

# **Impact of Religious Conversion on the Social Life of Banjara Tribal Community: An Empirical Study of Telangana State**

By

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## **I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

The tribal population has unfolded across the diverse culture which constitutes 8.9 percent of the total population of Bharat. It consists of 20 percent of the world's tribal population. The tribal society of Bharat is a heterogeneous community but homogenous subgroups within which they are culturally, socially, and ecologically connected to each other with a legacy of practices like traditional, religious, spiritual, dress patterns, food, and belief systems, despite it seems to have common characteristics, etc., However, the constitution of Bharat makes special provisions for reservation, the right to protect their dignity, quality of life, and well-being, with social, cultural, and identity (Article: 29 (1) – 30). In general, there are many tribal communities in the different parts of our country and regions, many of them still maintaining their primitive culture, social, geographical, and ecological practices, belief system, indigenous knowledge, etc.,

In a similar tone, the ancient indigenous Banjara community of Telangana has a significant belief system (Deities), religious practices, social, and cultural identity, etc., After the Telangana State formation, the present government was recognized as a separate Gram panchayat/Thanda panchayat of various Thanda habitations. Indeed, this shows greater credibility and significance of achievement and freedom of ruling on to their own legacy and headship/leadership. The other side was disheartened sign on the Banjara community by the situation with innocent, unpredicted coerced religious conversion within the community trendy like water under the mat spreading. Perhaps, this kind of situation gradually dilutes social relationships, vanishes cultural identity, and degradation of the existing social practices in society.

Since its inception, the Banjara Samaj has been closely associated with the Hindu religion and its traditional outlook. Certainly, there is no association with Christianity religion either culturally, socially, religiously, and so on. So, Christian conversion is one of the heinous practices that have been happening in the community for the last two to three decades. Conversion from one religion to another reveals that an individual has a social, psychological,

and one kind of mental Diarrhea, social illness, and mental trauma. Ultimately, the mindset of individuals and advertent commitment to spread. This is a significant change in the situation in one's social life that creates an identity crisis and social relationships within the community and family whereas the conversion establishes a new identity and recognition. Perhaps, that leads to many causes in social life, cultural, spiritual, indigenous knowledge, food habits, traditions, rituals, festivals, and moreover health-related factors that arise in an individual's social life, happiness, family bonding, and even the community reciprocal. Once a conversion from an existing to a new adoption it will bring many dynamics and social transformations within the community and even social life disorders of the individuals.

Religious conversion is a personal psychological mechanism of the human mind or mechanism. It will be one kind of social factor that will lead to social isolation within the community. In a similar tone individual feelings uncomfortable, and unhappiness lead to social disturbance and social disorder of social life at the end of social self-realization. Those who are switched from an existing religion/indigenous to a new religion birth sign of many social dynamics of their social life. *One of the reasons is that Christians believe in a way to heaven, people will get it and remove their sins. This is a message influencing diffusion through Christian followers.* It is one kind of social, psychological syndrome. Heaven or hell is a hypnotism of social propaganda created by many foolish individuals who are apathetic and unemployed individuals in society.

## **II. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY**

The significance of the study is to explore the impact of religious conversion and its consequences on the Banjara Tribal community. This study explores the pre- and post-religious conversion factors like social, cultural, environmental, psychic dynamics, social anxieties, pathological conditions, and mental diarrhea. Moreover, to study also explores the social life and community life of Banjara Samaj with Christian conversion in the present context. In addition, it draws the pros and cons of religious conversion consequences examine, when certain individuals shift to a new religious belief or experience would inculcate it. This will help to Banjara tribal community to understand and causative factors then how conversion will lead to the diluting, destruction, and vanishing of their indigenous legacy and heritage in Telangana.

## **III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

In general, every individual has a wish for social transformation, social development, and economic etc, which is a nature of righteousness. At the same time, the entity of social, ecological, and cultural identity of a particular community is a very sensitive subject matter

and a significant belief system. Religious conversion is a social stigma that will lead to many social distractions in the social life of the individuals mostly Banjara Tribal community in Telangana with the name of Heaven.

Perhaps, many social scientists believe that there is no Heaven or hell outside or inside of the cosmos, only present life. If you think likewise, it surely has a psychological trauma and social syndrome. Therefore, there is a need to address the social factors with religious conversion and its consequences on the Banjara Community in Telangana.

#### IV. CONCEPTUALIZATION

**Religious Conversion:** It is an adoption of a set of belief systems that partially fascinate to attach and acknowledge to self with one religious value to the exclusion of others. Religion conversion can be constructed as a process of attaining a new religious belief system or value system by leaving one's faith or religion. It would be emphasized that religious conversion is can self-deception, the leaving of adherence to one value and affiliation with another. This is the Individual blind perception and psycho-social issues but there is no evidence verified for social transformation with the religious conversion.

