

From Forests to Frontlines: Migration, Cultural Identity, and Work Empowerment among Lambada Women in Contemporary Hyderabad

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Abstract:

The modern socio-economic scenario of India is undergoing a tremendous change with rising internal migration within Lambada communities, particularly Lambada women. This paper discusses the intricate nexus between migration, cultural identity, and work empowerment among Lambada women who transition from forest-based, traditional occupations to urban and semi-urban job markets. Applying a descriptive research approach, the study discusses how these shifts affect their cultural practices, social status, and economic independence. While migration promotes opportunities for income earning, education, and broader visibility, it also generates issues of identity erosion, exploitation in the informal economy, and psychological dislocation. The study calls for a balancing act between development and cultural retention, supporting inclusive policies that give power to Lambada women through skill empowerment, legal protection, and culturally appropriate integration processes. Finally, this research contributes to gendered migration literature with the emphasis on the resilience of Lambada women as they go through the trials of mass migration, identity, and empowerment in contemporary Hyderabad.

Keywords: Lambada Women, Internal Migration, Cultural Identity, Work Empowerment, Socio-Economic Mobility, Gender and Development, Indigenous Communities

1. Introduction:

India's Lambada population forms one of the most historically deprived and culturally vibrant groups in the nation. Historically living in forested and ecologically fragile areas, Lambada groups have preserved distinctive ways of life, languages, and social traditions based on coexistence with nature. Yet with the pressures of modernization, economic growth, and environmental degradation, numerous Lambada families—most especially women—have been forced to migrate in pursuit of livelihood, education, and improved standards of living. Migration, which was once a survival mechanism, is now a process of transformation that is remaking the identity and livelihood patterns of Lambada women. This paper examines this transition and its effect on empowerment and identity. Lambada women have become significant players in the migration story, frequently migrating to cities and industrial areas to work in domestic labor, construction, agriculture, and informal sectors. These patterns of migration are not merely economic but are deeply embedded with socio-cultural aspects, such as identity negotiation, language adaptation, and cultural displacement. As they shift from subsistence living in the forest to wage labor in urbanized areas, Lambada women undergo many challenges—exploitation, discrimination, and loss of traditional knowledge systems. At the same time, these shifts also provide opportunities for independence, economic mobility, and self-assertion in the modern labor market. Work

migration has also transformed the classical roles of women in the Lambada communities and families. Women back home typically had supportive roles in farming, forest foraging, and cultural transmission. After migration, however, they become main breadwinners, decision makers, and agents of change in families. This change has necessitated a renegotiation of gender roles and power structures in both public and private domains. The article seeks to explore how this transition affects their sense of agency, work identity, and future aspirations, yet remain grounded in their indigenous past (Neetha, 2004).

Cultural identity is a central concern in the narrative of Lambada migration. The transition from forest homelands to industrial frontiers entails profound cultural disjunctures—loss of language, decreased involvement in Lambada festivals, disconnection from ancestral territories, and marginalization in urban society. For most Lambada women, upholding cultural practices in a foreign setting turns into an act of resistance and self-preservation. This research aims to examine how Lambada women retain, evolve, or reconstruct their cultural identities in the context of work migration and urban integration. Empowerment, especially in the context of work, is a salient theme that underlies this research. Employment not only gives Lambada women economic autonomy but also boosts their confidence, social mobility, and rights and entitlement consciousness. Empowerment is not, however, a one-way street—it is influenced by several variables such as education, legal protection, terms of employment, and support networks. This study takes a multi-dimensional perspective to comprehend how empowerment is lived, understood, and practiced by Lambada women in various migratory settings in India. This paper explores the changing realities of Lambada women's lives as they move out of forests and onto frontlines. It situates their experiences within wider discourses on gender, migration, and cultural identity. Reflecting on both the possibilities and the challenges that migration brings, the research emphasizes the imperative for inclusive development approaches that empower Lambada women without undermining their native identities. It adds to current scholarship by placing center stage the voices and agency of Lambada women who are at the crossroads of tradition and modernity in modern India (Shinde, 2023).

