

Lambada Songs of Sweat and Toil : A Sociological Study

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Abstract: *The present study discusses of the Lambada Songs, Lambadas are of north-west Indian origin, which they used to live in the forest by their earnings form transportation on the pack of bullocks. The Banjara seva sangh estimates that there are some 5 million lambadas in India, divided into 17 sub-groups in different states, and are known by at least 27 different names, all of them have same culture and language. The Lambada dialect is predominantly a mixture of Sanskrit, Rajasthani, Marathi, Gujarati and Hindi and bears the influence of local language they live in small settlements each referred to as a “Thanda” one important feature about the Lambada tribe is unlike all other tribes which are spread only in some districts or some states the Lambada aRe found in nearly all the states of India. Lambadas are treated as scheduled tribes in some states, scheduled caste in certain other states denotefied tribes in some states. In states for instance in Telangana Lambadas in the earlier they were recognized as denotified tribes. There is some evidence in the history that they supplied food grains to the Moguls when they invaded the Deccan however there is some dispute about the nature of their connection of moguls. They were forced by the compulsions of trade, was continuously on the move this probably helped them to preserve its only form of wealth, cattle from localized draughts. In order to protect their cattle from drought, they moved in search of food and subsequently took to trade. This was initially a subsidiary means of livelihood.*

Key Words: *Lambada, Songs, Sweat & Toil,*

‘Every flower has the right to grow according to its own laws of growth; to spare its own fragrance, to make up the cumulative beauty and splendour of the garden. I would not like to change any roses into lilies nor my lilies into roses. Nor do want to sacrifice any lovely orchids of rhododendrons of the hills’

“There is no point in trying to make them a second rate copy f ourselves”

--- Jawaharlal Nehru

1. INTRODUCTION:

Lambadas are of north-west Indian origin, which they used to live in the forest by their earnings form transportation on the pack of bullocks. The Banjara seva sangh estimates that there are some 5 million Lambadas in India, divided into 17 sub-group in different states, and are known by at least 27 different names, all of them have same culture and language. The Lambada dialect is predominantly a mixture of Sanskrit, Rajasthani, Marathi, Gujarati and Hindi and bears the influence of local language they live in small settlements each referred to as a “Thanda” one important feature about the Lambada tribe is unlike all other tribes which are spread only in some districts or some states the Lambada aRe found in nearly all the states of India. Lambadas are treated as scheduled tribes in some states, scheduled caste in certain other states denotefied tribes in some states. In states for instance in Telangana Lambadas in the earlier they were recognized as denotified tribes.

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There are about 7.5 lack Lambadas in a total population of TS Lambadas not only do agriculture but also work as construction workers, hunters fishermen and traders Etc.

Lambada during the past two centuries have gone through the trauma of various dominating forces in their name of progress and development. Their rituals, customs, and morals were being disturbed by forces of Hindu indigenous ethos.

2. LANGUAGE:

Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, or in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. It’s quite an illusion t imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that

language is merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication of reflection. The fact of the matter is that real world is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group (Sapir 1921:75) The Lambadas speak "Lambada" language which belongs to the indo-aryan family of languages. Many linguists tried to trace the origin of this language but they could not trace the origin. Though it has no script it keeps them socially and culture all united. Wherever they live they understand their language without any difficulty.

3. CULTURE:

Culture in a popular usage, is a collective name for the material, social, religious, and artistic achievement of human life. Other definitions of culture include traditions, customs and behaviour patterns unified by common beliefs and values. It can be defined as all the ideas and assumptions about the nature of things and people that we all learn when we become the members of social groups. According to Sapir and Whorf culture is "Socially acquired knowledge" this is kind of knowledge like our first language we initially acquire without conscious awareness. We develop awareness of our knowledge and culture only after having developed language. The particular language we learn through the process of cultural transmission provides us at least initially with a readymade system of categorizing the world around us and our experience of it.

Each community has its own distinctive cultural patterns. The cultural identities of any community or tribe are shaped by complex set off factors which are associated with the process of evolution of cultural practices and beliefs of people. In course of their historical experience, ecological setting, basic economic institutions and work related to it. The family structure and child rearing process, stories, myths and legends along with history constitute some of the elements which give identity to a culture as it manifests itself through symbolic expressions in material artefacts expressive behaviour belief systems language and literature etc.

Having said all the above features about culture, now we look at different social and cultural practices of Lambadas.

