

Participation of the Telugu Speaking Immigrants in the Religious Activities of the Host Society

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ABSTRACT Adjustment is perhaps the most fundamental postulate underlying all immigration programmes. On arriving at the place of immigration the immigrants face an entirely new situation in which they have to undergo a long process of reorientation. They have to adjust to totally different patterns of behaviour, new values and ideologies which may differ considerably from the ones they were used to. The immigrants try to put some order into the alien unstructured situation. Their participation in various socio-cultural activities of the host society is an interesting and significant aspect for anthropological exploration. In this paper an attempt has been made to examine the nature of participation of a group of Telugu speaking immigrants in the religious activities of the host society. The study was conducted in Attabira block of Bargarh district in western Orissa. With the help of empirical data the paper tried to verify some hypotheses in the context of participation of the immigrants in the religious activities of the host society.

Religion has a universal character. Throughout the history of humanity, the religious impulse has been always present as one of the great forces that makes and alters man's destiny. The deeper we delve, the more evident it is how inseparable is the religious instinct from human life and society. Religion always strengthens group solidarity. It has played an important role in the perpetuation and development of human society from the very beginning. Religious order exists in every society. The said order, revolving around cultural values and ideologies, supplies an ultimate idea of reality. In both simple and complex societies religion is still an effective means of social control. It performs an important function of integrating the community. Compared with other aspects of social life, religious beliefs and rituals change very slowly. The nature of religious participation of the members of an immigrant community is very important one from an anthropological perspective. It is very interesting to examine the nature of religious adjustment the immigrants and their chil-

dren make in the new set-up.

Religious conflict is one of the crucial agents for global unrest. Communal riots in various parts of India seem to be an almost regular feature. Keeping in view this contemporary problem in India, it is desirable that one should ponder over the matter as to who adopts more in an alien society; which migrant group merges quickly and receives the bounty of host society.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There have been a few systematic attempts to study the process of religious adjustment of the immigrants.

Raju (1989) in his study on the adjustment process of the Telugu immigrants in Tungabhadra region of Karnatak arrived at the conclusion that there is a tendency among the immigrants to absorb local Kannadiga festivals along with their own traditional festivals. This is a kind of adjustment and integration with the local community and its cultural and religious ethos. Nair (1978) is of the opinion that the stronghold of religion in the hearts and minds of the immigrants of Rastapeth is reflected in their numerous religious associations. Religion appears as an important concern in all the activities of the community. They, as a matter of fact, form the core of the community's social life. Inbantham (1988) in his study on Tamil migrants in Delhi has found that they have temples dedicated to Marriamma - the common village goddess in Tamilnadu. Temple worship also follows the settlement pattern. Parsons (1951) views that the ultimate balancing of the motivational and moral economy is the crucial function of religion in a sociological context seems to mean that religion mitigates the discrepancy between institutionally legitimized expectations and the actual outcome of events. It appears that major function of religion in our

internal pattern is perhaps its capacity to mitigate the discrepancy between a set of institutionally legitimized expectations as conceived by the immigrants in their native place and a set of institutionally legitimized expectations as conceived by the receiving society. This, however, is not a new hypothesis but only a more accurate way of describing the way of one of the variables, the adjustment process. Upreti (1981) in his study on social organization of the migrant group has arrived at a significant finding that interaction with the members of the host society has brought about significant changes in the religious attitude and ritualistic mode of the Kumaon migrants in the city of Jeipore. Mehta (1989) in his research findings has claimed how religion appears to be key factor in influencing immigrants' way of life. People of all faiths on the island are more religious than their counterparts elsewhere. The attendance at the church is generally quite impressive. The religious festivals of the Hindus or the Muslims or those of the Chinese are observed with great pomp and show.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

Against this backdrop, an attempt has been made in this study to assess the participation of a group of Telugu speaking immigrants in the religious activities of the host society. It paper also examines the possible correlation between religious participation of the immigrants and their socio-economic backgrounds, viz., length of residence, age, income and education.

