

“Marriage rituals of Lambani community: A Sociological Study”

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Abstract:

Family and marriage are the most ancient and fundamental institutions of human society. The main purpose of these is to nurture culture and fulfill sexual needs. According to sociologists, marriage is the consent of society to procreate and sexual gratification for women and men. The role of marriage is to control the aggressions that may occur in society, provide security to the life of a woman and a man, and make social life easier.

The rituals and practices of marriage differ from caste to caste. The marriage rituals of the Lambani community are formed against the background of experiences, aspirations, and cultural practices of different communities. The marriage rituals of the Lambani community are different from the marriage rituals of other Hindu castes and tribes, and include the most important aspects of their culture. The Lambani tribe has a sacred feeling about marriage. For them, marriage is not only a consent given by society to satisfy sexual desires and procreation, it is a sweet bond that unites hearts. Their marriage rituals bring the bride and groom closer physically and mentally and deepen human relationships.

They introduce the principles of religion, justice, ethics and morality to the couple and bind them to maintain the sanctity of marriage. In the Lambani tribe, marriage still plays an important role as a bridge between men, two families, and two clans. Gangotra marriage is prohibited among the Lambanis. Relations exist between the Bhukya and Jat gotras. Neither the members of the Jati gotra nor the Bhukya gotra develop marital relations with their inner gotras.

Key Words: Lambani, Marriage, Rituals, Nayak, gotra.

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I. Introduction:-

Banjara, Lambani, Nayak Gormata are a tribe residing mainly in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Originally from Rajasthan and Gujarat, they speak the Lambani language. They are currently nomadic and there is a temple of Sewalal and Mariyamma Devi in every Panjara Tandy. Even after two and a half centuries, Sewalal is still worshipped by the entire Banjara community. Many Lambani words are Lambani, style dances, Vaja (singing) and many other Panjara culture. The Banjara community has made an immense contribution to the rich Indian art culture with its own costumes. Before independence, the British called them “Gypsies”.

The Indian Constitution has considered them as a notified ‘tribe’ and has recognized them in various states as follows. Thus, they have a population of 6 crore 804 lakhs spread across different states. They are originally from the North Hindu Aryan culture and call themselves Gorbhar or Gor Mati.

Their mother tongue is Lambani, which has no script and is a mixture of Hindu, Urdu, Rajasthani and Sanskrit languages. They use the language of the states they live in as a second language. Their main deity is Sewalal. Their temple of worship is located in Surugondanakoppa in Honnali taluk of Davanagere district of Karnataka state. This village is included in the newly created Nyamati taluk. On the day of Shivaratri, a large number of Lambani relatives from far and wide come to this holy place. Recently, the temple, which was small, is being developed into a tourist center and holy place on a large scale.

Their family occupation is trade and animal husbandry. Their hard lives, their self-respect and honesty are so good that they were nomads earlier and have recently settled in villages and towns as civilization has developed. They call their towns Tandyas. Generally, Tandyas are located on the outskirts of the town. They were traders in the past and they used to sell pearls, gems, silver and gold in the Vijayanagara Empire, as shown in the sculptures made at the birthplace of Sevalal. They were included in the prohibited castes because they were competing with the British trade and were marginalized. Later, since their occupation was trade, they became nomads and settled in the country selling salt, lime and potatoes.

Panchayat system:

The Banjars call their towns Tandyas. In Tandyas, there is an elder, efficient and capable leader. He is assisted by a nayak and a dao and a businessman. They can solve any problem that may arise in the Tandyas. If any kind of problem arises in these Tandyas, the village leaders meet together to discuss and resolve the issue.

Tribes:

The Punjab or Lambanis call their tribes Pandas. Among them, there are two main tribes, Jat and Bhukkiya. There are many sub-tribes in these two tribes. People of one tribe consider the people of the same tribe as brothers and sisters. The Jats are Bhukkiyas and the Bhukkiyas intermarry with them. The Padas are as follows. Rathod or Bhukkiya (27 Padas), Pawwar (12 Padas), Vadatya or Jadav (52 Padas), Chavhan (6 Padas), Bannot (15 Padas).

