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**THE RELIGIO-CULTURAL DYNAMICS OF THE
HINDU ANDHRAS IN THE DIASPORA**

BY

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**SUBMITTED IN PART FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

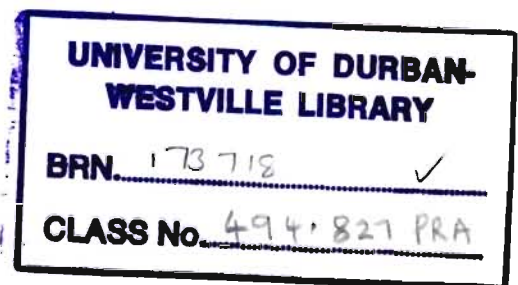
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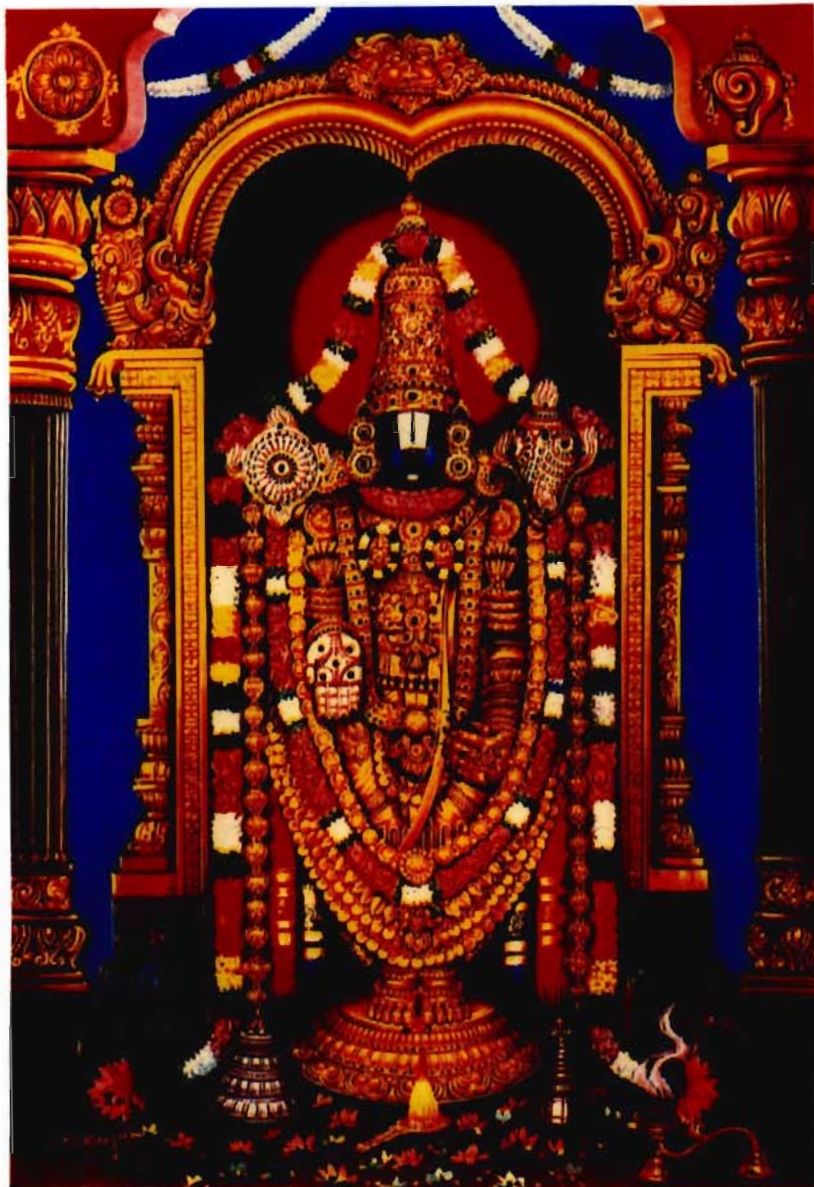


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గజాననుని పాదపద్మములకు అంకితం

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ఏడుకొండల స్వామి పాదాలకు అంకితం

STUDENT DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my original research and it has not been submitted at any other University previously.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AMSSA	-	Andhra <i>Maha Sabha</i> of South Africa
ATA	-	American Telugu Association
EMT	-	Ethnic Mother Tongue
H _a	-	Hypothesis
H _o	-	Null hypothesis
HoD	-	House of Delegates
HSRC	-	Human Sciences Research Council
MAL	-	Malaysia
MAMS	-	Mauritian Andhra <i>Maha Sabha</i>
MAU	-	Mauritius
MCA	-	Mauritian College of Air
MGI	-	Mahatma Gandhi Institute
SA	-	South Africa
SMT	-	<i>Śrīmati</i> (Mrs)
TAM	-	Telugu Association of Malaysia
TANA	-	Telugu Association of Northern America
TCLA	-	Telugu Cultural and Literary Association
USA	-	United States of America
WTF	-	World Telugu Federation

TRANSLITERATION USED FOR NON-ENGLISH WORDS

TELUGU PHONETIC GUIDE

Since the Telugu phonetic system is similar to the Sanskrit phonetic system, the researcher used the Telugu phonetic system for all the non-English words in this study. However, it is important to note that there are two Telugu vowels that are extensively used in this study (eg. ē and ō as in *Vēdas* and *Brahmōtsavam*) which are not present in the Sanskrit language.

a	ā	i	ī	u	ū	r̥	e
అ	ఆ	ఇ	ఈ	ఉ	ఊ	ఋ	ఎ
ē	ai	o	ō	ou	am̐	ah̐	
ఏ	ఐ	ఒ	ఓ	ఔ	అం	అః	
ka	kh	g	gh	ṇa			
క	ఖ	గ	ఘ	జ			
ca	cha	ja	jha	ṇa			
చ	ఛ	జ	ఝ	ఞ			
ṭa	ṭha	ḍa	ḍha	ṇa			
ట	ఠ	డ	ఢ	ణ			
ta	tha	da	dha	na			
ṭa	ṭha	ḍa	ḍha	ṇa			
త	థ	ద	ధ	న			
pa	pha	ba	bha	ma			
ప	ఫ	బ	భ	మ			
ya	ra	la	ḷa	va			
య	ర	ల	ళ	వ			
ṣa	śa	sa	ha	kṣa			
ష	శ	స	హ	క్ష			

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 SUBJECT OF STUDY : "THE RELIGIO-CULTURAL DYNAMICS OF THE HINDU ANDHRAS IN THE DIASPORA"

Hinduism, one of the oldest of the world religions, was not founded by one person and it does not owe its origins and development to any one prophet. It evolved over thousands of years on the basis of divine revelations experienced by many *rishis* (sages) when they were in deep meditation. They handed over their divine knowledge which is reflected in the four sacred books called the '*Vēdas*'. Although various contemporary scholars have tried to define Hinduism, it is very difficult to precisely define what Hinduism is. However, it is appropriate to mention that all the scholars agreed that Hinduism is 'the way of life' of a person who is a Hindu.

Although originated in India and developed into a strong religion, Hinduism did not remain confined only to the boundaries of the Indian sub-continent. Since the discovery of the Indus Valley Civilization (c.2,500-1,500) historians have been able to establish that Hinduism was already a thriving religion practised by the people of India as well as the far-eastern and south-Asian countries such as Burma, Malaysia, Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. Although the rise of Christianity and Islam affected the presence and growth of Hinduism in these countries, Hinduism did not erode completely in these regions.

Over the last two centuries, Hindus from India migrated as indenture labourers to various former British colonies such as Mauritius, Fiji, Surinam, Guyana, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, South Africa and more recently as volunteer emigrants to Canada, United States of America (USA) and Great Britain. Although Hinduism practised by these immigrants all over the world is basically the same (for example, although all the Hindus celebrate *Dīpāwali* as the festival of lights, the stories and myths associated with that festival differ from one linguistic group to the other), their modes of worship, their religious activities and the rituals performed by them differ from one cultural group to the other. For example, the Hindi-speaking (Hindis)

and Gujarati-speaking (Gujaratis) groups being Aryans, differ from the Dravidian group of people viz. Tamil-speaking (Tamils) and the Telugu-speaking communities and so do their religio-cultural activities. Again within the Dravidians, the Andhras or the Telugus, differ in their religio-cultural practices from the Hindus of other major Dravidian groups viz. the Tamils, the Kannadigas and the Malayālis and also from other Hindus of India.

The present-day Andhra community in the diaspora consists mainly of Hindus (approximately 75%) and the rest is composed of Christians and a few Muslims. The Andhra community in the diaspora, has its roots in the present-day Andhra Pradesh in India. Although part of the Hindu world view, this community has certain peculiar religio-cultural practices of an original nature in addition to subscribing to the major schools of Hindu thought such as Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, Śāktism and numerous Hindu reform movements. They are a vibrant ethnic group and their religio-cultural values characterise this community in the Andhra as well as Hindu diaspora.