HYPOTHESES

The study has been designed to verify the following hypothesis:

1. The length of residence of the immigrants in the host society is directly proportional to the degree of their participation in the local religious activities.
2. Immigrants of younger generation adjust themselves better in the religious sphere than that of the elderly persons with relatively fixed habit.
3. Immigrants with higher income and education participate more actively in the religious activities of the host society than that of the

immigrants with low education and income.

BACKGROUND

Attabira block of Bargarh district in Western Orissa was the universe of our study. The block has an outstanding reputation in the sphere of agricultural economy of the state. It is located between Sambalpur and Bargarh on the side of the number of six national highways (connecting Calcutta with Madras). The district headquarters of Sambalpur and Bargarh are situated at a distance of 35 kms and 13 kms away from Attabira respectively. This region has direct rail and road links with Andhra Pradesh, the immigrants' native state.

The "Hirakud Dam Irrigation Project" was launched in the year 1964. The new irrigation channel started supplying the left out water of the electric turbines perennially to the agricultural field of the region. Under various schemes of the project, subsidies were given to the agriculturists of the region for purchasing HYV seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, etc.

The response of the local agriculturists was surprisingly very poor in terms of availing of the aforesaid facilities. The poor response of illiterate local agriculturists could be mainly attributed to the speed of a peculiar rumour that after production of electricity the water loses its essence and, therefore, is of no utility for agricultural purposes. It got propagated like wild fire. The local agriculturists due to their low level of education and inadequate exposure to the future world believed the rumour and thus did not avail of various facilities under the irrigation project.

Such a situation forced the then Chief Minister of the state to give a paper advertisement throwing invitation to the agriculturists of the neighbouring states to come forward and accept the various facilities provided under the irrigation project. The information came to the notice of a few Telugu speaking agriculturists, mostly from East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh. These Telugu speaking agriculturists from lower and middle economic strata who had uneconomic holdings started showing a kind of interest for the Hirakud Dam Irrigation Project. Within a small span of time many of them reached here and started availing the facilities of

the new project. The chain migration continued with the large scale of entry of wives, children, relatives, village mates, service castes, etc. that slowly led to the growth and development of a Telugu speaking community in the Bargarh district in general and Attabira block in particular.

METHODOLOGY

About 3000 Telugu migrant households are estimated to be present in all the 19 Gram Panchayats of Attabira block. The present study takes into account only Larasara Gram Panchayat, which has highest concentration of Telugu speaking population under the block. Data were collected mainly by interview, observation and case study methods. The basic unit of observation for the study was the household. The heads-of-the-households were formally interviewed for the collection of data about himself and also in respect of other members severally. A duly pre-tested semi-structured interview schedule was used to interview 300 heads-of-the-households in the ethnic neighbourhood. Elderly members of the immigrant community were also contacted to obtain historical data about the community.

We have endeavoured to analyse the religious participation of the sample immigrants on the basis of their length of residence, age, income and education. A relatively much deeper probe is made on certain selected areas. Data on the nature of their visit to local temples, their knowledge about local festivals, participation in local festivals have also been gathered and analysed.

ANALYSIS

The total population of immigrants of Larasara Gram Panchayat is 1314 out of which 694 (52.96 per cent) are male and 618 (47.03 per cent) are female. Majority of the immigrants is from Kamma caste. However, there are also immigrants from other castes such as Brahmin, Kapu, Yellama, Devangulu, Kamsali, Chetti Balija, Mangali, Sakali, Biswakarma and Tenkulu. Of the total population, 51.67 per cent are literate and 48.33 per cent are illiterate. As many as 68.66 per cent respondents have agriculture as their primary occupation, 7.33 per cent follow traditional occupations like washing clothes, weaving goldsmiths, etc. The percentage of immigrants with occupations involving skilled, unskilled and contract labour, and service in government/private company is meagre. Income structure of the informants reveals that 47.66 per cent have low income, whereas 37.66 per cent and 44.66 per cent are from medium and high income brackets respectively.

It is found that 13.9 per cent of respondents who have resided here less than 10 years do not worship the local deities. However, sample immigrants irrespective of their varying length of residence visit local temple frequently.

