

Chapter - II

2. Rituals and Celebrations of Lambada's.

Introduction

The customs and traditions of the Lambadas have generally been intact. These have been quite smoothly handed down from one generation to another without any obstruction. Some of the major customs, traditions, and religious beliefs of the Lambadas are discussed below. Many Lambadas believe in Hinduism. There is a great impact of Pauranic deities, cycle of incarnation, idol worship and Hindu epics on the lives of Lambadas. They are quite devoted to the mythological deities, Shiva Parvati, Rama, Krishna and Hanuman. In addition, they are also dedicated to Sikh divine personage Guru Nanak and Balaji and represent them in their lyrics. At the same time, they also believe in their clan deities. Lambadas do not have any original epic of their own. They observe their religious rites through the dictates of their saints and divine mentors. These saints sermonise to the community based on mythological phenomena.

Similar to other tribals, the Lambadas commence their festivals by worshipping Gods and Goddesses. Some of the major festivals celebrated by them are discussed below.

2.1. Festivals of Lambada

Teej Festival.

Gouri worship is a major component of this festival. A statue of 'Gauri' is also installed and worshipped. This festival is very popular among the virgins. This festival is celebrated for a period of 10 days from 'Kartik Shukla Paksha to Aghan Shukla Paksha'.

“It is celebrated during the heavy monsoon season and just before the sowing and

broadcasting operations are launched. Lambadas are conscious that the proper germination of the seeds and the crop yields are dependent upon the fertility of the soil. Besides this, the fertility of their maidens needs to be protected for the procreation of a healthy race. Hence, along with the protection of soil, the protection of the fertility of womenfolk is also ensured by the exclusive performance of various rituals of Teej by their unmarried girls” (Sreedevi Xavier, in her paper)

To celebrate Teej, the virgins, first seek the consent of the Naik of the Thanda. This ritual is known as ‘Teejair Jaman.’ The Naik, after consulting the Thanda elders, grants the necessary authorization. The celebration of ‘Teej’ depends upon the circumstances of the Thanda. After the consent is given, the inhabitants of the Thanda purchase small baskets meant for growing wheat, and give these to their daughters. Wheat grown on this occasion is called the ‘wheat of Teej’. The girls make use the soil dug out by big ants for sowing the wheat. Before taking the soil, the girls worship a tree with the grains of wet grams needled into the thorns of berry. This soil is more fertile. So, the girls express their gratitude to the big ants through a song.

Teej borano:

The Lambada maidens gather at the home of the Naik with filled up baskets and keep the baskets in a tent. This tent is called ‘Pal’ in Lambadi language. Lambadas pitch a tent at the Naik’s home to have the Teej secured. The sowing of Teej process starts collectively. In the evening, the inhabitants of the Thanda make the maidens sow the wheat in the baskets of Teej. This is named as ‘Teej Borano’ in Lambadi language. First, the Teej of

the Naik is sown. On this occasion, worship is performed to 'Dandi Yadi' (Mother Gauri) and gratitude is expressed to her, with the following song:

Photo of Teej



Shavabhaya, Borayo Teej, Bayeena Paleno;

Dandyadi, Borayo Teej, Bayeena paleno;
Shukabhaya, Borayo Teej, Bayeena Paleno;
Jethabhaya, Borayo Teej, Bayeena paleno;
Maaroharo Javarare ye- gham voom-ladde-deriya;
Lambi Lambi ye, Lambedi vekoriya;
Lyaada briya, lambda vekoriya;
Joka kariye lambedi vekoria;
Lambi lambiya-lambedi vekoria;
Shavabhaya, Borayo Teej, ye Lambedi vekoria
Dandiyadi, Borayo Teej, ye lambedi vekoriya
Sukhabhaya, Borayo Teej, ye lambedi vekoriya
Jethabhaya, Borayo Teej, ye lambedi vekoria.

(Source: Mr. Phakira Naik, an elderly Lambada from Kaudipally Thanda, Medak District)

Translation

The great brother Shavabhaya planted the Teej,

Like the born baby kept in the cradles,

The Meryamma Mata planted the Teej,

The baby is wrapped in the swaddles,

The Shukabhaya planted the Teej,

Like child is lulled in the Cradle

Jethabhaya planted the Teej,

Like the born baby kept in the Cradles

My green plants grows as quick as a banyan tree”

The plant of gram grows long and long and

Swings and tosses in the soothing lap of the season.

It grows and quickens tall and tall.

Religious Belief:

Teej is the festival of virgins. On this day, girls observe a fast for the Goddess Teej. This festival is considered as a very good occasion for girls to seek the blessings of the Goddess. The following song brings out their feelings on this occasion:

“Ya Shavabhaya baacha maaraj:

Saive Jaes, Maaraj: Ayo: Jnakad Jola

Kaaton, doorkadesh, Saive Jaes Maaraj”

Translation

“O! God: Sevabhaya, thou art a great God. Bless us and protect us from all evils and dangers and do not forget us.”

Pani Ghalno. The sibling of wheat is called ‘Teej’. The Lambadas believe that their Thanda will develop in the same proportion as the sibling of wheat will grow within a span of ten days without any fertilizer. That is why the virgins look after the siblings of Teej with utmost care. The girls water the baskets of Teej in the morning and evening. They set out thence with big earthen pot to fetch the water from the well. The girls first of all bathe at the well and, after washing their clothes, fill their earthen pots with fresh water. Thereafter, they set out for the Teej tent with the pots on their heads. They water the Teej collectively in the tent. The girls sing the following song, while observing the growing Teej plants:

Hum Haroli Bai, Paniyaan Nikli,

Panini Nikli re Seva Bhaya!

Taare Kaaran Ramthi-Ramthi Paniyaan Nikli,

Humnen Aasis De Jo Re Seva Bhaya!

Translation

We Girls gathered together, to collect the water,

Oh God Seva Bhaya, We are moving to collect the water!

Because of you Brother, we are moving to collect the water with group dance

Oh Brother, please come and Give Lots of Blessing to us. !

Meaning

The song asks Lord Rama to save them from the drought and famine that are ruining their crops. They attribute the suffering to the sins and inequities of the people, which resulted in the God of rain becoming angry and punishing them, by not giving rain.

Dhamboli Waitno. It is a sort of eatable cooked with wheat flour and jaggary. Laddus are made with the item called Dhamboli which are given away on the eve of submerging the Teej. The girls offer Dhamboli laddus to the Goddess of Teej on the seventh day of the Teej festival. They give away the Dhamboli laddus to all, to inform them about the submerging of Teej. The girls also seek the forgiveness for any mistake committed while distributing the laddus.

Gangaur. This festival is celebrated with great pomp and fervour. It is performed on the 9th day of Teej. The Gana implies 'male' and Gaur implies 'female'. The joint statue of male and female is called 'Ganagaur.' The Lambadas regard it as the symbol of Shiva and Parvati. The statues of Gana and Gaur are made from the mud from the nearby pond. Some of the girls install these statues in the tent of Teej for the entertainment of the viewers. These statues are also offered laddus. These are worshipped through the following song:

*“Maare Voojli ganguor Saapath rakieeye jhamar joli ye,
Jollale jhamar KO ke, vaadero heem Jo-lo le,
Baa-eene paa-leno, veeraa, chungaroo, lo-che”.*

Translation

“My handsome Gangour sat pleasantly, when I was fanning the God,
Lulled baby swinging in pleasure, in a cradle hung from the Banyan tree.
When sister goes in a palanquin, Brother’s turban-hood flaps in a sign of gaiety”.

Toran Ramno.

After worshipping Gangaur, the girls invite all the females of the Thanda to play Toran Ramno in the evening. On this occasion, people from all walk of life old, kids, and male, female and from other villages and Thandas also turn up there to watch the game. The folk dances performed during the festivities include: (1) Ladi Dance, (2) Bedairo Dance, (3) Langdo (4) Pai Khail and (5) Dod Pai.

During the Gangam festival, the Lambadi virgins perform dance. In this dance, the girls stand in a circle and dance, while clapping in a bowing pose. Simultaneously, they also sing folklore.

Dasrao Pujno.

The Lambadas perform Durga worship on the day of Aswin Shukla Dashmi. They also worship their household Goddesses, along with Goddess Durga. This is known as “Dasrao Pujno” in the Lambada dialect. Dasrao Pujno means to celebrate Dashara. This is also a prominent festival for the Lambadas. However, they do not set the effigies of

Ravana on fire, nor do they play Ramleela – depiction of the valour of Lord Rama. This suggests that the Lambadas celebrate Dashara as per their culture.

The Lambadas believe that Goddess Durga had seven sisters. Of them, the prominent ones are Tulja Bhavani, Amba Bhawani, Hingla Bhavani and Mother Kankali. Lambadas call these sisters as “Mavali Yadis.” The statues of these Mavalis are not made of gold. Instead, silver is used for this purpose. The old statues are refined by the goldsmith “This is called “Mavali Dhoravano”.

This Lambadas place the refined statue on the head of a virgin from the goldsmith’ shop, while chanting hymns. Thereafter, the statue of Goddess Mavali is installed at the prescribed spot in the evening. Before setting up a worship spot, the Lambadas smear the house with cow dung. The floor is adorned with flour, kumkum and turmeric powder. This type of decoration is known as “choko Purno”. Some lemons are also placed in the Choko. The statue of Goddess Mavali is installed, with the face oriented towards the east. Thereafter, the Lambadas worship Goddess Mavali after sacrificing an animal. Next, the Lambada women recite hymns, known as ‘Mavleer Valang’, in praise of Goddess Bhavani. They then offer cooked rice with jaggery and flesh of an animal cooked with turmeric to the Goddess. Thereafter, the ‘Prasadam’ is distributed amongst those present. On this occasion, the Lambadas sing a number of devotional songs. In a very significant song, the name ‘Lukada’ appears a number of times. According to local legend, Lukada was a very staunch devotee of all the seven Goddesses’.

Women Dance. This occasion is also marked by dances performed by the Lambada women. The melodious songs, based on folklore, are in praise of the Goddess.

Bhavanire Arti. On the next day, morning Arti is offered to Goddess Bhavani. This is called” Mavleer Arti Vatarno”. On this occasion, an Arti song is sung. The seven Goddesses are mentioned in above said song. The Lambadas strongly believe that none is less powerful, and that all are mighty.

The Lambadas lift the bones placed near the idol of Mavali and cooked rice and jaggary called “Lapsi”. The meat, cooked with turmeric, is called “Narej”. After the Arti, the ‘Prasadam’ is distributed amongst the devotees. Mavali worship is performed individually that day. Some of households worship Goddess every year. The Lambadas invite their kith and Kin especially on that day.

Deepavali.

Deepavali is celebrated on Kartik Amavasya. In Lambadi dialect, the festival is called “Davali”. Like the other Hindus, Lambadas celebrate Deepawali by lighting small lamps. They continue the festival for two days. Hindus worship Goddess Laxmi, while the Lambadas worship Mother Cow on Deepawali. On this day, Lambada girls worship Gowardhan with great enthusiasm. The Details about how this festival is regarded by the Lambadas are as follows:

1. Kartik Amavasya is “Kali Mavas” in Lambada dialect. According to a popular Hindu Myth, Lord Krishna had killed the king of demons on that day. The Lambadas recall this event as the annihilating day of demonic powers.
2. On Kartik Amvasya at the time of sunset, immediately after the formal approval by the Naik of Thanda for celebrating the festival, all the inhabitants of the

Thanda light small lamps in their respective homes. The Lambada drum beater is instructed to inform the people of the Thanda to light these lamps.

