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Five Decades of Scheduled Tribe Status: A Historical Evaluation of the Lambada Movement in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana (1976–2026)

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the fifty-year historical trajectory (1976–2026) of the Lambada movement in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, analysing how their constitutional inclusion as a Scheduled Tribe catalysed rapid socio-political mobility while simultaneously igniting deep institutional resource conflicts and identity battles with the region's indigenous Adivasi populations.

It explores the multi-layered socio-political transformation, mobilization, and systemic challenges experienced by the Lambada community over the last fifty years. Following the landmark 1976 inclusion of the Lambadas into the Scheduled Tribe (ST) category under Article 342 of the Indian Constitution, the community experienced unprecedented upward mobility, transitioning from nomadic traders to a politically and educationally assertive demographic. However, this inclusion simultaneously triggered long-standing frictions with the state's indigenous Adivasi populations, who allege that the Lambadas have disproportionately monopolized reservation quotas and state-allocated resources. This study traces the historical trajectory of the Lambada movement across unified Andhra Pradesh and its post-2014 evolution in independent Telangana, critically analyzing the socio-economic milestones achieved alongside the rising tide of identity conflicts, judicial contentions, and legal disputes surrounding the community's ST status. By deploying a combination of archival research, policy review, and qualitative fieldwork, this paper highlights how the Lambada identity navigating capitalism and regional politics has faced a dual reality: significant structural empowerment counterbalanced by localized dispossession, debt vulnerability, and ongoing constitutional litigation. Ultimately, this evaluation reflects on the broader implications for reservation equity, ethnic tensions, and the future of tribal policy in southern India.

Keywords: Lambada movement, Scheduled Tribe (ST) status, Telangana tribal history, Andhra Pradesh tribal policy, Reservation equity, Article 342, Presidential Order 1976, Affirmative action in India, Adivasi vs. Lambada conflict, Sub-categorization.

Introduction

The 1976 inclusion of the **Lambada community** into India's Scheduled Tribe (ST) ledger stands as one of the most radical experiments in constitutional affirmative action in southern India. Once famed as a fiercely independent, nomadic trading community that managed medieval supply lines, the Lambadas (or *Banjaras*) faced severe structural displacement following colonial-era transport interventions and criminal tribe classifications. The landmark legislative shift under Prime Minister **Indira Gandhi's** administration erased regional boundaries and granted them ST classification across unified Andhra Pradesh. This sparked a profound socio-political metamorphosis. Guided by the trailblazing lobbying of iconic Banjara leaders—most notably **G. Swamy Naik** in the Rajya Sabha alongside **Sri Tilavat Lalsing** and **Umla Naik**—the community mobilized successfully to claim its citizenship rights. Crucial to this five-decade trajectory was former Warangal MP **Dharavath Ravinder Naik**, whose relentless grassroots crusades for tribal preservation, land integration, and educational equity earned him the enduring moniker of "**Banjara Gandhi**".

However, while this constitutional intervention catalyzed unprecedented upward mobility, it also transformed the regional political economy, disrupting historical socio-ecological relationships and creating a complex, adversarial relationship between the Lambadas and the plains' indigenous Adivasi populations.

This paper argues that while the fifty-year trajectory (1976–2026) of Scheduled Tribe status has successfully transformed the Lambada community from marginalized, nomadic pastoralists into a highly educated and politically assertive demographic, it has simultaneously engineered a deeply stratified tribal framework. This system is defined by institutional resource monopolization, intensifying inter-tribal ethnic friction with indigenous Adivasis, and persistent legal vulnerability, proving that affirmative action without localized sub-categorization inadvertently creates hierarchies of displacement within marginalized groups.

Within the context of Indian tribal governance, the "Structural-Welfare" system operates in siloed vacuums. State mechanisms treat "Scheduled Tribe status" purely as an administrative data point for the distribution of jobs, academic seats, and economic subsidies. This detached methodology entirely overlooks the unique cultural histories, land relationships, and geographic realities of different communities. By viewing all listed tribes as a uniform group, the state ignores the deep divide separating historically isolated, forest-dwelling *Adivasis* (such as the Gonds, Koyas, and Chenchus) from traditionally mobile, adaptable, and plains-dwelling communities like the Lambadas.