To donate something to the God/Goddess or temple is an integral part of the religious activities. It was noticed that the number of immigrants who donate something either in cash or kind to the local deities is significantly less than those who do not donate anything. Maximum percentage of immigrants in the 25 years or above length

Table 1: Respondents' length of residence-wise participation in various religious activities of the host society (N=300)

<i>Length of Residence</i>	<i>Worship Local Deities</i>		<i>Visit Local Temples</i>		<i>Oath before Local Deities</i>		<i>Donation to Local Deities</i>	
	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>
Less than 10 years	05 (13.9)	31 (86.1)	2 (5.06)	34 (94.4)	29 (80.6)	07 (19.4)	07 (19.4)	29 (80.6)
10 to 14 years	01 (03.7)	26 (96.3)	02 (07.5)	25 (92.5)	17 (63.0)	10 (37.0)	04 (14.8)	23 (85.2)
15 to 19 years	03 (07.5)	37 (92.5)	03 (07.5)	37 (92.5)	31 (77.5)	09 (22.5)	04 (10.00)	36 (90.0)
20 to 24 years	06 (06.4)	88 (93.6)	04 (04.3)	90 (95.7)	70 (74.5)	24 (25.5)	14 (14.9)	80 (85.1)
25 years and above	06 (05.8)	97 (94.2)	04 (03.8)	99 (96.2)	72 (69.9)	31 (30.1)	08 (07.8)	95 (92.2)
Total	21 (08.0)	279 (93.0)	16 (05.3)	284 (97.7)	219 (73.0)	81 (27.0)	37 (12.3)	263 (87.7)

or residence category have given some donation to the local deities. The percentage is lowest in case of sample immigrants who have lived here less than 10 years. For immigrants from other categories, the percentages vary between 85 per cent and 90 per cent (Table 1).

As regards nature of visit of the immigrants to the local temples in terms of their length of residence, it was found that majority of the immigrants visit local temple occasionally. Of the 300 sample residents, only 6 (5.33 per cent) have never visited local temples. Identical percentage of respondents rarely visit local temples. 71 (23.67 per cent) respondents frequently visit lo-

and participation in local festivals. Therefore, our initial hypothesis that "the length of residence of the immigrants in the host society is directly proportional to the degree of their participation in the local religious activities" is rejected in the light of our field data.

In terms of age group wise religious participation of the immigrants, it was found that highest percentage of respondents who are above 40 years of age frequently worship local deities. Our respondents who are less than 20 years of age frequently worship local deities and also visit the local temples. However, it is significant to note that very low percentage of immigrants take oath

Table 2: Respondents' length of residence-wise nature of visit to local temples (N=300)

Length of Residence	Nature of Visit				Total
	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	
Less than 10	02 (05.56)	01 (02.78)	23 (63.88)	10 (27.78)	36 (100.0)
10 to 14	01 (3.70)	00	21 (77.78)	05 (18.52)	27 (100.0)
15 to 19	03 (07.50)	03 (07.50)	23 (57.50)	11 (27.50)	40 (100.0)
20 to 24	05 (05.32)	03 (03.19)	66 (70.21)	20 (21.28)	94 (100.0)
25 and above	05 (04.85)	09 (08.73)	64 (62.14)	25 (24.27)	103 (100.0)
Total	16 (05.33)	16 (05.33)	197 (65.67)	71 (23.67)	300 (100.0)

$\chi^2 = 19.1$
D.F. = 12
P < .05%

cal temples. The sample respondents' nature of visit to local temples in terms of their length of residence do not indicate any specific trend. Chi-square test also finds no significant relation between these two variables (Table 2).

Data on the nature of participation of our sample respondents in local festivals indicate that immigrants with 15-19 and 20-24 years length of residence categories participate more actively (although passively) than those who have been inhabiting here for less than 15 years or more than 25 years. Chi-square test confirms the finding that respondents' length of stay is not very much related to their participation in local festivals (Table 3).