Divo Balno. The Lambada girls make earthen lamps at every home on the eve of Deepawali. They pour castor or edible oil into the earthen lamps and wait for the Naik's instructions. In the evening, after the drum beater conveys the Naik's instruction to celebrate Deepawali, the girls light the small lamps altogether (K. Shyamala, p .58).

Song

Raat Anderi Ye!

Ghar Ghar, Dewalo Baale Lijo,

Mare Bapune Kijiyo Mere!

Ghar Ghar Dewalo Baalijo ye,

Mare Veeran Kijiyo Mera!

Katra Bhasiyo Tho Haad Kardijo

Raat Andheri Ye

Meaning

Night is very dark, lit the Lamp in every house,

Night is very dark

First take the blessing of my Father by showing diya (lamp)

Light the Lamp in every house

Take blessing from my Brother by showing diya (lamp)

Night is becoming dark!

Cow Worship. The Lambadas prefer cow worship to that of Goddess Laxmi on the occasion of Deepawali. As a matter of fact, worship to Gowardhana signifies the worship of Laxmi. It has been mentioned in the perspective of Lambadas historical background that they were the people rearing livestock. Thus, the Lambadas regard the Cow as Goddess Laxmi. The Lambada males and females worship the cow at their door by embedding 'Tee' on her forehead. Thereafter, they feed the cow with Rotis, made of wheat flour and jaggery. They consider that the cow is their Mother and the Ox, their father. A heap of wood is set on fire in the cowshed and the Lambadas worship the cows with lit torches. They also utter words desiring the annihilation of the blood-sucking Jangori, Bamai stuck to the body of cows. Thereafter, the girls perform Arti to the cows.

Mera. Generally the term 'Mera' is not pronounced in the Lambada dialect. This term is used only on the eve of Deepawali, which implies 'blessing'. In this context, Dr. Yashwant Jadhav states, "On the night of Amavasya, the Lambada virgins seek 'Mehar' (gift) from the elders of Thanda by performing Arti to them. The term 'Mera' means compassion, grace and sympathy in Persian. The Lambada girls seek 'Mera' while going

from door to door in a group” (Naik. D.B., p 74) the practice of seeking ‘Mera’ is called ‘Mera Mangno’ in the Lambadi dialect. Only virgins are supposed to seek Mera from the elders.

On the eve of Deepawali after performing Arti for the cows, all the girls of the Thanda gather at the home of Naik and Naiken and seek Mera from them. Thereafter, they go from house to house in the Thanda and seek Mera from the elders.



Girls performing Mera on the occasion of Deepavali

<i>Vaarse Dhaneri Kore Dawali</i>	<i>Yaadi Thon Meraa !</i>
<i>Vaarse Dhaneri Kore Dawali</i>	<i>Bapu Thon Meraa !</i>
<i>Vaarse Dhaneri Kore Dawali</i>	<i>KakaThon Meraa !</i>
<i>Vaarse Dhaneri Kore Dawali</i>	<i>Kaki Thon Meraa !</i>
<i>Vaarse Dhaneri Kore Dawali</i>	<i>Phupa Thon Meraa !</i>
<i>Vaarse Dhaneri Kore Dawali</i>	<i>Phupi Thon Meraa!</i>

Translation

Yearly comes the auspicious light festival of Diwali.	Oh Mother!	Prayer for you!
Yearly comes auspicious light festival of Diwali	Oh Father!	Prayer for you!
Yearly comes auspicious light festival of Diwali	Oh Uncle	Prayer for you!
Yearly comes auspicious light festival of Diwali	Oh Aunty	Prayer for you!
Yearly comes auspicious light festival of Diwali	Oh Maternal Uncle	Prayer for you!
Yearly comes auspicious light festival of Diwali	Oh Maternal Aunty	Prayer for you!

Gotan Worship. Dung-worship and Gotan-worship are both similar. The sitting place for cows and oxen is called 'Gotan'. This rite is accomplished on the day following Amavasya. On that day, girls stud flowers into the dung lying in the 'Gotan'. Thereafter, girls worship Mother Deepawali and pray that God may bless the Lambada community with plenty of milk, curd, butter milk; etc. It is clear from the above discussion that the Lambadas treat Deepawali as Govardhan-worship. This festival denotes the significance of the ritual of Arti and the important role of girls in the festival.

Holi.

This is a very important festival for the Indian society. This festival is celebrated with equal gusto by people belonging to all castes. This festival is celebrated in the spring season. "A few days before the Holi, the Banjaras go around the nearby villages performing dances and singing melodious songs in their traditional way to collect money and grain. They sing a welcome song of Holi in order to declare the advent of New Year. Women and men exert themselves in singing and dancing and never leave any known person without extracting money or grain from them. The dancing women encircle the person and put him to so much of embarrassment that the man gives some money to escape the teasing and scolding of the women. The money collected is used for the celebrations of Holi festival" (Dr. M. Sreedevi Xavier),

Religious Belief:

Lambadas have adopted Holi just like the Hindus. The Lambadas have a slightly different version from the other Hindus about how the festival originated. The Hindus attribute the origin to the tale of Hirnyakhashyap, the non-believer and his son, Prahlad, an ardent devotee of Lord Vishnu. According to the legend, Hirnyakhashyap sister, Holika, had obtained a boon which gave her protection from fire. Hirnyakhashyap tried his best to discourage Prahlad from his devotion to Lord Vishnu. As a last resort, he asked his sister to sit on burning logs of wood with Prahlad on her lap. Miraculously, while Prahlad emerged safe, Holika was burnt to death. Since then, Hindus celebrate the Holi festival by observing the rites of Holika burning.

The legend, prevalent among the Lambadas, goes as under:

‘Holika’ was the sister of Hirnyakhashyap. Prahlad, the son of Hirnyakhashyap, was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu. Prahlad refused to accept that his father was omnipotent of his father and always kept himself engrossed in the worship of the Lord, despite strong objections from Hirnyakhashyap. He was very much irritated by his son’s behaviour. Holika headed for Devloka, the abode of the Gods, and began to abuse them. The Deities cursed her to be burnt to death. Even though she had her nephew, Prahlad, on her lap, the Deities saved Prahlad, while Holika was burnt to ashes. Since then, the Lambadas have been celebrating Holi.

The Lambadas regard Holika as Mother and worship her on the eve of Holi. Lambadas celebrate this occasion by the narrating folklores and performing folk dances. Apart from above said myth one more is also in vogue among Banjaras. This goes as follows:

There was a demon that used to abduct small children and eat them up. On hearing about him, Hirnyakhashyap called him up to kill his own son, Prahlad, who defied his father's command not to chant the name of the Lord. One day, the demon carried Prahlad to the jungle and tried to kill him. However, the Lord Narayana reached the spot, killed the demon and saved the life of Prahlad. Therefore, Lambadas observe 'Dhoond Fast' so that their children are protected from any calamity. (D.R. Pratap, p 46-49).

This 'Dhoond Fast' is imperative for the Bhukya cult of Lambada community. Lambadas celebrate this festivity with great gusto and gaiety. Firstly, at the initiation of Holi, the parents of infants invite their kith and kin. At times, the festival is celebrated collectively. Dhoond Fast commences with the burning of Holika.

On the occasion of 'Dhoond Fast', a blanket tent is pitched which sounds as 'Pal tanno'. The actual religious Dhoond Holi is to express their noble wishes to the child sitting under the tent. Generally, Dhoond air Holi is not set to fire without Dhoond festivity in Lambada - Thanda generally, the burning process to Holi is carried out in all the Thandas. However, Lambadas always prefer to observe 'Dhoond Vrat Holi'.

The Dhoond festivity is not held in the Thanda where a child is not born after the previous Holi. However, Holi is set to fire invariably on the occasion. The festival is celebrated with great pomp and show. The Lambadas engross themselves with melodies of folklores along with folkdances. They play 'Dhapp' (small hand drum) at the occasion. The Lambadas sacrifice goats on this occasion. It is called as 'Dhar Devno' in Lambada lingua Franka.

Holi Balno: Like the Hindus, the Lambadas set Holi to fire on the Purnima of Falgun Shukla Paksha. People in the community begin to collect wood and dried scraps of grass, etc., at a certain spot at the Thanda.

On the evening of Shukla Paksha, the Naik of the Thanda keeps the paraphernalia of Holi in order. The Lambadas are of the view that the high placed paraphernalia of Holi is attributed to a good omen in the same proportion. Thereafter, the Naik of Thanda performs rites and sets the Holi paraphernalia on fire.

This is named as 'Holi Balno' in Lambadi language. The Lambadi people take seven revolutions round the flaming Holi, chanting 'Bom-Bom'. It seems from the episode that it is Hirnyakashyap's sister Holika who is being set to fire. This Holi is worshiped en-mass.

The Holi of Lambadas is called Dhoond Holi which is set to fire in the morning hours. On this occasion, 'Dando Kando' is performed by the two boys who are going to be married in the near future. Dando Kando implies a process through which inner stem is taken out from the burning stick of caster wood lying in the mid of Holi paraphernalia by those two boys. The Lambadas believe that Dando Kando is a happy omen for the matrimonial life of the two boys. The dedication of the bachelors to Holi reminds one of the relations between Cupid and Rizaka. Both the boys worship Holi with the same devotion. Lambadas celebrate Dhoond Holi to commemorate the annihilation of Dhoonda Demon. However, they do not attend the process of Holi burning.

Holi is a prominent festival of the Lambadas. The folk songs sung on the occasion are called Lehngi. The very rhythms of Lehngi begin to gush out from the month of

Lambadas and it is continued even after a fortnight of Holi. The songs of Lehngi are not supposed to be sung round the year. Lehngi songs are sung in sitting, as well as standing, postures, both. The features of Lehngi songs are their reputation one after another.

Most of folklores contain the touch of romanticism. However, some of them are comprised of hymns dedicated to Gods and Goddesses, but the last stanza has a lustful touch. The best Lehngi singer is called Geria.

Sports of Holi: - It is a well-known fact that during the Holi festival, folk dances are performed and folklores, narrated. These are accompanied with a variety of sports. The participation of all male female, boys and girls, younger and elder even the old ones make the festivity of Holi an occasion for merry-making, leading the Lambadas into a state of ecstasy.

First of all Lambadas enjoy Holi at the home of the Thanda Naik. Simultaneously, the women surround the Naiken and dance. The Naik of Lambadas commands a position of honour in the Lambada community. The atmosphere echoes with the sound of small hand drums and folklores. On this occasion, the Naik hands out some money as a gift. The Lambadas bless him while accepting the money.

Geria: The term 'Geria' is used at the eve of 'Holi festivity'. Literally, it implies the one who plays and dances on the occasion of Holi. Only a married person can be a Geria.

Bumdi Marno. Resounding 'BOM' with hands on lips has been termed as 'Bumdi Marno'. The Lambadas believe that this activity at the time of Holi will bode well for the community. This activity is also carried through during the hours of sports, or at the time of its conclusion. This activity commences with the burning of the effigy of Holika.

