



INTRODUCTION

Lambani community influenced by the religious and cultural practices of the rest of the communities in the country is embracing the local religious practices, worshipping the local deities and observing the local festivals. The community is reported to strongly believe in the presence of an eternal power which guides and influences the good and the evil in one's life. Hence, they do not go against the belief in the existence of supernatural power.

Lambanis generally worship the female deities. Mariyamma, Kariyamma, Durgamma, Kankali (Chamundi), Huliyaamma (Vagjaie) are some of the female deities worshipped by them. They are also found to be worshipping the male Gods like Seva Bhaya, Mithu Bhukia, Balaji (Lord Venkateswara), and other Hindu Gods like Shiva, Vishnu, Rama, Krishna etc.

Lambani Tandas generally have temples of Mariyamma and Seva Bhaya which is called as 'math' (place where socio-religious programmes are organized). In front of these temples there are red and white flags fixed. The red flag is for Mariyamma and the white for Seva Bhaya. It is believed that this would prevent the occurrence of diseases like cholera, plague etc.

The other Goddesses worshipped by them are 'Saati Satti' and 'Saati Bhavani'. Saati Satti are 7 sisters and believed to be the wives of seven Rajas. The Lambanis depending on their place of living, worship one of the seven sisters. The following are the details of seven sisters and their Raja husbands:

Hoona Satti	- Ram ji Raja
Kesi Rani	- Kaana ji Raja
Sita Satti	- Dakhu Raja
Bheema Satti	- Teeta Raja
Tola Satti	- Madhu Raja
Tulaja Satti	- Sekha Raja
Roopa Satti	- Kaanaa Raja

These female goddesses never offered with any animal sacrifice. On the other hand the sweets prepared are offered to them. The vedic chantings called 'valang' are recited at the time of worshipping these Goddesses.

The Goddesses Saati Bhavani is called Adi-Shakthi. These are seven sisters and are worshipped in the form of small pebbles on agricultural lands. These seven Goddesses Bhavanis are as follows:

Tulaja Bhavani, Seetala Bahvani, Bojari Matha, Matarala Bhavani, Masoora Bhavani, Vagjai Bhavani, Ingala Matha

These are called Shakti deities and they are offered animal sacrifices on selected occasions. It must be noted here that among the Lambanis Saati Bhavani is worshipped as village diety, while Saati Satti is worshipped as a family deity. Saati Bhavani like other village deities is cruel while it is not the case with Saati Satti.

Mithu Bhukia: Another deity worshipped among the Lambanis is Mithu Bhukia, an old free-booter, who lived in the Central Provinces of India. He is venerated by the dacoits as the cleverest dacoit known in the annals of the caste, history. A hut was usually set apart for him in each hamlet, with a staff carrying a white flag before it. Before

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setting out for dacoity, the men assemble at the hut of Mithu Bhukia, burn a lamp before him and ask for an omen; if the wick of the lamp drooped the omen was propitious, and the men present then set out at once on the raid without returning home. The might not speak to each other nor answer if challenged; for if any one spoke, the charm would be broken and the protection of Seva Bhaya, Mithu Bhukia removed; and they should either return to take the omens again or give up that particular dacoity altogether. After a successful dacoity a portion of the spoil would be set apart for Mithu Bhukia, and of the balance the Naik or headman of the village received two shares if he participated in the crime; the man who struck the first blow or did most towards the common object also received two shares, and the entire rest one share. (Russel & Hiralal 1975).

Seva Bhaya: Seva Bhaya is valued very highly and is worshipped by all the Lambanis. Every Tanda has a math of Seva Bhaya. He is said to have taken many "avatars" and is considered to be a "siddi purusha". The temple at Pouraghad in Maharashtra is considered a place of pilgrimage. This is also believed to be a place where he has attained salvation. Very recently a temple has also been constructed in Sooranakoppa in Honnali Taluk in Shimoga district in Karnataka because this is considered to be a birth place of Seva Bhaya. However, there is no unanimity among the scholars point out the two other places said to be his birth place are Guttivallari near Mangalore and Gutti near Guntakal in Andhra Pradesh.

Apart from following their individual Gods and deities they also follow Hinduism. They worship their Gods which include saints Like Seva Lal and a dacoit named Mitthu Bhukhiya. The Hindu Gods worshipped by them include

Hanuman, Krishna, Shiva, Ganesh, and Balaji. Seva Lal, originally named Siva Rathode, is known to be a saint who protected the women of the tribe. Mitthu Bhukhiya is worshipped in a hut built towards the front of the village of the Lambanis. This hut has a white flag atop it and no one is allowed to sleep in it. They also worship Peer and Banjaras Devi. Goddess Shakti is also worshipped

All of the Banjaras people profess faith in Hinduism and follow Hindu culture. "They are known to worship deities such as Balaji, Goddess Jagadamba Devi, Goddess Bhavani, Renuka Mata of Mahur and Hanuman. They also hold Guru Nanak in great respect." (Deogaonkar, 1992) However, the Banjaras have been 'ambiguous' with regard to religion and were "tolerant and syncretic", "according to Satya. He notes, like Habib, that some banjaras those who had settled in the Wun district of Berar must have annoyed local Brahmins by preferring to use the services of their own priests rather than of that priestly caste" (Satya, Laxman D. (1997) Further, they were associated with the Mahanubhava sect which led to a belief in Krishna and a casual attitude towards cohabitation.

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