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Lambadas have a unique culture of their own. Their customs, traditions, language, food and dress habits, in short, their life style is unique which does not have anything in common either with the population of plain areas or with the local tribes who are popular as Lambadi or Banjara or Sugali in different parts of Deccan. The Lambadas have their own language as "Gorer-wath" or "Gor-boli" and it closely resembles the North Indian languages like Marwari, Hindi, Punjabi, Gujarathi, Rajasthani, and Sanskrit in both accent and words. However, due to cultural contact with the surrounding Telugu people, they have become bilingual and can speak Telugu fluently⁵.

The settlements i.e., Thandas or Bidikis, of the Lambadas are a cluster of rude huts and are isolated at some distance from the main village. The settlements are mostly pitched on high ground affording vantage for renaissance in predatory excursions. The hills settlements of the Lambada provide a peculiar setting from the point view of natural vegetation and topography⁶.

In the past they were nomads moving from one place to another, and naturally used to settle outside the main village where they could find plenty of space to keep their cattle and exclusiveness to carry on their activities without any hindrance from outsiders. Even after, they had properly settled leaving behind their settlements outside the main villages.

Dress pattern and Ornaments

The traditional dress pattern of Lambadas is supposed to be one of the distinctive identify mark of the community. The women wear a peculiar dress, consisting of a red gown with numerous glass pieces and couries stitched on it. They wear coloured blouse or jacket called Kanchidi which covers the upper part of their body leaving the back part exposed. The skirt that the Lambadi women wear is short and reaches only upto the ankles. It exposes all the ornaments of the leg. Sometimes they cover their back with a red coloured cotton cloth called Choutia⁷.

The men usually wear a mill-made shirt or handloom cloth, a dhoti and a turban on their head. Though they prefer to wear red turbans,

they also adhere to wear black or white stripe turbans. They wear dhoti above their knees. They believe that red colour is very auspicious for them. During special visits elderly men wear an over-coat. Most of the men wear footwear made locally by a cobbler, which are cheap and durable⁸.

Their ornaments are so singularly chosen that the women who have had eight or ten pounds weight in metal or ivory round their arms and legs. The favorite ornaments appear to be rings of ivory from the wrist to the shoulder, regularly increasing in size, so that the ring near the shoulder will be immoderately large, sixteen or eighteen inches, or more perhaps in circumference. These rings are sometimes dyed red. Silver, lead, copper or brass, in ponderous bars, encircled their shins, sometimes round, others in the form of festoons. A kind of stomacher, with holes for the arms, and tied behind at the bottom, covers their breast, and has some strings of cowries, depending behind, dangling at their backs. They wear likewise earrings, necklaces, rings on the fingers and toes. The hair is worn in ringlets or plaits hanging down each side of the face, and decorated with shells and terminating in tassels. The Lambada women use various ornaments to decorate their hair. They commonly used ghugri, a silver ornament, is used by all Lambada women. It is an ornament hanging from a silver lace, which is clipped on two sides of the hair. The silver beads hang from ghugri touch their cheek. This ornament is exclusively meant for married women and it indicates their material status. The women use both Bhuria and Phlula as their nose ornaments. Bhuria is a ring shaped ornament worn on right side of the nose. It is very popular among Lambada women. Phlula is a small pin like ornament worn on right side of the nose. Wanke, it is made up of silver or brass with various designs. Only married women are allowed to wear this one, Har is a necklace made of coins of different denominations, Hasla, a typical necklace kind of ornament with no restrictions to wear among married and un married, Moterabalia is another ornament to wear by women on their wrists and it is made of horns and Khas, Ghode, Wankado, Toering, Kunica, Gazera and Kusotia are the various forms of anklets worn by Lambada women. They wear heavy cumbersome ornaments and the jewels are

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LAMBADAS AND DHAVALO¹: THE PICTURESQUE TRIBE AND UNIQUE CULTURE OF TELANGANA

Venkateswara Rao Telluri & Gattigunde Venkaiah

Lambadas are of North-west Indian origin, which lived primarily by their earnings from transportation on the pack bullocks. There is evidence to show that they supplied food grains etc. to the Moghuls when they invaded the Deccan. However, there is some dispute about the nature of their Moghul connection. Whether they accompanied the Moghuls as an ordinance corps in the conquest of the Deccan and some of them later stayed back to continue trade or whether they were already present as traders, having come in an earlier period, and assisted the Moghuls when the latter came south.

The Lambadas are known by 27 names all over the country. These include Banjara or Banjari, Boipari, Laman, Lambani, Sugali, Sukali and Lambadi, which is said to have originated from another name Laman or Labhan.