Although the Hindu Andhras form an integral part of the Hindu community in South Africa and elsewhere in the diaspora, no academic study on a comparative basis has been undertaken thus far on their religio-cultural activities. This very fact precipitated the selection of the present topic for academic study by the writer.

Secondly, Prabhakaran's academic work on the Andhras in South Africa viz. "Telugu language and its influence on the cultural lives of the Hindu '*Pravāsāndhras*' in South Africa (1992 b) which focused on the inter-relationship between the Telugu language and the Andhra culture in South Africa motivated the preference for the said topic. Although her work demonstrates that religion and culture act as governing factors for the maintenance of the Telugu language in South Africa, it is limited only to the South African Andhra context and does not focus on the Hindu Andhra experience in the diaspora.

The findings of the previous academic study on the Andhras by the researcher (Prabhakaran 1992 b and 1993) viz. the specific nature of the religio-cultural life of the Hindu Andhra community, demonstrate the degree of preservation and/or erosion of the Hindu Andhra culture in South Africa. It also illustrates the influence of the Telugu language on the religio-

cultural lives of the present-day South African Andhras. These findings aroused the curiosity of the writer to examine and analyze the situation of other Hindu Andhra communities viz. the development of the Hindu Andhra community in the diaspora, its problems in the maintenance of Hindu culture and religion, its challenges, setbacks and achievements. The researcher is also motivated at drawing comparison and contrasts between the South African Hindu Andhra situation with the other Hindus in the diaspora, where they are the minority cultural group within the minority Indian Hindu group.

Besides being influenced by a lack of a comparative study on the Hindu Andhras in the diaspora, the selection of the topic is also influenced by the Hindu Andhra background of the writer. The personal interest of the writer in the Hindu Andhra culture, her observation of the Hindu Andhra experience discussed in the Third and Fourth World Telugu International conferences held in Mauritius (1990) and the USA (1992) respectively further attest to her *bona fides*. The writer's life as an immigrant Hindu Andhra in South Africa, her command of spoken Telugu and Tamil along with other Indian languages and her life as an Andhra in India equip her to make a comparison between the Hindu Andhra religio-cultural dynamics as manifested in the diaspora. All these above experiences of the writer assist her to determine the degree of erosion or preservation of the Hindu Andhra culture in the diaspora.

Finally, the writer, as an Hindu Andhra, also takes an immense interest to examine the factors that govern the strong maintenance of the Hindu Andhra culture in the midst of dominant Western and Islamic cultures in the diaspora where the Andhras have settled over the past two centuries.

In an academic study of this nature, clarity of the vital concepts involved in the title is a necessity. Thus, the terms 'religio-cultural dynamics' and 'the diaspora' need to be explained.

Although the title, in general, refers to the 'religio-cultural dynamics of the Hindu Andhras in the diaspora', the study is restricted only to the main religio-cultural activities of the present-day Andhra community in the chosen diaspora. For instance, generation by generation the Hindu Andhras, who had settled in the former British colonies viz. Mauritius, South Africa and Malaysia, nurtured and maintained their religio-cultural activities. Due to the

restricted focus of the chosen topic, only the main religio-cultural activities of the present-day Andhra community are examined even though brief references are made to the activities of their previous generations in their respective countries.

Another concept used in the title viz. "diaspora" also needs some interpretation. This term, taken from Greek, means "dispersion", and is associated with the dispersion of Jews among the Gentile nations after the Babylonian exile. As the Encyclopedia Britannica (1990 Vol 4 : 68) states, "although the term refers to the physical dispersal of Jews throughout the world, it also carries religious, philosophical, political, and eschatological connotations ...". In this study, the term "diaspora" is used with the widened meaning to indicate the migration and settlements of the Andhras to the various parts of the world during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, due to the scope of the topic, the study is restricted only to four countries viz. Mauritius, South Africa, Malaysia and the USA, with brief references being made to other countries such as India, Singapore and Canada. The choice of these four countries viz. Mauritius, South Africa, Malaysia and the USA is due to two reasons. Firstly, the former three countries are the products of indentured labourers during the colonial era and the latter is the result of voluntary migration to the west. Hence, these two groupings represent the both poles of diaspora settlement.

The second reason for the choice of these four countries is that they represent four different generations of Andhra settlements in the diaspora. Prabhakaran's previous work (1992 a and 1993) demonstrates that many Andhras in South Africa, unlike other minority groups elsewhere, instead of abandoning their language and culture in favour of the dominant western culture, maintain their ethnic mother tongue (EMT) from generation to generation through their religio-cultural activities. Her work also maintains that generation is a factor in maintenance or shift of EMT and religio-cultural activities of the Hindu Andhras in the South African context (Prabhakaran 1992 a & 1993). The writer develops the 'generation' phenomenon and would like to generalize it to the situation of the Andhras in the diaspora. While the Andhras in the USA mostly constitute the immigrant (less than 20 years) and first generation born Americans, the Andhras in Malaysia are mostly in the first and second generation born in that country (see table 1.1) and with a few immigrants who have emigrated from India before 1940's. Similarly, while most of the Andhras in South Africa are in second

and third generation born in this country, the Andhras in Mauritius are in their third or fourth generations. A few of them are even in their fifth generation and it is not reflected in the following table (table 1.1).

TABLE 1.1
GENERATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

COUNTRY	IMMIGRANT	1 ST	2 ND	3 RD	4 TH	TOTAL
MAURITIUS	4%	8%	8%	34%	46%	100%
SOUTH AFRICA	4%	10%	38%	44%	4%	100%
MALAYSIA	4%	44%	48%	4%	--	100%
U S A	92%	8%	--	--	--	100%

The writer is of the opinion that the generation of the respondents and their ability to speak their EMT influence their religio-cultural dynamics in the immigrant situations.

1.2 THE PROBLEM OF THE STUDY

In any research process, the first and foremost step is that of selecting and clearly defining the research problem. The hypothesis of the study is discussed in chapters three, four and five. Attention is focused on the awareness in the diaspora Hindu Andhra community regarding the question of their Andhra identity in an ‘enclave’ situation and how they chose religio-cultural activities as instruments for the maintenance of their identity.

Andhras, although the second largest linguistic group in present-day India, are a minority group within the minority Indian community of the Hindu diaspora. They are enclaved by two or three major religions of the world viz. Christianity, Islam and Buddhism and by major languages such as English, Malay, French Creole, Tamil, Hindi/Bhojpuri and Gujarati. Forced by various socio-economic and political reasons, many immigrant Andhras shifted their religio-cultural behaviour in favour of dominant "in-group" Tamil culture (eg. as in the case of the Andhras in South Africa and Malaysia) and "out-group" western culture (eg. as in the

case of most of the Andhras in South Africa and Mauritius). They abandoned their own Andhra culture and Hindu religion and became westernized in their outlook. Such Andhras felt or feel that their religion and culture are irrelevant in an alien environment and do not transfer their religio-cultural behaviour from generation to generation. They do not regard themselves as Andhras any more and assimilate completely with the dominant host religion and culture.

However, there are many Andhras in the three former British colonies and most of the immigrant Andhras in the USA who maintain Hindu religion and culture despite the socio-political and cultural challenges imposed by the new host environment. This brings one's attention to the problem of the study : two forces working in opposite directions. Like any other minority immigrant Hindus in the diaspora, the situation of the Hindu Andhras of these four countries on the one hand indicates religio-cultural shift in favour of westernization (Prabhakaran 1992 b). On the other hand there are indications that the Hindu Andhra culture in the diaspora is not faced with complete erosion and many present-day Andhras are returning to their Andhra culture, maintaining their group identity through specific religio-cultural activities (cf. Prabhakaran 1992 b, 1993 and Nirsimloo-Anenden 1990). This maintenance and return to certain religio-cultural activities are discussed in chapters 3,4 and 5.

Finally, in postulating the hypothesis, the writer is influenced by her previous academic work (1992 b) where she studied the religio-cultural behaviour of the Hindu Andhras in South Africa. There is over a hundred years of difference (1830-1960) between the immigration of the Andhras to the former British colonies and to the USA and there exist striking differences in the religio-cultural behaviour of these Andhras in the diaspora. However, they have certain common Andhra religio-cultural activities which did not erode over one hundred and sixty years (as in the case of Mauritius). Following this notion it is the writer's hypothesis that although the Andhras in the diaspora (particularly in the three former British colonies) may be westernized in their outlook, many Andhras retain a religio-cultural value system which is quite traditionally Andhra. It follows that although there are some clashes between the norms and values of the older and younger generation Andhras regarding their religio-cultural attitudes and activities, many younger generation Andhras are trying to nurture and maintain

their Hindu religion and culture. They are directly contributing to the maintenance of Hinduism in the diaspora.

1.3 AIMS OF STUDY

The above mentioned conflicting situation generates the two main objectives of this study:

- 1) to trace to what extent the religio-cultural activities of the Hindu Andhra community is maintained/eroded in the diaspora and what is the degree of erosion/preservation?
- 2) to analyze what are the main factors at work in such erosion/preservation?

With these objectives in the background the candidate will investigate the factors responsible for the resilience and perpetuation of religio-cultural values of the Hindu Andhras in the diaspora.