Existing scholarship on tribal developments in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana consistently proves that a community's pre-existing social capital determines how effectively it can utilize constitutional benefits. Sociological studies show that the Lambadas' historical background in trade and their geographic integration into plains and urban centers allowed them to adapt to modern education and public administration far quicker than forest-dwelling groups. However, critical literature also emphasizes that this rapid transition frequently resulted in localized debt vulnerability, land alienation within traditional *Tandas*, and loss of ancestral cultural identity due to rapid urbanization.

Despite extensive research on general tribal marginalization, current academic literature lacks a clear, comprehensive data model analyzing the long-term impact of boundary removals over a half-century timeframe (1976–2026). Existing studies fail to address how administrative data-sharing issues—specifically between the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, state reservation boards, and judicial commissions—leave the state ill-equipped to resolve competing tribal demands. This administrative gap fails to balance the rightful welfare expectations of the Lambadas with the preservation anxieties of indigenous *Adivasis*.

This study introduces a unified *Tribal Integration and Equity Model*. When the state treats tribal welfare as a standard bureaucratic process without acknowledging localized differences, it creates an inevitable clash. The more adaptable Lambada community successfully secures state-allocated opportunities, while indigenous *Adivasis* feel increasingly excluded from their own constitutional protections. This imbalance creates systemic friction, transforming standard affirmative action policies into volatile legal and socio-political standoffs. Operating under this conceptual framework, this paper evaluates the fifty-year administrative, historical, and political evolution of the Lambada movement across unified Andhra Pradesh and its post-2014 trajectory in Telangana. It aims to provide structural solutions to balance resource distribution fairly, de-escalate regional ethnic tensions, and offer a clear path forward for equitable tribal policy as the movement enters its next fifty years.

The Pre-1976 Era: Colonial Stigmatisation, Economic Displacement, and the Seeds of Mobilisation

For centuries, the Lambadas functioned as the vital economic lifeline of the Indian subcontinent. As a robust nomadic trading community, they operated massive pack-bullock caravans (*tandas*) that transported grain, salt, and essential commodities across difficult terrains, servicing medieval empires, the Mughals, and early European trading companies alike. However, the advent of the British colonial state in the 19th century shattered this traditional socio-economic framework. The expansion of the British railway network, coupled with strict forest conservation laws and new tax regimes, effectively dismantled the Lambadas' commercial monopoly. Displaced from their ancestral trade routes, many *tandas* were forced to settle in the plains, transitioning into agrarian labor and marginal farming under highly vulnerable conditions.

The final blow to the community's social standing came with the enactment of the **Criminal Tribes Act (CTA) of 1871**. Desiring to control mobile populations that evaded colonial taxation and surveillance, the British authorities branded the Lambadas a "hereditary criminal tribe." This legislative branding stripped them of their freedom of movement, subjected them to mandatory police reporting, and institutionalized a deep social stigma that persisted for generations. Even after the Act was repealed post-independence in 1952—reclassifying them as "Habitual Offenders" or Denotified Tribes (DNTs)—the psychological and systemic scars of criminalization left the community severely marginalized in the early decades of independent India.

The struggle to shed this colonial stigma and secure constitutional recognition began in the mid-20th century, driven by early Banjara intellectuals and political pioneers. In the Hyderabad State and neighboring regions, leaders like **Sri Tilavat Lalsing** and **Umla Naik** recognized that socio-economic salvation lay in political representation and education. They began organizing the scattered *tandas*, advocating for land rights, literacy, and community dignity. Concurrently, **G. Swamy Naik** emerged as a vital institutional voice, taking the struggle to national platforms and eventually utilizing his legislative presence in the Rajya Sabha to relentlessly lobby the Central Government. These early leaders argued that the Lambadas' unique vulnerabilities, distinct dialect (Gor Boli), and historical isolation warranted the highest level of constitutional protection: **Scheduled Tribe (ST) status**.