Khila Hokarno. In Lambada terminology, this term means ‘taking out a rooted stick from the ground’. A contest is arranged among the Lambada men and women to take out the rooted stick on the occasion of Dhoond Holi. The game, Geri, is played after liquor is consumed by the men. On this occasion, the women strive their utmost not to let the rooted stick out. As soon as a person comes to take the rooted stick out, the women strike his hands with small sticks taken from the branches of an Oak tree. On the other side, some Gerias stand in a scattered way to protect their companion. As per rule, a Geria is not supposed to oppose the beatings. He is required to pull the stick out, in spite of being thrashed. In this way one is the beater and another one is the beaten. Ultimately, the mightiest among the men gets the stick out.

Geir Wagavano: The Lambadas head for door to door in the villages and ask for gifts while narrating the folklores and performing folkdances. The Lambadas have coined a term, ‘Geir Wagavano’, for such a system. According to a Lambada myth, the Goddess of Lambadas directed them to sacrifice a goat purchased with the money obtained through the gifted amounts. Since then, the Lambadas have been carrying out this practice. The Lambadas do not consider this as alms taking. Instead, they feel that is in compliance of the orders of the Goddess.

Dances of Males: - Quite often, females are prone to dance on every occasion. However, the Holi festival is dominated by the dances of males. The male Lambadas perform the 1) Tupri Dance 2) Pai 3) Chuto natch, etc, at the time of Holi. The male Lambadas sing this very popular song at the time of Holi:

<i>Ma Maare Gharem Suthithi</i>
<i>Kankariya Kul Maare Bhai-Bhai Re</i>
<i>Holi Ramma Jhokthethi, Mashethethi</i>
<i>Bhai-Bhai Re!</i>
<i>Haar Gay Geriya, Haar Ge</i>
<i>Gerlin Dekan Geriya Dhaansge</i>
<i>Bhai-Bhai Re!</i>
<i>Thu Kimethi Aayo Didaar, Vengan Majiyadaar</i>
<i>VO Venganen Thoden Githi</i>
<i>Vel Kata Bhanjere do-chaar</i>
<i>Vengan Majiyadaar</i>
<i>VO Venganen major lagaayithi</i>
<i>Kai Aangli Kataai Do-Chaar</i>
<i>Vengan Majiyadaar</i>

Translation Lambada into English

I was sleeping in my home

Oh my Brothers and Sisters

We will play Holi festival all together

Oh my Brothers and Sisters

We tired and Tired,

Head of the group (Male) Ran away while seeing Head (female) of the group

Oh my Brothers and Sisters

Oh my friend from where you are coming, from vegetable fields

I am coming with Brinjal field

Hands injured while cutting the Brinjals

But Brinjal is the King of the Vegetables

I kept the Brinjal for sale

Even my fingers injured while cutting the Brinjals

But Brinjal is the King of the Vegetables

Rang Ramano. The parameters related to colour throwing activity are complied with strictly. The husband's younger brother, husband's sister, Sister-in-law, brother's wife and sister's husband, etc., can throw colours. However, the mother-in-law, daughter-in-law, father-in-law are not supposed to smeared with colours. The Lambadas fully revel in such a merry making atmosphere. On this occasion, Lehngi songs with the blend of romanticism are sung.

Songs Related to Holi Dances.

Lambada also perform collective dances on the occasion of Holi. The folk songs sung on this occasion depict the sense of devotion towards God-Goddess and saints, apart from the alluding to Mother Nature. The Lambadas are aware the fact that the cosmos has come into existence due to the grace of some unseen power. Like Hindus, the Lambadas

also believe in 'Might' and they also regard that it is 'Might' which created the human race.

The folklores also reflect the ethnic unity of the Lambadas. Through these, the Lambadas resolve that they should be unified by ignoring their mutual differences and should chant the name of 'Rama'.

The Saints of Lambadas are also there in the picture when they render the following

Song:

Seva Bhaya Ladi Ramechi Kai,

Seva Bhaya Holi Ramechi Kai!

Dhoti Vaalo Dav Ramchi kai,

Seva Bhaya Dhund Ramechi kai!

Meaning :

A woman is requesting Sant Sri Seva Bhaya as follows:

Seva Bhaya, can you perform group dance with us?

Seva Bhaya, can you play colourful Holi with us?

Wearing Dhoti (White Towel (Lungi), great person, can you perform dandiyaddi dance with us?

Seva Bhaya can you perform Dhund dance with us?

the following features of the Lambada folk songs:

1. “There is no authorship for these songs,
2. The songs are open-ended,
3. These bear no traces of specific time and history,
4. These are not documented in writing. Instead, these are basically oral recitations from memory,
5. Chorus is an important element in these songs, which are never song solo, but only in groups,
6. These songs are composed on the rhythmic movements of the footsteps”
(Vislavath Rajunayak, p 154).

2.2 Folk Traditions

Many customs and traditions of the Lambadas are intact and everlasting. These have imparted a distinct identify to the Lambadas. The succeeding paragraphs will discuss about the customs, traditions, beliefs, etc., of the Lambadas. Most of the Lambadas believe in Hinduism. There is a great impact of Pauranic deities, cycle of incarnation, idol worship and Hindu epics on the lives of Lambadas. At the same time, they also believe in clan deities. The soul of the folklore is folk music. Self realization and its expression is the zenith of human life. Human being has chosen the path of music to reveal their inner most sentiments. Males and females express the art of rhythms through their songs. Folk parlance and folk rhythm are used in these songs. Rather enigmatically, while the songs

sung by males may contain imperfections, there are no such flaws in those rendered by the females.

Festivals and folkdances are an integral part of tribal culture. The Festivals and folkdances play an important role in reminding the people about their past. These motivate them to live a traditional life. For thousands of years, folklores and folkdances have been drawing inspiration from religion. When human beings began to live in groups and a sense of community began to thrive among them, they started to enjoy dancing altogether. It was then that the genre of folkdance originated. Later, these dances took the shape of classical ones.

The folkdances came into existence for the sake of merriment – and not for any financial gain. However, when classical dances emerged, these grew as the sources of livelihood for the performers. Folkdances depict a sense of neutrality, while classical dances tend towards artificiality. Also, folkdance contains an element of originality. Folkdances depict the culture of a country or a region. They reveal the nature of man, his identity, simplicity, sociality as well as his rites and customs. Hence, these are an integrated part of the local culture of a country. As already mentioned, the folk dances are largely influenced by religion. This becomes obvious when one watches the Dashara celebrated by Lambada.

Indian folk dances demonstrate substantial art oriented facts, enthusiasm, fascination of smile, grandeur of nature, man's dedication to beauty and his free spirit. The salient features of folk dances are as follows:

- (1) Folk dances are self created. These were not composed, but emerged spontaneously. Folk dances owe their existence to the whole society. They cannot be attributed any individual and specific composer.
- (2) Folk dances are easily available and understood by all. They are easy to understand, learn and demonstrate. These trio merits of folk dances are not only required in the perspective of society as well as the community, but also for professional ground. Their simplicity, comprehension and easy availability make these easy to learn. It is said that folk dances are inborn in humans. These are molded into the life of persons, ever since their childhood days.
- (3) Folkdances reflect people's traditions, rites, customs and sense of spirituality. That is why their origin is very ancient. As an high stationed and virtuous man get transformed into a sort of Deity, in the same way folkdances assume that status through the passage of time and they get a religious connotation , resulting in a metaphysical significance. They have paved the way for the people to follow a health oriented view. They were not bound with temporal chains found in the existing scenario.

Although the aboriginals of India dwell in different pockets, their festivals, folkdances and customs have a lot of similarities. The aboriginals have managed to retain their uniqueness by virtue of their way of living, dresses, behavior, rites, customs, religious and social sentiments.

Folkdances mirror, the social and religions facets of the community concerned.



Photo No.1 Ramnaik Thanda dance performance Warangal District

The lives of Lambadas have been bifurcated into two streams - penury and unquenched desires. In spite of being stricken with adverse circumstances, they know how to infuse bliss into their lives and transport themselves into a state of pleasure.

The Telangana Lambadas celebrate Teej, Dashara, Deepawali and Holi with similar rites. They have managed to keep their old festivals intact.

Some of the important folkdances for the Lambadas are discussed below.

- 1. Tupri.** The males stand in a circle with stick in their hands and take rounds while hitting another stick. Lehngi song is sung on the occasion. The hitting of sticks echoes with a melodious sound.

2. **Pai.** Lehngi is sung with this dance. Pai is a symbol of Holi also. A Geria dances with rhythm.
3. **Talwar pheravno.** This is not performed on many occasions, since it requires the utmost care. The dancer perform dance with a sword in one hand and a shield in another. The salient feature of this dance is that the sword is not visible to the spectators.
4. **Lathi Pherno.** A bamboo baton is revolved artistically in this dance. The skill of the man who revolves the stick draws a lot of admiration. Stick dance is also performed collectively. This dance is meant for entertainment only.
5. **Chuto Natch.** This dance is performed with the beats of small hand drums. This can be performed either solo, or in a group. A drunken Geria dances. He amuses the viewers by his leaps and pounces. Another name for this dance is 'Dhapada Ro Natch' (Drums Dance).

Since many males are under great external impact, they are unable to protect their traditional gifts. Secondly, they are more prone to look down on their culture. On the contrary, females are tending to be more protective of their traditional heritage.

The composers of folklores are not acquainted with classical themes. Many of them are illiterate and are oblivious of rhythms, etc. Yet, it cannot be denied that the fundamental base of creation is rhythm. The river flows in a rhythm. Even life moves in a rhythm. Rhythm is the life of a song. This rhythm also has been termed as a 'breakage' in

musicology. Rhythm and at random composition of couplets both are complementary to each other. Quite often, when a female recites a non-metrical lyric, he makes up the deficiency by dint of sound variations.

Folklores prominently contain the musical sounds termed as Kaharwa, Dadra and Deepchand. The Peelu, Tulak, Jajiwani, Kanot, Kafi, Khamag, Bilawal sounds dominate the folklores. In fact, folklores are devoid of 'tall' sounds, so these are controlled by rhythm.

The Lambadas believe in certain mythological deities, along with their clan deities. Amongst them, Shiva, Parvati, Rama, Krishna, as well as Hanuman are the more popular ones. Some Lambadas are devotees of Guru Nanak and Balaji and represent them in their lyrics (DR. Arya, p.56).

2.3. Clan Goddesses

The Clan Goddesses occupy a prominent place Lambadas. They call clan Goddess as 'Mavli Yadi' that implies Mother Goddess. Dr. Ramesh Arya has posited, "The Lambadas are of the view that there are seven Goddesses as a whole that protect them in calamities. These seven Goddesses are Jagdamba, Sheetla, Kankali, Chandi Bhavani, Hingla and Matral. But Goddess Mariyama enjoys the supreme position. The Lambadas worships them individually and collectively both. They call this worship as 'Mavli Pujno'."

Prior to Mavli Pujno, the Lambadas install brass or silver idols in their houses. On the occasion of Mavli worship, they recite the following hymns:

Meaning

A prostrated salutation to the Mother. O! Mother Grant your acceptance to our desired task. Increase our food grains. Bestow your blessings on our performed task. Keep away moneylender and legal suits from us. Bless us to be prosperous. Be attentive to our kids, kith and kin, all creatures, insects and fauna. O! Mother! Keep our Naik happy. Have mercy upon all of us and accept our supplications. Lambadas also approach their clan Goddesses in times of distress. Some of these Goddesses are male oriented, and the others, female ones.