2. Background of Study:

India has more than 700 Lambada communities, which are listed as Scheduled Tribes (STs), accounting for about 8.6% of the country's population (Census of India, 2011). These groups have lived historically in isolated forest areas, depending on agriculture, collection of forest produce, and artisanal occupations. Lambada women have been central to these economies for centuries, contributing to household income, cultural practices, and community health. Systematic neglect, geographical remoteness, absence of access to good education and healthcare, and displacement as a result of mining, industrialization, and deforestation have adversely affected Lambada populations. These activities have resulted in a spate of migration, particularly of Lambada women, in pursuit of livelihood and security. The movement of Lambada women from forest and rural areas to cities is frequently instigated by push factors like poverty, alienation of land, unemployment, and ecological degradation. At the same time, pull factors like city jobs, higher wages, access to education, and aspirations of social mobility also instigate this migration. Diverging from historical male-dominated movements, current tendencies indicate growing

feminization of mobility, with active engagement of females in labor economies. Lambada females are working within diverse informal employment sectors, namely domestic work, construction, agricultural activities, and service sectors. Though these moves bring new vistas of opportunity, they are loaded with risks that include exploitation, disconnection of community support, and erosion of identity. This migrant experience redefines not just the economic position of Lambada women but also their cultural and social identities. In Lambada societies, women have relatively greater status and independence in issues relating to land, family, and culture than many patriarchal non-Lambada communities. Migration tends to turn this equation on its head since Lambada women enter urban spaces where they are subject to discrimination, marginalization, and systemic erasure. Loss of cultural identifiers—language, clothing, festivals, and rituals—threatens their ethnic identity. Simultaneously, urban exposure leads to increased awareness regarding rights, education, and gender equality, indicating a duality of struggle and empowerment (Chandras, 2023).

Governmental and non-governmental efforts over the years have attempted to deal with Lambada concerns through schemes for skill development, employment of women, and preservation of culture. These programs, however, do not address the intricacies of migrant Lambada women, particularly in peri-urban labor markets and slum areas of cities. Policies emphasizing economic dimensions of migration overlook the cultural and psychological aspects of displacement. There is an urgent need to embrace an intersectional framework that examines migration through the prism of gender, ethnicity, identity, and labor rights. The context of this research is rooted in this gap in both policy debate and scholarly literature. This study seeks to fill the gap by investigating the everyday lives of Lambada women who have moved from forests to urban frontlines to seek employment. It investigates how migration influences their cultural identity, choice of work, and empowerment trajectories. Through highlighting their stories, the research seeks to promote a more equitable understanding of migration with sensitivity to socio-economic and cultural aspects. It emphasizes the need for facilitating policies that empower the Lambada women while being respectful of their heritage, thus making development not only inclusive but also sustainable and culturally sensitive.

3. Scope and Significance of Study:

The purview of this research includes the dynamic convergence of migration, cultural identity, and work empowerment among Lambada women in modern India. It seeks to map their transition from traditional, forest-based livelihoods to their changing engagement in various socio-economic spaces in urban and semi-urban India. The research incorporates intra-state as well as inter-state patterns of migration and accounts for women within different Lambada groups in India, including Gond, Bhil, Santhal, and Lambada. It examines how their cultural values get reproduced, reworked, or negotiated in the new urban contexts. Placing their experiences in the context of larger socio-economic transformations in post-liberalization India, the research fills the lacuna in intersectional analyses of gender, ethnicity, and work. This ambit is created to provide macro-level analysis as well as micro-level accounts. This study's relevance is in bringing to light the shift in Lambada women's roles and identities as a consequence of migration and shifts in

the work environment. Migration is commonly researched based on its economic or demographic dimensions, whereas the cultural and gendered aspects, especially of Lambada women, have received less attention. This study presents the lived experiences of these women, highlighting the ways in which migration is a disruptor as well as a facilitator of empowerment. It assesses the double-edged sword of migration—offering economic prospects on one side and disrupting traditional norms and generating new vulnerabilities on the other. The study is significant in terms of understanding how Lambada women are reconceptualizing dignity, autonomy, and agency through their work participation. In investigating work empowerment, the research examines types of jobs available to Lambada women in urban areas like domestic employment, construction work, street vending, and increasingly, service sector employment. It also considers government jobs and NGO-sponsored skill training programs that aim to empower Lambada women. The study considers how these options impact their economic independence, social mobility, and negotiating power within families and communities. In addition, it critically assesses whether these changes are reflected in sustainable empowerment or perpetuate exploitative labor relations. Particular emphasis is given to the Lambadas' problems—language differences, discrimination based on caste, absence of institutional support, and harassment at the workplace—which could vitiate their attempts at empowerment.