Lambada is declared as a scheduled tribe in Andhra area according to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes lists modification order, 1956 as "Sugali" and as de-notified Tribe in Telangana area of Andhra Pradesh. They are also found in other states like Bihar, West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh, etc.

Traditionally, the Lambadas is a semi-nomadic pastoral tribe about whom the present study is concerned. The Lambada seems to have been one of ancient tribes of India and their name is found in old Sanskrit work like 'Dasakumara Charitha' written by "Dandi" who live between 11th and 12th centuries³. We found same cultural traits among Lambadas, Gurjaras, Marwadas and Rajputs and come to a conclusion that all these races had their origin from one common race. These are having or a similarities among these races. Culturally Rathods, Chowhans and Paramaras were very close to Marwadas, Gurjaras and Lambadas. There is no doubt to lie that all these tribes originated from one race.

The Lambadas of Telangana were always in the picture even during the time of Nizam's armies and they were more known in Telangana due to their criminal activities. It must have been a boon to those who availed their services to have a band of mobile merchants especially when the roads were not developed and the other modern means of transport were not known. The

numerous which include glass, beads and mirror bits. In addition to these the married women wear horn or ivory bangles between the elbow and wrists. They prefer red, green and yellow coloured cloth for their gown. They pay little attention to cleanliness, their hair, once plaited, is not combed or opened perhaps for a month, their bodies or clothes are seldom washed, their arms are indeed so encased with irony that it would be no easy matter to clean them⁹.

Lambadi ornaments are too heavy and are well designed. Lambadi women do not hesitate to wear and they never look tired by wearing these heavy and varied ornaments.

Religious practices

The Lambadas celebrate some Hindu festivals such as Sankranthi, Sivarathri, Ugadi, Sri Ramanavami, Deepavali, Rakhi, Dassera and Vinayakashavithi. The important traditional festivals are Teej, Seethals and Tulja Bhavani and they regularly celebrate them. Tulja Bhavani is another female deity propitiated annually by the Lambadas for their child protection. Unlike other festivals, Tulja is festival of sacrifices for the Lambadas. Silver image of a female representing the Tulja Bhavani and seated in 'Tailor fashion' fix any Tuesday in the month of Karthika according to their convenience. The head of the family who perform the rites has to observe certain taboos. He should not eat food and should not even drink water till sun-set on the festival day¹⁰.

One more colourful ritual of Lambadas is Teej, celebrating in the cool month of Sravana (July). When the monsoon rains drench the parched earth the Lambadas celebrates the fertility festival of Teej. The elaborate ritual is performed with utmost religiously spread over nine days with vigorous ritual dances performed to the tune of melodious religious songs. D.R. Pratap writes that 'this festival of fertility is exclusively the festival of maidens, who are considered to be free from pollutions of birth and other unclean sexual activities. The married men, women and widows are tabooed from performing rites during the celebration of Teej¹¹.

Seetla is another important female deity whose ceremony performed in the month of

Ashada (June). This festival may also be called 'festival of sacrifices and free flow of blood'. The Lambadas believe that Seetala, the eldest of the alignment seven sister deities like Tulja, Jalpa, Hingla, Masuri, Amba and Daullamgar, who is believed to control endemic diseases, alone protects their cattle. In addition to these non-traditional festivals, they also celebrate their favourite festival of Holi (Kamuni Panduga) with much pomp and joy. For better enjoyment of the festival the Lambadi women go to neighbouring villages and towns and collect money by display of their traditional dances and singing carols. The amount they collect spent for the exclusive celebration of the festival¹².

Dhavallo

On occasions like marriage and death Lambada women give vent to their emotion through wailing. This is a systematic science of weeping that is being followed by Lambadas from time immemorial, but unknown among other people. This is very interesting and outstanding. In Lambada language, it is called 'Dhavallo', which means a kind of training given at the time of marriage to a Lambada Navaleri (bride). She is taught special modes of weeping to be followed on different occasions during her married life. Some elderly women of Lambadas impart this training¹³.

'Dhavallo' are three modes of expressing pathos. They are, Expression of Sorrow, Expression of Prayer and Expression of brides vow.

1. Expression of Sorrow:

YE YA KOONA PAALO, KOONA PASOO.
KOONA BHOGA SAKARAJ- HI-YA!
YEYA YADI PALI BAPA POSO
SASU BHOGA SAKARAJ ETC.

Meaning: Oh mother, tell me who nursed me, who protected me and who is enjoying my services? Oh mother, my mother nursed me, my father protected me and my mother-in-law will enjoy happy reign...! This wailing is done on the occasion of the bride departing from her parents¹⁴.