Ancestor Worship

The Lambada are mostly an animistic community. They are the worshiper of nature, trees, water, air and wind. They also worship their ancestors and forefathers (who they treat them as their Gods and goddesses. First, the ancestor must be worshiped before performing any ritual or ceremonies. On festivals like 'Diwali and Ugadi,' they offer sweet rice, cooked with the mixture of jiggery, and pour ghee in the fire. This is known as *dhabukar*. And also before the marriage ritual, the Lambadis sacrifice goats in the name of their ancestors. The puja is performed by eldest person of the community. The place is cleaned with cow dung, water and Jowar Atta is used to draw rangoli. After sacrificing a goat, they cook 'saloi', which is prepared with the goat's meat and blood of the goat. The community head, or shadu, sprinkles water all over the house and then prays later, the cooked mutton is given to the guests who have attended there.

Mariyama Bhavani. Mariyama is most prominent among the Goddesses of Lambadas. An imposing temple of the Goddess is situated in village Pohra, district Akola,

Maharashtra. A fair is held every year on the occasion of Navami. The Lambadas turn up in large numbers. According to a legend, the Mother Goddess is the eldest amongst the seven Goddesses. There is a widely held belief among the Lambadas that Goddess Mariyama strolls about among Lambada community in the guise of an elderly Lambada woman to find out about the welfare of Lambadas. They strongly believe the outbreak of Cholera occurs when the Goddess is displeased. Therefore, this epidemic can be checked by offering severe penance to the Goddess. Mariyama is regarded as a male oriented Goddess. Therefore, there is extreme dedication to Goddess Mariyama amongst the Lambadas.

<i>“Ye Amba Mariyamma</i>
<i>Saari Malakema Thuchi Yadi</i>
<i>Dharathi Yadi Thaar Cha Yadi</i>
<i>Ore Upper hamcha Yadi</i>
<i>Varse dader Puja thone Derecha Yadi</i>
<i>Nangaren Haro Bhuro Karan Yadi</i>
<i>Doke Kaatan Pako Dekalan Mari Yadi</i>
<i>Ye Nangaren Jan Janganeen HariKaris Yadi”</i>

Translation

“Goddess is looking serious with raised neck

The neck has looking like nine feet long

Goddess is looking with raised head

I am able to come to see the Goddess

Goddess is looking with very serious

I am enable to come to see the Goddess”.

Tulja Bhavani. A huge temple of Tulja Bhavani is located in village Tuljapur, Distt. Pandarpur, Maharashtra. The Lambadas believe that Tulja is the Goddess of small pox. The disease breaks out when the Goddess is annoyed. The effected household worship and repent before the Goddess so that affected person may recover from the disease. Small pox is also called ‘Mother.’”Once a person recovers from the disease, his family members sacrifice a rooster at the altar of the Goddess. Tulja is a female oriented Goddess, therefore, Lambadi ladies observe fast on Tuesdays to the Goddess and after having worshipping the Goddess, they break their fast. Generally, the clans Goddesses are worshipped on Tuesdays. Lambadas treat Tuesday as the day of the Goddess. Therefore, Tuesday has been regarded an auspicious day.

Kankali. Goddess Mahankali is called Kankali by the Lambadas. They believe that if Kankali gets angry, the world would face famine and drought. Lambadas every year visit The Kankali Temple in Maher Mountains of Yevatmal district of Maharashtra is a popular place of pilgrimage for the Lambadas. According to a legend, once when the Goddess created havoc all over the globe, she could be propitiating only when a buffalo was sacrificed at her altar. Today, the buffalo sacrifice has been replaced by that of a goat. Kankali is a male oriented Goddess. The Lambadas believe that Goddess Kankali protects them at the time of drought and famine.

Sheetla. A fair is held in every region of Rajasthan during the second half of Chaitra month. Sheetla is worshipped as the Goddess of protection in Rajasthan and the surrounding states. In this context, Shri Ram Sharma wrote, ‘Sheetla is regarded as Goddess of North India.’ Goddess Sheetla is worshipped at the eve of Pola festival of oxen conducted in Maharashtra. The Lambadas, hailing from South India, regard Sheetla as the Goddess of cattle. These Lambadas worship Sheetla en mass for the health of their livestock.

On the occasion of Goddess Sheetla worship, the Lambadas beseech to Goddess to lead their herds of white cows to the destination and protect their old sick and fatigued ones. The same way worship to Sheetla is prevalent even today with the following words:

*“Ye yaadi, Saive-es, Mariyamayaadi, Sathe Yaadi, Kaartheta,
Jeev- janvarer, Bal Bachaar-Saives-es? Nanger-mamaar, Saive-es.
Ayo-jhakad-jola-kota-on.Doorkadesh-paanta palem re, Barkath- Desh”*

Translation

O! Mother Goddess, Mariyama- Sister of Seven Sisters

Protect our Animals- Children and Thanda,

Keep us from robbery-make profit in Agriculture

O! Mother Goddess, Mariyama-Sister of Seven Sisters

Matral. The popular notion is that Matral is the youngest of the seven clan Goddesses. The Lambadas regard Matral as the protector Goddess for the cattle. A goat is sacrificed at the altar of the Goddess and the cattle are smeared with the blood of the sacrificed

goat. Matral is regarded as a male oriented Goddess. At the time of worship to Matral, her seven sisters are also glorified. The worship to Matral is performed in the eastern region of Thanda. Most of the Lambadas perform worship to Matral on the day following Dashara.

Other Goddesses. Besides these seven Goddesses, a few other Goddesses are also worshipped by the Lambadas. They include: (1) Masai (2) Vagai (3) Jarimari (4) Samnalk and (5) Ori. The Lambadas have also adopted local Gods and Goddesses in addition to their clan Goddess and other ones. In this connection, Dr. Shri Ram Sharma has mentioned, “The Lambadas have been striving to keep their exclusive identity and they have been successful in this. The Lambadas have adopted local customs and traditions, while keeping their own heritage intact.” It implies that folk deities and Goddesses have a great impact on the lives of Lambadas.

Divine Females in the Lambada Community. The Lambada community has been invoking the intervention of certain divine females whenever calamity strikes the community. Amongst them, Samki Yadi is worshipped with great devotion.

Samki Yadi. This Goddess originally hailed from a poor Lambada family. Her parents earned their livelihood by manual labour. Samki also had to go out for manual labour. According to local legend, one day Samki came across Seva Bhaya. Samki recognised Seva Bhaya, but he did not. At that time, Seva Bhaya was inspecting the task being carried out there. Samki was a well mannered and beautiful girl working in torn clothes. He asked, “Daughter! Whose daughter are you?” She replied, “I am your daughter”. Seva Bhaya was much pleased at her presence of mind. He later called on her poor parents and

proposed that their daughter be married to his younger brother, Jeta. Samki's parents could not comprehend anything. They were too poor even to serve meals to the marriage party. They were too confused to accept the proposal. Ultimately, Samki and Jeta were engaged. The date of the marriage was fixed. On that day, Seva Bhaya reached Samki's home with his brother and the marriage party. There, they found Samki milking a six months old cow and her house was full of all sorts of commodities. How this could be possible? People began to regard her as a divine being. From then onwards; the Lambadas have been regarding Samki as a Goddess and worship her with great devotion.

2.4 Lambada Saads.

There have been certain mentors, or 'Saads,' in the Lambada communities whom they have elevated to the status of Divine Beings. The Saads are believed to possess the character of ascetics. They are worshipped posthumously. There are three 'Saads' deities, in whose honour hymns have been composed by the Lambadas. The devotees to Goddesses in Lambada community hold a specific place. They are related to a particular race. They are the people who accept gifts and offerings in the name of Goddesses. 'Coli' devotee is also hired as a guide to visit Goddesses. This person acts as a priest to the Goddess. Some of the eminent devotees to the Goddess are related to this caste.

Seva Bhaya. He is regarded as the most eminent devotee to the Goddess in Lambada Community. Some people consider him as the incarnation of Lord Shiva. Seva Bhaya's clan Goddess is Mariyama. Dr. Shri Ram Sharma terms Seva Bhaya as a divine being for the Lambadas. He states, 'Seva Bhaya' was born in a common Lambada household. His father's name was Bheema Naik and mother was Dharmani. He had three brothers, Hapa,

Poora and Baddu. It is said that a Goddess named Mariyama has prepared a pill with the dirt of the body and handed that over to Dharmani with the blessing that she will give birth to a divine child. At the appropriate time, she birth to Seva Bhaya. Mariyama had forgotten that with the help of that pill, a divine child has taken birth. It has been stated in a myth that Goddess Mariyama was herself present at the time of Seva Bhaya baptism (Cheenya Naik, p, 112).

Dr. Shri Ram Sharma adds that Mariyama is the Goddess of Cholera. She loved Seva Bhaya. She headed for the spot in the jungle where Seva Bhaya used to graze cows. She said to Seva Bhaya, "I love you, you should marry me." Seva Bhaya did not accept the proposal of Mariyama.

Seva Bhaya was a true devotee to Mariyama. The Lambada community does not relish the sensual relation between a Goddess and a devotee. As a matter of fact, Mariyama had stressed on devotion, rather than proposal. The propounded theory of devotion suggests that a devotee beseeches his Deity to grant refuge to him. The Deity is not supposed to direct his devotee for his worship. It is the devotee who is liable to be engrossed in the devotion of his Deity.

However, the Lambada community's sense of devotion is just contrary to it. It is their view that the devotee is one upon whom God bestows his favour. The Goddess requests her devotees to worship her. No one is supposed to turn down the decrees of the Goddess. Seva Bhaya also had to accept the command of Goddess, ultimately. However, Seva Bhaya put forth the following conditions to the Goddess to be her devotee:

1. The Lambadas who succeed him must be given the status of devotees for the next fourteen generations.
2. Every utterance of the devotee must be true.
3. The mount of the devotee always must be a horse.
4. The Goddess must help him at the time of crisis.
5. Heifer livestock must flourish among the Lambadas.
6. A well-built and robust bull must always be available among their cows.

It is said that the Goddess had accepted the conditions put up by Seva. Within no time, there were 3344 cows with Seva Bhaya. Seva Bhaya's grave is located at Pohra Thanda, dist. Akola, Maharashtra. Pohra Thanda is a place of pilgrimage for the Lambadas. People call it the 'Kashi of the Lambadas'. Lakhs of Lambadas visit the place every year on Ramnavami day. The pilgrims offer homage at the grave of Seva Bhaya (J.J.Roy Burmon, p 93).

Seva Bhaya has been mentioned as incarnation in the folklores of Lambadas. A journey to Pohra is considered as the pilgrimage of deliverance. Mariyama is also worshipped at Pohra, along with Seva Bhaya. Lambadas believe that, with the grace of Seva Bhaya, they will achieve deliverance. They pray: "May the mercies of Seva Bhaya continue unabated on the Lambadas. May he keep all calamities away from the Lambadas? We make this offering with a deep sense of devotion. Please accept this offering."

It has been mentioned that Seva Bhaya is capable enough to remove the sorrows of man. In another supplication, Seva Bhaya has been requested to provide protection to the Lambadas. The supplication goes like this.