Marriage rituals of the Lambani community

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Those belonging to the same gotra consider each other as brothers and sisters. Strict adherence to this rule has made it possible to maintain sexual discipline within the tribe. In the Lambani community, men and women do not have the freedom to choose their life path. The parents shoulder that responsibility and even in the event of divorce, the parents' decision is final.

“Among the Lambanis, marriage takes place in four main stages”

1. Negotiation (Vat Boli)
2. Determination (Sagai)
3. Veelya Shastra (Golpani)
4. Marriage (Vaya)

Negotiation:-

The husband's family goes to the woman's house and asks for a girl for his son. If she agrees, they bring a bottle of wine and give it to their relatives, and they drink it and return happily. The custom of the husband going to the woman's house and asking for more is still prevalent among the Lambanis. It is considered an insult for a woman to go to the man's house to negotiate marriage. In other castes of Hindu society, we find a remarkable system of practice that is contrary to this. The custom of the woman's family to ask for a girl first was not followed in other Hindu societies due to social prestige, pride in being on the side of the husband, prejudice of status, dowry, etc. Even in these days when the demand for a man is high, the Lambanis have secretly used the custom of the man asking for a girl first. Negotiation is the first stage of marriage science.

Nishchaya:-

The second stage of the Hindu marriage process is called “Sagai” in their language. The word Sagai is derived from the word Sago. In Urdu and Sanskrit, the word Sagai is used to mean the marriage contract. At this stage, the husband's side, along with the leader and elders of their Tanda, go to the bride's house. There, the leaders of both Tandas hold talks related to the marriage.

After the talks are over, the husband's side, according to their ability, drinks Sarai and introduces the relatives. After the contract is made, the man and the woman are considered as members of the same society, not belonging to two families. After the contract is made, if there is any difference of opinion among the relatives, no decision can be made without informing the Tanda leaders. If the release of relations is inevitable. If there is no mutual objection after informing the leaders of both Tandas, the relationship can be developed in another

direction. If a man or woman dies untimely after the marriage, the man or woman may have a relationship with someone else. Knowing that marriage is the ultimate blessing for a woman, she is cremated with the body of her husband who died without wanting to remarry. The story of the family deity Hunasatti is a good example of this.

Veelya Shastra:-

Veelya Shastra is a very important part of the marriage process and is called ‘Golkhayoro’. This Shastra is performed before the marriage. Considering the seriousness of this Shastra, it can be called a pre-wedding sub-wedding. ‘Golu Khayoro’ literally means ‘eating jaggery’ in Kannada. In this context, the Veelya Shastra activities performed by the male and female Tandavas are called Golkhayoro. In this Shastra, distributing jaggery to all those who join the female Tandava is an important task, so it is called this.

Recently, instead of jaggery, sugar has become the norm, but the word ‘eating jaggery’ has remained as a record of tradition. The husband’s family informs the wife’s family in advance about the Veelya day. The Lambanis believe that Sundays and Thursdays are auspicious days. On the appointed day, the husband's family goes to the house of their Tanda and gives them a betel nut, saying that today they should go to the Veel Nut Shastra and that everyone should stay at home.

In the case of the woman's Tanda, the woman's family informs their Tanda in this way. This call, which was inevitable during the days of migration, remains a ritual even today. On the appointed day, the husband's family comes to the woman's house with their Tanda leader, Dao, Karbari and other elders. After the 'Ramaswamy' treatment, the woman's Tanda leader, Dao, Karbari and elders go to the nearest village to consult astrology. This is called 'Bamanpoochero'. The main purpose of this fortune-telling is to know whether a match is possible between the woman and the man and their relatives. Odds and evens are calculated in this way. If the woman comes in the form of a ragi and the man in the form of a areca nut, it is believed that they are a good couple. The woman's luck is given to the man and woman in which animal group they come. If the girl falls into the Akal group, it is considered auspicious, and if the girl falls into the Akan group, it is considered auspicious. If the groom comes into the vagina of these animals, it is considered very good.

After seeing the group, if the match is correct, the men and women from both sides sit in separate groups in the middle of the woman's circle. They bring a sarapi kootli. These are single-layered cloth bags made of cloth. They look like a tambula bag. In one of these bags, fenugreek seeds, rice, and in the other, coconut husks, and a little money are put. Two such kootli also come from the woman's house. Except for the money, the man's kootli has the same belongings as the man's kootli. They belong to the Jatbukya tribe. The cash received by the woman's family through the kootli is an advance payment for the bride price.