1. The main aim of this comparative study is to examine the religio-cultural expressions of the Hindu Andhras in the diaspora with specific reference to Mauritius, South Africa, Malaysia and the USA.
2. It will also focus briefly on the development of the Hindu Andhra community in these four countries.
3. The study will seek to assess and analyze the problems, challenges and setbacks the diaspora Andhras confront while trying to maintain their Hindu Andhra culture in their respective countries and reasons for their accomplishments.
4. The study will draw comparison and contrasts between the situations of the Hindu Andhras in Mauritius, Malaysia and USA with that of the South African Hindu Andhras.
5. Lastly, to contribute to a wider understanding of Hindu culture in the diaspora in general and to the South African Hindu culture in particular.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

The theoretical aspects of the said research entailed the phenomenological cum hermeneutical approach. In this study the content analysis of both "primary" and "secondary" sources were employed and both formal and informal primary sources were utilized. The formal sources include the various minutes of the Andhra *Sabhas* (eg. Mauritius and South Africa) or Telugu

Associations (eg. Malaysia and USA), their annual reports, official letters written by the members of such organizations and the documentation available on Andhras in each country, all of them directly concerned with the topic of the study. The empirical research (see 1.4.1 for more details), combined with personal interviews conducted with various elderly and younger community members from different generations, social classes and castes and the leaders of the Andhra community in the diaspora constitute the informal primary sources for the research.

The secondary source comprises the literature available on the Andhra religio-cultural activities in India and in other countries, the information on Hindu immigrants in the diaspora from various libraries in Mauritius, South Africa, Malaysia and the USA. The brochures, Telugu magazines and newspapers published by various Andhras in the diaspora were thoroughly analyzed. Lastly, both published and unpublished academic works on the community concerned (eg. the published Ph.D thesis on the Telugus in Mauritius and South Africa) and audio and video materials available in the diaspora were also utilized.

Since no single method of approach is known to be fully adequate (Prabhakaran 1992 b : 7) in academic research, along with the use of printed materials, a combination of various methods was employed by the writer. The other methods of research used in this study are:

1. Personal participation
2. Empirical research
3. Personal interviews

1.4.1 Personal participation

In order to procure "first-hand" information about the religio-cultural activities of the Hindu Andhras in the diaspora, the writer involved herself deeply in the Andhra community activities of the diaspora since 1989. Thus, as a result of prior contact, the writer had an opportunity to become involved in the diaspora Andhra community's activities as a participant-observer without being an "outsider". The friendly contacts established prior to the registration of the study and her previous academic works on the South African Andhra community enabled her to make an impact on the Andhras in the diaspora. Due to the cordial

relations established, numerous interviews were obtained freely, without any restraint when she visited the different countries. The writer spent three to four weeks in each country (July 1992 and April 1994 in the USA; July 1993 and September 1993 in Mauritius and January-February 1993 in Malaysia) under study which equipped her to observe various religio-cultural activities of the community. It also authorized her to understand the role played by a priest, the individual, the Andhra community (in a certain country) as a whole and the Telugu organizations of the country concerned. While interacting with the community the writer maintained the necessary distance that permitted her to be "objective". At the same time, both careful and casual information given by the informants were also utilized while evaluating the data.

The writer, being an executive committee member and one of the coordinators of the World Telugu Federation (WTF), was able to have contacts with various esteemed members of the Andhra community in the four countries. WTF membership also enabled her to acquire access to the minutes of Telugu Associations in the diaspora.

1.4.2 Empirical research

The writer also employed the empirical method to establish the religio-cultural attitudes and activities of the present-day Andhra community in the diaspora. The term "empirical" means any thing which is verifiable by observation (Behr 1983: 5). As Behr (1983 : 5) states, "the methods of empirical research have built-in-mechanisms which ensure that the procedures and results of the researcher are open to scrutiny" by any professionals. In South Africa, the interest in the empirical research has grown after the foundation of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) which was established after 1968. The HSRC undertakes, promotes and coordinates various types of projects which uses this empirical method. The empirical research in combination with the personal interviews, also allowed the researcher to ascertain the degree of erosion/preservation of the Hindu Andhra culture in the diaspora.

1.4.2.1 The sample

In any empirical research the respondents selected should be as representative of the total population as possible in order to produce a miniature cross-section of the concerned society. The selected respondents, technically called a 'sample', should at least be an approximate representative of the selected community (Prabhakaran 1992 b : 8-9). With this criterion in mind, along with the experience she gained during the previous academic study on the Andhra community in South Africa, the researcher circulated her questionnaires to the Hindu Andhra community in the diaspora. Thus, the data illustrated in chapters 1,3,4,5 and 6 roughly epitomize the Hindu Andhra community in the diaspora.

The respondents are selected partly on the basis of their accessibility to the researcher and due to their willingness to respond. In each country, the researcher chose three districts or states out of which at least in two states the Andhras are concentrated in considerably large numbers. However, in the case of South Africa, the questionnaires were distributed only in the province of Natal, where most of the South African Andhras have settled, from Port Shepstone in the South to Kearsney and Stanger in the North. In Mauritius the sample was drawn from the districts of Port Louis, Curepipe, and Quatre Bornes. In Malaysia, the research was mostly conducted in the districts of Pahang, Perak and Selangore. Lastly, in the USA, the country being very large and wide and immigrant Andhras living in almost all fifty states, research was limited only to the states of Michigan, New York and Tennessee which have a sizeable Andhra community.

A small group of acquaintances (8-10 members in each country) formed a pilot group on whom the questionnaire was first tested. The pilot group provided numerous contacts with the Andhras living in other parts of each country from whom the final respondents were drawn. With the help of various Telugu organizations and *sabhas* (eg. Mauritian Andhra *Sabhas*, South African Andhra *Sabha*, World Telugu Federation and other Telugu Associations in Malaysia and the USA) the researcher has distributed a common questionnaire to all the Hindu Andhra respondents. From each country a fixed number of 50 completed questionnaires were taken into consideration.

However, some respondents were personally approached by the researcher at the Andhra religio-cultural functions, festivals and annual cultural activities. In some instances the *sabha* leaders were approached to help in the collection of the answered questionnaires. Lastly, it is pertinent to mention that the researcher insisted that only one questionnaire should be completed from one family as most of the questions are directed to the whole family rather than an individual. The data from each country was computerized and analyzed separately and it is reflected in chapters 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

In addition to the empirical research the writer also conducted scheduled and unscheduled interviews, numerous telephonic and casual interviews with various members of the Andhra community in the diaspora. While interviewing the community (in some cases they have responded to the questionnaire) the researcher tried her utmost not to elicit information from only one section of the community.

1.5 PROBLEMS

This study is a preliminary attempt to document some problems of an immigrant minority Hindu religio-cultural group in the diaspora. Andhra Hindu religio-cultural dynamics in the diaspora and their contributions to Hindu-world view thus far did not captivate serious academic research in the diaspora. Due to a lack of preliminary research on the Andhra community in the diaspora, the writer had to solely depend on her own previous findings conducted on the Andhras in South Africa and on situations similar to the Hindu Andhras in other parts of the world. However, not much literature was available on this subject. Thus, there is a need for research on other Hindu minority groups to focus on their religio-cultural activities, their problems, challenges and successes. The writer, due to the restrictions of the topic, was constrained to limit her study to only one aspect of the Hindu Andhra community in the diaspora viz. the present-day religio-cultural activities of the diaspora Hindu Andhras.

Moreover, the paucity of documentation of the Hindu Andhra community in the diaspora where they form a minority linguistic group also compounded the difficulties of the research process. The lack of academic documentation compelled the writer to depend exclusively on oral information and observer-participant methods.

One main impediment in the empirical research was the apathy exhibited by the Andhras living in the USA. The writer had to distribute almost 1 000 questionnaires to procure only 50 answered questionnaires. She was forced to visit the country on two separate occasions to conduct her empirical research and had to spend much of her personal time and money in requesting the American Andhras to respond to the already distributed questionnaire. Almost all her letters, telephone calls and faxes sent were unfruitful and the bills amounted financially constrained her academic work.

Another unexpected problem faced by the writer was the apathy displayed by some of the American respondents and interviewees towards the choice of the four countries. However, the kind co-operation and support granted by other respondents and organizational leaders enabled the researcher to complete her task in the USA.

Regarding the former three British colonies, the problem faced by the writer was of a different type altogether. The inability of the respondents in these countries to understand English and Telugu completely posed certain minor problems. It was a strange situation in Mauritius and Malaysia where English is no more the main spoken language. Many of the respondents from these two countries could not completely comprehend some of the English terms used in the questionnaire (see annexure). In the case of Mauritius the writer, with the help of some *sabha* officials, had to translate several terminologies into French Creole. However, in the case of Malaysia where most of the female respondents and some of the male respondents could not speak or understand English, the writer had to translate the whole questionnaire into Telugu. Similarly, in the case of the South African Andhras, where language shift has taken place (Prabhakaran 1992 b, 1994 a & 1994 b) in favour of English, the young respondents could not comprehend the Telugu terms (eg. *taddinam*, *vadugu* etc) used in the questionnaire. They did not answer such questions due to a lack of spoken knowledge in Telugu.