**Social Life:** In general, *life* is difficult to define notion and understand it. It is about a simple existence journey from the ability to be born as an organic being (Human being) to emancipation, progress, reproduce, and die with an experienceable impression in society. On the other hand, **Social** is a fruitful association with society as a member. As an individual member of a specific community having shared certain common experiences, indigenous culture, interests, spiritual feelings/rejoice, belief systems, traditions, role feeling, discipline, and regulations, etc.,

This sense of connection as an individual's member in a particular community allows them to get closer and usually encompasses social life activities. So, *social life* encompasses various activities that take place in the public or community sphere. They would live inside the community ethos and within the family. As we can affirm an individual member would be nurtured in the socialization process and grow up with family and community bonding by indigenous practices in the nature inheritance itself. They can be acquired highly through oral storytelling and other modes of communication/conversation in all aspects related to community inheritance from one generation to another generation. It is significant to establish religious practices and belief systems related to religious reliance or cultural practices.

#### 4.1. Understating the Concept of ‘Tribe’ and the History of Tribal Community.

The concept of the tribe is dynamic. It has certain common features besides its dynamic nature; they are homogeneous subgroups comparatively lagging behind the mainstream society in development. Bharat is a country of diverse communities and includes social and cultural practices. Tribals are known as *Adivasis* or *aborigines* which means first or original dwellers of a land or aboriginals. The term ‘Adivasis’ (Adi: Original; Vasi; inhabitant) has recently gained currency in order to designate these groups ([Mridula et al; 2021; p.27](#)).

Etymologically, the term ‘*Tribe*’ derives its origin from the word ‘*tribes*’ meaning a divining (or a pronged divining) of the *Roman* people. Since inception, the term has no such pejorative as came to be assigned later on. It is difficult to define the term judiciously. It has been defined by scholars according to the existing conditions, understanding, knowledge, and demands of the time. **Collins Dictionary (1987; p.156)** defines a tribe as a group of people of the same race, who share the same, who share the same customs, religion, language, or land. Among preliterate people, a group of persons, a group of persons, families or clans believed to be descended from a common ancestor and forming a close community under a leader, or chief. Especially when they are not considered to have reached a very advanced level of civilization. **Oxford Dictionary (Vol. XI.1993; p.39)** defined a tribe as a race of people now applied especially to a primary aggregate of people in a primitive or barbarous condition, under a headman or chief. In the case of Bharat tribal society does not fit in the standardized definitions given by the different dictionaries. This diversity among Tribal poses a challenge to define a ‘tribe; in the Bharatiyakaran context. However, the first primary minister of (India) Bharat, **Jawaharlal Nehru** made a clear point by explaining the tribal society of India (Bharat), ‘Most historical writings have sought to reflect man’s disunity, disrespect, shallow and therefore much of what has been written about the tribal legacy in the various parts of India (Bharat)..... such a colonial ethos has undermined the whole concept of the study of tribal social life, dignity, and this is why we do not have a coherent, logical, or broadly applicable definition of a ‘tribe’ further he feels and strongly considered that their (Tribal) way of life and culture are superiors to ours” ([TCR& TI, Tribal Welfare Department, AP, Hyderabad; 1989; p.1-56](#)).

Scheduled Tribes (ST) of Bharat are the earliest inhabitants or indigenous people of the country who were unable to defend themselves and were gradually forced to recede before the invading hordes of such people as the Dravidians, Indo-Aryans, and Mongols coming from the West, North – West, and North – East respectively, who were not only superior in numerical strength but also in mechanical equipment, the indigenous people thus took shelter in the mountain

depth and thick jungles, where a considerable number of them are still found and have been estimated to be about ten million ([Mridula et. al 2024, p.28](#)).

In general, many tribal communities love to live in isolation from their natural surroundings and they develop certain specific features, viz., typical cultural background, tradition, belief system (deities), geography, ecology, demography characteristics, economy, language, identity, and political system of their own, etc.,

## **V. Religious Practices and Social Life of Banjara Community**

According to **Tylor (1913)**, “Religion is the belief in supernatural beings”. Tribal religion in Bharat seems to have a common feature that all beings are endowed with a living spirit and the significance of spiritual practices in general. Religion/belief system is one of the foremost components that exist irrespective of different forms of human social formations. There are different schools of thought that explain and describe the different forms, meanings, and nature of religion evident from prehistoric and historic periods of human existence/survival. Every entity of the word religion is supernatural and suprasensory whereas culture has the material aspect too. Religion is the expression of manner and mode of adjustment affected by people with their conceptions of the supernatural.

