The Lambada Bhats are singers, storytellers and genealogists for the Lambadas. They narrate the history, myths and legends of Lambada community. They are also from the lowermost rungs of the caste hierarchy of Lambada society. As they move from one Tanda to another practicing their profession, they are also perceived as messengers for Lambadas. They often live at quite a distance from the Tanda. There is strictly no possibility of marital relationships between Bhats and the rest of the Lambadas. The profession of a Bhat is to act as musician for the upper clans and their presence is mandatory on all occasions like marriages, death ceremonies and other rituals happening in their patrons’ households. Their job is to sing the glories of the Lambadas and their past heroic deeds; and in return they take gifts from their patrons either in kind or cash. Bhats use a stringed musical instrument made from the wood of mango tree called Rabab. Their narrative poetry comprises of the heroic and legendary stories of Prithvi Raj Chauhan, Aramsingh Rathod and Rana Pratap Singh. Before narrating the stories, as a ritualistic prelude, they offer either an onion or a goat to their gods and goddesses. However, it depends on the economic capability of the family whether they choose to go for a goat or make do with an onion. If they are poor, they simply offer an onion and some liquor.

Dapidiyas are also considered inferior to other Lambadas. Dhadies are both musicians and mendicants, who sing in praise of the Charan Lambada ancestors, and of old kings. They use dapda (Dappu) as their instrument. They make their own dapda covering with the skin of a goat or a lamb. They also play Sarangi, a small string instrument like Rabab; these two musical instruments are used as accompaniments when Bhats sing. Besides, they also sing songs praising the main clans and their ancestors for which they are paid in cash. They treat it as their right to attend marriages and death ceremonies of the main clans and benefit from them.
either in cash or in kind. In these ceremonies they receive paddy, cash, gold, silver and cows from the main clan people and they bestow their benediction on those who offer them these gifts. These people of the Lambada society are found in the Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh. “Bhatia is a caste which is spread all over India. They generally claim that they are from Rajasthan of ‘Yadubansi’ race”1. However, they claim that they occupy the lowermost position among all castes of the ‘Yadubansi’ community. Some of them are engaged in petty business enterprises, while some of them continue to be narrative performers. This Bhatia caste is divided into two groups comprising of 84 divisions. Lambada Bhats are from these two groups. Like the Lambada Bhats and others, Bhatias are also itinerant traders, and they narrate the genealogies of the superior clans. Though they claim that they have originated from Brahmans, we cannot verify how far this claim is correct. In any case, their main vocation is to sing, narrate and compose songs. The Punjabi form is ‘Bhatt’, but it is commonly pronounced as ‘Bhat’, especially in the hills.

The organization of the Bhats almost baffles description; so fluid are its intricacies. Some of the Mirasis of the Rajputs in Rajasthan are called ‘Rana’ or ‘Ucharan Bhats’. Rana and Ucharan are the two-storytelling communities; the Ranas, basically being storytellers and eulogists, are also genealogists. Yet another account divides Bhats into four classes- 1. Rai Bhats are singers, 2. Ranas used to function as envoys, as well as to encourage people from the martial sections by singing their legends, 3. Kathaks or musicians, and 4. Jagas are genealogists and storytellers.

The Bhat Guts (Gotras) such as Bimblan, Bhardwaj, Chand Bardai, Chandian, Kalia, Mirchal, Sair, Tind and Sodhian commemorate their past. However, according to an account of Multan the groups are four, viz. Brahm, Varteshwar, Chandisar and Kutichar. Each Gotra performs different functions of its own. The legend says that Chand Bardai was a strong admirer of Prithvi Raj Chauhan and worked as a narrator during the latter’s period. However, Lambadas claim that Prithvi Raj and Chand Bardai belong to Lambada community. The Lambada Bhats claim that their main origin is from Chand Bardai. H. A Rose says, “The Sanskrit meaning of the word Bhat is ‘a bard’.”2 Some of them are poets, lyricists, storytellers and genealogists. In the same entry he also says “originally they were to be found chiefly in the Dadra along the banks of the Ganges, in the Bijnor District of the United Provinces, where many of them were the Lambadas.”3 These Lambadas might have migrated to various parts of the country during the medieval period of Indian history. Bhats perform certain functions for their upper clans at weddings and at all the other ceremonies. According to the historians Bhats are divided into four classes.