Lastly, the conservative attitude and behaviour of the Malaysian female Andhras resulted in the unequal sex ratio of the respondents from Malaysia. The Malaysian Andhras, being dominated by Muslim culture, appeared to be more conservative and shy than their counterparts in the other three countries under study. They preferred to play a low profile

in the community and in the *sabha* meetings. They refused to fill the questionnaire and requested their husbands or brothers to fill them. This could also be attributed to the lack of their spoken command of English.

CHAPTER TWO

ANDHRA SETTLEMENTS AND RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS DURING THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

2.1 ABSTRACT

This chapter, being historical in nature, briefly focuses on the Andhra migration and settlements in the diaspora and briefly illustrates the religious conditions during the nineteenth centuries. The conditions under which the Indians in general and the Andhras in particular were forced to emigrate to various former British colonies are discussed in 2.2. Later, the relations between India and the three concerned sugar-belt colonies and the types of migrations and settlements are elucidated (2.3 to 2.5). An attempt is made (in 2.6) to demonstrate how the Andhra migration to the United States of America is different from the nineteenth century migration. The religious conditions of the Andhra country during the nineteenth century and the religious situation on the plantations are elucidated in 2.7. Lastly, the position of the Andhras as a minority group in the diaspora and their dilemma of assimilation against the question of group-identity is discussed in (2.8) the conclusion.

2.2 INTRODUCTION

Various historians have documented the socio-economic conditions of nineteenth century India which compelled the Indians to emigrate to various parts of the British diaspora. Their main focus was on the results of the unsatisfying British India rule which precipitated the Sepoy Mutiny (1857). However, Indian migration during the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries was the creation of British colonialism in India and the diaspora. This is manifested by the fact that the vast majority of the Indians migrated only to the British colonies, one exception being Surinam, then a Dutch colony. While the gradual expanding of the British capitalist plantation economy, which originated a great demand in the labour market, acted as a pulling factor, the deterioration of the handicraft industry, waning of crops, dearth and famine, increase in land revenue, rigid caste system and illiteracy of the Indians exerted a weighty pushing influence on the decision of the Indians to emigrate.

Prabhakaran (1992 b : 37-39) discusses extensively the specific conditions under which the Andhras were shamelessly exploited under the Company and Crown rules and how those conditions led to the exodus of the Andhras to Natal. However, it is appropriate to mention briefly the situations under which the Andhras were compelled to emigrate.

The Andhra migration began with the export of indentured labour, contract or '*cūlie*' (*coolie*) labour in the 1830's. There had been an uneasy labour-capital confrontation due to the exploitation of the slave labour by the western countries which later eventuated in the abolition of the slavery in 1833 (Prabhakaran 1992 b : 40). The emancipation of slaves resulted in a labour demand in the previous British colonies, which were expanding their industries. The labour scarcity threatened the 'cash-crop' economy, in which the sugar, rubber and coffee plantations were included (Prabhakaran 1992 b : 40). At this point, the British started recruiting Indian labour (of which the Andhras formed a part) under an indenture system from India.

A study of the Andhra migration during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries evolves four patterns of emigration : viz. a) indentured or contract labourers to British Guyana, Trinidad, Mauritius, South Africa and Fiji; b) under the '*Kāṅgāny*' system (see 2.5 for more details on '*Kāṅgāny*' system) or '*maistry*' labourers to Burma, Malaysia and Sri Lanka; c) "brain-drain", or voluntary emigration (see 2.6 for more details) to the first world countries of Europe, North America and Canada and d) labour emigration to West Asia. The labour emigration to West Asia differs from the first two labour emigrations. It is because the emigration patterns and recruitment laws differs from time to time. It also differs due to the prohibition imposed on the contract labourers to settle permanently in the countries of their destination (Jain 1989 : 8).

Due to restriction of the chosen four countries for the study involved, only the first three patterns of Andhra migration, in a chronological order, are briefly reviewed in the following subsections.

2.3 HISTORICAL MIGRATION TO MAURITIUS

By the beginning of the nineteenth century (1810) the British government was successfully able to establish its sovereignty in Mauritius. It was the dawn of a new era in the history of Mauritius. Because of the industrial revolution, the British government was bent on the conquest of new markets for its finished goods, and to exploit the raw materials produced in Mauritius and other such newly acquired colonies. The introduction of British industrial capitalism in the Indian Ocean region initiated a mass transfer of labourers from the over populated regions of India to under-populated Mauritius (Ly-Tio-Fane Pineo 1984 : 11-12).

The British had ventured many forms of labour recruitment before the organized system of "contract labour" or "indentured labour". Between 1810-1833 they initiated importation of the convicts from British India to work in Mauritius on plantations and to help agriculturalists. Slave labour, known as "*corvée*" or "forced labour" was already in existence in Mauritius and not adequate to cater for all the labour needs of private enterprise. Thus, during the early nineteenth century, they commanded a pool of casual labour made up of convicts from India which was a near by British colony. For twenty years Indian convicts supplied the labour required for public works (Ly-Tio-Fane Pineo 1984 : 13). When the supply of the "forced labour" and "convict labour" ceased in 1834 following emancipation of the slaves (1833), the Mauritian planters resorted to the introduction of Indian agricultural labourers under a period of contract.

In spite of the failure of the first experiment with the indentured labourers, due to the scarcity of labour for the development of sugar industry, the Mauritian planters were forced to speculate on a second chance. Before 1842 almost twenty six thousand Indian contract labourers were introduced to the island (Source : Mauritius Immigration Report, 1859). The immigration of the Indians in Mauritius continued until 1910 and finally stopped in 1911, due to the malpractices of the indenture labour system. The British Indian government subsequently banned the indentured labour system in Mauritius and South Africa.

The Mauritian sugar industry grew rapidly and brought immense financial gains for the private enterprises. In a study of this nature it is not appropriate to discuss the problems of

these indentured Andhra labourers (cf. Prabhakaran 1992 b) in Mauritius or in other such immigrant situations. However, it is important to mention the places of their settlements. In the Mauritian context, the island being very small (see map 2.1), the Andhras, as indenture labourers, have been scattered all over the country and at present they constitute a minority group within the Mauritian community and their actual numbers are not properly documented by the government.

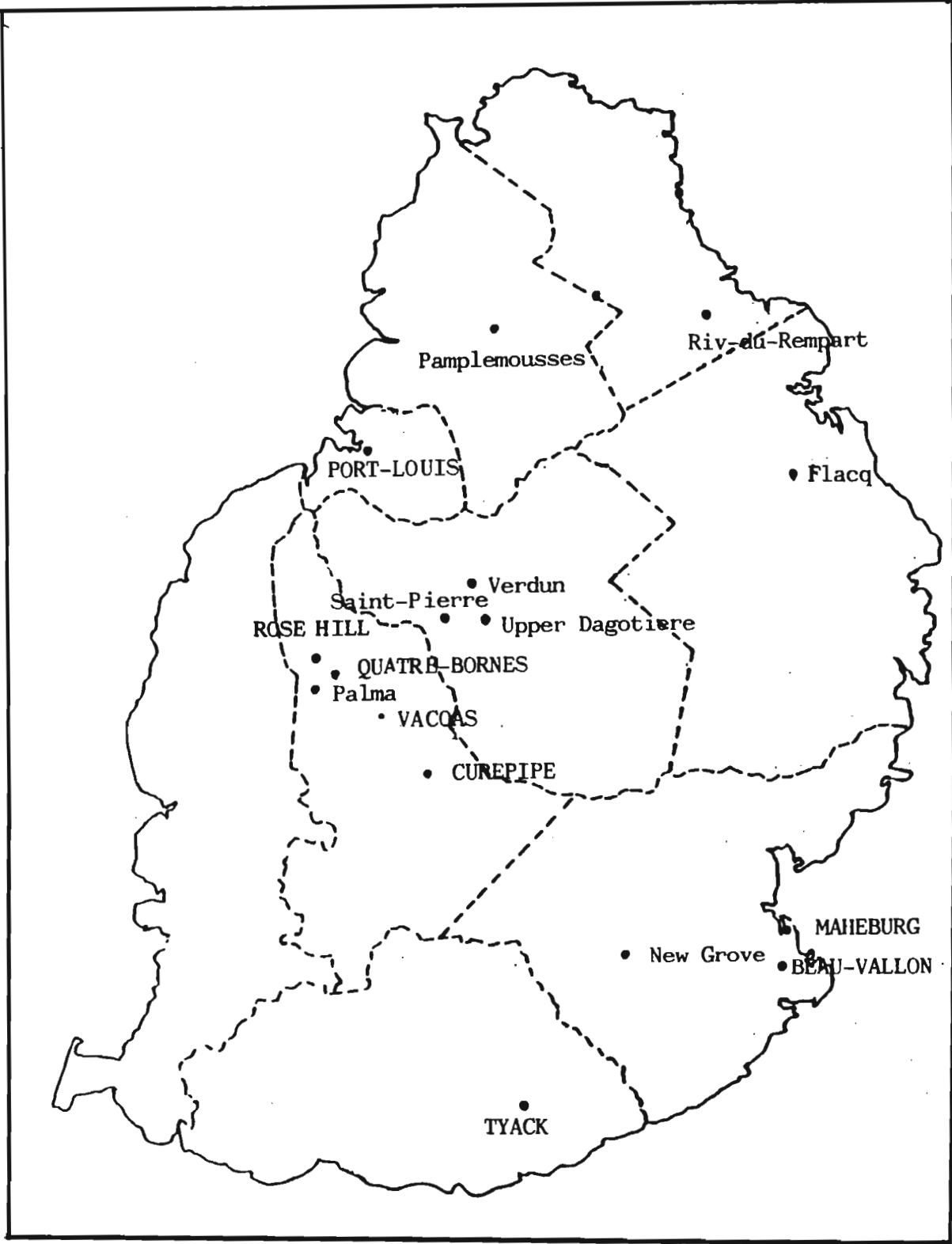
2.4 EARLY ANDHRA SETTLEMENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