The "Banjara Gandhi" Epoch: Dharavath Ravinder Naik and the 1976 Institutional Shift

As the movement gained momentum in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a new wave of grassroots leadership emerged to bridge the gap between rural *tandas* and state power. Foremost among them was **Dharavath Ravinder Naik**, who would later serve as the Member of Parliament for Warangal. Affectionately and reverently called the "**Banjara Gandhi**", Ravinder Naik adopted a philosophy of relentless, non-violent mass mobilization. He traveled extensively across the remote *tandas* of unified Andhra Pradesh, establishing community networks, resolving local land disputes, and instilling a unified political consciousness among the fragmented sub-clans of the Banjara identity. His charismatic leadership turned localized grievances into a formidable, disciplined political voting bloc that regional political parties could no longer ignore.

The culmination of this decades-long agitation arrived during the administration of Prime Minister **Indira Gandhi**. Recognizing the persistent structural disadvantages faced by the community in southern India, the government enacted the **Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Act, 1976**. This landmark legislation removed the restrictive regional boundaries that had previously kept the Lambadas excluded from the ST ledger in

the Telangana region (where they had been classified as Backward Classes or left unlisted). Under **Article 342** of the Indian Constitution, the Lambadas were officially recognized as a Scheduled Tribe across the entirety of unified Andhra Pradesh.

The 1976 amendment acted as a massive socio-economic catalyst. For a community that possessed an inherent adaptability, urban familiarity, and a strong collective drive to overcome historical stigma, the opening of ST reservation quotas yielded rapid dividends. A dramatic surge in admissions to higher education institutions, medical colleges, and engineering universities redefined the youth landscape. Swift representation within state government services, police forces, and administrative bodies followed. Simultaneously, political consolidation manifested in the establishment of dedicated *tanda* panchayats and an unprecedented increase in the number of Lambada lawmakers in the state assembly.

The Adivasi-Lambada Fractures: Resource Distribution, Legal Battles, and Regional Friction

The rapid upward mobility of the Lambadas, however, triggered unintended structural imbalances within the tribal ecosystem of Andhra Pradesh. The state's indigenous *Adivasi* populations—such as the Gonds, Koyas, Kolams, and Chenchus—possessed a vastly different socio-historical background. As historically isolated, forest-dwelling communities, the Adivasis relied heavily on localized forest economies and lacked the linguistic adaptability and plains-integrated social capital that the Lambadas used to their advantage. Consequently, when competing for the same uniform ST reservation pool, the Adivasis found themselves drastically outpaced by the better-positioned Lambadas.

By the late 1980s and accelerating into the 2000s, Adivasi organizations began openly protesting what they termed the "monopolization" of tribal benefits. They argued that the Lambadas, whom they viewed as non-indigenous settlers to the tribal areas (*Agency tracts*), were consuming a disproportionate share of engineering and medical seats, civil service jobs, and political representation. This led to the formation of powerful Adivasi resistance groups, such as the *Tudum Debba*, which demanded the outright removal of Lambadas from the ST list or, at the very least, a strict **sub-categorization** (classification into A, B, C, D groups) of the ST quota to safeguard indigenous rights.

These systemic frustrations frequently boiled over into direct regional conflicts. The northern district of **Adilabad** (and subsequently parts of Khammam and Warangal) became volatile flashpoints. Adivasis alleged that Lambadas were bypassing the strict protections of the **Andhra Pradesh Land Transfer Regulation Act (1 of 1970)**—which prohibits the transfer of land from tribals to non-tribals—by acquiring traditional Adivasi lands under the cover of their shared ST status. Tensions reached a historical high during the 2017–2018 period, marked by large-scale bandhs, violent physical clashes, the defacement of cultural statues, and a complete socio-economic boycott between the two groups, requiring prolonged state police interventions.