Songs sung while Transplantation

Song No. 1

*"Boyi sole gadiro bangalacha-bai bangalarwema chaya baticha
Bai byati byati kagada vancharicha- bayi nandi ro kaluva chalarocha
Bai sanana pani bhandarecha- bai gora gariba bancharecha
Bai senagara pani bhandarechabai maldi matha bhavare goraloka
Maldima kai laagacha deko- maldima kaanta lagacha deko
Thama sindi matha piaro goraloko- sindima kai lagacha deko
Sindima pundi lagacha deko- thama daru matha pio re goraloko
Daruma kai lagacha deko- daruma jhad lagacha deko
Thama boti matha khavore goroloko bhoti makai lagacha deko
Thama boti matha khavore goroloko bhoti makai lagacha deko
Botima Hadaka lagacha deko"*

Translation

Sixteenth storey bungalow is there- stream was sitting in that bungalow
Sister was turning over the papers- stream was flowing,
Sister was turning the water into the field-poor people were struggling for livelihood
Sister was turning the water to red ram-! Lambadas don't eat fish
See inside the fish- bones are there inside
Don't drink toddy-look, what is there in the toddy
Insects are there in the toddy- don't drink liquor
Look! What is there in the liquor- pesticide is there in the liquor
Don't eat meat see what is there in the meat?
Bones are there in the meat.

Meaning

Sister chayadevi was sitting in the sixteenth storey's house and turning over the papers. The stream of the river was flowing. Sister was turning the water into the field of green gram. They were living in poverty.

She says oh! Lambada people, fish have bones in their body, insects are there in the toddy. There is pesticide in the liquor. Meat also has bones so don't consume these items.

In this song a sister chayadevi requests all the Lambada people to give up drinking toddy, liquor and meat. Because all these items contain harmful items like bones, pesticides, and insects that cause ill health. There is no use

with these alcohols and since we are struggling with poverty so wasting money on drinks will make you remain in poverty forever.

There is a practice of having liquor at night everyday in Lambada community. People work from the morning till night in the fields and before going to bed they have liquor to forget their body pains as well as to have a good sleep. In most of the Thandas Lambada men get addicted to the liquor and spoil their health and family. Their wives always worry about the health of their husband.

Analysis

The song begins with a description of Chaydevi's activities in the bungalow. Then slowly goes on describing the situation of poor Lambada people's sufferings and their mode of consumptions. In this song she asks all the Lambadas to think once about the danger of consuming liquor. She also talks about fish, meat, toddy, and the types of fields that she is working in. She gives examples fish, meat, and liquor because majority of the Lambadas consumes these items in their life. She concludes the song by saying some thought provoking words and how it spoils their health. In this song two things were basically pointed out one are hard work and the other one is poverty. The message of the song is they should give up all their bad habits i.e. drinking consumption of harmful items and live happily. She expresses hard work and bad habits of Lambada men simultaneously in this song.

The word "Bai" was being repeated in first four lines of the song by a Lambada sister and in all these four lines express about agriculture and their sufferings were as remaining five lines talks about alcohol and meat. Sister asks Lambada men in the form of question at the same time she explains the outcome of it. Last words of the song *Deko, Deko* reveals her request to Lambadas which means looks

Lambadas are generally addicted to liquor and toddy. It was kind of earning to them at the same time they have become poorer and remained in poverty. Lambadas mostly eat meat by sacrificing hen and goats on every festive occasions. They also catch fish in ponds, wells and canals. Every day they make green gram roti and eat fish and meat. Roti is unavoidable in their menu, since Lambadas live on their life happily they spend huge amount of money on drinking liquor and meat this could be one of the main reason for their poverty.

Song no. 2

*"Cho cho eena madi khanai-laseria bhena rothija
Cho cho meene nara ghalai-laseria bhojai rothija
Cho cho meena madi natayi- laseria natena rothi ja
Cho cho meena madi kalapayi- laseria devara rothija"*

Translation

Six months, I ploughed the land but now I am crying
Six months, I transplanted but now I am crying
Six months, I sowed but now I am not willing to do that work
Six months, I removed the weeds but now I am crying
Six months, I harvested but now I am crying.

Meaning

She ploughed the land for six months but now being tired she is unable to do that work and her sister was weeping now. It took six months to transplant the crop but now my dear sister-in-law was weeping. For the past Six months her daughter-in-law has been removing the weeds in the field but now being tired she is weeping. For the past six months my dear brother has been harvesting the crop but now he is crying.

During transplanting, ploughing, and harvesting time they express their work in the form of a song. When they don't get the proper result from their hard work their grief is incomparable.

Analysis

This song describes the hard work and sufferings of Lambada women in an emotional way. It is a sorrowful song of Lambada women in which she reveals her labour as well as the outcome of it. She says though she worked for six months in the fields to plough the land, sowing the seeds, transplanting, and reaped the crop all her hard work was in vain so she feels disappointed. She conveys her grief and pain to herself.