When the British government abolished slavery in 1833, the British private enterprise in Natal also grieved severely. There arose an urgent need for labour in the various plantations since the emancipated former slaves refused to work under the same white employers again. In Natal, as early as 1854, sugar-cane plantations proved to be a success and there was a great demand for cheap labourers. The labour was needed for the day-to-day work which involved weeding, fertilising and harvesting the sugar fields (Prabhakaran 1992 b : 40). The Natal plantation owners, who observed the success of the nearby Mauritian plantations, which depended heavily on cheap Indian labour, zealously sought to secure Indian labour and induced pressure on the British government, which in turn approached British India. The British Indian government agreed to send indentured labourers initially on a three year contract period which later was extended to a five year period (Calpin 1949 : 6).

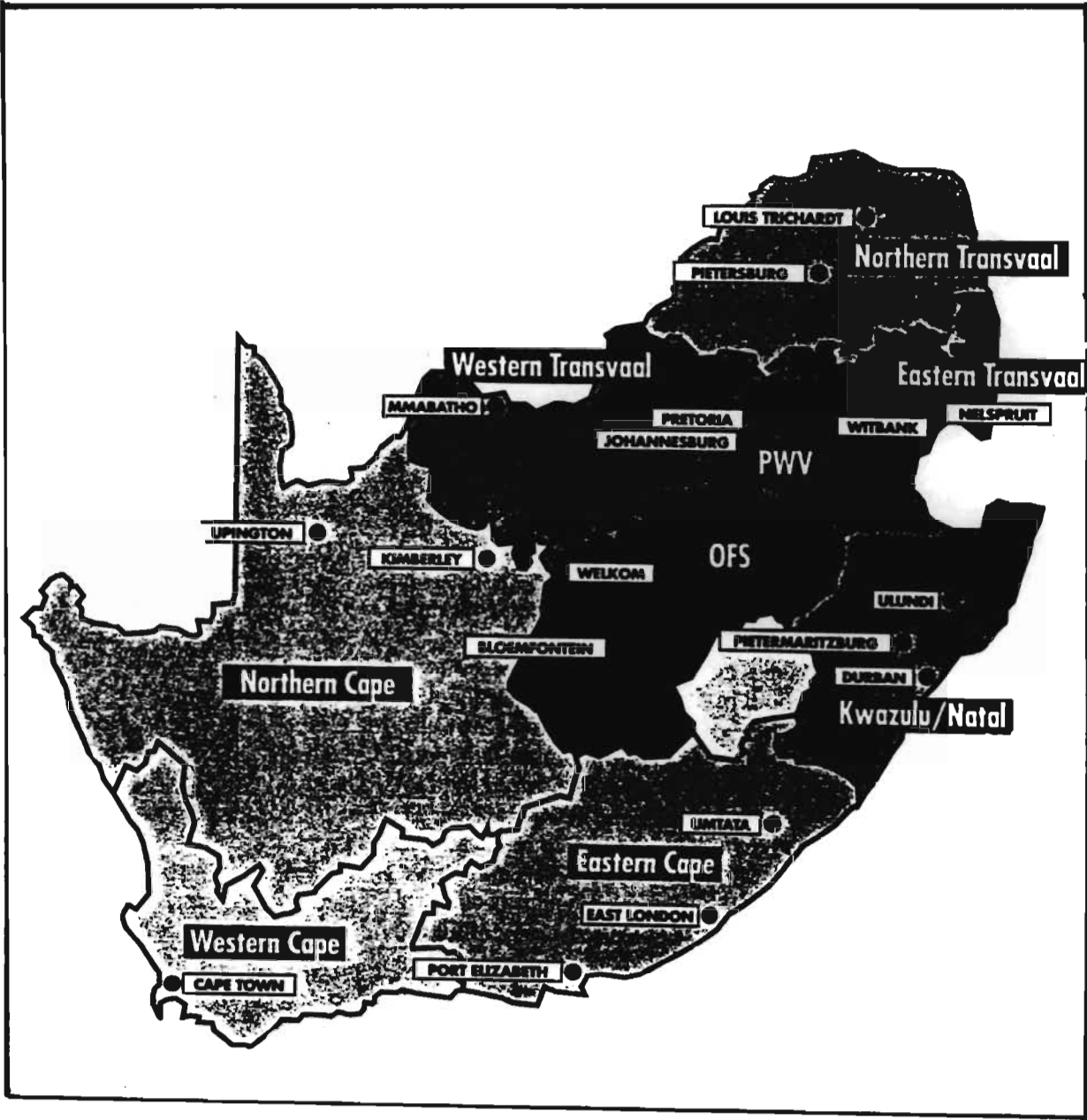
Although the British government passed a series of laws to shield the indentured labourers, many Indians became the miserable prey of this indentureship, because of the deceptive techniques used by the recruiters. Many Andhras, along with Tamil-speakers, were either lured to take the indentureship in Natal or were influenced by their personal problems (Prabhakaran 1992 b : 41-42). On 16 November 1860 the first batch of Andhras arrived in Natal when the first steam paddler "S.S.Truro" docked in Natal.

According to the various documentation made on the Indians in Natal in general (Brain 1984; Bhana 1987; Kuper 1960) and the Andhras in particular (Prabhakaran 1992 b), the latter were dispersed along the coastal belt from Port Shepstone on the South Coast to Kearsney on the North Coast (see map 2.2 a and 2.2 b). They were contracted to various leading employers