Unable to find a lasting solution through legislative consensus, both factions turned to the courts. Adivasi groups repeatedly petitioned the judiciary to review the constitutional validity of the 1976 Presidential Order, arguing that the inclusion of the Lambadas violated the spirit of protecting vulnerable indigenous tribes. While state governments frequently appointed judicial commissions (such as the Thonse Karanth Commission and subsequent panels) to study tribal differentiation, implementation remained stalled. The Lambada community, under their own powerful organizations, fiercely defended their hard-won constitutional rights, arguing that any attempt to dilute their quota would unfairly penalize their hard-earned educational progress and push them back into historic vulnerabilities.

The Post-2014 Telangana Reality:

Institutional Restructuring, Quota Politics, and Tanda Governance

The formation of **Telangana in 2014** marked a critical turning point in the modern history of the Lambada movement. Moving away from the political dynamics of unified Andhra Pradesh, the newly formed state government faced a unique challenge: managing a highly concentrated, politically assertive tribal population. Over the subsequent decade, Telangana's state-building policies fundamentally reshaped Lambada identity, local administrative power, and relations between different tribal communities.

The most significant local administrative reform for the Lambada community was the state's fulfillment of a long-standing movement demand: **converting exclusive Lambada settlements (*tandas*) into independent Gram Panchayats**. Under the Telangana Panchayat Raj Act, the state upgraded over **3,400 tribal habitations and *tandas*** into self-governing local bodies. This change directly realized the historic movement slogan, "*Maa Thanda Maa Rajyam*" (Our Thanda, Our Rule). It allowed Lambada hamlets to break free from the administrative control of non-tribal main villages. This policy automatically created thousands of new, reserved leadership positions for tribal ward members and *sarpanches*. It allowed Lambadas to directly manage local state funds, build infrastructure, and handle administration right in their neighborhoods. However, this administrative shift also highlighted internal class divisions within the *tandas*, as wealthier, politically connected families often secured these new local leadership positions.

A central pillar of tribal politics in post-2014 Telangana was the state's push to increase Scheduled Tribe reservations from **6% to 10%**, reflecting the higher proportion of tribals in the state's population. The state assembly passed a dedicated bill to raise the reservation ceiling and sent it to the Central Government for inclusion in the **Ninth Schedule** of the Constitution, aiming to bypass the 50% reservation limit set by the Supreme Court. Following years of delays from central authorities, the Telangana government issued an executive order to implement the **10% ST reservation** in state education and public jobs. While the Lambada community strongly supported this expansion to match their growing population, the policy inadvertently worsened tensions with indigenous Adivasis. Adivasi groups shortages argued that without sub-categorization, a simple quota increase would just allow the more urbanized and educated Lambadas to secure an even larger share of the new opportunities.

In the broader political landscape, the concentration of the Lambada voting bloc across districts like Mahabubabad, Warangal, Nalgonda, and Khammam transformed them into crucial players in state elections. Major political parties actively recruited Lambada elites, offering them key assembly tickets and ministerial portfolios. This visibility helped move the community's demands into mainstream policy discussions. However, state authorities frequently had to walk a fine line to balance this engagement. To avoid alienating the Adivasi voting bloc—especially in northern districts like Adilabad—political parties frequently split their outreach, backing Lambada candidates in the plains while supporting Adivasi leaders in forest and *Agency* areas. This approach further institutionalized the deep political and geographical divide within the state's wider tribal identity.

Conclusion and Policy Remediation:

The fifty-year trajectory (1976–2026) of Scheduled Tribe status for the Lambada community in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana stands as a testament to the transformative power of constitutional affirmative action. However, it also serves as a critical case study of the friction that arises when a uniform policy is applied to deeply unequal socio-historical realities. As the region steps into the next half-century of tribal governance, resolving the structural impasse between the upwardly mobile Lambadas and the historically marginalized indigenous Adivasis requires moving away from zero-sum political maneuvering. Instead, it demands the adoption of data-driven, legally sound policy interventions.