‘O! Seva! Under your reign, may we be prosperous. This time take your incarnation with all formidable troops. Let us know that the ultimate victory will go to Seva Bhaya. The Lambada community is convinced that Seva Bhaya will be reborn. The Lambada, with silver waist belt (kandoro), bangles in hands (baliya), a shirt without buttons being tied with cloth strips, dhoti and a turban on head, will reappear as Seva Bhayas. An honest simple, tradition oriented and dutiful people with high moral character will enjoy the privilege to hear the sermons of Seva Bhaya. The person, who hears the sermons of Seva, will attain deliverance. A person who is a hypocrite, corrupt, drunkard, immoral and irreligious will definitely go astray.

Seva Bhaya had advised Lambadas to always speak the truth, think well before speaking and remove the hardships of the grief stricken ones, keep the houses neat and clean, maintain good health, not to deceive others, abstain from sins, give up intoxications and not to steal..

The above said facts prove that Seva Bhaya was a saint and a great social reformer. He strived to uproot the social evils existed among the tribals. Particularly, he opposed the atrocities being perpetrated on the destitutes.

The local myths also tell that Seva Bhaya had made prophesies during his life time. This prophecy is called ‘Seva Bhaya Bol’ by the Lambada community. Seva had said that there would be a drought across the country and that thirteen grains of gram will be sold

for one rupee. Water would be sold. The son would treat his mother as an unnecessary burden. Also that cows and oxen would face a terrible crisis and Lambadas will be scattered far and wide.

A saint is that person who observes celibacy till the very end. A householder cannot be a saint. A saint is the supreme religious statesman in the society. The saint is supposed to worship Goddess once a week. The saint should also be punctual in his daily worship.

Folk literature on Seva Bhaya focuses on his character. This character has been classified into three parts. The first part suggests that Seva Bhaya attained the state of devotion through the grace of Goddess and by virtue of that devotion; he performed a number of miracles. The second part mentions a contradiction between the Goddess and her devotee. This contradiction may be applied to asceticism and family life. The third part described the welfare move of Seva Bhaya to Lambadas. As a matter of fact, the Lambada community has elevated him to the status of a Deity.

Mithu Bhukiya. He is the Deity for those Lambadas who work as ‘Ladenis’ (transporters). Mithu had been born in a Rathor Bhukiya clan of Lambada community.

A local myth suggests that his ‘would be bride’ had passed away before the marriage procession has left. This episode utterly shocked him. He resisted all pressures to get married again. Later on, he got involved in social service for the Ladeni Lambada community for the rest of his life. Keeping in view his motiveless service, the Lambada community elevated him to the status of a Deity. They also regard him as an incarnation.

He is invoked by the offering of chicken's legs and wings. Lambadas strongly believe that Mithu will answer all their supplications.

Matru Saad. Matrusaad was a devotee of Lord Venkateshwara. Dr. Shri Ram Sharma notes, "Matrusad is worshipped even today in Mehboob Nagar, Nizamabad and various districts of Telangana."

Soma Saad. Ravi Gaon is a pilgrimage centre for the Lambada community. This village is situated near Tandur Tehsil of Ranga Reddy district in Telangana. Here, there is the grave of Soma Saad, a very ardent devotee of Lord Venkateshwara. Even today, Lambadas invoke him to remove their sorrows and regularly worship him. Lambadas offer Somasad pudding made of jaggery, rice, milk and ghee.

Muna Saad. Gotia Mountain is located near Nagarjun Sagar in Telangana. There is a temple of Munasad, son of Somasad on this mountain. A fair is held there every year. Thousand of Lambadas visit this place from far and wide. Munasad was a devotee of Lord Venketeshwara. Their ardent devotee to Lord Venketshwara settled in Tirupathi in the last stages of his life. Legend says that, during the stay of Somasad in Tirupathi, Lord Venketshwara and Hati Ram Baba visited him. When Lord Venketshwara and Hati Ram used to play chess, Somasad was always present.

Somasad also propagated the Vaishnava religion among the Lambadas. He introduced the tenets of this religion to them. Dr. Shri Ram Sharma has mentioned in this regard, once a year, Lambada from far and wide visit the grave and glorify him throughout the night (Sri Ram Sharma, p 11). This suggests that the Lambadas have adopted Lord Venkateshwara

of South India as their Lord. Even today, Lambadas visit Lord Venkateshwara in Tirupathi to get their supplications fulfilled.

Hati Ram Baba.

Large sections of the Hindu community, including many along with Lambadas, regard Tirumala Tirupati as a great pilgrimage centre. There is a monastery of Baba Hati Ram, adjacent to the temple of Lord Venkateshwara. Lambadas come to this place every year. According to a myth, Baba Hati Ram was born in the Lambada community. He was an ardent devotee of Lord Ram. Quite often, Lord Venkateshwara and Baba Hati Ram used to play chess in the evenings. During these games, Somasudra would be present. The bet was set for the game whoever will win the game. Lord Venkateshwara purposefully gets himself defeated to please his devotee, Hati Ram. Even today, the Lambada pilgrims stay at Baba Hati Ram monastery and visit Lord Venkateshwara after they visit the monastery. Lambadas also call Lord Venkateshwara as Balaji and perform worship to Balaji after they return from their pilgrimage.

2.5 Rituals of Lambada.

Rituals implies cultural heritage. Cultural rituals are performed by the Lambadas throughout their lives. However, the Lambadas do not recite Vedas hymns during their religious rituals, despite many of them being Hindus also; hardly any priests are involved in these rituals.

Birth Rituals. Earlier, Lambada women used to have their deliveries in the houses of their husbands. As already mentioned, in earlier times, most of the Lambadas used to move from

one place to another place for trading. Even in those days, the women were not allowed to go to their parents' houses. An elderly woman from the community used to be available to help at the time of delivery. A few days before the delivery, the family members would repair the cattle shed, where the delivery would subsequently take place. In earlier times, till the labour pain, the pregnant women used to work in the fields, or do whatever work they are doing. They were not allowed to take rest by their in-laws. As soon as the labour pains started, the woman would be taken to the cattle shed by a midwife, called '*Lomsonil*,' or *davo*. Two to three ladies from the community assisted her during the delivery. If the midwife felt that the woman was ready for the delivery, the midwife would adopt the age old method to give her relief from pains. She would warm the hips and waist of the woman. Another woman would rub the chest. There is strong belief that the heat generated in the body of pregnant women would facilitate an easy delivery. After the child birth, liquor would be offered to the residents of the Thanda.

The community gives a lot of importance to male children. If a male child is born in the house, the head of the family distributes sweets in the Thanda and gives a feast and liquor to the neighbours. If a female child is born, no ceremonies take place and the old ladies of the family think that their fate is not good. And the mother is tortured by her in-laws. And it is also a prestigious issue of the in-laws for not sending their daughters- in-laws to the parents' houses. These days, under the impact of the non-Lambada culture, some of the Lambadas are tending to take their daughters to their homes for the delivery. In such cases, the women are sent to their in-laws homes after completion of 8 months.

Puberty Rituals. Lambada community has no such formalities regarding the celebration of functions. But the girl who attain the age of puberty are not allowed to go out of the

house for five to seven days. She is given food, rich in vitamins, in order to strengthen her. After puberty, most of the girls in the community are allowed to wear their traditional skirts and blouses, which girls should wear before marriage. Sometimes they should wear the half saree (Langa and odni). “The Lambadas living in cities and towns are adapting the culture of ceremonies and arranging function on the eleventh day and inviting their relatives, friends and neighbours. The present day dressing pattern has changed the girls are wearing western dress like chudihars, jeans and T-shirts” (B.Rathord p, 59).

Marriage Ceremony. The present day marriage rituals of the Lambdas are quite different from the ones followed in earlier times. This phenomenon can be attributed to the impact of the Hinduism, or other religions, which the Lambadas have subsequently adopted. Originally, the Lambadas were a nomadic race, who used to move from one place to another groups, consisting of about 10 to 20 families. When the group of people settled in one place, they used to seek marriage proposals for their children within the group itself. Thanda the marriages were mostly arranged by Dhadi Sub caste of Lambada. The traditional system of marriage among the Lambada community was almost within the clan. Marriage within the same gothra has not been permitted, since the Lambadas feel that the boy and girl from the same gothra are like a brother and sister... If anybody marries a person from the same gothra, the couple is kept away from their families.

The marriage rituals of the Lambadas in olden days could be spread over as long as three months. The marriage would be performed by the head of the Thanda (Naik), or an elderly person from the Vaditya clan. There was no involvement of any priests. The marriage in the Lambada community is a long-drawn out process. The earlier system was

for the bride to go to the groom's house for one to three months. In course of time, the period was reduced to nine to eleven days. Now, it is generally for three days. Lambada Banjaras has named different stages as different types of ritual. There are many reasons for such an arrangement. One could be to test the bride's character, or the suitability of the groom.

Most Lambdas practice monogamy. However, there are also a number of instances of polygamous marriages. In the community, there is no restriction on the number of wives a man can have. In earlier times, it was quite common for a man to have two wives. Both the wives had to stay in the same house. The common 'justification' for bigamy was the barrenness of the first wife. There were also cases where a man with a lot of wealth, fields and cattle needed women to take care of his house, cattle and fields. In such cases, the person usually married the sister of his first wife.

Indian scholars are not unanimous about the strength of samskar or cultural heritage. Birth, marriage and death rites are the main heritage of Lambada community. The Lambada give paramount importance to the institution of marriage. On this occasion, the Thandas of Lambadas echoes out with the sounds of folklores and folkdances and feels in the state of ecstasy. All members of this community become part and parcel of every marriage ceremony.

There is a custom of Kanya Shulk, or girl's dowry money like the Arsh marriage in the Lambada community. The Jurymen of the Panchayat prescribe the dowry at the time of the engagement. Five calves are given to the father of the girl after the decision is taken. The father of the girl also gives in return one calf to the girl. This is called 'Dejoo Kalda'

in Lambadi parlance. When the availability of calves becomes an issue, the members of panchayat fix the amount equivalent to five calves. The father of the girl uses some of that money to prepare ornaments for the girl. Sub-caste and clan is specially kept in mind in Lambadi marriages. Marriage is prohibited between a girl and a boy belonging to the same sub-caste or hamlets. Inter-caste marriage is also prohibited among Lambadas.

Inter caste Marriage.

Under this institution, it is imperative to get married in the same clan or caste. A person who marries outside his clan is declared a sinner. All of the inhabitants in Lambadi community socially boycott such a person. From the social point of view, there seem two prominent objectives in intra-caste marriage. Firstly, it ensures that the blood related purity remains intact. Secondly, marriage within the same caste helps in maintaining the customs, traditions, rites, orthodoxies and manner of the clan. According to Manusmriti, 'spouse of the same caste has been praised everywhere'. (Page 103)

The Matrimonial Process.

After the selection of bride and bridegroom, the matrimonial process starts. The process of marriage is initiated in the Lambada community with the ceremony of engagement. It concludes with the ceremony called 'Tangdeen Bhar Kadno'.

Sagae. Engagement is called 'Sagae,' or 'Kaan Sagae'. Engagement amongst Lambadas does not pose much of a monetary problem. That's why Lambada folklores

never worry about the destitute conditions of the fathers of the girls, while arranging the engagement. On the contrary, the elated father arranges the engagement ceremony in a mango garden, or an orchard. Nowadays, this ceremony is also being organized at home. The father serves 'Ghee Polis' (sweet chapatti) to his kith and kin on the auspicious occasion of his daughter's engagement.