From the above analysis it is evident that length of residence is not significantly related with respondents nature of visit to local temple

Table 3: Respondents' length of residence-wise nature of participation in local festivals (N=300)

Length of Residence	Nature of Participation			Total
	Non-Participation	Passive	Active	
Less than 10	27 (75.00)	09 (25.00)	00	36 (100.0)
10 to 14	21 (77.78)	06 (22.22)	00	27 (100.0)
15 to 19	21 (52.50)	17 (42.50)	02 (05.00)	40 (100.0)
20 to 24	52 (55.32)	39 (41.49)	03 (03.19)	94 (100.0)
25 and above	53 (51.46)	48 (56.60)	02 (01.94)	103 (100.0)
Total	174 (58.00)	119 (39.67)	07 (2.33)	300 (100.0)

$\chi^2 = 13.20$
D.F. = 8
P > .05%

before the local deities. Highest percentage of immigrants from the age group 20-39 years take oath before local deities. The percentage of immigrants in all the age groups are significantly high apropos 'yes' response to the question "do you donate anything to local deities?" than the immigrants who answered in negative (Table 4).

A deeper probe into the age group wise nature of visit to local temple reveals that adult immigrants in the age group below 20 years (cent per cent) and 20-39 years (6.94 per cent) are the "most occasional" and "rare visitors" to the local temple respectively. Chi-square test finds no significant relation between respondents' age group and nature of visit to local temple (Table 5).

As regards the nature of religious participation, it was found that cent per cent respondents below 20 years of age and 50.69 per cent respondents from the age group 20-39 participate

passively in various local festivals. Respondents who are 60 years and above hardly participate in the local festivals. As an exception only one respondent in the aforesaid age group actively participate in the local festivals. Chi-square test shows that the age group of the respondents has a significant bearing on their participation in local festivals (Table 6).

From the above analysis it is clearly evident that age group of the respondent is positively correlated with their participation in local festivals. So the hypothesis that "immigrants of younger generation adjust themselves much better in the religious sphere than that of the elderly persons with relatively fixed habit" is found to be correct.

Data on income wise religious participation reveal that 97.7 per cent respondents from high-income group and 91.6 per cent respondents from the low-income group worship the local

Table 4: Respondents' length of residence-wise participation in various religious activities (N=300)

Age Group	Worship Local Deities		Visit Local Temples		Oath before Local Deities		Donation to Local Deities	
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Below 20 years	00	02 (100)	00	02 (100)	01 (50.0)	01 (50.)	00	02 (100)
20 to 39	02 (01.4)	172 (98.6)	06 (04.2)	138 (95.8)	102 (70.8)	42 (29.2)	17 (11.8)	127 (88.2)
40 to 59	14 (12.3)	100 (87.7)	06 (05.3)	108 (94.7)	84 (73.7)	30 (26.3)	14 (12.3)	100 (87.7)
60 and above	05 (12.5)	35 (87.5)	04 (10.0)	36 (90.0)	32 (80.0)	08 (20.0)	06 (15.0)	34 (85.0)
Total	21 (07.0)	279 (93.0)	16 (05.3)	284 (97.7)	219 (73.0)	81 (27.0)	37 (12.3)	263 (87.7)

Table 5: Respondents' age group wise nature of visit to local temples (N=300)

Age Group	Nature of Visit				Total
	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	
Below 20 years	00	00	02 (100.0)	00	02 (100.0)
20 to 39	04 (02.78)	10 (06.94)	100 (69.44)	30 (20.83)	144 (100.0)
40 to 49	08 (07.02)	05 (04.39)	70 (61.40)	31 (27.19)	114 (100.0)
60 and above	04 (10.00)	01 (02.50)	25 (62.50)	10 (25.00)	40 (100.0)
Total	16 (05.33)	16 (05.33)	197 (65.67)	71 (23.67)	300 (100.0)

$\chi^2 = 8.36$
D.F. = 9
P > .05%

Table 6: Respondents' age group wise nature of participation in local festivals (N=300)

Age Group	Nature of Participation			
	Non-Participation	Passive	Active	Total
Below 20	00	02 (100.0)	00	02 (100.0)
25 to 39	68 (47.22)	73 (56.69)	03 (02.08)	144 (100.0)
40 to 59	73 (64.04)	38 (33.33)	03 (02.63)	114 (100.0)
60 and above	33 (82.50)	06 (15.00)	01 (02.50)	40 (100.0)
Total	174 (58.00)	119 (39.67)	07 (2.33)	300 (100.0)

 $\chi^2 = 27.8420$

D.F. = 6

P < .05%

deities. Similar trend is also marked apropos visit of the migrants to local temple. However, it was found that there is no significant difference between low and medium-income group immi-

age of respondents from low-income group do not visit local temples. Chi-square test corroborates the finding that income of the respondents has a significant bearing on their frequency of visit to local temples (Table 8).