1. Brahma Rai work for the Brahmans

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1. H.A. Rose (1990), p. 93
2. Ibid. (1990), p. 98
3. Ibid. (1990), p. 94
2. Bero Rai work for the Rajputs

3. Raja Rai are the people who sing songs and also work for all the communities irrespective of their caste.

4. Jagas are genealogists.

Brahma Bhats are divided into four groups and each group is called as a Vateshar. Their primary duty is to attend weddings and funerals. Usually at the time of funeral their women take part in mourning and would be paid for that. Jaggi Bhats recite the genealogy of their patrons sitting on their terraces. Charan Bhats are wandering singers and while singing they also dance. Rama or Ucharan Bhats are storytellers, eulogists as well as genealogists. The interesting thing is that there are some Bhats who hold faith in Islam; they are called Muhammadan Bhats, but who also sing for Hindu communities in the northern part of India. Though Lambadas are tribal people they often consider themselves as worshippers of the Hindu pantheon of gods and goddesses. As a result, the Bhats who believe in Islam become conspicuous as a minority with a different faith altogether. In any case, the narratives sung by both these groups significantly differ from each other.

A second account maintains that Bhats derive their origin from the Pushkarna Brahmans as well as from the Sarsut. Both of them are called Bhats and they claim that the Pushkarna Bhats are equal in status to the Sarsut though the work and status of the two groups is notably different from each other. Lastly, a third account gives the old functional groups: the Sut who sing songs and recite chronicles ‘in the afternoon’; the Magadh, who keep pedigrees of kings and recount their deeds: the Windijan, who teach princes and Bhats or Jagak who sing songs in the early morning hours to wake up the king. There are myths on the origin of Bhats, which say that Bhats are simply an offshoot of the Brahmans, being functionally differentiated from them.

According to some other historians “Bhats are by origin Brahmans but having adopted ‘karewa’ (singing) they lost their dignity and honour and are now by occupation genealogists.” Bhats, though belonging to different communities, are more or less involved in the same kind of work. Their caste may be different but their professional culture is the same. However, one can see some changes among the Muhammadan Bhats’ work, which is that, at the time of a girl’s betrothal the Bhat women, instead of men, sing songs. And for this they are paid either in money or in kind. Muhammadan Bhats sing only for Sheikhs. They won’t sing for any other communities, just like Lambada Bhats.

The Lambada Bhats never sing for other communities. However, there are other similar communities, which sing and tell the genealogy for their upper clans, they are Langas, Manganiyar and Mukabancha Bhats in Rajasthan. Caste in India has generally been identified through their hereditary occupational characteristics. Moreover, as Andre Beteille observes,

4. Ibid. (1990), p. 96
Castes are “enduring groups” and “can be located with relative ease since they are named and have fairly well-defined boundaries.” But one of the commonly encountered problems in describing castes of performers in modern India is the diversity of activities associated with such social group.

One caste in Western India in particular is a territorially extended group known as Barots. The best-known puppeteers in Western India are kathaputi (puppet) Bhats who appear to be indigenous to Rajasthan, where from they travel to Gujarat in dry winter months, returning home by the onset of monsoon. Kathaputi (family name) Bhats perform as families and are most often found in the larger cities and towns of Gujarat. The standard stories they perform are those of the Rajput heroes, Amar Singh Rathod, Prithvi Raj Chauhan and their betrayal by Mughals. This gives us a clear sense of identity among the Lambadas of Rajasthan. The family names Rathod and Chauhan are the family names of the Lambadas, too. And Lambada Bhats say that Amar Singh Rathod and Prithvi Raj Chauhan belong to Lambada community and that they were great rulers of the country. In the Lambada Bhat narratives we find the legends of Amar Singh Rathod and Prithvi Raj Chauhan. One needs to understand that one community called Barots in Gujarat’s northern part of India narrates the same stories and sing the glories of the same people as the Bhats of the southern India. There might be some variations in the narration and plot, but the characters and themes are essentially the same. And the claim, which Ramjhol Bhat makes, is that they were the Lambada rulers who heroically fought against the imperialism of the Mughals.