The most sustainable solution to the reservation dispute lies in the rationalized sub-categorization of the Scheduled Tribes quota, a mechanism legally fortified by the landmark **Supreme Court Constitution Bench judgment in *State of Punjab v. Davinder Singh* (2024)**, which affirmed the state's power to sub-classify reserved categories to protect the most backward sub-groups. The expanded **10% ST reservation** in Telangana should be structurally partitioned into distinct sub-categories (e.g., ST-A, ST-B) based on empirical vulnerability indicators. Indigenous, Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) and forest-dwelling Adivasis (such as the Gonds, Kolams, and Chenchus) should be granted an exclusive, protected share of the quota proportional to their population. Concurrently, a separate percentage of the quota must be explicitly secured for the Lambada community. This ensures that their hard-earned educational advancements and structural gains over the past five decades are not penalized, keeping their path to upward mobility intact.

Much of the inter-tribal friction in the *Agency tracts* stems from perceived and actual violations of land tenure protections. The state government must deploy modern GIS mapping and digital land registries to conduct transparent land audits in scheduled areas, particularly in flashpoint districts like Adilabad, Komaram Bheem Asifabad, and Khammam. The **Andhra Pradesh Land Transfer Regulation Act (1 of 1970)** must be stringently enforced to prevent non-tribal encroachments while establishing clear, fast-track tribal dispute resolution tribunals. For land disputes occurring *between* Lambadas and Adivasis within Scheduled Areas, specialized joint customary councils—comprising elders from both communities alongside ITDA (Integrated Tribal Development Agency) officials—should be empowered to mediate claims.

The administrative framework of the ITDAs must be decentralized to cater to the distinct geographical realities of different tribes. A dedicated, fully funded institutional body, the **Plains Tribal Development Agency (PTDA)**, should be permanently established to oversee the specific economic, linguistic, and infrastructural needs of Lambada *tandas* located outside Scheduled Areas. This will streamline funding for entrepreneurship, preservation of the *Gor Boli* language, and agrarian modernization. Conversely, existing ITDAs in forest zones should refocus their resources entirely on local bilingual education, forest-rights compliance (FRA 2006), and primary healthcare networks tailored to isolated Adivasi habitations.

Socio-political elite manipulation has frequently weaponized ethnic differences for electoral gains. De-escalating grassroots tensions requires deliberate social bridging. State-sponsored cultural councils should actively integrate celebrations of both Adivasi legacy figures (like Komaram Bheem) and legendary Banjara spiritual leaders (like Sant Sevalal Maharaj). In regions with mixed populations, local government schools should introduce foundational modules celebrating the unique histories, contributions, and struggles of both indigenous forest tribes and the historic nomadic trading caravans, building a shared regional identity among the youth.

The narrative of the Lambada movement is not one of a community receiving undue privilege, but rather a profound testament to how a historically criminalized, displaced nomadic population can utilize constitutional tools to reclaim its agency. The lessons of the 1976–2026 epoch show that affirmative action is most successful not when it treats marginalized populations as a monolith, but when it evolves to balance the scales of internal equity. By executing these structural remedies, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana can transition from an era of ethnic friction into a model of collaborative tribal empowerment, proving that the expansion of one community's rights does not have to mean the erasure of another's survival.

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However, while this constitutional intervention catalyzed unprecedented upward mobility, it also transformed the regional political economy, disrupting historical socio-ecological relationships and creating a complex, adversarial relationship between the Lambadas and the plains' indigenous Adivasi populations.

This paper argues that while the fifty-year trajectory (1976–2026) of Scheduled Tribe status has successfully transformed the Lambada community from marginalized, nomadic pastoralists into a highly educated and politically assertive demographic, it has simultaneously engineered a deeply stratified tribal framework. This system is defined by institutional resource monopolization, intensifying inter-tribal ethnic friction with indigenous Adivasis, and

persistent legal vulnerability, proving that affirmative action without localized sub-categorization inadvertently creates hierarchies of displacement within marginalized groups.