'*Kaslat*' i.e. a declaration process under which the intellectuals declare the significance of the panchayat. The Lambadas treat it equal with the court of King Bhoja. This panchayat is organised so that the decision taken thereof may be treated as final. Almost invariably, the name of King Bhoja is invoked. The implication is that today's get together of the kith and kin is like that of the court of King Bhoja. All the participants in the panchayat are pretty well prosperous. Being famous in the world of our genealogy is also eminent. Wherever we go, we receive red carpet reception due to our eminence. As water flows on the surface without any hurdle, similarly we have obtained a very simple and smooth route to pass away from this world. Are the households of the people in this gathering enjoying a healthy and prosperous life? Another person adds that, by the great grace of God, all households of our brothers are perfectly all right.

After completion of the process of engagement, the enmass process of entertainment commences in which Tadi (intoxicating drink made by the essence of palm tree) and marijuana are taken. However, nowadays liquor is being used. On such occasions, "Wagvi Vilas" is celebrated.

This is depicted in the following lines:

Samlar bhai Sagae Re Geeth!
Pench ro Nasab, Raja Bhoja ro Nasab,
Pachere lakh, En Pachare Sava Lakh,
Bhaiyen Segae, Se Pachare Jagowo,
Mein Changawe, Ka- koti Maje Ganga
Godke Taame Gad Kankara, Haweej par aamero Daal,
Asso Maro Sagewalo, Heraj ro Laal,
Kageriche Puri, Mayin che Thuri,
Savajena vecha Purje Hari,
Ghodero Khan Doye Barabar, Sagashan Doye Barabar,
Harri Tupi Ghalojana, acho hansatho ayoMar Sageain,
Asho Sagain Ayo Heera Mare Jahko, Laal Hoye Sagashan.
Jhag Jameer Thasso Naikeru Bahpu,
Passa naike vali xeno, Kochlo Xino Verayo
Choric he sene,
Saga dhino Jhana, Laare Te Kheer,
Se Mitoj Mitrora Naike Bhapu,

Translation

Dear elders of the community! This is our Nasab (panchayat), which is equal to the king Bhoja's court. There will be some time mistaken things which happen with some we

greet each other or not but it does not matter. Our heart should be as big as pound or river how the “Rain drop of water get mixed with the pond and river Ganges”. Each and every community produces good people. Thereafter, both the relatives serve the members of the Panchayat with Tadi and marijuana which is called as stream of milk, according to the Lambadas. After consuming that, they congratulate one another.

Gol Khvano.

The matter of engagement is confirmed among Lambadas, when the Gol Khano (eating of jaggery) process is completed. This process is carried out within six months to one year so that both parties can make arrangements for the marriage. Quite often, the marriage is fixed in this community since childhood and sometimes Bamanya Gol activity is also completed. However, it is not certain that this relation will continue till the end, because of subsequent conflicts and differences, etc.

The proposal of gol khano in this community is offered from the household of the boy and the message is conveyed to the father of the girl. Immediately after receiving the message, the father of the girl consults the chieftain of the Thanda (hamlet) and karbhari (secretary) and conveys the message to the father of the boy for consuming the jaggery. The father of the boy goes to the girl’s house, along with the chieftain of the hamlet and his kith and kin. The boy is also present on the occasion. The Panchayat members, as well as the kith and kin of either side, decide the engagement under the shadow of an enormous tree or a garden and enjoy the ceremony of Jaggery eating.

The father of the bridegroom is called 'Leria'. This term means "person accompanied," i.e., the person to get the boy married. The elderly ones sitting in the row utter term "take Bhang". Every person sitting in the row utters 'The Aag.' According to the rules, jaggery is offered to the elderly persons sitting in the front row. Thereafter, this, along with marijuana or Tadi, is served to all the invitees. The expenditure incurred on this event can be met by either party.

Goler Marijuana

This is the first commodity in Lambada community which signifies the confirmation of the engagement. Bhang (marijuana) has been mentioned seven times in Lambada marriage ceremony. The suggestion is that, according to the Lambadas, the best marijuana is that which is drunk by the Sultan. That is why after having consumed marijuana, the Lambadas do not consider themselves less than the Sultan. The Lambadas give importance to marijuana like the mine of diamond and pearls. A Lambada considers he is not less than a wrestler and possesses the strength to overpower anything before him. In this community it is almost mandatory to consume marijuana, Tadi or liquor. On this occasion, a mention is also made that all those present here are adored like the courtiers of King Bhoj. All the brothers sitting in this assembly are equal to one another. You several times sent communications to my home to attend this function, which was absorbed in the fragrance of musk contained with message of engagement and which was unique in itself. When we were the inhabitants on the mountains then we were far away,

now we have got an identity. Now may our relation continue to be intact like diamond and pearl?

Sakya Pherno.

It is the custom of giving “Sakyar Rupya” at the time of the jaggery eating ritual. ‘Sakya’ means evidence. After the confirmation of engagement, either side give one rupee to each other as a token of evidence, meant for preventing the parents of the boy and girl from getting them engaged to someone else. In case of breach of the agreement, the chieftain of the Thanda may be held responsible and liable to a penalty. Therefore, Sakyar rupiya assumes a lot of importance. If the chieftains of either side are not confident about this engagement, they will not accept this money, nor will they bear witness. It is mandatory for the parents of boy and girl to be faithful to the chieftain of the Thanda.

Kararer Kotla.

The Jurymen prescribe the girl’s dowry money at the time of engagement. It is called “karar” in Lambadi Language. “Karar” is also given to the father of the girl”. “Karar” is a promise between the two fathers to exchange their son and daughter. Therefore, “Kararer Kotlo” means “a purse of promise. Under this process, the Leria amount, on behalf of the bridegroom, is circulated among the people sitting over there and the purse is handed over to a household veteran sitting there. The veteran draws five rupees from the purse in the presence of the jurymen and hands over the amount to the father of the girl. It is said

that whatever the five Jurymen decree is unchangeable and both sides have to accept that. Therefore, the father of the girl accepts whatever is decreed by the jurymen of the Panchayat.

On this occasion, the brother of the girl also gives two rupees to his brother-in-law. This symbolises that both he and his father are agreeable to the engagement. The brother of the girl places a pot of water mingled with red colour and a rupee. It is called “Ranger Rupee”. Red colour is a symbol of love and lust. It also manifests enthusiasm and elation at the newly established relations.

Sadi Ceremony.

This is a very auspicious celebration in the boy’s household. This celebration is called ‘Sadi Tanno’ in Lambadi dialect. For this event, the Lambadas organise a number of folkdances. The music of the small hand drums and trumpets echoes all around. All present get engrossed in the rhythm of folklores. Even the old attendees get very much enthusiastic on this occasion. Sadi ceremony is a source of utmost pleasure to the Lambadas. This ceremony is held at the household of the girl two days prior to the departure of the marriage party. For this event, all relatives and Thanda inmates are invited for the treat, known as ‘Tello’ by the Lambadas.

Vadaee.

After the conclusion of worship to Kalash, the Vadaee rite starts. The bridegroom is made to sit in front of the Kalash and given 'Agan Dagh'. During this process, a person heats the needle in the light of a lamp and with the hot needle, the persons scalds the right hand of the bridegroom. This process is called 'Agan Dag Deno' in Lambadi dialect and with the same needle, a hole is made in the right ear of the bridegroom and he is made to wear a golden or a copper ring in that ear. Vadaee sounds like the Hindi term 'Badhaee,' which means congratulations. Vadaee rite is held for continuation of the lineage.

On this auspicious occasion, the sister of the bridegroom applies a Tilak of kumkum on his forehead and performs the rites of 'Artee' for him. Thereafter, all those present worship the God and Goddess together. During this event, Prasad of Guru Baba, known as Churmo Vatno, 'is also distributed. It is made with bread, jaggery, milk and cardamom, etc. The matrimonial folklores originate with the custom of Vadaee. The folklores on this occasion are prominently about the clan deity, folk deity and clan mentor, etc. These include the following:

Song

<i>Koli Aave! Koli Jave!</i>
<i>Dhologhodo! Hanslo!</i>
<i>Patlya Asavar!</i>
<i>Choraru tehvarche!</i>
<i>Kovali kattar cha!</i>

<i>Tali athara bancha!</i>
<i>Munge athra verche!</i>
<i>Munge Phallise anghali!</i>
<i>Gour Saiba sada, sada!</i>

Meaning

The Clan comes and goes

Goodness will flourish in the clan

You have a beautiful bow

And a smart arrow

Baba's blessing will be on you forever.

After the custom of Vadaee is observed, the sisters of the bridegroom adorn him with dress, etc. The adorned bridegroom worships his clan Gods and Goddesses. After worship, the process gets completed and the bridegroom is taken out of the house. This process is called Vetdoon Bar Kadno. During the event, two men stand outside the house by holding both sides of a saree in an elevated way. Under the shadow of the saree, the Vetdoo walks slowly and the retinue of singing women follows him. The next core of the saree is in the veranda of the home. The Vetdoo keeps standing on that spot smeared with cow dung.

The process to get the bridegroom out of the home under the shadow of saree is called 'Sari Tanvo'. The bridegroom is forbidden to re-enter the home once he comes out from it. The bride and bridegroom enter the home together after they get married.

One can witness such a peculiar situation as is seen nowhere in other Hindu communities after the bridegroom comes out of the home on this happy occasion of marriage. When bridegroom touches the feet of elders, his mother and sisters embrace him and lament. While lamenting, they recall his deceased father or brother and state if they been alive, they also would have participated in your marriage. However, their untimely demise has snatched them from us. This pathetic scenario makes all those present weep. To get the bridegroom out of this gloomy atmosphere, he is made to sit in the eastern direction. The Leria also sits in the eastern direction, along with bridegroom. People from another sub caste ask about their welfare to reduce their sorrow while serving them water.

Departure of the Marriage Party.

The marriage party sets out for the home of the girl after one or two days. It departs towards the eastern direction and stops at a small distance. A shawl is laid thereupon and a Rupee coin is placed on it. Then five married men lift the shawl and tie the Rupee with the core of shawl. The boy and the girl move round and round the sacred fire, wearing that very shawl. This Rupee is called 'Heler Rupee'. This Rupee is given as the fees of marriage.

Reception of the Marriage Party.

Like other communities of India, the Banjara bridegroom is also given a warm reception, when he along with marriage party, reach the girl's home. This process is called "Vetdoon Gharem Leno".

After reaching near the girl's Thanda, the members of marriage party wait for a little while. Thereafter, the Karbari (Secretary) conveys the news of the arrival of the marriage party to the chieftain and Karbari of the Thanda and offer them hubble-bubble, with the request to take the bridegroom home.

If there is any hot exchange between the two parties, the chieftain does not accept the hubble-bubble until they settle their conflict. In such circumstances, the intelligent Leria persuade the kith and kin with the smart tactics with the offer of liquor or tadi so as to prepare them for reception and permission might be accorded to bridegroom to proceed to the bride's home.

As soon as chieftain accepts the hubble-bubble, the Karbhari (Secretary) mobilises the males and females of the Thanda. The inmates of the Thanda approach to receive the marriage party along with a virgin with a water filled pot on her head. The mother of the girl does not participate in this event. When the bride reaches the bridegroom's home, the Leria distributes 'Moe' amongst the residents of the Thanda.