As genealogists in pre-modern India, Barots were characteristically associated with the Hindu rulers of their region, notably with Rajputs. Interestingly, like Barots, Bhats of the Lambadas also narrate the genealogies of their community. The instrument, which Barots play, is called ‘Rawaj’ which is similar to the instrument of the Lambada Bhats, Rabab. The word Bhat has two meanings; as a proper noun ‘Bhat’ is name of the sub-caste among the Lambadas. Gordon Thompson says, “as a common word or noun Bhats are occupational titles referring to the singer.” In the northern parts it is used as a synonym for the word Barot. Some scholars describe that they are genealogists, as Bhats and Barots did not have much differences, and suggest that they could be the members of the same caste. However, Thompson’s article on Barots in Gujarat gives an account of them and lists out the similarities between Bhats and Barots. The musical instruments which Barots use are one and the same as those of the Bhats. Shah, Sharoff and other historians suggest that the main difference between the Barots and the Bhats is that the former keep the genealogies intact while the latter do not. Bhats allow their accounts to incorporate a lot of elements from other sources, both local and otherwise. They also suggest that Barots initially began as Bhats. As entertainers, Barots and Bhats of the Lambada community, particularly Ramjhol group, have made the heroes and heroines of the

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region their subjects. And more importantly, Barot performances have been a remarkably
diverse combination of narration and composing music.

Sometime near the beginning of the last century the role of the genealogist and musical
panegyrist turned obsolete because of modern audio-visual technology. However, some
communities like Barots, Langas, Mangniyars, Mukabhanca Bhats and Bhats of the Lambadas
are the chief bridges in maintaining the links with their glorious past by narrating songs
handed down from generation to generation by the oral record keepers of the families. All the
above-said communities composed these songs. Typically, on the occasion of a death, the
concerned family would inform them a week before the ceremony starts. Lambada Bhats
come to the dead person’s house on the third day and start narrating the songs till the ninth
day. The song composed on a Nayak or a family member who is dead will be sung on the ninth
day of the ceremony.

The modes of singing songs and narratives of these communities are different; however, the
patterns of singing and narrative art across different regions of Lambada Bhats are more or
less the same. The instruments that they use are different from each other. Langas and
Mangniyars are traditional musicians of Rajasthan and they use ‘Sarangy’ (a small string
instrument) while singing the songs. Dhadies also use this instrument. H. A. Rose claims, “on
the other hand, it could be asked what the patrons stand to gain from continuing this
tradition”.7 And their response is very simple: ‘these musicians carry the weight of our
genealogy on their head.’ Through this genealogy, the families of the patrons are given
cognizance and respect in society at large, and the musicians contribute to their status in a
significant way.”8 Their narratives are very important for the upper clan to know their history.
Without them there will not be any one who can tell their genealogy or past history of the
Lambadas. These communities work as institutions to provide information through narratives.

There are many legends, which explain the origin of Lambadas. Here is one from H.A. Rose:
“‘Janmejay’ celebrated a sacrifice and he summoned the Gaur Brahmans and tricked one of
them into accepting an offering of a diamond by concealing it in some pan.”9 Here the one
who did not accept the offering became a Bhat. Another myth of the Bhats’ origin is that
when Brahma offered boons to Brahmans, they all refused to accept those, while only one of
their sisters’ sons accepted it, and thus became a Bhat. There are legends from the Shimla hills
also which describe the origin of the Bhats. One legend is about the goddess Kyankali who was
the wife of a Bhat. In any case, the goddess Kyankali is one of the major Goddesses of the
Lambada mythological pantheon. Whatasoever, descriptions of these legends strongly suggest
that Lambada Bhats had come from the northern parts of India.

7 Rose H.A. (1990), p. 96
8 . Ibid. (1990), p.104
9. Ibid. (1990), p. 98
The word “Gaur”, which the Lambadas use as a generic category of identity across the Indian Sub-continent, means Lambadas. People other than Lambadas, i.e. outside the fold of their community, are called kwar. This is one of the notable aspects of Lambada identity, that they strongly share a sense of belonging to one large stream. Another myth gives a different kind of account about the origin of the Bhats: “Lord Siva was celebrating the wedding of his son, and giving alms to Jogis, Jangams, Sanyasis and Suthas, who received them with a good grace. Thereupon the God was asked to constrain himself from giving alms, and a drop of sweat fell from his brows to the ground. The first Bhat sprang from it, with a Katar in his hands, and uttered a Kabit”.