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As the movement gained momentum in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a new wave of grassroots leadership emerged to bridge the gap between rural *tandas* and state power. Foremost among them was **Dharavath Ravinder Naik**, who would later serve as the Member of Parliament for Warangal. Affectionately and reverently called the "**Banjara Gandhi**", Ravinder Naik adopted a philosophy of relentless, non-violent mass mobilization. He traveled extensively across the remote *tandas* of unified Andhra Pradesh, establishing community networks, resolving local land disputes, and instilling a unified political consciousness among the fragmented sub-clans of the Banjara identity. His charismatic leadership turned localized grievances into a formidable, disciplined political voting bloc that regional political parties could no longer ignore.

The culmination of this decades-long agitation arrived during the administration of Prime Minister **Indira Gandhi**. Recognizing the persistent structural disadvantages faced by the community in southern India, the government enacted the **Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Act, 1976**. This landmark legislation removed the restrictive regional boundaries that had previously kept the Lambadas excluded from the ST ledger in the Telangana region (where they had been classified as Backward Classes or left unlisted). Under **Article 342** of the Indian Constitution, the Lambadas were officially recognized as a Scheduled Tribe across the entirety of unified Andhra Pradesh.

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The Post-2014 Telangana Reality:

Institutional Restructuring, Quota Politics, and Tanda Governance

The formation of **Telangana in 2014** marked a critical turning point in the modern history of the Lambada movement. Moving away from the political dynamics of unified Andhra Pradesh, the newly formed state government faced a unique challenge: managing a highly concentrated, politically assertive tribal population. Over the subsequent decade, Telangana's state-building policies fundamentally reshaped Lambada identity, local administrative power, and relations between different tribal communities.

The most significant local administrative reform for the Lambada community was the state's fulfillment of a long-standing movement demand: **converting exclusive Lambada settlements (*tandas*) into independent Gram Panchayats**. Under the Telangana Panchayat Raj Act, the state upgraded over **3,400 tribal habitations and *tandas*** into self-governing local bodies. This change directly realized the historic movement slogan, "*Maa Thanda Maa Rajyam*" (Our Thanda, Our Rule). It allowed Lambada hamlets to break free from the administrative control of non-tribal main villages. This policy automatically created thousands of new, reserved leadership positions for tribal ward members and *sarpanches*. It allowed Lambadas to directly manage local state funds, build infrastructure, and handle administration right in their neighborhoods. However, this administrative shift also highlighted internal class divisions within the *tandas*, as wealthier, politically connected families often secured these new local leadership positions.

A central pillar of tribal politics in post-2014 Telangana was the state's push to increase Scheduled Tribe reservations from **6% to 10%**, reflecting the higher proportion of tribals in the state's population. The state assembly passed a dedicated bill to raise the reservation ceiling and sent it to the Central Government for inclusion in the **Ninth Schedule** of the Constitution, aiming to bypass the 50% reservation limit set by the Supreme Court. Following years of delays from central authorities, the Telangana government issued an executive order to implement the **10% ST reservation** in state education

and public jobs. While the Lambada community strongly supported this expansion to match their growing population, the policy inadvertently worsened tensions with indigenous Adivasis. Adivasi groups shortages argued that without sub-categorization, a simple quota increase would just allow the more urbanized and educated Lambadas to secure an even larger share of the new opportunities.

In the broader political landscape, the concentration of the Lambada voting bloc across districts like Mahabubabad, Warangal, Nalgonda, and Khammam transformed them into crucial players in state elections. Major political parties actively recruited Lambada elites, offering them key assembly tickets and ministerial portfolios. This visibility helped move the community's demands into mainstream policy discussions. However, state authorities frequently had to walk a fine line to balance this engagement. To avoid alienating the Adivasi voting bloc—especially in northern districts like Adilabad—political parties frequently split their outreach, backing Lambada candidates in the plains while supporting Adivasi leaders in forest and *Agency* areas. This approach further institutionalized the deep political and geographical divide within the state's wider tribal identity.