The bridegroom gets this 'Moe' prepared at his home. 'Moe' is made of rice flour, ghee, jaggery or sugar and cardamom. At this time, the fathers of the bride and bridegroom feed the sweet to each other as a sign of mutual congratulations.

The females react on distributing the poor quality 'Moe' and state that the Moe is dry and it does not taste good because the ingredients of Moe were not prepared by the mother of bridegroom.

'Kotlo' is placed inside the house after the distribution of 'Moe'. This process is called 'Kotlo Gharem Leni' by the Banjaras. To take the kotlo inside the home means that father-in-law has granted permission to the bridegroom to enter the home. In this manner, the reception process concludes.

Ghota Kadhno.

After the bridegroom, along with marriage party, reaches the bride's home and before the marriage process begins the 'Ghota' process starts. This is called 'Ghota Kadnu,' i.e., to feed the inmates of the Thanda with ghota before the marriage ceremony begins. Ghota is a sort of liquid prepared in an earthen pitcher with black pepper, opium seeds, jaiphal and minced jaggery. They inform the inmates of the Thanda to inform the family members of the bridegroom to serve Ghota to them. On this occasion, Seendhi is also served along with the Ghota. This is called ghotar Ban Bhand (marijuana) by Lambadas.

Tello.

This term means a common treat to all and sundry. The common treat is served twice during the ceremony of marriage in the Lambada community. First, it is on the occasion of Sadi ceremony at the home of the bridegroom. The second is at the home of the bride. This celebration is held for the residents of Thanda by the father of the bride on the day following the Ghota. Dr. Yashwant Jadhava has written in this regard Lambadas exchange riddles on this occasion. A woman refers to the plates to be served for men, sitting in rows, their drinking pots, stools, turbans, and soap.

Teeko Deno.

The brother of the bride applies a turmeric mark on her forehead. This is called 'Teeko Deno' by the Lambadas. The 'Teeko' is applied by the brother of the bride on behalf of the bridegroom. The turmeric is brought from the bridegroom's home who is rubbed on stone by the brother in front of his sister sitting in marriage tent. Thereafter, he applies a 'Teeka' on the cheek of his sister on behalf of the bridegroom. This is treated as applying the sindoor. On this occasion, she says, O! My brother! Why you are applying a Teeka on behalf of a stranger?

O! Brother! Don't make me deserted from my father home and don't make your beloved sister secluded O! My dear brother!

Mahendi Laganno.

For this event, leaves of myrtle are brought forth. These leaves are ground to paste only by virgins. The Leria gives one and quarter rupee to the girls for grinding the myrtle. The girls sing a satirical song on this occasion:

Mahendi Piti- Pisiye Kuvaar Kaniya!

Jaraa varethi Deko Re Lokdaniya!

Kaane Mai Sonner Kaniya!

Vone Dekan Aayoch Lokdaniya!

Translation

Unmarried Girls come together and grind the Mahendi!

Please watch the ceremony from away from the Girls Gathering!

Wore the golden rings on Ears!

To see the ceremony whole Thanda people have gathered!

The bride and bridegroom are made to sit inside the tent and apply myrtle on each other.

The Lambadas perform such marriage-related rites on a moonlit night.

Vayar Hangoli.

There is a custom in Lambada community to make the bride and bridegroom bathe publicly. Such sort of bath is called 'Vayar Hangoli'. First of all, females make the bride bathe and then make her sing also. On this occasion, the bride beseeches her father to get her a sandalwood stool so that she could have a bath.

After the bride takes bath, the bridegroom is bathed by the males.

Vetdoor Hangoli.

In the public bath, the bridegroom get ready to climb the elevated spot in the tent, the boys and girls prevent him from reaching the elevated spot. This has been express in a song in which the old women warn the bridegroom that there are a number of brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law standing outside. So you are supposed to tie up your dhoti properly before you climb the elevated spot and head for bath carefully.

After a few skirmishes when the bridegroom reaches the elevated spot for the bath, the old woman tells him to sit down. It is mention worthy until he is said to sit down, he does not. When he sits on the elevated place, the males make him bathe. This very process is called vetadoor Hangoli.

The public bath for the bridegroom indicates a high sense of humour. On this occasion, the bridegroom is subjected to a lot of teasing. The sister-in-laws of the bridegroom also mention the same in the above mentioned song. They say that the bridegroom has no

ears, and his long knees are very much awkward. They just poke fun at him. Dr.Yashwant Jadhava observes about this episode. “The sister-in-laws always do their best to tease the bridegroom to the maximum extent. Sometimes, they pour a pitcher filled with hot water and sometimes chilled water on the bridegroom. Sometimes, the bridegroom is submerged in mud. The sister-in-law is bent on knocking down the bridegroom while bathing and rubbing him. These activities can be borne only by a robust and well build man. It seems that bridegroom is required not only to be strong, but also cool minded so as to bear all these ribbings with patience.

A song mentions that the sister-in-laws laugh at bridegroom when he falls down. They add he was being served nutritious meals for the last six months. He was fed with ghee, milk cake, and delicious bread of wheat with chicken, In spite of this, you fall down badly.

Choteer Pani Peeno.

On this occasion, the mother of the bride groom drinks water which is poured down on her daughter’s areal. In this process, she keeps on combing the areal and rinses it seven times and ultimately she also drinks up a little bit water. This process is expressed in the following song sung by the females:

Song

Pelaye yaadi,Naale yaadi,Naralero Pani !

Phar koni Male Yaadi Naralero Pani!

Pideya per Beti Jana chene Tahre Beti
Veya me beto Jana, chene tharu baap!
Kuvari vathi jana chene thari beti,
Pelaye yaadi, Naale yaadi, Naralero Pani!
Phar koni Male Yaadi Naralero Pani!

Translation

O! Mother drinks coconut water and eat!
O! Mother you want the coconut water again!
Bride is sitting in the marriage, now she is not your daughter,
When she was small, she was your daughter,
O! Mother drinks coconut water and eat!
O! Mother, you want the coconut water again !
Vetdoon Sota Marno.

In this ritual, the sister-in-law of the bride strikes on the shoulder of the bridegroom with a pestle (sota) seven times.

Dosakya Phodno. The brother and sister-in-laws standing nearby the bath place challenge the bridegroom to break the ‘Cheepa’ (an earthen pot) only by one kick. A count is kept of the number of times he misses the shot. Through this process, the weakness of bridegroom is found out. So, the bridegroom tries to break the cheepa only

by one strike. The bridegroom breaks three cheepas in this process. The Lambadas call this process as 'Dosakya Phodno'.

Kanen Kankra Dabno.

In this ritual, the bride's brother places pebbles on either ears of the bridegroom and presses. Through this process the bride's brother make the bridegroom understand that he will never tease the bride, respect the elders and obey the parents, etc. If the bridegroom does not respond instantly for these questions, the bride's brother presses the pebbles more vehemently. Ultimately, bridegroom accepts these advices.

Doran Bandhno –Chhodno.

The bath ceremony is very significant for the Lambadas. After the bath, the bride and bridegroom are made to sit on an elevated place in the tent with wet clothes. Around them, an earthen pot, with 'Chromo,' is placed. Near these earthen pots, the married couples tie the bride and bridegroom seven times with cotton thread and make a necklace through that. This very thread necklace is called "Doran". Seven knots are made on "Dhoran" (Thread) and worn by the bride and bridegroom. Thereafter, both of them are directed to place their hands on the Dhorans. This is called "Doran Bandhno".

The bride and bridegroom are bathed the following day in the same manner. Thereafter, the seven knots of the Dhoran worn and tied on the first day are taken out very carefully as Dhoran is made of feeble thread which is prone to be broken. Breakage of Dhoran is

regarded as a bad Omen. Thereafter, the Dhoran is released very cautiously. It is called “Dhoran Chhorno”. That’s to say Dhoran will not give place tied by the hands of your father. O! Daughter! You keep sitting with all your restraints. All the inmates of Thanda who had participated in the bath ceremony have gone away.

After having given up Dhoran, all the males and females set out from there. After they go, the bride and bridegroom bathe again, but separately. It is called ‘choreer hangoli’ by Lambadas since this bath is not taken publicly. In the last for saving the bride and bridegroom from evil glance, the same is removed from rice and kumkum, etc. The task is performed by the children. This process is called ‘chawal varno’.

Phera Pharno.

This means seven rounds of marriage. The sister of the bridegroom sings a song which says O! Brother! You are supposed to accept the proposal put up by bride’s father through the Panchayat for seven matrimonial rounds. Anyhow, if they extend the date of marriage, even then you are required to accept the proposal. It may be possible, avert the date of today for tomorrow.

Through this song, the sister of the bridegroom entreats him not to hurry to take seven matrimonial rounds. She pleads with her brother to adjourn the date of seven rounds. She says that his trading brother in Marwar is very intelligent. He even knows everything about the land of moon. His sister can recognise him even amongst the crowd of twenty five thousand by his footsteps. While referring to the close relations between her brother

and her, she utters in a resented tone that he should not expedite matrimonial relations, otherwise she will be held responsible to repay the debt to his father.

Four ditches are excavated on the four corners of the marriage tent at the house of the bride before they take seven rounds. In every ditch, paise are placed. Thereafter, earthen pots are put over there. These earthen pots are baptised too and they are put one upon another. First of all Doskya, upon that Handi, their Kaldiya and in the end, Kaldi is placed. These Handis are placed on four corners and they are covered with green branches of oak and dhak leaves.

At this time pestles are erected among the four Handis (mud pots) at a distance of five feet. It is known as ‘Vayar Sota’ in Lambada parlance. Pestles are tied with ‘Mendal’ (stick). Before the pestles are hammered in the tent, some cowries, Bhilanwan and one rupee is placed in the ditches. The Lambadas believe that this process will protect the bride and bridegroom from the evil eye and witchcraft.

The girl friends lead the bride to the tent. After the bride reaches the tent cowries, beetle nut and a ‘Heler’ Rupiya (money) are placed on her right palm, the same is placed on the right hand of bridegroom. Thereafter, the process of seven matrimonial rounds starts. Even after seven matrimonial rounds, the bridegroom leads the bride. These seven matrimonial rounds are carried out round the four erected pestles in the tent. First of all, the bride and bridegroom take four rounds of the pestle, i.e., they revolve total seven times. In the first four matrimonial rounds, the wife of bride’s brother also accompanies her and another three matrimonial rounds, are taken exclusively by the bride and bridegroom. For the Lambada community, these seven matrimonial rounds are of great

importance. The Lambada community imparts the status of spouses after they take the seven matrimonial rounds.

At this stage, the bride bursts into tears and sings the following song:

Yaadi Ye, Aa hiyaa!
Chanda suryari Jodi Ju
Maa-Betiri Jodi!
Kidi Mungi Supati Ju Thari,
Beti Koni Sapathi!
Limbu Je Naral Vakajav Ju Thamati
Beti Thak Chali Yaadi....
Aa hiyaa!

Translation:

Mother! Oh Mother

Pair is like Moon and Sun

Pair of Mother - daughter

Ant and group like yours

Daughter you're so missing

Daughter you're going like Lime and Coconut

Daughter you're going..Going...

Mother! Oh Mother!

Kolia Khano.