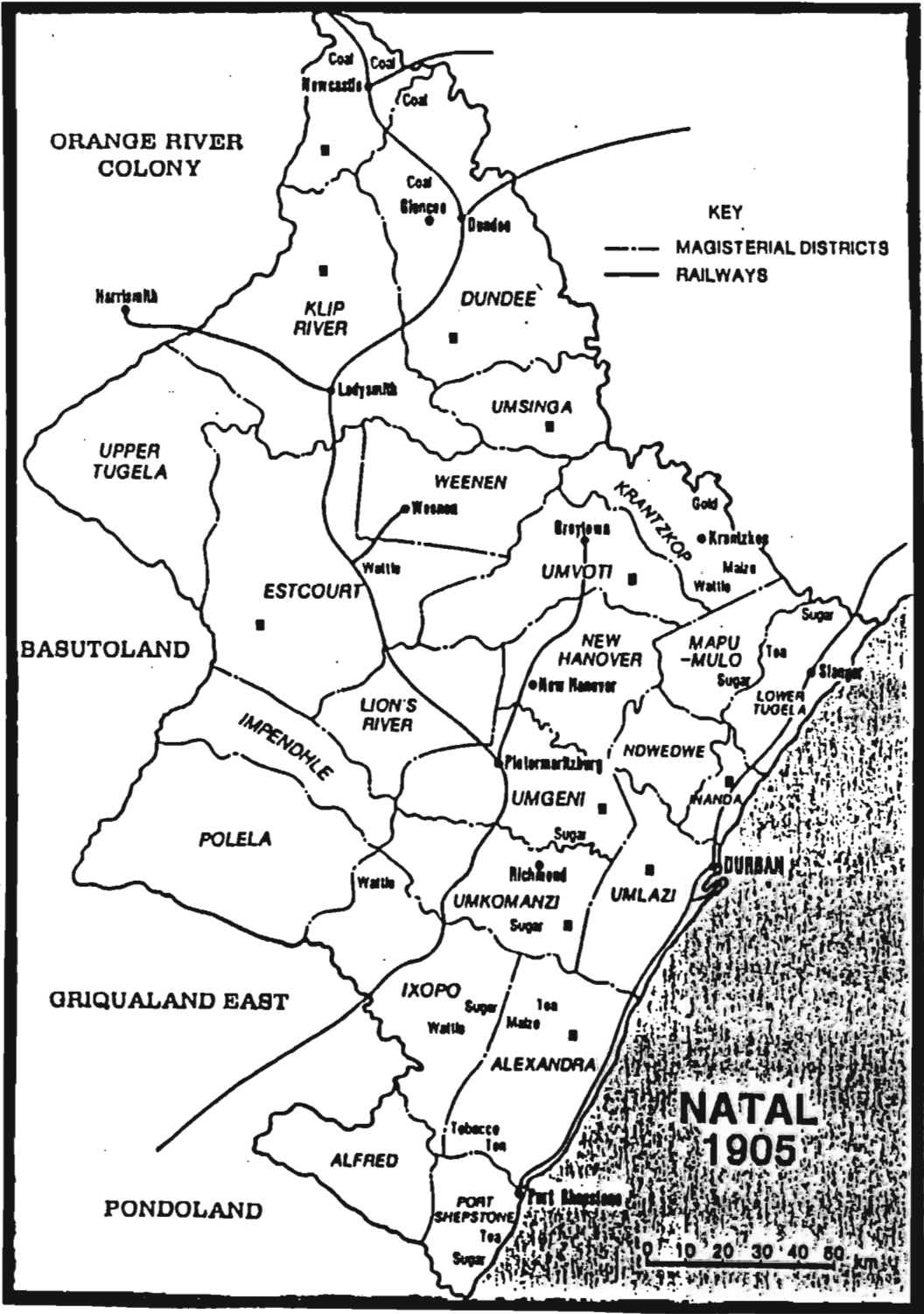
MAP 2.1 - MAURITIUS



MAP 2.2 a - NEW SOUTH AFRICA



MAP 2.2 b - MAP OF NATAL IN 1905



such as Blackburn Central Sugar Company, Kearsney Estates, La Lucia and Muckle Neuk Estates, Natal Sugar Company, Natal Government Railways and Tongaat Estates (Prabhakaran 1992 b : 46).

After their initial indentureship many Andhras inhabited in areas such as Illovo, Esperanza, Umzinto, Congella Barracks, Stella Hill, Sea View, Puntans Hill and Clairwood, which are all in Natal. However, some of the prominent Andhra settlement areas such as Stella Hill, Sea View and Clairwood were uprooted later by the harsh Group Areas Acts (1950-1960) and the Andhras were compelled to move from their early settlements.

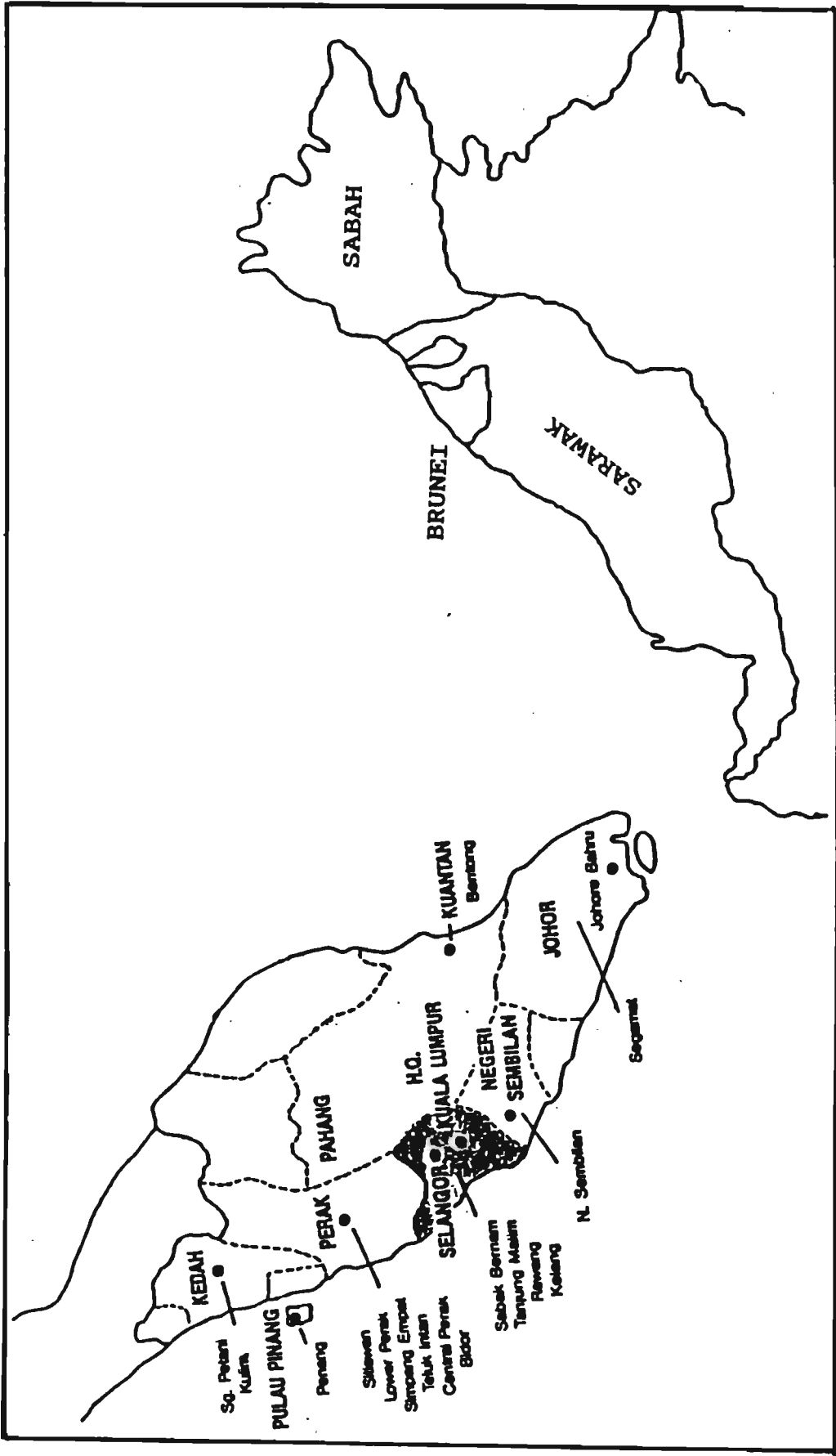
One hundred and thirty four years after their arrival in South Africa, the present-day Andhras are mostly scattered all over Natal and a few thousands living in the provinces of Transvaal and Cape. As in the case of Mauritius, although their actual numbers are not documented separately, the Andhras are a minority within the minority Indian community in South Africa.

2.5 "INDENTURE" AND "KĀṆGĀNY" SYSTEMS IN MALAYSIA

Unlike the previous sugar-belt British colonies viz. Mauritius and South Africa, the historical relations between India and Malaysia dates back to the early centuries of the Christian era when the Indians seeking great riches dared to cross the rough seas of the Bay of Bengal and voyaged to South East Asia, which was described as '*Suvarṇadvīpa*', a Sanskrit word which means 'golden peninsula' or '*Suvarṇa Bhūmi*'. Malaysia, previously called Malacca and approximately 1 950 kilometres away from India, was an independent kingdom and was heavily influenced by Indian philosophy and Hindu religion. Proof of the Indian influence is found in the form of inscriptions which were found in the Kedah regions (see map 2.3). These inscriptions bore Sanskrit words and script.

The geographical position of Malacca is very suitable for a maritime route because it links the Indian Ocean with the China Sea. Due to the favourable winds and monsoons, the traders had excellent access to a comfortable shelter for their ships and cargoes. Malacca flourished as a collecting centre for South-East Asian merchandise such as nutmeg, mace, cloves, pepper, gold, tin, resin, camphor and sandalwood which were needed by the people of Eastern

MAP 2.3 - MALAYSIA



Asia and Western Asia (Smith and Bastin 1967 : 26). The South Indian traders sailed due east to the Nicobar islands and then taking advantage of the monsoons headed towards Sumatra and saw the landfall on the Kedah coast (Arasaratnam 1970 : 2). After the trade transactions, due to a lack of modern equipment, they ventured to return home only when monsoons assisted in the south-west journey, sometimes waiting for 6-7 months before returning home. Thus, it was imperative for some of those traders to establish settlements while they helplessly awaited the change of seasons.

While awaiting to return home, the South Indian traders probably participated in the trade of the neighbouring regions, inter-married with the local maidens, bore children and implanted their religio-cultural habits in Malaysia. Later, the foundations of *Srī* Vijaya Kingdom (seventh century A.D) by Hindus of Sailendra dynasty (7-11 centuries), the Andhra rulers of South India, facilitated close kinship relations and friendship ties between the Andhras and the Malays (Madini Soma Naidu 1981 : 5).

Indian trade with Malacca enormously expanded from the fifteenth century (Arasaratnam 1970 : 5) and both India and Malacca benefitted by these trade relations and prospered. As Smith and Bastin (1967 : 35) document, the trade relations between these two countries continued even after the British take over of Malacca in 1786. After the eighteenth century, the development of large-scale mining and plantation agriculture, also known as 'cash-crops' encouraged the British to spread its colonial wings to the other parts of Malaysia such as Penang, Kedah and Singapore.