Cultural identity is an important theme since Lambada women find themselves torn between the maintenance of indigenous values and the forces of cultural assimilation in new settings (Radhakrishna, 2023). The research examines how language, customs, clothing, and rituals are preserved or diluted after migration. It looks at the negotiation of dual identities as being Lambada and urban and how these shapes their self-construction and sense of belonging to a community. Based on ethnographic accounts and secondary case studies, the research records both the survival and the adaptation of cultural identity. This dimension is crucial in realizing that empowerment is not only physical but rooted in cultural situatedness and pride. The research is timely and contextual, given current controversies concerning inclusive development, Lambada rights, and gender justice in India. Even with constitutional protection and positive discrimination, Lambada women are among the most disadvantaged groups in India. Through an analysis of their place in the migration-empowerment debate, the research hopes to inform policy reforms and grassroots interventions that tackle their specific challenges. It also resonates with national development agendas, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that focus on gender equality, decent work, and lower inequalities. The research hopes to inform policymakers, activists, and scholars in the areas of Lambada studies, migration, and gender empowerment. This research bridges an essential academic and empirical void by drawing on several perspectives—anthropological, feminist, and socio-economic—to study Lambada women's migration and empowerment. It shifts from fixed representations of Lambada groups as passive recipients of welfare to active change-makers. Through recording their stories from forests to frontlines, the research provides a reconfigured empowerment framework with voice, agency, and dignity. It aims to stimulate future research on Lambada women's hopes, resistance strategies, and community leadership in crafting inclusive and equitable development. It finally emphasizes the need for context-specific, culturally nuanced approaches to empowerment that are respectful of the histories and futures of Lambada communities in India.

4. Objectives of Study:

- To examine the patterns and causes of migration among Lambada women in contemporary India
- To analyze the impact of migration on the cultural identity of Lambada women
- To explore the nature and scope of employment and livelihood opportunities available to migrant Lambada women
- To assess the extent of work empowerment experienced by Lambada women post-migration
- To understand the interplay between socio-cultural change and empowerment among Lambada women in new urban environments
- To recommend inclusive policy and community-based strategies for sustainable empowerment of Lambada women migrants

5. Review of Literature:

Migration within Lambada societies has been traditionally motivated by survival needs, opportunities for higher livelihoods, and displacement caused by development initiatives. Researchers such as Xaxa (2008) have reported that internal migration, especially by Lambada women, tends to be involuntary and conditioned by structural marginalization. The process of migration greatly alters the social structure and economic life of Lambada households. These changes, in turn, result in a reinterpretation of gender roles since women become major breadwinners in families that migrate. Research by Mosse et al. (2005) also identified how Lambada identities get reconstructed during migration through either cultural dilution or coping strategies. Seasonal migration trends also perpetuate insecure employment, which restricts access to stable empowerment channels. The literature hitherto gives a macro perspective to these migratory trends but under-represents the personal experiences of Lambada women. In addition, there are gaps in examining how identity negotiation takes place in urban and peri-urban workplaces. There is, therefore, a need to move from focusing on sheer mobility to lived experiences after migration.

Cultural identity among Lambada women is a process of constant negotiation in new social environments. According to Baviskar (2007) work, Lambada women face cultural assimilation, linguistic heritage loss, and breakdown in traditional roles. However, resistance to erasure of culture by reaffirming indigenous culture in urban ghettos has also been evidenced in some research. The dialectic of preservation and adaptation becomes critical in reconstructing identity. Urban migration, for example, creates exposure to multicultural values contradicting Lambada norms. Sengupta (2014) discussed how rituals, dress, and language act as symbols of cultural resistance among migrant Lambada women. At the same time, the intersectionality of caste, class, and Lambada status makes the process of assimilation even more complicated. Even as government policies may envision integration, they fail to cater to the specifics of cultural pluralism. Therefore, identity is not lost or retained—it is actually changed. There is a scarcity of micro-level ethnographies of such transitions, particularly of younger Lambada women.