Data on participation in local festivals reveal that 69.93 per cent and 38.64 per cent respondents in low and high-income group do not participate in any of the local festivals. 59.07 per cent respondents from high-income group participate passively and 2.27 per cent from the same group participate actively in the local festivals. Chi-square test shows that income of the respondents has significant association with the nature of their participation in local festivals (Table 9).

Data on education wise religious participation reveal that there is no significant correlation between educational level of the respondents and their frequency of visiting and worshipping the local deities. As regard oath taking before local

Table 7: Respondents' Income-wise degree of participation in various religious activities of the host society (N=300)

Level of Income	Worship Local Deities		Visit Local Temples		Oath before Local Deities		Donation to Local Deities	
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Low	12 (8.4)	131 (91.6)	11 (4.7)	132 (92.3)	106 (74.1)	37 (25.9)	26 (18.2)	117 (81.8)
Medium	08 (7.1)	105 (92.9)	04 (3.5)	109 (96.5)	78 (69.0)	35 (31.0)	08 (07.1)	105 (92.9)
High	01 (2.3)	43 (97.7)	01 (2.3)	43 (97.7)	35 (79.5)	09 (20.5)	03 (6.8)	41 (93.2)
Total	21 (07.0)	279 (93.0)	16 (05.3)	284 (97.7)	219 (73.0)	81 (27.0)	37 (12.3)	263 (87.7)

grants apropos worshipping local deities and visiting local temple. 93.2 per cent respondents in high-income group give donation to the local deity; the corresponding figure for the respondents in the medium-income group is 92.9 per cent. Thus, no significant difference is marked for income-wise respondents' worshipping of local deities and visiting to local temples (Table 7).

However, respondents' income wise frequency of visit to the temple shows a different trend. 15.38 per cent and 31.82 per cent of the immigrants from low and high-income group frequently visit local temples. Highest percent-

Table 8: Respondents' level of income-wise nature of visit to local temples (N=300)

Age Group	Nature of Visit				Total
	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	
Low	10 (06.99)	06 (04.20)	105 (73.43)	22 (15.38)	143 (100.0)
Medium	05 (04.42)	03 (02.65)	70 (61.95)	35 (30.97)	113 (100.0)
High	01 (02.27)	07 (15.91)	22 (50.00)	14 (31.82)	44 (100.0)
Total	16 (05.33)	16 (05.33)	197 (65.67)	71 (23.67)	300 (100.0)

 $\chi^2 = 291.64$

D.F. = 6

P < 12.592

Table 9: Respondents' level of income wise nature of participation in local festivals (N=300)

Level of Income	Nature of Participation			
	Non-Participation	Passive	Active	Total
Low	100 (69.93)	40 (27.97)	03 (02.10)	143 (100.0)
Medium	57 (50.44)	53 (46.90)	03 (02.66)	113 (100.0)
High	17 (38.64)	26 (50.09)	01 (02.27)	44 (100.)
Total	174 (58.00)	119 (39.67)	07 (2.33)	300 (100.0)

 $\chi^2 = 26.61$

D.F. = 4

P < .05%

deities, it was found that highest percentage (44.4 per cent) of the literate respondents without any formal education take oath before local deity (Table 10).

A deeper probe into the respondents education-wise religious participation reveals that as many as 73.10 per cent illiterate respondents are the occasional visitors to the local temples. Literate immigrants without any formal education are next to illiterate respondents. 28.92 per cent immigrant with U.P. and M.E. educational standard and 11.76 per cent respondents with educational standard H.S.C. (10+) and above visit local temple frequently and rarely respectively. Chi-square test confirms that educational standard of the respondents and the frequency of their visit to local temple are significantly related (Table 11).