The initial words of the "*choc cho meena*" were being repeated in all the five lines of the song to say how long she worked hard in the field, and also the final words "*rovathija*" which means "crying" repeated. It signifies the intensity of the sorrow. It is a perfect rhythmic song sung by group of Lambada women the whole song was addressed to sister, brother-in-law, sister-in-law and son. She expresses her unwillingness and sadness of doing agricultural work.

This song also explains the hard work and result of it. In the first half of the line she talks how she worked hard. And in the second line she expresses her sufferings. The main theme of the song is to convey her sadness and feelings to the audience.

Song no. 3

*“Madi babacha, madi natacha- hathema raagi batira
Sevari beti ham rameri naarire- lachamaneri bhojai re
Madi dunacha, madi natacha- hathema kwadi mudda
Sevari beti ham rameri narire-lacha maneri bhojai re”*

Translation

Land is ploughed, we have custard gourd (Raagi) bun in our hand
We are the daughters of Sevalal and wife of Ram-we are Sisters-in-laws of laxmana
Land is ploughed and transplanted- we have curry lump in our hand
We are the daughters of Sevalal and wife of Rama-we are sisters-in-laws of laxmana

Meaning

Although we ploughed the land and transplanted with so much hard work we only get a piece of bread and lump of chilly rice in our hand. We are the daughters of Sevalal and wife of Rama. They compare themselves with the sister of Sevalal wife of Ram and Sisters-in-law of Laxmana. This song expresses their grief, though Lambada women work in the field throughout the year they are still living in poverty and getting little for their hard work.

Analysis

This song gives a message to the Lambadas regarding their cultivation, poverty, and intimate relationship with sevalal and Laxmana. It also carries their social life and economic conditions. Though it is a small song it gives a good message and provokes thought. Initial words have been repeated in all the four lines to add a perfect melody to the song. In the third line of the song the word *Kwadi Mudda* reflects their food habit, which means lump of chilli powder.

The song starts with the description of land cultivation and food that they get from the land then in the second line she made a comparison of Lambada with god Sevalal and laxmana. This comparison signifies their relationship and honest with the god. In the third line a lump of curry shows their poverty and food habits at last the song ends with a consoling mood.

Song no. 4

*“Chalo chalo chawari kamala natena- O kyaramar Jhad kassero
Okyaramar jhada limbero- Jhadepara bvyati yadi maissamma
Chute, chute yaadi O kammjediana-bhando bahando bhiya gugurari bandi
Dapdo dapdo bhiya adavi allapalli-kevadi gochare ganmero doctor
Mare kammedina suyi marejo- thari kammedina suyi parena bhuja bai
Mari kammedina gulkos chadalare gamero doctor
Thare kammedina glucose chadaniye buja bayis
Khod khodo bhiya elekadan- ghalo ghalo bhiya O kammdina
Phenkho phenkho bhiya mitti r dhud”*

Translation

Kamala lets go for transplantation, which tree is there in the field
It's a neem tree; Mysamma was sitting on that tree
Mysamma left a bird, brother let's bring a bullock cart
Let's go to adavi allam palli, (Name of the place) where the doctor is?
Let's given an injection to her; her body is not cooperation for injection
O! Doctor let give glucose to my daughter
Sister, injection is not working in her body
Let's dig the ground, bury my daughter
Let's cover the dig with soil.

Meaning

Kamala goes to the field to transplant and there is a neem tree in the field. Mysamma, a village goddess was sitting under that tree; kamalamma is possessed by the goddess. Immediately her brother brings a bullock cart to take

her to the doctor of that thanda but her body does not cooperate with the injection and glucose. She passed away. They all buried her dead body. They consoled to her parents not to weep.

They believed that because of Mysamma's magical power injection and glucose do not cooperate in her body and she passed away. They believe that Mysamma's magical power works on a person that's why her body does not cooperate for medicine. This song asserts their belief in Mysamma's magical power. If a person dies without getting married, the dead body is buried. Lambadas believe in superstitions and black magic. If they don't sacrifice goats or chickens to their goddess they believe something wrong will happen to them. And also if there is a dispute between two families or two persons they fear that the other person might use charms on them in order to harm them. This song explains their belief in superstitions.

Analysis

The song starts with a happy mood and addressed to kamala a Lambada girl who goes for transplantation. In the second and third line of the song, the mood of the speaker was changed it is something serious and tensed. Because while they are working in the field kamala was possessed with goddess mysamma and her condition becomes serious so they have frightened with this incident. Some sort of disappointment and sorrow was expressed by the singer. It is an explanatory song in which they express an unfortunate incident through this song. In the final line the song was quite sorrowful. If we compare from the beginning to the end of the song we can see a difference in terms of the tone and expression in terms of their helplessness, gloomy, sad and disappointment. The word *mysamma* indicates their beliefs in black magic.