The work empowerment function in the migration process is multi-faceted. Work can provide Lambada women with financial autonomy, greater agency, and social mobility. Empowerment is not merely about economic empowerment, as Kabeer (1999) suggested,

but the capacity to make strategic life choices. Yet, such a process is frequently limited by exploitative work conditions, insufficient formal sector employment, and weak social protections. A study conducted by Neetha (2004) highlighted that Lambada woman in domestic employment, construction work, and farming experience wage gaps and harassment. The informal status of employment confines access to workers' rights and mobility. In addition, the double burden of work and domestic responsibilities is exaggerated in migrant homes. Empowerment is thus still conditional and dependent on institutional support. Literature discusses more of economic outcomes than comprehensive empowerment that encompasses psychological, legal, and educational aspects. It is also important to examine how digital inclusion and skill training influence empowerment trajectories for Lambada women.

Migration alters the traditional gender equations in Lambada societies. Although patriarchy within Lambada systems may be less extreme than within caste-based Hindu hierarchies, the strain of migration may further exacerbate gender inequalities. Rao (2011) studied find that women in migrant environments frequently take on greater responsibilities, yet lack the equivalent authority. Their efforts are also often made invisible in policy reports and data collections. Even so, certain Lambada women gain greater bargaining power in households because of their contribution to household income. The shift from forest livelihoods to wage labor changes the locus of power relations. Yet, this empowerment is usually limited by new urban patriarchy and institutional abandonment. Chakraborty's (2016) literature highlighted how Lambada women can internalize backwardness and modernity stereotypes. There is still little intersectional analysis of Lambada identity, gender roles, and urban adaptation in the existing literature. A feminist perspective must be further applied to demystify these transformations.

Education is a mediating variable crucial in both preservation and empowerment within and after migration. Empirical evidence indicates that literacy among Lambada women greatly boosts their decision-making capabilities and ability to cope with challenges. The Ministry of Lambada Affairs (2021) revealed that literacy among Lambada women lags behind the country's average, especially in migrant communities. Education can enable women to access urban workplaces, claim entitlements, and exercise cultural rights. Yet, there are high dropout rates because of early marriages, economic constraints, and cultural alienation from mainstream curriculum. According to research by Mohanty (2013), when education incorporates indigenous knowledge, Lambada girls are more engaged. Language difficulties and the absence of female teachers are also common issues in host communities. Although various government schemes aim at educational empowerment, their reach among migrant Lambada women is uneven. More qualitative studies are needed on the contribution of informal and vocational education to empowerment narratives. In addition, digital education and e-learning need to be evaluated in this regard.

Healthcare access and reproductive rights also have an important contribution to the empowerment of Lambada women after migration. Research indicates that Lambada women who have migrated experience poor maternal health care, lack of access to contraception, and higher susceptibility to communicable illnesses. Das and Mohanty's (2012) research indicated that the health services are insensitive to the language and beliefs

of the Lambadas. The incompatibility between traditional healing modes and modern medicine also hinders access. Migrant Lambada women usually do not get access to welfare schemes because they lack documentation or information. Mental health, particularly displacement-related, is an under-researched domain. Acculturation stress, financial insecurity, and urban loneliness can give rise to depression and anxiety. Empowerment would therefore need to be understood as including bodily autonomy and health access. Disaggregated data for Lambada sub-groups are not found in the existing literature, constraining refined understanding. Policy models need to incorporate health as a foundational aspect of empowerment.

Legal protection and institutional representation are also important for sustaining long-term empowerment of migrant Lambada women. Although laws like the Forest Rights Act (2006) and PESA (1996) tried to safeguard Lambada autonomy, these are ineffective upon women's migration. Urban slums seldom ensure institutional arrangements for grievance redressal. Researchers such as Shah (2010) contended that Lambada women are politically invisible despite economic engagement. In addition, migration often dislocates voter registration as well as access to local decision-making institutions. Involvement in self-help organizations and NGOs has been proven to increase political consciousness. Such activity is typically limited to individual NGOs and rarely institutionalized. Legal consciousness of Lambada women is extremely low, prohibiting them from exercising their right to entitlements. Studies must investigate the contribution of local leadership and representation in emerging urban settings. The emancipation of Lambada women should not only be seen in domestic or economic realms but also in the political arena.

