



## 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), Huliyyamma (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, Mascora 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 deity, 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

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. 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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ISBN 978-93-91146-59-7



**NATIONAL BANJARA PROFESSOR'S ASSOCIATION**  
**AND**  
**INTERNATIONAL BANJARA ROMA ORGANISATION**  
*Organizes*



**10<sup>th</sup>**  
**NBPA**  
**CONFERENCE**  
**2022**

At Gadag, Karnataka  
26th & 27th March 2022

**10<sup>th</sup>**  
**NBPA**  
Conf-2022

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**PUBLISHED AT**

10<sup>th</sup> National Banjara Professors'

Conference-2022 at Gadag, Karnataka

Designed by : City Graphics & Santosh Graphics

**PUBLISHED BY**

**AABS PUBLISHING HOUSE**

Kolkata, West Bengal, India-712121.

**ISBN 978-93-91146-59-7**

1.	UNITED WE STAND	D. RAMA NAIK	01-04
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3.	THE LAMBADIES' BANJARAS OF THE CEDED BELLARY DISTRICT AN ETHNO-HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE 1800 AD-1947 AD	Dr. NAGAVENI T.	10-17
4.	BANJARA LIFESTYLE AND COMMUNITY ITS ROLE IN INDIAN HISTORY OF TELANGANA	Dr. DEVASOTH HARI	18-21
5.	GOR-BOLI (BANJARALANGUAGE): SOCIO-CULTURAL IDENTITY	Dr. DINESH SEWA RATHOD	22-27
6.	ECONOMIC AND EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF LAMBANI MIGRANTS: A CASE STUDY OF VIJAYAPUR DISTRICT	Dr. Ashok R. Rathod Dr. Prakash. Rathod	28-34
7.	SOCIO- CULTURAL STATUS OF LAMBANI MIGRANTS IN VIJAYAPUR DISTRICT	Prof. Ravi Lamani	35-40
8.	<b>RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF BANJARA COMMUNITY IN KARNATAKA</b>	<b>Dr. Dyavappa Pawar</b>	<b>41-42</b>
9.	CELEBRATION OF DEEPAVALI AND HOLI FESTIVALS OF BANJARA COMMUNITY	Dr B.S. Rathod	43-45
10.	BIRTH AND DEATH RITUALS AND CULTURE OF BANJARA COMMUNITY IN KARNATAKA	Dr. Shankar Pujar	46-47
11.	LAMBANI LANGUAGE: AN INDO-ARYAN DIALECT	Prof. Sandeepkumar B.	48-50
12.	SHAHID- E- AZAM: GOLDEN HISTORY OF THE LAKHISHAH BANJARA	Dr. Ashok Pawar	51-56
13.	बंजारों की तीन शाखाएँ : गमळिया-लदेणिया-ओसरिया	डॉ. गोवर्धन बंजारा	57-58
14.	DHADIS: PROFESSIONAL SINGERS OF LAMBANIS	Prof. D.B. Nayak	59-61
15.	BANJARA'S INFLUENCE ON CONTEMPORARY ART	Dr. B. L. Chavan	61-64
16.	AN ANALYSIS ON CULTURAL CHANGES OF BANJARA COMMUNITY IN KARNATAKA	Dr. Krishna Karabhari	64-67
17.	SOCIO- POLITICAL CHALLENGES AND IMPACT OF WESTERN CULTURE ON LAMBANI COMMUNITY	Dr. Ravichandra S.	67-69
18.	INCLUSION OF BANJARA LANGUAGE IN EIGHTH SCHEDULE OF CONSTITUTION	Dr. Ramesh P. Chavan	69-71
19.	TANDA AND JEWISH SHRINE IN EASTERN MOROCCO:	Mr. Ivar Fjeld	71-73

# Ushering a new era in the Upliftment of Banjara Community

The Karnataka Tanda Development Corporation established by the Karnataka Government with an objectives of overall development of Banjara community by providing Physical, Economical, Educational, health, Social, Moral and Cultural Infrastructure to Tandas. This Corporation is the first of its Kind in the Entire country created exclusively for the development of Banjara community.

## ON GOING PROGRAMME

- Physical infrastructure to connect Tanda through Infrastructures like CC Roads, drainage, Angawadi, RO drinking water units etc, awareness and skill development programs.
- Construction of working women hostels,
- Construction of Banjara Bhavan at District and taluka levels and Santh Sevala Bhavans at Tanda.  
Eradication of ill practice practice and their rehabilitation program.
- Comprehensive development of Santh Sevealal Mahmutt at Bhayagadh in Dhavanagere District.
- Comprehensive development of historical and cultural heritage Centre at Bahadur Banda In Koppal District.
- Conceptualized to established traditional Art and Culture promotion Theme Park and Skill development center at Laladhari in Bidar District.
- Established Libraries at tanda level to enhance the education status of village level banjara
- Organizing health camp at tanda level with an objective to identify the health problems and give suitable treatment through super specialty Hospitals to give good health to Banjaras.
- To enhance cultural rejuvenation programs planned to construction of Sevalal Smskriithi Bhavan and for overall development of backward Tandas a new scheme of Pragathi Tanda is introduced.
- Helping the community to get converted their Tanda to revenue village, file application to Government to secure their lands coming under Forest rights Act, and file applications to secure their dwelling houses built on government and private lands, as per the Government of Karnataka notifications.



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