It is a tearful song with an emotional tone and language, in the beginning of the song they go to the field for transplantation later when kamala possessed with goddess mysamma all of them started crying and takes her to the nearby Thanda doctor. In the beginning of the song the tone was quite normal but when things were going wrong they become emotional. This song expresses their strong belief in superstition in the last lines of the song it was quite opposite from the beginning of the song because kamala passed away and all of them were in despair. In this song two English words were being used one is *doctor* and *glucose*.

Song no. 5

*"Saantha jaricha raavo katena baiye-santhari angali katagiye baiya
Saantha jalalidi ado bhandaro baiya- mam layocha jeebana car baiye
O machadagi shanthane saaru baiye- mama layocha duderi sede baiye
Yadi jaricha pani bharena baiye-yaadi ubathena chulepara raago baiye
Duda upalena chalope raago baiye- yadi kotalidi chathina matho baiye
Mare vashema khodine bati baiye-khodi khautho muno balecha baiye
Bati khayutho jhado dukacha baiye-kunsi raanduri laagi nagare baiye
Dakane randeri laage nanjara baiye-kalo belathi kado nanjara baiye"*

Translation

"O! Sister, Saantha was going to harvest raagi, she cut her finger,
She was sitting and her brother went to bring jeep and car,
She sat inside the jeep, her uncle brought milk for her.
Mother was going to fetch water, custard gourd (raagulu) was pouring down from the oven,
Milk was pouring down from the oven, mother was crying at heart.
In my fate I was bound to have curry, and bun, my mouth was getting hot.
My jaws are paining; which witch has cursed me (disti)
Let my disti will be removed with a black cloth"

Meaning

When shantha was plucking custard gourd (ragi) in the field she cut her finger. Her brother took her to the hospital in a car and her mother was crying, milk was spilling from the pot. If she feels the sensation of chilli powder, her mouth was getting hot. She says if she eats Roti her jaws will get pain. Which witch has cursed me? Let the curse (disti) will go off with a sooty cloth.

Kurnool district lambadas cultivate raagi grains in huge quantities. When they harvest the crop small incidents happen such as cutting the finger, getting back pain etc. when we eat rotis, our jaws will get pain. These things show their poverty. Incidents such as mouth is aching, jaws paining show their strong belief in superstition. To remove this, they use salt, *jidiginjalu*, *red chillies*. They also use a small black cloth to avoid their pains. This practice can also be seen in Telugu culture.

Lambadas, generally have a belief that when they suffers from stomach ache they used to do a practice called disti to get relief from the pain. They believe in superstitions and black magic.

Analysis

This song reflects their social life and the beliefs in their day to day life. The song begins with an incident that occurs when shantha (name of women) works in the field. She expresses the miserable and painful life in their domestic and agricultural life. Words like *khodi*, *bati raagi*, reveal their food habits and poverty in their day to day life. Though they work hard they can't afford for their food. They say that poverty is a boon for them. She also says that when she eats these foods she feels pain in her jaws and also mouth. Because she believes somebody had cursed her for her prosperity. This song also signifies their beliefs in superstitions. Since they are uneducated they believe that some kind magic was played by other magicians in Thanda. Various types of foods have been mentioned here and this food item reflects their culture. Throughout this song there is a perfect rhyme. This song portrait the sufferings of their domestic and agricultural life and the tone and mood of the singer are emotional.

4. CONCLUSION:

All these labour songs are based on their struggle for livelihood, poverty, food habits, dress code, life style, family relationship and superstitions. Though these songs are not composed by anyone but are sung melodiously and rhythmically. Their work is the main source for their creativity. When we listen to these songs, we not only feel happy but also get to know about the history and great culture of Lambadas.

For many centuries, Lambadas have been preserving their culture and tradition in their folk literature (oral songs) but they are isolated and neglected from the mainstream of society. The discrimination, bias and their suffering could be known through their songs. For centuries they were being exploited by other communities and their resources were completely grabbed. Because of this continuous exploitation, they are still living below poverty line and unable access the facilities such as good education, technology, and luxuries of the world as how other middle class and elite want to. They give more importance to their culture and tradition. If somebody tries to change their customs and practices they feel as if they are going to get separated from their family. A good number of Lambadas are educated and they are trying to change their culture and language. The life style of some of the Lambada people who dwell in the city and villages have completely changed. On every occasion, they sing, dance and express their feelings through their songs. This song culture has occupied a prominent place in their day to day life.

In the end we can say that Lambada culture and tradition is unique in terms of their custom, life style, food habits, dress code, songs and dance practices. Though there is no any written evidence for their origin their culture and tradition gives enormous scope to study their literature further. In this respect their heritage and culture must be preserved for the new generation to study on them.

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