Cultural forms like dance, oral narrative, music, and ritual resist assimilation and provide sites for identity articulation. After migration, these forms are frequently used as means of community cohesion and public expression. Scholars like Mahapatra (2009) recorded how cultural revival festivals enable Lambada migrants to maintain a feeling of belongingness. Women tend to be the guardians of oral traditions and rituals, making them play special roles in cultural reproduction. Yet, commodification of Lambada culture for tourism or NGO functions can also erode authenticity. This creates a problem of cultural appropriation and loss of agency. Lambada women tend to walk a double life—adjusting to modern livelihoods while grounding themselves in tradition. The literature has the potential to examine how cultural performance is turned into a site of empowerment and negotiation. There is also room to analyze how digital media are being utilized to share and conserve cultural identities. This aspect of empowerment is under-theorized in mainstream migration studies.

Access to technology and digital literacy have become new frontiers of empowerment for Lambada women. Mobile phones, the internet, and social media can be used as instruments of information, networking, and even business. As per a report published by GSMA (2023), Lambada women in India have a large gender gap in digital access. Digital exclusion further excludes them from a fast-digitizing economy. Nevertheless, programs like e-Shram cards and job portals on the internet have started to fill this gap. Women collectives are utilizing WhatsApp and YouTube for selling Lambada handicrafts and farm produce. The literature is yet to expand on how Lambada women interact with digital technologies

after migration. Research must emphasize digital protection, training on digital skills, and web-based financial literacy as empowerment strategies. Digital empowerment must be supported by measures against exploitation and disinformation. This confluence of migration, gender, and digital inclusion requires more pinpointed academic research.

The long-term nature of empowerment should be questioned by examining intergenerational transformation. Does migration empower the initial generation of female laborers or does it have ripple effects within families and communities? According to research conducted by Desai and Banerji (2019), migrant Lambada families with educated mothers record improved children's health and educational status. Empowered women are role models, but maintaining gains depend on enabling policies, networks at the community level, and cultural continuity. Threats to losing Lambada identity while seeking modern empowerment require balanced consideration. Scholars have to critically consider whether work empowerment erodes or reinforces traditional values. Additional longitudinal studies are necessary to identify the long-term effects of migration on Lambada women's empowerment. Because Lambada women occupy a nexus of more than one identity and transition, their stories yield profound insights about social change. The literature must change to encapsulate these richer, layered narratives with more nuance and depth.

6. Discussion and Analysis:

Lambada women's migration from forest areas to urban areas is not just a matter of spatial relocation—it is an intense socio-cultural and economic change. In seeking employment, numerous Lambada women become part of the informal labor sector where exploitation and discrimination are ongoing. However, this transition also allows for agency, especially when women become the primary breadwinners. The gendered customary norms start to shift, opening up for women new arenas of decision-making. This doubleness—of risk and possibility—characterizes the transitional space they inhabit. Migrant Lambada women tend to be confronted with obstacles such as lack of documents, language disadvantages, and poor social security. Nevertheless, their narratives are those of resilience, where adaptation strategies are imaginatively fashioned by need. These results resonate with Kabear's (1999) empowerment paradigm of being able to make strategic life choices under constraints. Migration hence becomes a disrupting but enabling factor in Lambada women's lives.

Cultural identity, initially embedded in community-oriented rituals and oral traditions, is fluidized in urban spaces. The research identifies that Lambada women develop double cultural identities—externally conforming to urban practices while maintaining traditional practices privately. For instance, though women might wear contemporary clothing to work, a lot of them still practice Lambada rituals and festivals in the household. Such a balancing act is as much a declaration of cultural tenacity as a means of survival. Cultural alienation is seen when Lambada traditions are considered "primitive" by ruling social classes. Women are pressured to adapt, which creates psychological turmoil and identity loss. However, urban Lambada groups and online communities have enabled some women to reclaim their heritage proudly. This is consistent with Sengupta's (2014) discussion of cultural resistance among migrant Lambada groups. Altogether, negotiation of cultural

identity is neither a linear process but a multifaceted, context-specific evolution influenced by class, caste, and urban experience.