In a similar tone, since the inception of the religious belief system, one of the significant religious belief systems has been practiced and followed by the Banjara community in India. The ancient indigenous Banjara community is the major portion that was settled in the southern region (Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana State, and Western and Central Region (Maharashtra) as the Thanda Panchayat/habitations. Another side they were designated as unlike in different states of Bharat. In five states of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Bihar, Odisha, and Jharkhand the Banjara Community has been designated as a Scheduled Tribe, in two states of Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka has been recognized as a Scheduled Caste, and in Chhattisgarh, Daman and Diu, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, it has been designated as an Other Backward Class (OBC). However, this community has inhabited significant religious practices, cultural commitment, and social life not only in India but also in similar ways of social life all over the world even today. Accordingly, the Banjara community does not have a homogenous social life, but over the period they nurtured their own belief system includes deities, spirituality, culture, tradition, language, food, dress code, social norms, and regulations etc.,

One should to know and understand the mythological origin stories and religious practices of the Banjara community roots had been examined thoroughly by many renowned scholars like sociologists, social anthropologists, historians, and other social scientists. Fascinatingly, by and

large, many studies found and similarly explored that the mythology, rituals, cultural and religious practices are the close nexus of the Indian-born Hindu religion and its cultural aspects of belief system. Since its inception, due to its nomadic nature and illiteracy, they have not preserved any perfect fact sheet about their origin and history in written form. According to many sociologists, anthropologists, historians, and tribal research scholars was stressed that the ancient Banjara tribal community under the family of the *Indo-Aryan race* spoke a language like that of *Sanskrit* and *Hindi* blend. However, one renowned historian ([Bhangya Bhukya;2023](#)) from the same community had emphasized that their language belongs to the *Bhili family*, which is a *Dravidian language* spoken by the *North Western Tribes of India*, but like *Chattisghad*, it is heavily influenced by the Indo-Aryan language. There is a difference of opinions among scholars and social scientists regarding their birthplace, origin, and settlements within Bharat and outside of Bharat. In this connection, the historical background and origin of the Banjara community were intricate and imperfect manner so required to bring out and explore further scientific research studies on it.

Since its inception, the statistics, origin, and most of the scholars claimed that they belonged to *Vali and Sugriva*, the two ancient tribal kings of south India mentioned in the *Ramayana*. Some other studies also underlined and claimed that to be descended and origin from *Mota* and *Mola*, the two cattle breeders under *Lord Sri Krishna's* cows in *Mahabharata*, ([Syed Siraj ul Hassan; 1990](#)) so its indigenous origin, many mythological studies enlightened stories were linked to Indian borne Hindu religion and puranic literature. Based on the above it would be considerable that the Indian-born Hindu religion was closely connected to the Banjara community/Samaj religious practices and belief system.

The major festivals and rituals distinguished of Banjara Samaj have been celebrating their indigenous and ethnic practices festivals such as *Seetla Bhavani Festivals, Teej Festival, Holi, Dusshera, Diwali, Srirama Navami, and other Hindu festivals such as Makara Sankranti, Ugadi, Ganesh Chaturthi, Maha Shivaratri* and they also celebrate the New Year. Some Banjara households also worship and visit all local Hindu temples and other religious holy places such as *Sikh Gurdwaras* in Nanded but it does not considerable a permeant turn to as Sikh religion. A few Banjara families also visit Muslim Dargahs during Moharram festivals and they are celebrated with vital social aspects. This is Individual beliefs and spiritual connections, but then we cannot treat them as followers of Islam/Muslim even nor do they claim any so. This sign of the diverse culture and belief system of this community whereas not complete conversion nor form the core of religious culture.

The Banjara Samaj distinguished unlike others in their social practices, community life, social life, marriage, widow remarriage system, cultural life and practices, geographical and

ecological life, family system, language, food, Dress, Art and Dance, Economic life, religious life, Rituals of Death, Festivals, Sacrifices, Ancestor Worship, Spirits/Demons, Belief of Sin and Salvation. The exclusive social life and distinctive has been bonding and connected to belief systems, community life, language, religious rituals, festivals, and other ceremonies marked very significant. Certainly, the Banjaras community belief system is unlike any other people who have a unique tradition of socio-cultural life.