The term 'cash-crops', in Malaysian context, is employed by various economists to indicate only those crops such as rubber, oil-palm, coconuts, fruit trees and market-garden but excludes paddy (Gungu Wang 1964 : 429). The emergence of these cash-crops created fresh opportunities, profits and labour shortage problems. As in the case of Mauritius and South Africa, the needed manpower was not coming from the inhabitants due to the sparsity of the population of the Malaya Peninsula. It was also due to the fact that the inhabitants were already engaged in other parallel forms of the economic activity and would not be diverted from their traditional patterns of occupation. The only alternative solution at that time was to follow the examples set by other British colonies, to look elsewhere, and to initiate the

migration of large numbers of people from areas with slow economic growth which were over-populated.

British Malaya first experimented with the importation of Chinese labour who readily agreed to flood into the tin-rushes of the Perak, Selangore and Negri Sembilan (see map 2.3) states from the 1820's. Although, the Chinese were very hard-working, had a long tradition of worker solidarity and societal organization, they were constantly demanding higher wages (Arasaratnam 1970: 11-12). This situation continued up to the 1880's and annually the European plantation owners desired much cheaper and more docile labour (Stenson 1980 : 14). At this crucial moment, in many respects, India emerged as the obvious solution from which both cheap and docile labour could be hired. In 1887, it was agreed by the British government to induce mass migration of Indians (particular South Indians) to Malaya.

The South Indian migration to Malaya, unlike the Chinese immigration, was well planned and directed by the Colonial authorities from the ports of Nagapatnam and Madras in South India, thus making the Tamils the majority and the Andhras the minority in Malaysia. Andhras, along with Tamils, were brought into the states of Perak (1874), Negri Sembilan and Selangore (1880's) and Kedah (1880's) as indenture labourers up to 1938.

Due to the shameless abuses and malpractices which existed in the indentureship everywhere, the recruitment of the Indians as labourers was finally terminated in 1938 (Thomas Timothy 1985 : 24). However, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a parallel system of labour recruitment, called the '*Kāṅgāny* system' evolved in Malaya. This was a method of recruiting labourers through a '*Kāṅgāny*', a person who himself was an immigrant working on the plantation as a foreman or a supervisor or even a labourer with some influence and standing (Arasaratnam 1970 : 16). The coffee and the rubber planters acquired most of the labour through the '*Kāṅgāny* system' because they felt that this system provided superior labour force. Most of the Malaysian Andhras arrived under the '*Kāṅgāny* system' (Appanna Appalaidu 1981 : 1). Recruitment by the '*Kāṅgāny* system' continued up to the beginning of the Great Depression (1929) and fully collapsed during the Depression (1929-30).

In conclusion, it should be noted that during the 1880's the Andhras settled only in the three British districts of Penang, Malacca and Singapore. However, they later settled in Province Wellesley, Lower Perak, Selangore, Negri Sembilan, Kedah and to a lesser extent in Jahore and Pahang. At present the Andhra population in Malaysia is a minority within the Indian community (Andhras were only 26 113 out of 1 087 561 Indian population according to the government population census of 1980), the Malays and the Chinese being the first and second majorities respectively. Similarly, Hinduism is a minority religion when compared to Islam (approximately 80%), Chinese (Buddhism 10%) and Christianity.

The early Indian traders intermarried and assimilated with the local Malay community. However, most of the Hindu Andhras who emigrated to Malay during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, although unconsciously assimilated with the Tamils, maintain their Andhra religio-cultural habits and practices against all the problems they have to undergo as aliens in Malaysia.

2.6 "BRAIN-DRAIN" OR VOLUNTARY EMIGRATION TO THE USA

Although the history of Indian immigration to North America dates to the early years of the twentieth century (Adhopia 1993: 47-48), large scale Indian immigration took place only in the mid 1960's (Encyclopedia Britannica Vol. 29 1990 : 193). After the Second World War, rapid scientific and technological progress took place in the USA. This eventuated a severe demand on heavy investments in research and development. As a result, as Venugopala Rao (1975 : 12) states, many existing educational institutes received increased financial support. This support was forwarded by both public and private sectors which initiated establishment of numerous new institutions. These new institutions extended invitations to all foreigners, particularly to the northern European countries. At this juncture many educated Indians (in which the Andhras are included), as Venugopala Rao expounds (1975 : 13), found it attractive and convenient to go to the USA for higher studies. Thus emigration to the USA started in the late fifties and reached its maximum peak by the late sixties. In Andhra Pradesh the major Universities, as Andhra University and Osmania University among others, supported candidates with science or engineering degrees. Such professionals emigrated to the USA with student visas.

In December 1965, many changes occurred in the immigration policies of the USA government. New laws were passed which abolished the preference for Northern European immigrants and allowed immigrants from other continents (Encyclopedia Britannica Vol.29 1990 : 193). Thus many more Andhras and Indians in general decided to emigrate to the USA which has better living conditions and science and technology. Most of them elected to remain in the USA after their education and obtained permanent residence.

Due to these changes in the American government laws, a new category of Andhras (Indians), who are "technocrats" (see 3.2 for more details), decided to emigrate to the USA. These are the professionals who completed their education and training in India, and now acquired immigrant visas to enter and work in the country. Once settled in the country, they extended their help and sponsorship to their brothers, sisters and kinsfolk, to help them seek admission to the USA. Since then, the immigration laws have allowed thousands of Indian (Andhra) immigrants to arrive in the USA either with student visas or with sponsored immigrant visas. However, whenever there is an economic depression, which leads to a growing unemployment situation in the country, the pattern of immigration changes drastically because at such difficult times the American government tightens laws and only professionals whom the USA badly needs are encouraged to immigrate. Thus, it is mainly doctors and engineers who have immigrated from Andhra Pradesh (India).

At present, three decades after the commencement of Andhra immigration to the USA, there are five categories of Andhras living in the States viz. a) students pursuing higher studies in the States; b) Technocrats who obtained post graduate degrees in the USA and settled permanently as immigrants; c) persons who entered the country as professionals and residing as permanent/temporary residents; d) persons sponsored by their blood relatives (educated or uneducated house wives and parents of the technocrats); and e) the American born first generation Telugus who are more exposed to American culture than to the real Andhra culture.

The first category of the Andhras resident in the USA with temporary student visas and usually spend two to five years in the country. They have their financial needs taken care of by their host institutions and usually are the lowest income group (Venugopala Rao 1975 :

13) of the Andhras. They try to seek some holiday (summer) jobs to meet their extra expenditure. The second group of Andhras have probably lived longer in the USA. They occupy academic and professional posts in institutions or universities and would have crossed the low income stage (Venugopala Rao 1975 : 13). As one American informant states, most of the Andhras in this category are well off and live in their own homes (Interview : *Sri Achyuta Rao* : 1994). Some of these Andhras bring their parents from India for occasional visits. As another informant states (*Sri Nallamothu Satyanarayana* : 1994) states, this category of people developed more roots in the American society than the others.

The third category of people after gainful training in India, enter the USA due to the lucrative salaries offered as well as the better living and working conditions. Many American Telugus informed the researcher that medical doctors are the highest paid professionals in the USA and most American immigrant Telugus of this category were/are doctors. When one refers to the problem of "brain-drain" in Andhra Pradesh (India), it is generally to this category they are referring.

The fourth category of the immigrants, the blood relatives of the green-card holders, might not be as highly qualified as their American residing kith and kin. During research it was evident that some of the Telugus who arrived due to sponsorship are not as well qualified to the other technocrats. Some of them are even "uneducated" housewives, and some despite university degrees remain housewives. Some such immigrants do many "odd jobs" in society such as house keeping and work in Indian shops as sales-persons. One young technocrat immigrant in New York bitterly states (informant refused to disclose his name) that "such immigrants are not the cream of the society like their technocrat brothers and sisters but enter the country with sponsorships by their relatives". He truly feels that they are lowering the image of the technocrat Indians.

The last category, American born Telugus or Telugus who arrived as infants to the USA, are the present-day younger generation whose parents have immigrated to the USA during the past few decades. Most of the Telugus in this category are either teenagers or have just crossed that age group. Some of the American born Telugus the researcher interviewed have married and settled in their lives. Some of the younger generation, although born in Andhra

Pradesh, emigrated to the country as an infant of two or three years and were raised completely in the USA. Such Telugus sometimes visit Andhra Pradesh once in every two or three years.

To conclude, the American Telugus are not a well-settled or a well-established community when compared to their counterparts in the three former colonies. Unlike the other three countries, Andhra immigration to the USA is a relatively recent phenomena and dates back only two or three decades and is still continuing. Their emigration is voluntary and it depends on their educational qualifications, not on their physique (as in the case of the immigrants to the three former colonies). In most instances it also depends on their financial background because they purchase their own air-ticket which is very expensive for lower-middle class or poor Telugus in modern Andhra Pradesh. However, every year thousands of Telugus (Indians) arrive in the USA and it takes them at least one decade to finish their studies, obtain jobs and permanent residential status. As *Sri Nallamothu Satyanarayana*, the Secretary General of the WTF (interview : 1994) states, during this period they struggle a lot to survive socio-economically, and to adjust religio-culturally. Most of them suffer due to the extreme cold weather which they were not exposed to before (Andhra Pradesh is a very hot state). Many immigrant Telugus have a cultural shock when they arrive in the USA because of the domination of the western culture and are overwhelmed by its influence.