Informal sector employment is the crux of migrant Lambada women's empowerment stories. The research identified that garment factory work, domestic work, and construction employment are the most typical types of employment. Although these types of employment generate income, they tend to be insecure, low-waged, and physically stressful. Their absence of social protections like maternity leave, pensions, and occupational protection bars real empowerment significantly. Nevertheless, a few women indicated greater self-confidence, improved financial management, and family decision-making status. The empowerment is therefore partial and conditional, highly susceptible to work environments and family support. For example, women with supportive networks or husbands were more likely to report satisfaction and future work plans. Neetha's (2004) observations regarding the vulnerabilities of informal domestic work resonate with this double reality. Therefore, economic engagement does not necessarily translate into comprehensive empowerment unless institutional arrangements adapt to facilitate these women.

Education and skills are the critical differentiators in the post-migration trajectories of Lambada women. Women with the skills of basic literacy or vocational training had a better chance of finding regular jobs and occupying leadership roles in the community. Illiteracy restricted mobility and fostered intermediaries' exploitation. Outreach of the National Skill Development Corporation continues to be low in Lambada enclaves, indicative of systemic failure. In addition, cultural and linguistic incompatibility in training modules tends to cause dropout. Nevertheless, digital learning has demonstrated promising trends among young Lambada women, particularly through mobile-based apps and vernacular YouTube content. Women who acquired basic tech skills were able to explore alternative livelihoods such as tailoring, beauty services, or online handicraft sales. These results complement the emerging discourse on ed-tech inclusion and its potential for empowerment. Thus, specially designed education interventions need to be locally relevant, linguistically appropriate, and people-driven in order to bring sustainable empowerment.

Medical care and legal entitlements are on the periphery of empowerment but at the core of Lambada women's overall well-being. Migrant women do not have access to reproductive healthcare owing to poor documentation and a lack of outreach by health professionals. Government programs such as Janani Suraksha Yojana and PMJAY are not made optimal use of because of insufficient awareness. Also, fear of hospitals or discrimination dissuades Lambada women from visiting institutions for receiving care. Even legal rights in the form of ration cards, voter IDs, or property deeds are not converted after migration and hence remain outside the legal pale. Membership of SHGs and NGO networks has slightly enhanced the legal literacy level of Lambada women in urban areas. Yet structural obstacles persist as bureaucratic obstacles and digital illiteracy. These findings affirm Das and Mohanty's (2012) findings regarding healthcare exclusion. Therefore, without guaranteed access to health and legal systems, economic empowerment will continue to be insufficient.

The impact of migration on generations also emerged in the testimonies of Lambada women. Mothers would commonly speak of dreams for their daughters to pursue education and escape backbreaking labor, reflecting a change of heart (Lal, 2023). Migrant children in private or semi-private schools were considered symbols of hope and pride. But language difficulties, discrimination based on culture, and limited parental academic assistance continue to impact their educational status. Transference of cultural identity also differs—while some are forgetting Lambada languages and traditions, others are urged to engage in cultural activities. Empowerment is thus not a static endpoint but a generational process. When combined with community support, financial literacy, and institutional engagement, it holds transformative potential. Desai and Banerji's (2019) work affirms the importance of maternal empowerment in securing better outcomes for the next generation. In this way, Lambada women are not just migrants—they are catalysts of systemic change.