Interestingly, it seems the philosophical notion and belief system of the Banjara community found that they are holy worshipped and believed in seven goddesses popularly known as '**Saathi Bhavani**.' These idols or Seven Bhavani (seven goddesses/deities) a '**giver of life**' at juncture they strongly believe, worship, and trust about the power or the sources of creative energy had been a mother goddess who provides and protect their survival and **fittest social life**. The Banjara Samaj are worshipped and believe in Saathi Bhavani (seven deities) with symbolized by seven stones, The **Saathi Bhavani** like **Sheetla Bhavani** is a sign of *health and wellbeing*, **Mariamamma Bhavani (Merama)** is a symbol of *fertility and childbirth*, **Thulija Bhavani** is a sign of *knowledge and purity*, **Hinglaj Bhavani** is a sign for *healing and purification*, **Kankali Bhavani** signs for *strength and protection*, **Manthrali Bhavani (Masuri)** is a sign of *prosperity and fulfillment of wishes*, and **Dhavalagar Bhavani** is a sign *purity and holiness*. The Banjara Samaj belief and worship of these goddesses is an integral part of their culture, tradition, and religious practices. Each goddess has her own unique qualities do these deities will fulfill their wishes.

One of utmost festival of the community is a *sheetla Bhavani* festival which is celebrated on the outskirts of the Thanda this one of the significant celebrations performed by the Banjara community during the month of *ashada masam* usually happens in June and sometimes in July. The Banjara community has adored an integral part of their Dharma practices, cultural, traditional, and social fabrication which is deep-rooted in their belief system from generation to generation. Even, this community offers worship performed during significant events such as weddings, births, and festivals. The Banjara religious Dharma is entirely distinct from the rest of the Hindu Dharma being unlike in their religious occasions and practices, systematic belief system, tradition, culture, social life, language, manners, customs, etc., however which is closely connected to Hinduism and its Indic perspective. Their religious occasion and rituals are under the direction of 'Thanda Naik'/Thanda elder or 'Bhagat' as they act as a priest to perform the ceremonies.

From the time of the kings to the time of the British, the Banjaras led a nomadic life, delivering the necessary war materials to the respective kingdoms. The religious propaganda of the British and Muslim rulers caused many problems for the Banjara community.

In Bhagavath Gita (4-7);

**यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।  
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥ 7॥**

“Whenever there is a decline in righteousness and an increase in unrighteousness, O Arjun, at that time I manifest Myself on earth.” **Lord Krishna** said that he would be born when Dharma is harmed. In this connection, as such causal born was **Sant Shri Sevalal Maharaj** in the Banjara community. In the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century one of the socio and religious reformers and is now revered by the Banjara community spiritual **Guru Shri Seva Bhaya/Sant Shri Sevalal Maharaj (15<sup>th</sup> February 1739 – 4<sup>th</sup> January 1773)**.

In such circumstances, Sant Shri Sevalal Maharaj appeared to lead the Banjaras to the right path. He was Bhagat of the Bhavani and began to worship with the **Seven Bhavani/Saati Bhavani** (seven deities) and was blessed. The Banjara Samaj was led by his teachings of mesmerisation to choose righteousness, bonding ethics, human relationships, spiritual wisdom, etc., Now he became the idol of Banjara Samaj. Poharagarh is a holy place among Banjara Samaj where Sant Shree Sevalal Maharaj had died in the Washim district of Maharashtra.

Sant Shri Sevalal Maharaj made many movements for the welfare of the people. ‘**Periphar**’ is one of them. Propagation of dharma, economic reforms, prevention of religious conversions, protection of kshetra dharma, etc. are important. He said that non-violence is a great sin and that alcohol and smoking are a curse. In those days he laid the foundation of the doctrine of non-violence, imagining the reputation of the Banjar Samaj.

In a similar tone majority of the Banjara Samaj is closely associated with **Lord Shri Venkateshwara Swamy (Balaji)** since inception according to my knowledge. With due respect and devotion of the majority Banjara Samaj devotees and worship to go once a year for the darshan of **Lord Balaji**. This community people with due respect and traditional practice, first visit and worship **Hattiram Matt/temple** then go for Darshan of **Lord Balaji** (Sri Venkateshwara Swamy), which has become of the traditional belief system of the Banjara Samaj. Lord Shri Venkateshwara himself played the game of dice with great devotee Hathiram bava this story goes centuries back. So, one of the glorious **Namalu of Lord Balaji** was **hāthirāmāpriya Govindā** Namam mentioned in the **Lord Shri Venkateshwara puranas**.



So, secular nations like Bharat need to protect and promote egalitarian tribal culture, indigenous belief system, heritage, tradition, etc., besides need to stop and action to take western coerced religious conversion.

## **VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE**

This part would include the objectives, research questions, types of research design, techniques, and tools to be adopted in the present study.

### **6.1. Objectives of the Study**

1. To study the demographic characteristics of the Banjara Tribal Community in Telangana.
2. To explore the causes and impact of Religious Conversions in the Banjara Tribal Community.
3. To study the pre- and post-religious conversion and its impact on the social life of the Banjara Tribal Community in Telangana.