Data regarding education level and nature of participation in local festival reveal that 3.19 per

cent and 8.82 per cent immigrant with educational levels U.P., M.E. and Matriculation and above respectively participate actively in local festivals. Lowest percentage (34.48 per cent) from illiterate group and highest percentage (50.00 per cent) from matriculate and above educational category are the passive participants in local festivals. 64.83 per cent from illiterate group and 41.18 per cent from matriculate and above educational category are the non-participants in local festivals. Chi-square test confirms that education of the respondents has significant association with their participation in the local festivals (Table 12).

Thus, statistical analysis shows that respondents from high income group and better educational standard participate more actively in the local festivals than that of the members of other

Table 11: Respondents' level of education wise nature of visit to local temples (N=300)

Level of Education	Nature of Visit				
	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Total
Illiterate	08 (05.52)	04 (02.76)	106 (73.10)	27 (18.62)	145 (100.0)
Literate without formal education	02 (07.41)	00	18 (66.67)	07 (25.23)	27 (100.0)
Literate (U.P. and M.E.)	04 (4.26)	08 (08.51)	55 (58.51)	27 (28.92)	94 (100.0)
Matriculate and above	02 (05.88)	04 (11.76)	18 (52.94)	10 (10.64)	34 (100.0)
Total	16 (05.33)	16 (05.33)	197 (65.67)	71 (23.67)	300 (100.0)

 $\chi^2 = 27.54$

D.F. = 9

P < .05%

Table 10: Respondents' level of education wise participation in various religious activities (N=300)

Level of Education	Worship Local Deities		Visit Local Temples		Oath before Local Deities		Donation to Local Deities	
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Illiterate	09 (6.2)	136 (93.8)	09 (6.2)	136 (93.8)	103 (71.0)	42 (29.0)	18 (12.4)	127 (87.6)
Literate without formal education	01 (3.7)	26 (96.3)	02 (7.4)	25 (92.6)	15 (55.6)	12 (44.4)	03 (11.1)	24 (88.9)
Literate (U.P. and M.E.)	07 (7.4)	87 (92.6)	03 (3.2)	91 (96.8)	76 (80.9)	18 (19.1)	12 (12.8)	82 (87.2)
Matriculate and above	04 (11.76)	30 (88.24)	02 (5.88)	32 (94.12)	25 (73.53)	09 (26.47)	04 (11.76)	30 (88.24)
Total	21 (07.0)	279 (93.0)	16 (05.3)	284 (97.7)	219 (73.0)	81 (27.0)	37 (12.3)	263 (87.7)

Table 12: Respondents' level of education wise participation in the local festivals (N=300)

Level of Education	Nature of Participation			Total
	Non-Participation	Passive	Active	
Illiterate	94 (64.83)	50 (34.48)	01 (00.69)	145 (100.0)
Literate without formal education	14 (51.85)	13 (48.15)	00 (00.0)	27 (100.0)
Literate U.P. and M. E.	52 (55.32)	39 (41.49)	03 (03.19)	94 (100.0)
Matriculate and above	14 (41.18)	17 (50.00)	03 (08.82)	34 (100.0)
Total	174 (15.00)	119 (33.33)	07 (28.67)	300 (23.00)

 $\chi^2 = 14.37$

D.F. = 6

P < .05%

categories. Chi-square test confirms the finding that income and education of the respondents are positively co-related with their participation in the same. Thus, our hypothesis that "immigrants with higher income and education participate more actively in the religious activities of the host society than that of the immigrants with lower education and income" is found to be correct.

A kind of adjustment is noticed in the sphere

of religious participation of the immigrants in the host society. It is important to note here that all the immigrants do not have the same level of flexibility to make adjustment in religious sphere. Their participation in the religious activities of the host society is very much dependent upon some socio-economic variables. As the immigrants are Hindus, some of them do not find it difficult to make marginal adjustments within the broad framework. Such adjustment makes those immigrants more acceptable in the host society. However, in the inner core of life, most of the immigrants remain consistent with their own normative structure, value pattern and ideology.

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