7. Findings of Study:

- The research discovers that migration, though frequently forced or necessity-led, has turned into a means for numerous Lambada women to gain access to financial independence and exposure to new settings. Yet such empowerment is conditional and is actually determined by the character of work and assistance frameworks. Jobs in the informal sector, while facilitating some earnings, are tainted with exploitation and instability.
- Numerous Lambada women still experience wage discrimination and gender-based harassment in their work settings. In spite of these issues, some women showed enhanced self-confidence and autonomy in family decision-making. Such conditional empowerment largely relies on urban adaptation, literacy levels, and peer networks. Migration is therefore neither exclusively empowering nor wholly exploitative—it lies in a dynamic zone of negotiation. The empowerment gained is highly unequal, varying by age, place, marital status, and occupation category. Empowerment through migration is a multi-layered and transient process and not an absolute one.
- The analysis brings to the fore that Lambada women do not renounce their cultural identity after migration but instead pursue a perpetual process of cultural negotiation. Urban life forces them to embrace mainstream codes of behavior in public life, but private domains continue to carry Lambada customs and rituals. This double life is both a survival strategy and a silent act of resistance.
- Most women still follow traditional festivals, cook native foods, and converse in Lambada dialects within their homes. Yet, a new generation is slowly losing contact with indigenous ways, particularly in metropolitan areas. The hybrid identity formed after migration is a mix of modernity and tradition. Digital sites are also used by some women to express and maintain Lambada identity. Cultural resilience is more robust in women who have maintained stronger community connections after migration. This implies that migration reconfigures cultural identity, but does not eliminate it—instead, it reconstructs it in changing manner.
- One of the most significant findings of the study is the central role of education and computer literacy in helping Lambada women break exploitative job cycles. Literate or vocationally trained women are in a better position to secure safer

employment, negotiate salaries, and pursue entrepreneurial endeavors. Computer applications, including mobile phones and web-based learning tools, have opened up new sources of self-employment and social interaction.

- In spite of the digital divide, a few women have utilized social media to sell Lambada handicrafts and farm produce. Enrollment in skill training programs, while restricted, has increased their socio-economic mobility. Lack of specifically designed, Lambada-language content is still a deterrent. The observation points out that integration into the digital economy can greatly magnify the impacts of migration-induced empowerment.
- Educational levels among children also increase in families where women enjoy learning and exposure to technology. Education is therefore an intergenerational empowerment multiplier.
- Despite the resilience of Lambada women, the research discovers that their empowerment is undermined by structural and systemic barriers. Healthcare access, legal rights, housing, and social benefits are still inconsistent or unavailable in most urban areas. Most women do not have voter IDs, Aadhaar cards, and ration cards upon migration, making them invisible to welfare schemes.
- Exclusion from healthcare, particularly reproductive healthcare and maternal care, is prevalent on the grounds of linguistic, cultural, and economic exclusions. Legal illiteracy further undermines their strength in landlord-tenant or workplace conflicts. Self-help groups and NGOs somewhat bridge this gap, but their reach is narrow. Public policy frequently neglects to incorporate Lambada populations' mobility and cultural diversity into urban policy. These conclusions underscore that empowerment will be shallow unless structural transformation redresses the urban Lambada phenomenon. Empowerment needs to go beyond economic engagement to embrace health, legal rights, and civic representation.
- The research showcases positive intergenerational changes driven by Lambada women's migration and work experiences. Most women voiced hopes for their daughters to be educated and have professional careers, so they would not have to endure the difficulties they had. Migrant women's children, particularly in semi-urban areas, are gaining access to formal education and digital resources.
- Cultural transmission is declining among some households, but it is being innovatively rekindled through community events and internet sites. Empowered women's daughters are more likely to have better health outcomes, educational success, and political involvement. Such cascading effects imply that even marginal empowerment at an individual level will lead to lasting benefits to the society.
- Nevertheless, policy incentives, education stability, and healthy working conditions enable sustainability of these changes. From this intergenerational perspective, migration has the potential to sow seeds of change that bear fruits in the future. Empowerment therefore seems not as a moment but as a gradual, cumulative process with potential for the future.

8. Conclusion:

The study has critically analyzed how migration influences the lives of Lambada women in modern India, with specific reference to work, cultural identity, and empowerment. It

uncovers that migration, although frequently compelled, offers a space for the redefinition of gender roles and facilitating economic engagement. This empowerment, however, is not standardized or assured—it is influenced by situational factors such as job security, social networks, education, and urban inclusivity. Whereas some women describe enhanced decision-making authority and self-confidence, others become ensnared in the cycles of insecure work. Migration is thus both a place of liberation and a destination of new risks. The experience is highly context-dependent and cannot be collapsed into empowered-oppressed binaries. This requires a multi-dimensional analysis of Lambada women's agency in transition sites. Empowerment, as seen, is dynamic and changes with shifting socio-economic and cultural contexts. Migration, therefore, needs to be examined not just as movement but as transformation.