### **6.2. Research Questions of the Study**

1. What are the major issues and causes of the turn to Christian conversion of the Banjara community?
2. What is a significant difference between pre- and post-religion conversion of the social life of the Banjara Community?
3. How did a Banjara Samaj/people in Telangana turn to Christianity conversion?
4. What has been the impact of pre- and post-religious conversion on the Banjara community regarding psycho-social, economic, and cultural aspects?
5. Is there any social relationship gap formed between families and within the community relationship with Christian religious conversion?
6. Are any social barriers occurring between the converted Christian Banjara community and the Banjara community in their social relationship?
7. What are the mental health issues that happen post-religious conversion like disruptive social behavior, dissocial disorders, psychosocial, social depression, and family social life disorder?
8. Did any transformation occur in the Banjara family's social life like spiritual, social, economic, and cultural aspects post-religious conversion?

Based on the above inquiry, this study was adopted an *exploratory* research design, the present study adopts the *qualitative research* method by selecting as few case studies who are converted Banjara Christian households in the community to become respondents. Probably,

this is based on their informal recognition and information from their social network, family interaction, and the community.

In the present study, data and discussion were collected from a ***Purposive approach*** and with ***participative observation*** based on *grounded theory* according to the research study. The analysis of the data was *thematic analysis* and conclusion through various discussions and observations during the study.

## VII. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The following part will cover real-world issues of religious conversion and its impact on the social life of Banjara Communities in Telangana with suitable case studies and thematic analysis of the present study. One should also discuss and look at their traditional outlook of the Banjara Samaj pre and post religious conversion.

**7.1. Traditional Outlook, Heritage, and Social Life of Banjara Community:** In the following figures reveals the Banjara community, social life, and heritage.

**Figures (01):** Traditional Banjara Women Dress, Handmade Embroidered, & Ornaments



**Figures (02):** Banjara Community Marriage Ceremony



Figures (03): Banjara Community Traditional Teej Festival



Figures (04): Sri Sant Sevalal Jayanthi Celebration



Figures (05): Karthinka Masam of Aayappa Swamy Diksha



Figures (06): Tribal Traditional 'Daru' (Alcohol) Making



The Banjara Samaj have follows certain traditional festivals either in the temple offer food, drinks food grains, etc.,

1. They would visit the temple or do a puja during festivals of their indigenous deities at home or if located in the village and other associated festivals of the Hindu religion.
2. They have been participating and celebrating indigenous traditional festivals like *Seetla Bhavani, Teej, Holi, Dusshera, Diwali, and other Hindu festivals* and other important rituals connected with Hindu gods and Goddesses.
3. During agricultural operations (both sowing and harvesting), visit temples, and offer cereals and cash for joint feasts.
4. During marriage the pujari (community priest and most probable priest of the temple), and barber is invited for ceremonies to conduct the rituals at the house and the priest and the pujari (priest) is offered cash and some food for the services rendered.
5. During death funeral/ritual all the Banjara Samaj households and relatives would collectively do all formalities, and active participation in the funeral ceremony.
6. They would display photographs of Gods and Goddesses like Balaji, Shiva, Sant Shri Sevalal Maharaj, Ganesh, Durga, Laxmi, etc., in the mandapam decoration on the backside and on the wall near the entrance sometimes.
7. The priests, if available, visit the temples on occasions of festivals, and other occasions.
8. Mostly animal sacrifices are made (goats, hens) with Jhatka. However, buffalo or cow is not sacrificed, non-vegetarian food is an integral part of ceremonies and rituals. During festivals, liquor is also offered to ancestors and to specific indigenous deities, and is also offered to guests, friends, and other relatives.

The ethnic Banjara Samaj speak their own language called *gore boli* and follow traditional customs, culture, religious practices, harmonious social life, and beliefs that have been passed on through generations of the Banjara Samaj. Historically, they were nomadic traders or shepherds who moved around with their herds of sheep and goats. Today, most members of the Banjara samaj live in rural villages, cultivating agriculture and working as agricultural laborers or manual workers. In spite of drastic changes and social transformation to their livelihoods over time, the Banjara Samaj still practice many cultural, and traditional, activities such as music, dance, and storytelling which reflect and show their harmonious legacy. Many of these practices involve spontaneous articulation of making songs singing songs during festivals about singing of everyday life experiences and celebrating festivals throughout the year and connected to their own calendar that relates to important episodes and significance in their history.



**7.2. Post-Religious Conversion of Christianity of Banjara Community:** In the following will reveal the converted Christian Banjara community outlook and some festival celebrations.