In these rituals, the bride and groom, who are about to start a family, should wish for a happy and prosperous life. After this, there is a tradition of distributing ‘sak’. Sak is a one-rupee coin. The leader of the female troupe asks for one from the leader of the male troupe. This coin ultimately remains with the leader of the female troupe. The sak coin has the importance of a social contract. From this perspective, the coin is a means of binding the two troupes and, through it, the entire Lambani society to a divine commitment that regulates the rules and regulations. The husband’s side, who has received the sak coin back, feels that the relationship between them and the other side is growing, and the relationship between them is growing. Since it has acquired all this importance, the sak coin is used in a special sense.

After this, the Veelyashastra verse is recited. After reciting the shloka, the jaggery brought by the husband is distributed to all the guests. After distributing the jaggery, sarai, leaves, nuts, and bidi, the dye is given. The woman's family has brought the necessary dye to give the dye as a symbol of sexual pleasure. The dye is applied only to the husband's side. It is customary for the husband to first give the dye to the man and then give the dye to the rest. After this, there is the ritual of filling the man's raiment. The woman's side puts money on the man's lap in front of the congregation according to their ritual. There is a proverb prevalent among the Lambanis regarding the Vinya Shastra. ‘Panpaneti, Mymanetrirang’ ‘Vilye- Vilye-dendemanyyata-dendemanyya-dendemanyya-dendemanyya’ This expression indicates the three main components that take place in Vilye Shastra. Vilye, Delehanchuva Guru-Rangu, which gives respect to the elders, these components collectively express the importance of Vilye Shastra. Thus, the Vilye Shastra of the Lambanis is the main component of the marriage process and gives a clear form to the marital relationship between a woman and a man. After this Shastra is completed, the girl is ‘cut from the waist up as if she has become a boy’. However, until marriage, the woman is not allowed to talk to or look at the husband directly, and whoever comes across the husband’s family, she shows respect by covering her face with a thick veil.

Dowry:-

In Hindu society, everyone knows that dowry is a big problem for the girl's parents and a thorn in the society. Dowry has always been prevalent among the Lambanis. Although the social evil of dowry is spreading in this society these days, dowry is still prevalent as a remnant of tradition. The Lambanis call dowry 'Karar'. 81 rupees for a girl from the Jatgotra, 65 rupees for a girl from the Bhukyagotra. Apart from the reason that there is open discrimination within the gotras of the same tribe, Lambani veterans tell several legends about it.

There are 27 sub-gotras in the Bhukyagotra, of which there are three main types. They are allowed to marry each other. But if a person from the Bhukyagotra wants to marry, he must be a girl from the Jatgotra. Due to this gotra policy, when the Bhukya gotra could not get women for marriage, the elder brothers 'Bala' and 'Biku' of the Agotra married their children to each other. This brother-sister relationship grew. They were identified as 'Banvat' gotra. The 13 children born to them later grew into sub-gotras. When the children of this Banvat gotra came of age, the problem of getting them married led to the emergence of this new gotra. All the Lambanis expelled the perpetrators of this heinous act from the tribe. The Bhukya gotra, who admitted their mistake, apologized to the society and agreed to take less dowry for the women of their gotra.

The Bhukya gotra developed marital relations within their sub-gotras, and the number of women among them increased drastically. Then they carried their daughters on their shoulders to get them married. They also agreed to take less bride price.

Marriage Shastra:-

The Lambanis call marriage as Vaaya, Veeya, Saadithanero, Tamboothanero in their language. These people, who have a long tradition of organizing marriages for months, start the marriage ceremony on a Sunday or Thursday. Before the wedding ceremony begins, the preparations for the wedding are made in the groom's house. They have different customs and traditions regarding marriage. Like their clothes, the materials used for the wedding are of a unique type. The wedding materials that a Hindu society can get in any fair are not available to them everywhere.