As already noted, Lambada Bhats have a string instrument called ‘Rabab’; while narrating their stories they play Rabab and in Lambada language kabit means uttering something in the form of a recitation. Lord Siva was surprised to see them and says; “now I grant you great influence and all will be terrified at your voice.” When the Bhats narrate the stories of the Lambadas the whole Tanda people listen to them and it gives a kind of confidence that the gift, which they got from the god, is a ‘(good) voice’ and which is absolutely necessary for them to sing songs. However, everybody has got the voice but only Bhats can make the people sit and listen to them in rapt attention. In Tandas people are pleased to see Bhats during festive times. They are ready to listen to the stories narrated by Bhats as many times as they are told.

The accounts provided above give us different kinds of meaning and sense to the word Bhat. The term Bhat is shared by different perceptions, according to equally divergent work culture and ethos related to particular Lambada community. However, all the Bhats are singers and each Bhat has a rich repertoire of songs suitable for different occasions and communities. Songs which they are singing do not at all relate to them or their own lives. The songs which they sing do not belong to them though they are engraved in their minds. Bhats are parasitically dependent on the same group of people who are called Lambadas. By singing songs for them, they are rendering their services to the upper clan. In fact, the clans Bhats come under occupy an inferior position in the hierarchy of Lambadas. They are never treated on par with the rest of the Lambada community in terms of social prestige and status. Nevertheless, they are part of the Lambadas and they rightfully participate in every occasion.

Differences between the Bhats from one region to other

There are various kinds of narrators spread all over India. Some of them sing on particular occasions only. But Lambada Bhats can go to a Tanda any time in the year or in any season, and narrate or sing songs for the Tanda Lambadas. In Andhra Pradesh Dakkalis and Chindus of the Madiga or Scheduled caste tell the stories like Jambapurana and other different stories. All of them have a great variety of narratives. None of them, however, compose songs on people who are already dead. On the contrary, Lambada Bhats of Telangana region of Andhra

10. Ibid. p. 97
11. Ibid. p.100
Pradesh compose songs even on the dead people of the Tanda, whether the person who is dead is a Nayak or any other person of the Tanda. They sing the newly composed song on the occasion of the 9th day following the death of the person. In general, on other occasions, they attend the Tandas but do not sing in the mourning contexts.

The songs that Bhats compose keep the record of the Tanda history and their genealogies. They can effortlessly go back at least fourteen to nineteen generations, and they have spectacular memories. They can recall all kinds of detail, which is entirely in the oral form; that is their way of remembering family memories across generations. In Rajasthan the Manganiyars preserve the genealogy of their patrons in the form of a panegyric called the *shubhraj*.

Apart from Langas and Mangniyars there are two more communities; they are Pothibancha Bhats and Mukhabancha Bhats. Pothibanchas Bhats are those who, apart from singing narratives, also keep the record of all the males born in a family. Mukhabancha Bhats are those who rely solely on their memory for their oral recitation, and while reciting narratives they use a special musical instrument called the Dhol (drum). Pothibancha Bhats maintain records, in their own oral manner, to remember their clans. Both the Bhats visit the homes of their patrons at least once in every three years. Another interesting feature of Mukhabancha Bhats is that they recite for the low caste communities also.

On the contrary, Lambada Bhats sing songs only for the upper clans of the Lambadas. Lambada Bhats visit every Tanda in a group. Here the only major difference between Lambada Bhats and other parallel communities is that all the above Bhats sing for other communities; but Lambada Bhats sing only within the community and they are counted as part of the Lambada community. In Lambada Bhat community women do not go for singing or narrating stories for people from other clans. However, among the women of Rajasthan Bhats, it is allowed to attend their patrons and sing for them, as well as attending people from other clans. In this article I will be focusing mainly on Lambada Bhats and their narratives.