Figure (07) Converted Christian Banjara Community Marriage Occasion



Pic (08): Converted Christian Banjara Community Funeral Ceremony prayer offered by Pastor (Converted Christian Priest)



In the following discussion made about the converted Banjara Tribal Christians, some festivals occasions, or functions either in the Church or offered at home., etc.,

1. The converted Christian Banjara households do visit a church on Sunday and other important special occasions connected with a church.
2. The Converted Christian Banjara households occasionally formed festivals connected to agricultural operations (sowing of seeds, harvesting, etc.,) participated in and visited a church, and offered cereals and cash for a joint feast.
3. The Converted Banjara households during marriage and betrothal ceremonies visit the church along with a few relatives and offer cash or kind of the church as well as the priest.
4. Those Converted Christian Banjara who can read if they are literate Roman scripts have been provided with a copy of the bible translated into Telugu for organizing regular prayer in the community.
5. Display paintings and photographs of Christ or the holy cross on the wall, facing the door.

6. In the church there is a hierarchy, the chief priest is known as the pastor (outside converted community member) under him the community mobilizer or facilitator. Those who are living locally will look and care about all important events to gather converted households and mobilize them to participate in a special event/ceremony.
7. While observing rituals and festivals, animal sacrifice is encouraged but with halal. However, since all major ceremonies are followed with feasts, animal sacrifices are made in separate places. Liquor is not offered to the church or the guests, port is not offered to the guests however they would offer soft drinks.
8. The converted Banjara tribe has tried to develop a consciousness of preventive measures for better health status and become aware of the bad effects of liquor and smoking. In this connection, the Banjara tribal who got themselves converted to Christianity felt proud of a higher/better than the traditional Banjara Tribal community.
9. Hindu Banjara Tribals have discarded the expensive traditional rituals connected with marriage, festivals, and death, (also time-consuming). Probably animal sacrifice, feasts, and Liquor (which are expensive items) are not being encouraged. However, they would participate in and attend all events of the traditional Banjara festivals with special treats.
10. The converted Banjara Christians both veg and non-vegetarian have started attending regular ritual occasions and other festive occasions where they will participate to order or hint at special halal food for preparation.

## VIII. CASE STUDIES WITH SUITABLE EXAMPLES

1. **BR:** *First Case of Religious Converted Households:* The Banjara family was by birth a Hindu-associated believer, they followed as usual Banjara community rituals, cultural practices, tradition, and celebrations, etc., in their day-to-day life till the last decade. In general, alcohol consumption is a customary practice but not compulsive, and it depends on personal interest which is an integral part of their cultural and ritual performance since inception. The Indigenous alcohol which is called '*Daru*' is organically prepared on their own. It would be consisting of joggery and forest-based *Mahua* flowers. Another way of preferring or offering during their rituals and habitual habits is that countryside alcoholic beverage which is known to all '*toddy*.' They felt that the reason for his father's alcohol dependence was due to their culture and ritual celebrations. So, they turned off their indigenous cultural and traditional practice last decade. Some coercive conversion troops were motivated them to believe in new christen faith or new belief systems that would remove their social obstacles and calamities. Interestingly, now those who are present christen followers said, those who have coerced them to conversion to a new faith or new religion. Those were from other communities they had chosen as one kind of source of employment. Their intention and

function are with the motto of Christian conversion. Then they started a new belief system as christen followers in their community and they built a church with a few converted Banjara Christian households. Still, this is remaining follows but they felt not happy with their new belief system due to his father was continuing with consumption of alcohol and recently get lost due to various health issues and factors. Neither transformed any *social, economic, nor spiritual* gain with a new belief system. They felt that everything had been lost like the Banjara community culture, *social life, identity, social inclusion, social isolation or exclusion*, and *destruction of social relationships* within the community and family system. Further, it leads to causes loneliness, poor, and social, and economic backwardness within the community when compared to peer families due to donations, or offerings to others such as existing assets (land, and economic) in the name of Jesus or religious faith. Finally, they realized and felt that the *community's customary habitual practices* are not a major factor nor cause of human backwardness or other constraints ultimately this will depend on social and individual '*mindset*' only.