Therefore, the groom's family goes to a fair where materials related to their caste are sold and buys them. They are called 'Saadi Moliya'. In Saadi Moliya, there are dresses that the bride and groom have to wear. After bringing them, the elderly women of the Tanda prepare the dresses of the bride and groom. On a specific day, the groom's family would go to their house and tell them, "This is my son's wedding, everyone stay at home." It was very important for these nomadic people to give advance notice of the wedding. That evening, three stages of formal ceremonies take place at the groom's wedding. Vadayi, Mundedo, Ghotagholero.

Vadayi:-

'Vadai' is a religious seal that is applied to the right shoulder of the groom before marriage to formally induct him into the Lambani society. The Lambanis' Vadayi is similar to the etiquette of polite society. A rangoli is drawn in the middle of the house and neatly folded gunny bags are placed on it and the groom and his brother are made to sit down. In front of them, seven chicken balls made of 'Churamo' are placed on both sides with a silver plate. At the same time, ghee and ghee are put in the hearth of the stove and incense is offered.

The elderly women stand in a row in the middle of the house and sing the 'Valanga' song, all the above activities are done simultaneously. The Tanda leader places a chicken made of Shadramodi on the laps of the groom and his brother. The seal is applied to the right shoulder of the groom and his brother with a hot needle. This may be a sanctification ceremony for joining the Lambani community. While applying the seal, the guru and the elders, women and men present there recite a verse.

There is a legend among them about the practice of this Madhi. A guru gave two Lambani youths alms to bring saffron dye for their clothes and sent one of his disciples with them. When the Lambani youths saw a liquor shop on the way, they drank liquor with the money given by the guru and started fighting. The disciple who went to break up the fight between the two died. The youths, who woke up, buried the disciple and came to the guru and apologized for the incident.

The guru, who was saddened by the death of the education, performed a Shraddha ceremony and put his seal ring in the fire and pressed it on the shoulders of the Lambani youths for the mistake they had made. He cursed that only those who had a seal in the Lambani clan would be cremated with fire and attain salvation.

Wedding Chappar Structure:-

They call the wedding chappar 'Mandedo'. This is a unique chappar. Two poles are attached in front of the bride and groom's house facing the east. Four ropes are tied to the four corners and the ropes are tied to the pegs that are firmly planted. A long peg is placed in the middle and it is made stable. Overall, this is a tent-like chappar with a single peg. A 'Phulia' branch is tied to the top of the blanket at the end of this peg and a chamba is tied securely on it. The chamba is covered with a piece of cloth near the 'Ganna'. Overall, it takes the shape of a kalash on the end of the peg. Rice, jaggery and a little money are placed in the chamba of this kalash. It is believed that whichever direction this kalash leans towards, the direction in which the woman's husband is. Elders say that in the days of nomadism, brides and grooms used to go in the direction of this Kalash in search of brides. These people believe that this Kalash is in the direction of the Tanda, which is still the place where women are born. This belief sheds light on the nomadic life of this people in the past.

Preparation of the drink: -

After the chapparas are prepared, the youth of the Tanda prepare the drink in a new earthen pot. When the water is soaked with jaggery, they soak the poppy seeds. They mix chili powder according to taste with the jaggery water. This is a unique and delicious drink, which they call ‘Ghota’. The drink with the chili powder is kept in a separate new pot, which is reserved for the Basari women. This is called ‘Peikoghota’. A new kumbha is filled with water, a one rupee coin is placed in it face up and the kumbha is covered with a cloth. While the drink is being prepared, the women sing songs related to the drink in the courtyard of the house.

On the third day, all the women of the Tanda gather in groups inside and outside the wedding house and sing in different styles with joy. The groom is adorned with a wedding dress. The groom, adorned with seven types of attire, is called a ‘dhoola’. The dhoola wears a red band around his head. He wears a necklace of beads around his neck. He wears cardboard slippers. He wears an embroidered waist belt, a dagger tied around his waist, and holds a ‘hoka’ and a ‘nal’ in his hand. He holds a kotli in his left hand. The kotli has seven compartments, and in each compartment, items used for a different type of wedding are placed. Among the special items that a Lambani groom has, the dagger is important. It is like a hand sword.

There is a rule that the groom cannot go out for a wedding while wearing this. Perhaps because the groom had to travel through dense forests and meadows to the bride's house with a companion, the rule must have come about that he should always carry a dagger to protect himself from wild animals and thieves.