Cultural identity, previously geographically and socially located in Lambada societies, is radically redefined during migration. The research indicates that whereas certain cultural practices are lost, others are preserved or even renewed in new settings. Lambada women are not passive recipients of change but active agents negotiating between tradition and modernity to build hybrid identities. These negotiations are apparent in the use of language, religious traditions, food consumption, and art forms. The cultural resilience is most apparent in women-led programs that preserve traditional rituals within cities or use digital media to communicate their heritage. This illustrates the potential of Lambada women to exercise cultural agency even in hegemonic urban structures. Still, the fear of assimilation without alienation lurks. Identity then functions as an instrument of adaptation as well as resistance. Identification and respect for such fluidity is vital for policymakers and social workers working among Lambada migrants. Cultural empowerment has to be understood as a critical column of integral development.

Employment and income generation offer Lambada women an entry point into urban economies, but empowerment through work is conditional and uneven. Most women remain confined to informal sectors where protections are minimal and exploitation is rampant. Despite this, earning an income transforms many women's positions within their households and communities. Some gain confidence to negotiate domestic roles, invest in children's education, and participate in decision-making. The research discovers that education, vocational training, and computer literacy can go a long way in improving the quality of this empowerment. Systemic exclusion—caste-based exclusion, gender discrimination, and urban marginalization—still confines possibilities. The nexus between migration, empowerment, and work is hence mediated by intersecting structural disadvantages. Empowerment in its true sense would involve not only access to work but also recognition, rights, and respect at the workplace. This calls for a comprehensive approach involving legal protection, skill development, and socio-cultural responsiveness in urban policy interventions.

Education and information and communication technology inclusion were found to be robust predictors of possible upward mobility for migrant Lambada women. Access to education—formal and informal—weighs directly on the quality of work, social engagement, and awareness of health conditions for these women. In addition, electronic platforms provide space for preserving cultural identity, accessing e-commerce, and

maintaining a connection with home communities. Nonetheless, most people suffer from double disadvantage in low literacy and constrained access to the digital infrastructure. Government programs largely miss this category because of lack of linguistic diversity or lack of outreach in the informal settlements. The research emphasizes that inclusive education and access to technology are not merely empowerment tools but also protections against systemic invisibility. Hence, education and digital equity have to be infused into all empowerment programs. Community-led learning models, pedagogy with roots in culture, and digital literacy camps specific to Lambada requirements are hopeful steps ahead.

The research also emphasizes the role of structural support systems in influencing empowerment outcomes for migrant Lambada women. Though they contribute to urban economies, these women are legally and politically marginalized. Their health services are poor, there are no legal protections, and public policies do not usually cover the intersectionality of gender, tribe, and migration. Although NGOs and self-help groups have made significant interventions, their interventions are usually dispersed and donor priority-based. Empowerment in this scenario has to be redefined to encompass access to rights, healthcare, housing, and civic engagement. Structural inclusion is required to ensure individual empowerment turns out to be sustainable and intergenerational. Unless their specific challenges and contributions receive policy recognition, Lambada migrant women will continue to be invisible in development discussion. Empowerment should thus transcend rhetoric and be rooted in institutional reforms representing ground realities. This is possible only when migration has the potential to become a definitive transformative force for Lambada women. Lambada women are not passive victims of displacement; they are active agents of transformation traversing complicated socio-economic landscapes. Empowerment is not a static destination but a fluid process influenced by numerous variables—whether employment and education or identity and institutional access. Subsequent research needs to take longitudinal and participatory approaches so that it is able to capture these unfolding stories. For policymakers, mainstreaming Lambada women's voices in urban politics, labor rights movements, and digital literacy initiatives is a pressing necessity. Empowerment, in this sense, can be refigured as relational, processual, and deeply contextual—grounded in both struggle and strength, from forests to frontlines.

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