2. **BV:** *Second Case of Religious Converted Households*, according to my knowledge and sources of discussion with family members, this Banjara household's family with causes of regular alcohol consumption and economic problems was reason to shifted new religion faith. [In similar tone alcohol consuming mean that, the Indigenous alcohol which is called '*Daru*' which is organically prepared by their own. It would be consisting of joggery and forest-based *Mahua* flowers. Another way of preferring or offering during their rituals and habitual habits is that countryside alcoholic beverage which is known to all '*toddy*.'] So, after reliance of three decades with Christian faith and belief system somehow, he was good rehabilitated with alcohol but still suffered from *poverty and social tragedies*. They felt that conversion does not bring up social transformation or social rejuvenation. In addition to *health issues* such happened such as gastric and stomach-related problems, bone health, obesity, Diabetes, and many structural health diseases due to soft drinks offered by converted followers/believers during festival celebrations. In addition, it found that there are mental health and social disorders. Finally, they were made comparisons with peer family households and within the family regarding progress and settlement, painfully uttered that even new belief faith/conversion neither settled his child's nor grew up *socially, economically, joyfully, peace of mind, not feeling happy, or any other personal transformation* in the society. At lastly accepted that conversion was a heinous evil that would bounce back your *joyful, harmonious community life, family relationships, and prosperity of social life*, ultimately creating *social isolation, psycho-social disorder*, and feeling uncomfortable in the community. So, glorification and progress have depended on proper socialization, social realization, and persistence of hard work but not conversion.

3. **BP:** *Third Case of Religious Converted Households:* In a similar tone, since inception, this Banjara family has been celebrating rituals, and customary cultural, and traditional ceremonies very richly and participated actively with the community. Participative discussion on Christian conversion with the family members in this regard they were responded that their conversion happened due to *health and economic issues* of the family so they switched to the new belief system. This family also trusts and has continued Christian religious practices for the last one to two decades. As scholars asked many questions regarding Christian conversion, at the end of a discussion they finally said and expressed their views that Christianity will give us a haven for life after living this embodied birth, remove our sins, and diminish penalties. One of the family members expressed (elder son) a view that they actively participate in community festivals, rituals, and other important occasions, but on another side, they did that Christianity is a particular path that they have chosen to get a heaven life and will consecrate liberation of the present life. Finally, about religious conversion, they agreed and scholarly observations were made here that there is no immense social transformation and rejuvenation formed in their health, economy, social life, quality and well-being of life and other aspects. Indeed, there is no better social transformation that brings up economic progress, spiritual wisdom, and social inclusion in society and within the family.
4. **BB:** *Fourth Case of Religious Converted Households:* As per my knowledge, this is the first family was converted as Christian believers in the community in the past three and half decades. When I scholarly discussion made now with the younger son about why they converted to Christianity faith he replied that his mother (no more) was suffering from a social mental disorder/social anxiety disorder (social phobia) issue so they turned to a new belief system as per his knowledge when he was child. Still, they have continuing Christian followers, actively participating in Christian religious faith. Here as scholarly observed they have suffered from poverty, chronic health, social, and economic disasters even not having a shelter due to their innocent, good virtuous, and blind Christian religious faith following Christianity. Therefore, they have not sustained any social, or economic progress or spiritual gain. Only things are left that struggling with poverty and losing social relationships in the community and within the family.

## **IX. MAJOR FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS**

As participative observation and close discussion above made in this study, pre- and post-religious conversion brought many significant consequences, and drastic social transformation happened in the Banjara Samaj with partially constructive and largely negative aspects were found in the present study. Since its inception, converted Christian Banjara households have



enjoyed their prosperous social life and community life like festivals, rituals, and other traditional ceremonies before conversion or new belief system. Finally, in this connection to the present study, Scholarly, found that the influence of religious conversion partially brought drastic preoccupied transformation formed regarding their social life and well-being. Some of the converted Christian heads of the family had partially forgotten habitual alcohol consumption. Perhaps they felt this was a major social transformation happening, but finally, many households considered that it was not more than that loss of social identity, happiness, freedom, social life, and social relationships within family and peer family in the community. The Indigenous drinks prepared from Mahua flowers, the juice of palm, and date trees will be essential ingredients for the health point of view, so need to be promoted. One of the causes of Christian conversion and turning to a new belief system is health reasons so in this connection need to promote of indigenous drinks system in the community. Which is to help avoid chronic health issues and social calamities like religious conversion in the banjara samaj instead of commercial liquor promotion. One of the causative factors for health and social issues of the Banjara people is commercial alcohol consumption which will lead to creating space for religious conversion.

Moreover, conversion brought many health issues such as Diabetes, gastric and stomach-related problems, bone health, obesity, and many other structural-related health diseases due to soft drinks offered by among converted followers/believers during festival celebrations juncture. Interestingly, in addition, it found that religious conversion had also brought many social tension, social disorders issues like loneliness, social phobia, stress, anxiety, mental health issues, social depression, social distress, separation anxiety disorder, adjustment disorders, conversion disorder, substance use and addictive disorders, and substance/medication-induced depression disorder, addictive disorders, feelings of guilt or worthlessness, antisocial personality disorder, paranoid personality disorder, and binge eating disorder in this study.