After the seven matrimonial rounds, the Kolia Khano rite is performed. For this event, the bride's sister-in-law makes the bride and bridegroom sit in a lonely room of the house face to face and serves them 'Lapsi' (pudding) made of bread, Jaggery and ghee and bolts the door from outside for a while. The bride and bridegroom feed each other Lapsi. Such sort of eating is called 'Kolia Khano'.

Mand Ramno. This game is full of fun and humour. In this, the bride and bridegroom are made to sit face to face and a wooden bowl is placed between them. The bowl is filled up with rice soup. The contest is about who will catch the cowrie, beetle nut and one rupee from the rice soup. The bride and bridegroom compete to search out the items from the rice soup. The bride's brothers and sisters strike on the hands of bridegroom with the branches of oak and dhak (Peepal) so as to defeat him. In this way, these paraphernalia is cast into wooden bowl seven times. This process is called 'Mand Ramno'. In the end, the bride and bridegroom pour the rice soup on each other.

Ghota. The bridegroom invites all the residents of the bride's Thanda for the treat of marriage. This treat is meant for all and sundry. The Leria provides a goat and liquor to the Thanda residents. On this occasion, a goat is sacrificed to Goddess Mariyama and she is offered its kidney exclusively. Thereafter, a small portion of mutton and liquor is distributed to all residents of the Thanda. On this occasion, every household of the Thanda gives some money to the bride. This money is received by the father of the bride. This process is called "Ghota" by Lambadas.

Chudo Tipno. It is a ceremony of presenting the ornament, a small silver strip, brought by the bridegroom's side, to the bride. The bride wears it above her elbow. This process is called "Chudo Tipno". Bangle, ghugri and topli attribute to the married life of Lambadas. At this time, the bride sings a song, which says,

O my mother! Don't make me wear these ornaments; because I shall be secluded from you, am I wearing these. So, return the ornaments which have been brought over here. Don't make me secluded by adorning me from these ornaments.

Dhavlo.

The girl is taught Dhavlos (episodic songs) on the occasion of the marriage. Such songs are called "Dhavlo." The female Lambadas recite this song in a very rhythmic accent. Learning "Dhavlo" is a must for the married female Lambadas. The bride, on meeting her parents, brothers, sisters, friends and kinsmen, express her sorrows to them through the Dhavlo songs. Therefore, the bride learns and sings these songs during the process of marriage. These songs manifest the deep sense of affection.

Before the bride's departure, she sings the following song:

"Range navajoo-naviyoo
Roop tapaju-tapiya
Sooyire naake maayeethi nikalyoo
Thobi tamari aakimaa koni aayedoo
Maare naayeke baapu-hi-haa!"

Source: Smt Shabavat Naji Bai, an elderly female Lambada of the Thanda.

Meaning of the song

“I will be flexible and delicate like thread and obey my in-laws, like the way silver is moulded to bend when the ornaments are made. I will never do wrong things” In the song, she also says,

“The fisherman has thrown her net into the clean water of specious pond in which small and big many more fish have been trapped. Similarly, your daughter has been trapped into the net thrown by a stranger.”

She adds that like vegetables, she has been sold to a stranger. She further says if she was a cowry and would have been adjusted in one of the holes in her house but what to do? The rules and regulations of the society are like it.

Narvaleen bar Kadno. At the time of departure, the veranda of the house is full of the kinsmen and residents of the Thanda and the bride keep sitting among them shedding tears. When her brothers, natural uncles, etc., take her out of the house, she catches the cord firmly tied there and requests them not to take her out. With great difficulty, when her brothers, etc., forcibly set her free from the grip of cord, she makes seven knots on the cord. This cord is called “Kasna”.

The Lambadas believe that after bride ties the knots on the cord, she changes her intention. Thereafter, the Kinsmen take her out while consoling her. This very process is called “Narvaleen” Bar Kadno”. At this moment, she expresses her sorrow in a Dhavlo song. She embraces all her Kinsmen and shares her sorrows through Dhavlo song. This Dhavlo song is called “Malno”.

After the bride comes out of the house, she beholds a simple ox tied with a tag. It is called “Dolia”. The bride ride on this ox in a standing posture and showers praises on her parental home. First of all, she reveals her grief to the Dolia through Dhavlo song in which she mentions that she faced no scarcity of anything in the mansion of his Naik father during her virgin life. The Gurhal, Anjeer and Margosa trees have their own respective qualities. The Gurhal tree expands all around to the greater extent and the shade of the Margosa tree is very much health oriented and cold. Therefore, the bride desires that her father’s mansion must have the qualities of these three trees. She also longs for a pleasant atmosphere in her father’s mansion. Whenever she visits the mansion of her father, it must be flourishing with all the pleasures.

Another, song on the subject of Haveli is sung in the following manner:

Yaadi ye –Kana dehko, Jana mare Baapu re madagee!

Hari bhari rese a madagee ah-yaane,

Mane mare baapu re madagee dhur mathe karoj ye yaadi

Ah-yaaha!

Through this song, she states that the glory of my father’s mansion is great and glamorous and I don’t want to be deprived from the pleasures of this mansion because I shall miss it every day. It is a very strange tradition in Lambadas that the bride blesses her father’s house when she departs.

The bride says to her father while shedding tears that he never allowed her stay more than 8 to 15 days on her visit to her kinsfolk. She adds that her father never put up with her

absence for long and got his beloved daughter back. She cries and says why she is being sent with a stranger forever.

At this, the father consoles her and reminds her of duties. The daughter assures her father that she will behave politely with youngsters and elders in her in-laws' house. She will treat them with flexibility. She will face all difficulties dauntlessly. She will bear all sorts of crisis, but never let her father face any embarrassment. She will always try to keep her father's self respect intact. She will store her father's teachings in her mind for ever.

The bride's mother says to her son-in-law, with tears in her eyes, that since her daughter is very small and innocent, she may tend to commit mistakes. Now, you are all-in-all to her. You make her understand and accommodate her in your sea like heart.

At the time of departure, the sister says to her brother that she never made him apart from her. However, today he is keeping her aloof due to the social obligations. However, don't forget me on the occasions of festivals and come to me if you have to cross any difficult terrain. Treat 100 miles way as one mile and if you have to cross seven seas, do that and come to your sister without delay.

Tangri Jano.

The bag made of jute to keep the clothes of the bride is called "Tangdi". When the bride sets out for the house of bridegroom by sitting in ox-cart or sedan, the Tangdi is sent with her. This is called "Tangri Jano". Now, there has been some change, they have begun to

give iron box instead of jute made bag. However, there is no change in its name. It is always called only “Tangdi”.

At the time of departure, the bride requests her mothers in Thanda through a Dhavlo song to accompany her for a little distance. In the songs she says that her mother has abandoned her on the zig-zag paths of jungles and rivers and now they are going back. The bride also mentions about the other Thanda on her way and its elderly female inmates. She insists on them to accompany her for a while. At this, the girl friends of the bride console her. On its way to the bridegroom home, the inmates of different Thandas serve water to the marriage party. The marriage party stays overnight at the bridegroom place. Thereafter, they set out for their respective houses. This process is called “Tangdi Wal Hoto Jano” that is to say the members of the marriage party go back to their respective houses.

The females in Lambadas do not participate in the initial rites; however, they are allowed to exercise every rite of marriage after they perform “Sari Samskar”. Along with the entry of women, the folksongs of Lambadas also start. Without folksongs, no Lambada rite is complete. These songs to be sung on the occasion of Sadi Samskar and during the complete process of marriage hold a very important place. ‘Arranged’ marriage is given more importance in Lambada community. The Lambadas are well aware that marriage is a must for exercising self restraint, getting progeny and perform duties related to religion.

Puberty Ritual

The Lambada community has no such formalities regarding the celebration of functions. But the girl who attains the age of puberty are not allowed to go out of the house for five to seven days. And they are given food, rich in vitamins, in order to make her strong. After puberty, girls in the community are allowed to wear Lehanga (skirt) and blouse and sometimes they should wear the half saree (Langa and odni). The Lambadas living in cities and towns are adapting the culture of ceremonies and arranging function on the eleventh day and inviting their relatives, friends and neighbours. The present day dressing pattern has changed and the girls are wearing western dress like chudidars, jeans and T-shirts as 'mentioned earlier in the chapter'.

Widow Marriage.

In a very significant departure from the mainstream Hindu society, where widows tend to be treated with disdain and regarded as bad omens, in the Lambada community, widow remarriage is permitted. A widow is allowed to marry the younger brother of her late husband, or some other male relative. However, marriage with the elder brother is regarded as sinful. Remarriage outside the immediate family is also permitted. However, if a widow marries an outsider, she is required to pay some amount as bribe to her ex-mother in law. This amount is decided by the Nasab (Panchayat). Once this amount is paid, the widow is regarded as a virgin. During the widow marriage ceremony, the pair is made to sit on opposite sides and feed each other cooked rice and jaggery.

Divorce System in the Lambadas

In the Lambada community, the divorce system is decided in the Panchayat (Nasaab). Most of the cases are decided on the grounds of infidelity of the partners, or marital discord. This issue is referred in the panchayat and whoever is interested to take divorce is asked to pay some money to the other party and also bear the expenditure of the Panchayat. It is decided by the Naik, Karbhari and elder people of the community. The separation of the couple is treated as 'full and final' by breaking a piece of straw before the Panchayat.

Death Rituals.

In Lambada Thandas, there are separate death rituals for the unmarried and married persons. Unmarried persons are buried and married ones are cremated. Before the cremation, a knot is tied with a tamarind stick to the body of the deceased and a symbolic marriage ceremony for that person is performed. When a death occurs, all relatives and friends are informed. Thereafter money is collected from the relatives and the residents of the Thanda to meet the expenses for the death rituals. After giving a bath to the dead, they place garlands and flowers on the body, which is then placed on a *Doli* or a Ghat. The body is then taken for burial or cremation. There is no separate cremation ground for the Lambadas. They complete the process in their own land or fields. The eldest son of the deceased has to put fire to dead body, and he also gives taccho (touching with long stick) to the dead body's head. This symbolises that the eldest son will look after the family.

“Thereafter, the funeral party takes bath near a well or lake and returns to the Thanda. The party does not take the same path through which it had come. It follows a different route, which may even be a zig-zag one. The intention behind such a practice is to mislead the spirit of the dead person” (C.J. Padamaja, Thesis, p,56). Again, money is collected from the relatives and residents of the Thanda to sacrifice a goat and purchase liquor. Liquor is distributed amongst all the community. All the people of Thanda go to the residence of the deceased. The people from same (sub gotra) *pallawadiya or gothwada* stand in a row in front of the residence and one person pours water on their legs before they all sit down. The Thanda Naik or Karbhari tells the elder person to take care of family. The food is served in a big plate. Everybody is allowed to eat meals brought by persons of other sub castes people, because food is not cooked that day in the house of the deceased.

The Lambadas observe a death ritual, known as *dado*, on the third day. For this ceremony, the family of the deceased prepares food for the people of the Thanda. In case the family is very poor, *churmo*, made of rice, atta roti, and jiggery, is prepared. On this day, five persons go early in the morning to the cremation place or burial place with milk and food, to search for signs at the cremation or burial site. The Lambadas believe that, if there are animal foot prints at cremation place, the dead has become God or his /her soul gone to heaven. However, if human footprints are observed, they think that the dead soul will be roaming on the earth and he or she might have become a ghost. The people who come to console the relatives of the deceased are called as Dhal.

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