Conclusion and Policy Remediation:

The fifty-year trajectory (1976–2026) of Scheduled Tribe status for the Lambada community in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana stands as a testament to the transformative power of constitutional affirmative action. However, it also serves as a critical case study of the friction that arises when a uniform policy is applied to deeply unequal socio-historical realities. As the region steps into the next half-century of tribal governance, resolving the structural impasse between the upwardly mobile Lambadas and the historically marginalized indigenous Adivasis requires moving away from zero-sum political maneuvering. Instead, it demands the adoption of data-driven, legally sound policy interventions.

The most sustainable solution to the reservation dispute lies in the rationalized sub-categorization of the Scheduled Tribes quota, a mechanism legally fortified by the landmark **Supreme Court Constitution Bench judgment in *State of Punjab v. Davinder Singh* (2024)**, which affirmed the state's power to sub-classify reserved categories to protect the most backward sub-groups. The expanded **10% ST reservation** in Telangana should be structurally partitioned into distinct sub-categories (e.g., ST-A, ST-B) based on empirical vulnerability indicators. Indigenous, Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) and forest-dwelling Adivasis (such as the Gonds, Kolams, and Chenchus) should be granted an exclusive, protected share of the quota proportional to their population. Concurrently, a separate percentage of the quota must be explicitly secured for the Lambada community. This ensures that their hard-earned educational advancements and structural gains over the past five decades are not penalized, keeping their path to upward mobility intact.

Much of the inter-tribal friction in the *Agency tracts* stems from perceived and actual violations of land tenure protections. The state government must deploy modern GIS mapping and digital land registries to conduct transparent land audits in scheduled areas, particularly in flashpoint districts like Adilabad, Komaram Bheem Asifabad, and Khammam. The **Andhra Pradesh Land Transfer Regulation Act (1 of 1970)** must be stringently enforced to prevent non-tribal encroachments while establishing clear, fast-track tribal dispute resolution tribunals. For land disputes occurring *between* Lambadas and Adivasis within Scheduled Areas, specialized joint customary councils—comprising elders from both communities alongside ITDA (Integrated Tribal Development Agency) officials—should be empowered to mediate claims.

The administrative framework of the ITDAs must be decentralized to cater to the distinct geographical realities of different tribes. A dedicated, fully funded institutional body, the **Plains Tribal Development Agency (PTDA)**, should be permanently established to oversee the specific economic, linguistic, and infrastructural needs of Lambada *tandas* located outside Scheduled Areas. This will streamline funding for entrepreneurship, preservation of the *Gor Boli* language, and agrarian modernization. Conversely, existing ITDAs in forest zones should refocus their resources entirely on local bilingual education, forest-rights compliance (FRA 2006), and primary healthcare networks tailored to isolated Adivasi habitations.

Socio-political elite manipulation has frequently weaponized ethnic differences for electoral gains. De-escalating grassroots tensions requires deliberate social bridging. State-sponsored cultural councils should actively integrate celebrations of both Adivasi legacy figures (like Komaram Bheem) and legendary Banjara spiritual leaders (like Sant Sevalal Maharaj). In regions with mixed populations, local government schools should introduce foundational modules celebrating the unique histories, contributions, and struggles of both indigenous forest tribes and the historic nomadic trading caravans, building a shared regional identity among the youth.

The narrative of the Lambada movement is not one of a community receiving undue privilege, but rather a profound testament to how a historically criminalized, displaced nomadic population can utilize constitutional tools to reclaim its agency. The lessons of the 1976–2026 epoch show that affirmative action is most successful not when it treats marginalized populations as a monolith, but when it evolves to balance the scales of internal equity. By executing these structural remedies, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana can transition from an era of ethnic friction into a model of collaborative tribal empowerment, proving that the expansion of one community's rights does not have to mean the erasure of another's survival.

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