**Bhat according to the Lambadas**

**Bhat**: Bhat means singers in Gormaati (the Lambada language). **Lambada Bhat** is a community within Lambadas who sing for the Lambadas, and **Geet Bol** is the oral tradition of Lambada Bhats. Ramjhol Group visits Tandas annually. The Bhat group generally is comprised of three or more members. One Bhat plays the *Rabab* and narrates the legends, while the rest give chorus and play *tali*. *Tali* is the Lambada equivalent for cymbals used in keeping the beat and time. This could have been the derivative of *Tala* of Indian classical music. For Lambadas, Bhats are the only resources to know about their legends and also history. Since Lambadas have no script and have no scribal culture, most of the information pertaining to their past can only be inferred from the oral compositions sung by the Bhats. These oral texts are the exclusive property of Bhats only. One of the renowned Bhat communities of the Telangana region is the Ramjhol group. They have been narrating stories for the past fifty years. The
three surviving members of this group are already getting old and unfortunately they have no successors. Therefore, the entire Lambada community is most likely to lose its heritage of oral narratives if no one comes forward to continue the tradition. In the rest of the chapter, my main emphasis will be on the narratives orally produced by the Ramjhol group.

Bhat Narsa Nayak is one of the singers of Ramjhol group, who lends his voice as one of the chorus. He is eighty years old, and has been singing these songs ever since he was eight years old. Initially, he used to go along with his brother to give the chorus. His elder brother Chandu Bhat (father of Bhat Ramjhol Nayak) was the Motobhat, the main singer who used to sing and also play the Rabab. Narsa Nayak learned narratives from his elder brother Chandu Bhat and helped the Ramjhol group learn and perform narratives later. In fact, Ramjhol, the lead singer, always treats Narsa nayak as his teacher.

Bhats’ mode of training to sing is hereditary, and it is inculcated from childhood onwards. Here narrating the stories is one kind of a hereditary function, which every Bhat learns, but playing the Rabab depends on the individual learner’s ability. Every Bhat cannot play the Rabab. Narsa Nayak Bhat had started at the early age of eight but still he does not feel confident to play the Rabab. When I asked him why you would not play the Rabab, he said that everybody could not play it, as it requires greater control over the instrument. Ramjhol group says that, sometimes in certain dramatic and emotional sequences Rabab jumps out of their hands. They also say that, once they hold the instrument and begin singing, they feel possessed and electrified by a strong sense of empathy with the narrative they are singing. That is how they claim that one must have the ability to control it. However, they believe that such a controlling ability comes by birth, and they generally identify that exclusive ability within their own community.

Bhat Ramjhol Nayak, the lead performer of the Ramjhol group, lives in Gurrampet Tanda. It is a remote habitation of Venkatpur Mandal in Warangal District. So far nobody has in fact even bothered to either recognize his ability or give credit to his art except the Lambadas. He started his career as a Bhat at the age of five and he got married at the age of fourteen. Ramjhol has two sons and a daughter. In the beginning he used to accompany his father Chandu Bhat on his itinerary. He just used to sit in the group, but sometimes his father used to ask him to lend his voice for the chorus. Gradually he started reciting and humming the narratives along with his father. Indeed, his father liked his style of recitation. Soon Ramjhol’s father started observing him and his abilities keenly and began to give special attention, so that Ramjhol can soon begin to understand and sing the narratives. Ramjhol’s father died when he was just sixteen years old. Therefore, the chief men of the Tanda, i.e. Nayaks, decided to bestow the responsibilities of playing the Rabab on Ramjhol. When I asked Ramjhol about his initial entry into the very act of narrating the legends, he recollected an incident, which he explained with tears in his eyes. He said:
When I lost my father I was alone and we stopped singing for a year. After one year Rana nayak called me to his Tanda and gave me his red turban as a gift. After tying the turban on my head, Rana nayak placed Rabab in my hands and told me that I should be like my father, that I should become as famous as my father and preserve the legacy of his name. From that day onwards, I started singing the songs and playing the Rabab.

The turban worn by Ramjhol Nayak while narrating is red in color and is sixteen meters long. Without wearing the turban Ramjhol does not go to any Tanda. For others it is just a turban but for Ramjhol it is an emblem of respect and honor, and now this turban is almost thirty years old. The characteristic of Bhats’ life is the association of musical activities with the role of the genealogist. Their function and duty is to render the genealogies of Lambadas in different narrative forms. Bhat Ramjhol says that every song or narrative has memories, which are unwritten. When I asked him if he writes these songs himself, he replied, mar dain bakero cha pani lakekuni (I recite but do not write). He also said that if he knows how to write, he would write a history of Lambadas. Besides, I asked him out of curiosity, if he ever thought of composing his own songs? To this Ramjhol replied:

“katraiko hapta kelogo lakunkan ababi lakun kan kelunchu pani mana laktho aieni. Maro bap katraiko geed bol tho tho maa samal aon ma siko. Mand lakero malam rido vatho abe thani katraiko geet lakdetho.”