Since its inception, Presumably the Hinduism has been closely associated with indigenous the Banjara Samaj and their religious practices, belief system, and cultural aspects. In this present context of Telangana, the Banjara Samaj considerable social progress and development growing up at the same time as the religious conversion is one of the causative factors budding in the community with various reasons and consequences.

In the context of religious conversion, many things are found as driving and attracting factors that cause the conversion without personal faith and trust. It has been evolving due to personal and professional wishes to way created, so in this connection, every individual lives in a selfish manner for their self-growth, and self-actualization through religious conversion is one way to

progress, defend, and sustain their life. Interestingly, it has been scholarly observed that religious conversion is one of the key employment sources for unemployed people who are non-Tribal to be chosen as pastors in introducing a new belief system in the Banjara Tribal community. This is one of the heinous practices and cultures that began and promoted in the community many years ago. Those who are playing the role of a pastor in the name of Christianity as community service will be sustaining a very grown-up economically, and socially in society. However, those who were influenced to conversion they will be the same or either lower or more than the worst in the previous conditions in the community in the aspects of social, economic, and other aspects. Finally, a new belief system/Christian conversion is an illusion of influences that will dilute the finest social and community life of individuals in the present context of the Banjara Samaj in Telangana.

## **X. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

Through the passage of time, rapid changes are taking place in the present religious practices among the Banjara Samaj with various reasons and consequences. Some innocent Banjara people were largely influenced by the non-tribal followers unknowingly due to their health, economic, and social calamities in the name of Christianity they lost their finest social life.

Since its inception, according to many Purana or mythological stories and scripture reveals that Hinduism has been proximately associated with indigenous the Banjara Samaj and their religious practices and belief system, social, and culturally in many Indic perspectives. So, the religious conversion from an existing to a new belief system is one of the heinous practices and cultures. Many paid artists or agents found in the present study have come forward to influence Christian conversion and will designate a profession to introduce and promote in the community.

However, Article 25 of the Indian Constitution is a basic human right and dignity guarantees a right to freedom of practice, the dignity of life, and to excellent, however, the anti-conversion laws in the Indian context must be given their due significance. As per the anti-conversion laws and regulation, no person can be coerced or induced to be converted and this need to be prevented. In this connection, several anti-conversion or so-called “Freedom of Religion and Practices” laws have been brought as perceived in Arunachal Pradesh in 1978, Gujarat in 2003, and Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh in 2006. In 2007 it is fascinating to reference that Himachal Pradesh became the first Congress party ruled State to adopt a law banning illegal religious conversions. Unfortunately, in the Telugu states (Andhra Pradesh and Telangana) no such laws triumphed even not at all accomplished due to political conspiracy. However, several Indian states had passed “Freedom of Religion Bills” in the past to prevent people from

converting to Christianity. According to these laws forced conversion of religion is a cognisable offence under sections 295 A and 298 of the Indian Penal Code and it is a recognised as punishable offence and imposes imprisonment and fines.

Such a secular country of Bharat should stand its position to promote and protect its own religious dharma like **Indigenous Banjara Dhrama** or **Indigenous Tribal's Dharam** whatever it may be applicable to be in Telangana context and other parts of the country.

Certain intuitions of the indigenous leaders, youth, and other educators have been opposed to the conversion activities since may perceived as a threat to the survival of their indigenous traditional culture, and indigenous identity. It needs to be retrospective and worthy of the preservation of the indigenous legacy of the Banjara Samaj.

Finally, concluded that the Christian conversion is drastic progress in material affluence but this prosperity is certainly unsafe unless there is a need to promote the indigenous spiritual, ethnic, and ethical aspects. Other side, the Banjara Samaj is connected with an indigenous belief system so need to promote it they will grow up in an idealistic way of their character and persona with an indigenous spirit only.

**10.1. Limitations and Future Research:** This research study is an emerging issue in seems in the Banjara Samaj, a religious conversion in the present context and its perspective. The present study is limited only to Telangana State with few case studies done on Christianity conversion on the Indigenous Banjara Samaj only in general. The Indigenous Banjara Samaj is not associated with Christianity either with social, traditional, cultural, or belief systems and so on. Indeed, the Banjara Samaj, since its inception, has appeared to similar association with the Indian-born religion, or Dharmic religions of Indic religions and their belief system practices. So, one of the heinous social hazards and issues is religious conversion like Christianity which has been diluting and distracting of harmonious social life and legacy of the Banjara Samaj in Telangana at present.

Eventually, I have to acknowledge that this research paper has many weaknesses, drawbacks, and editorship. Due to the constraints of time and short-term opportunities, further in-depth exploration in these areas will be carried forward.

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