The groom, adorned, comes out of the wedding, takes out a rupee coin from the kumbha in the middle of the chapara, ties it to the end of his handkerchief and sits outside the chapara. The person who accompanies the groom to the bride's house is called ‘lerya’. In Kannada, it can be called a companion. The groom's companion should be intelligent, brave, knowledgeable in the shastras and rituals, and a young man. He is responsible for going along with the groom, completing all the marriage rituals and bringing the groom safely back.

Then the act of pouring the drink takes place. They share the ‘telo’ with the drink. The act of distributing both kichudi and huggi is called telo. It is the act of distributing the drink. It is the work of men, while the distribution of tola is the work of women. After placing the tola in the Ganga, it is first offered to the deity and then distributed to those who are present in the marriage hall.

Telo Lambani Women's prestigious ritual. The act of distributing tola is disappearing in the changed social environment. This custom is being neglected in the background of the growing number of thandas and the difficulty of distributing huggi khichdis. But it is good to maintain this ritual, which is a sign of the prestige of the thanda women.

Farewell to the groom: -

The thandas send off the groom after he has left for the wedding with gifts. The women hug the groom's neck and cry. The custom of hugging and kissing during a wedding ceremony seemed strange to the civilized world. This has a meaning in the context of the life of the Lambani people. In the previous society, the two families used to make a marriage contract when the bride and groom were still in their childhood. After learning about the bride's coming of age, the groom would go out for the wedding with his companion. In those days, getting married and bringing the bride home was as much of an adventure as winning a war for the groom. Therefore, there must be a reason for his tears of relief when sending the groom to the bride's house. The original profession of the Lambani was a peddler. They did not have any profit in this profession. No one except his companion would go with the bridegroom. After saying goodbye to the bridegroom, there would be no special programs in the groom's house until the bride was returned home.

Tilak distribution:-

The ritual of tilak distribution is performed on the day of the distribution of the bride's house. This ritual is started at the time of sunrise. The reason for this is the wish that the couple's life will be good as the sun rises above. A little rice, a blouse, a betel leaf with ginger, the groom's handkerchief, and 15 rupees are placed in a bronze bowl and they sit facing east and are called bride's gifts.

Gifts from the hometown to the bride:-

As is the custom of the groom to give the bride a dowry, there is a rule that the bridegroom should give gifts of clothes from his hometown to the bride. Those gifts are in the form of a bed, a blanket, clothes to wear, and jewelry to wear.

Mangal Snan:-

Mangal Snan is one of the most important rituals in Lambani weddings and is also very special. This is a rare ritual that is meant to test the strength and courage of the groom. In this ritual, which usually begins in the afternoon, there is no special place for honey.

Balagada oota:-

After all the rituals of the wedding are completed, the husband serves a meat meal inside. This is brought by a pure-breasted woman. The ground is cleared in front of the wedding house, a rangoli is laid, a clay sack is placed, and on that sack, a pot filled with water, leaves, areca nuts, lit money and tobacco are placed, and a dagger is planted.

Haveli Shastra:-

It is very painful to drop the honey during a wedding ceremony. They cross the threshold with it. A bull is decorated and the bride and groom are placed on it to form a 'haveli'. Haveli is another unique ritual. The word 'haveli' means house in the ancient language. It is a prayer song that she performs while standing facing the sun at the last moment of saying goodbye to the bride and groom after all the wedding rituals are completed.

II. Conclusion:

The Lambani community has its own unique culture and significance in Indian society. Their way of life is unique and has nothing in common with the plains population or the local tribes. They are called by various names in different parts of the country including Banjaras, Lambani Sugali and Labhani. More than 90% of the Banjaras now follow non-Banjara traditions for marriage. This study contributes to the ongoing change in Indian society.

The Lambani community gives great importance to marriage. Our main objective is to know about the rituals and rules of marriage in the Lambani community and how much importance is given to the marriage of the Lambani people. The marriage rituals of this community are different from the marriage rituals of other Hindu castes and tribes. To know the marriage rituals, rules and rules of the Lambani community, we met some women belonging to the Lambani caste and collected information from them and learned about the rules.

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