In “free” rendering in English this would read as follows:

Many times I felt like writing and now also I feel like it, but I cannot. My father used to sing many songs. At that time I was very young and I did not have much ability to remember all the songs. But I learnt some of them, because these songs, which I am singing, were sung many times wherever my father went to narrate them. Now I regret that I did not learn how to write and read. If I had known how to write there would have been many songs by now.

He proudly says that Bhats are keeping these songs in their minds, which are the past memories of the Lambadas and their struggles. A renowned singer Gadder says that “prathi pata venuka oka katha untondi, aa katha venuka Kasta jeevula kannillu, chemuta semuta chukaluuntai” (behind every song there is a story, which comes from the sweat and tears of hardworking human beings). In fact, the narratives of the Lambadas include the centuries-long struggle that they have undergone ever since the medieval times of Indian history. And the only source of this cultural and historical memory for Lambadas is the narrative lore of the Bhats. Other communities may not understand the language and the significance of these narratives. However, Lambadas spend hours on listening to these
narratives. Therefore, the role of Bhat seem still to include both the maintenance of ‘Pada’ (family name) and the performances of some sort of musical activity. The Bhat’s association with these two activities is important both for both Bhat and Lambadas.

Ramjhol’s style of narrative presentation would seem to straddle between stretches of speeches and songs. Sometimes it sounds like speech suddenly inflected and, at some other times it seems like following clearly intoned pitches. Narratives that Ramjhol sings begin with a melody and end with a heightened speech. While narrating he generally plays the Rabab, but sometimes his narration is not accompanied by it. It is because he wants to make sure that his listeners are getting him right. In between the singers use some humorous short nuggets of wisdom, sometimes along with little anecdotes, to gather the listener’s attention. These are called ‘Sattas’. However, the main singer, Ramjhol here, does not deliver these Sattas himself. They are often told by one of the chorus members of the group. In one way, it gives the lead singer an interval.

When the rainy season ends and traveling becomes practicable, the Ramjhol group sets off on their yearly tour from one Tanda to another Tanda. One by one they cover almost all the Tandas of Warangal District. And from each Tanda they receive the usual courtesies and felicitations. They don’t demand any money for their performance. These are the people who play the Rabab for the auspicious ceremonies of Lambadas. It is meant for bringing the Tanda people together at one place. After they receive the usual welcome, they praise the nayak of the Tanda. They later pray the God to bestow wealth and blessings on the Tanda and also to save it from all kinds of natural calamities and regular epidemics.

The genealogy of Lambadas gives us the narrative of Prithvi Raj Chauhan’s confrontation with Mohammad Ghor. Muhammad Ghor was the twelfth century, Afghan conqueror of Northern India. A brother of the sultan of Ghor, he was made governor of Ghazni in 1173 and from there launched a series of invasions on India. By 1186 he had conquered the Muslim principalities in the Punjab. The Rajputs under Prithvi Raj defeated him several times, in 1191, but the following year he routed their army, and Delhi was captured. Muhammad’s generals then overran Bihar and Bengal. He succeeded his brother as sultan in 1202 but was murdered in 1206. After his death his empire in North India fell apart and passed to his generals, one of who founded the Delhi sultanate.

The genealogy recitation also gives an account of how the very name Lambada got converted to Lambada in the course of history. From Ramjhol’s narratives the following account can be gleaned. This account basically tells us about the reasons why the Lambadas became nomadic. Prithvi Raj Chauhan was a Lambada, more precisely a Banjara Rajput king. People who call themselves Lambadas today trace their ancestry to those who were ruled by Chauhan some centuries ago. For different political reasons the ambitious Mohammad Ghor invaded Chauhan many times. But Prithvi Raj Chauhan could successfully counter all of them. However, once when there was nobody with him at his fort, Ghor came and captured him at his fort itself.
Prithvi Raj was later taken to Ghori’s fort and was kept chained in captivity. Chand Bardai Bhat, who was the Bhat of Prithvi Raj’s court, and the one who accompanied the king in many of his battles, came to know about this humiliating defeat. Chand Bardai belonged to the community known as charan and was the royal bard in Prithvi Raj’s court. He came to know about this from Chauhan’s wife, and he promises her that he would set him free from the imprisonment of Ghori. He went to Ghori to bring his king. Ghori greeted him and proudly claimed that he has captured Prithvi Raj. Chand Bardai replied that a powerful king like Prithvi Raj is invincible and nobody could capture him.

Chand Bardai went on to add that he knew Prithvi Raj so well that, were he to see the prisoner, he would instantly recognize whether he was Prithvi Raj or not. This way he met Prithvi Raj and plotted for his release from the jail. He told Ghori that Prithvi Raj was an expert Shabdabhedhi (expert in an art of shooting anything by merely locating an object on the basis its sound, even when blind-folded). Ghori arranged for a performance in his courtyard. Chand Bardai told Prithvi Raj through his recitation in Gormaati, their mother tongue, to kill Ghori the moment he makes any sound. When Ghori gave the command, Prithvi Raj immediately shot an arrow at him and killed him. One account recounts that after taking him as a prisoner, “Ghori ordered the eyes of Prithvi Raj to be gouged out and made the blind Prithvi Raj a subject of ridicule in his court. After some time, an archery competition was held in Ghori’s kingdom. Prithvi Raj, being a skilled archer of repute was also brought for this competition and asked to compete to ridicule him further. Prithvi Raj refused to shoot his arrow on the orders of Ghori’s generals, being a king himself. As such, Ghori himself asked Prithvi Raj to shoot at the target. Prithvi Raj, instead, turned around and locating the source of the voice, shot his arrow straight into Ghori’s throat, killing him instantly.” 12 Both Chand Bardai and Prithvi Raj killed each other with knives to safeguard their honor. In those days it was considered beneath one’s honor to get oneself killed by the enemy.

From then onwards, to avenge Ghori’s killing, his soldiers started butchering every Lambada. In order to protect themselves, Lambadas ran into jungles and changed their lifestyle and dress habits, like women wearing special kinds of bangles etc, so that they could protect themselves from the harsh life in jungles. Ever since those times they called themselves Lambadas to camouflage their identity. They gradually migrated to the southern part of the subcontinent and also to other parts of the country, and the world.

On British rule, there is a sharp critique of the changes brought into Indian society by them, which in turn changed the fate of Lambadas for good.

\[\text{Agal tu mera raj angregi vale angregi vale} \]
\[Bina bail ka rail chalaye tamasha dek unka \]
\[Oh..oh.. bina bail ka rail chalaye tamasha dek unka \]

\[12\] Dasharatha Sharma (1975), p.156
Oh ..oh.. loya lay whata banaye gadi chaleneka jaga jaga
Per jakam lagaya takit bharne ka..
Ohh..Rayakud mei kuwa khodaya pani peneka
Ohh Raj Angregi! Without bullocks you run trains, what a surprise
You brought iron and made ways to run the trains on it
And in every place where it stops, you built stations and collected money
You dig wells to drink water and in Jagathpur you built poles to hang the people.

As he sang this Ramjhul paused here and said, “you did some things which cause very serious harm to us; because of you our position is very bad today”. This rendering provides a straightforward descriptive account of these narratives, along with discussing certain collateral issues like tone, point of view, and styles of composition and modes of narration. However, the primary emphasis will be on how these narratives offer a clue into the oral tradition of Lambadas as their most important thriving cultural form.

All the narratives that the Lambada Bhats narrate aim to show that these communities are not lower communities but have a history of ruling community. That is how they claim the ruling status. Thus they could find place in colonial establishment. It’s a general phenomenon during the mediaeval period: all the Indian downtrodden communities of India claim their earlier higher status; some communities assert their culture. Some communities claim the Kshatriya status. These performances try to establish the Kshatriyas and Rajputs during the colonial period.

This kind of reconstruction of the Lambada Bhat oral narratives opens up new possibilities in producing a new literature, and to understand the neglected communities like Lambadas, whose voice has never been there in developing modern literature. When they do not have any written literature, oral narratives of the Lambada Bhats is the only available authentic resource and they stay in the collective memory of the Bhats. This is a kind of traditional data available on Lambadas, I feel the use of oral narratives would be useful and the record derived from the Bhats will be useful and will serve as a more realistic, concrete source to reconstruct Lambada history. We need oral history for the recovery of past and oral narratives as tools to get to the unwritten accounts of the Lambadas.