Most of the Telugus have clustered around major cities like New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Pittsburg, Washington, D.C, Atlanta, Houston, Chicago, Detroit, San Francisco and their suburbs (see map 2.4). The student category and the academics are naturally found in the university towns which are usually located far from the major cities (eg. Knoxville in the Tennessee State).

At present the Indian population in the USA is estimated to be over one million, of which the Telugus consist approximately 200 000 to 250 000 (Figures given by some officials of the Telugu Associations in the USA). Like their counterparts in the other countries, the American Telugus are dispersed throughout the country. However, unlike their co-relatives in South Africa and Malaysia, they are not dominated by Tamil-speaking Indians because the Telugus are the third highest ethnic group in the Indian American population (Gujarati-speaking and

MAP 2.4 - UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Dates are those of admission to the Union as states.

Malayalam-speaking are the first and second highest ethnic groups respectively).

2.7 RELIGIO-CULTURAL EXPRESSION OF THE HINDU ANDHRAS

2.7.1 Religious conditions in India

Prof Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the ardent Andhra and one of the greatest exponents of Hinduism, summarises the nature of Hinduism as follows (1939 : 48):

Hinduism grows, in the proper sense of the word, not by accretion, but like an organism, undergoing from time to time transformation as a whole. It has carried within it much of its early possessions. It has cast aside a good deal and often it has found treasures which it made its own. It took what it could whence it could, though it adhered to its original vision. The more it changes, the more it remains the same thing.

For a reader of Hindu history it is evident that Hindu culture was influenced and profiled by the Hindu cultural experiences. The Hindu resistances to external forces like the Greeks, the Huns, Kushans, Muslim and, much later the Europeans without doubt outlined its religio-cultural and social expressions. The resistance to European and Muslim cultures will be evident in the religio-cultural expressions of the Hindu Indians in the diaspora. The Hindus in India and in the diaspora came into contact with the effects of many religions, which led to some degree of assimilation because as Kumar (1985 : 12) states, "Indian civilization has the ability to absorb alien cultures without losing its distinctive identity".

The immigrant Andhras, most of them being Hindus, were also influenced by the foreign contact, but reacted by becoming more stringent in their religio-cultural practices than before (see chapters 3, 4 and 5). Singh, while commenting on the situation of the Hindus in South Africa, states that (Singh 1991 : 1):

their exposure to western society and secularism resulted in a change, to an extent, in their religious practices and social attitudes. Confronted with his new environment the Indian sought to retain his cultural identity and religious adherence.

To understand this reaction we should briefly discuss the religio-cultural conditions of Indian Hinduism, with special reference to the Andhra country, antecedent to the emigration of the Telugus to various British colonies during the nineteenth century.

Prior to the advent of the Muslims in India, the country underwent exposure to many foreign invaders such as the Greeks (B.C 327-153), Scythians (B.C 3-2 century) and Kushans (1 century A.D). During their onslaughts Hinduism tolerated setbacks because of the numerous raids which destroyed some of their temples and monasteries. However, these invaders did not force their religion or culture on the Indians so they did not pose any real threat to Hinduism.

Between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries, the Muslims, with their more militant religion, invaded the region. Islam, as a powerful world religion, posed a dangerous threat to the existence of Hinduism and its adherents could not easily be Hinduised (Ariyan 1989 : 40). The Muslim invaders like Muhammad Ghazni, Muhammad Gori and Ala-Ud-din Khalji demolished many Hindu temples and cloisters during their raids. As a result of these raids, in order to protect their own religion from Islamic infiltration, as Singh (1991 : 10) notes, Hindus became austere in their observation of rituals and caste rules.

Ala-Ud-din Khalji attacked Warrangal (the Andhra country) in December 1309 and Rana Prataparudra was compelled to surrender everything his country produced, from vegetables to mines and animals (Chopra 1979 : 9). Among the precious treasure was the famous diamond Koh-i-Nur. The whole of South India was at the mercy of Ala-Ud-din Khalji and could not offer much resistance. Hindu temples were destroyed, *mūrties* were disfigured, defiled, and looted.

Islam really entered the Andhra country with Prince Mahammad-Bin-Tughlakh's invasion of the Kākatīya dominions in 1321 (Gopalakrishna Murthy 1975 : 15). The mosque in the Warrangal fort and Rajamundry *Bazār* (market) were raised by him, the latter on a destroyed Hindu temple. As a result of Islamic intervention in the Andhra country, as well as in India as a whole, the old approaches to religio-sacrificial rites were replaced by a new, emotional and passionate attitude to God. This later led to the *Bhakti* (devotion) movement.

However, these Muslim invasions led to the establishment of the powerful Vijayanagara Empire that revived Hinduism in the Andhra country. From the thirteenth century onwards, Hinduism and Islam co-existed in the Andhra country. Thus, when the Andhras migrated to

Malaya they were already accustomed to this co-existence between these two religions and were exposed to Islam which later paved the way for their peaceful co-existence in Malaysia.

The arrival of the Dutch (June 1596) and French (1669) did not affect the Andhra country to the same degree as did the arrival of the British. The Portuguese and Dutch were chiefly interested in establishing trade rather than procuring territory in the Andhra country, as in India at large. They tried to baptise Hindus into Christianity, but did not have any profound consequences on Indian history. As Majumdar (1979 : 290) asserts, the Portuguese "came to India with a crucifix in one hand and a sword in the other". The word 'sword' in this quote also insinuates their desire for political power which was not very successful in the Andhra country.

The arrival of the French and the British in India and the Andhra country in the seventeenth century became a salient event in Indian history. The French had trading settlements in Machilipatnam, which is in the Andhra country, by 1669 (Raghunadha Rao 1990 : 29) along with various places such as Pondicherry (1673) and Chandranagore (1690). The first British settlement in the Andhra country was in Machilipatnam (1612). Economic conditions in the Andhra region made the French and the British more obstinate to occupy the country. The British were successful in the Anglo-French rivalry and finally the French were expelled from the Andhra region by April 1752. Unlike the Muslims the British were the precursors of Western influence in India because as Singh (1991 : 13) pronounces, they induced new thoughts, ideas and modern ways of life into the Indian sub-continent. The well-organized infiltration of the British influence and western civilization on the Andhra country have in some respects served to camouflage the Hindu religio-cultural and social conditions (Sooklal 1990 : 13).

As Sooklal (1990 : 13-14) maintains, at this time the Hindu religion and culture had reached a period of stagnation and there were no significant developments in Hindu religion or culture. At the same time the profane customs of the old Hindu society like *Sati* (widow burning), child-marriages, enforced widowhood and many more such practices were later confronted and discouraged by prominent Andhras like *Kandukūri Veeresalingam* (1848-1919) (Raghunadha Rao 1990 : 76). It was a "dark age" in the history of Hinduism. During this

MAP 2.4 - UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



period the western influence was clearly apparent in India and there was a direct threat of this westernization curbing all the creative work done by the Hindu community thus far in the Indian sub-continent (Sooklal 1990 : 14).

The western ideas and western religion ramified extensively into Hindu lives with the introduction of western education, which brought the Hindus into immediate contact with western science, technology, literature and art. Missionary enterprises gained impetus, leading to the institution of missionary schools and colleges. Many Hindus were caught off balance and were easily lured by the westernization which repudiated the caste system, *sati*, and other negative practices of Hinduism (Singh 1991 : 14-15). Such Hindus, as were attracted to western teaching and culture, started challenging the real essentials of Hinduism. Many Andhras were easily converted to Christianity.

Many Hindus feared the loss of their innate Hindu traditions which led to the rise of reformers, teachers and scholars who sought to purify Hinduism by reproofing some of its later adjuncts (Sooklal 1990 : 17). They segregated the requirements from the non-requirements, thus making Hinduism more profound, and which substantiated the ancient truths of Hinduism. This Renascent Hinduism led to the creation of the *Brahmo Samāj* under Ram Mohan Roy (1834), the *Ārya Samāj* under *Swāmi* Dayananda Saraswathi (1875), the Rāmākṛiṣṇa Mission (1897) and several movements.

Most of the 'colonial era' immigrant Andhras, being illiterate in the western sense, coming from small villages and having left the mother country at the beginning of the Neo-Hindu period, were not fully aware of these religio-social reforms usurping at the time of their immigration. Thus, most of the Andhras brought to the diaspora (except in the case of the USA) the religio-cultural practices and activities prevailing in their villages (viz. village Hinduism) at the time of their immigration from the Madras Presidency. Due to their impoverished economic status and various other socio-political reasons, most of the diaspora Andhras did not have or could not sustain any religio-cultural propinquity with India.

Faced by various forces of westernization, in order to resist acculturation, the loyal Hindu Andhras in the diaspora rigidly practised many of their religio-cultural habits which they

brought at the time of their arrival. The colonial era immigrants and many of the present-day immigrants to the USA integrated some benefits of westernisation and abolished the rigid caste and dowry systems, both of which are still prevalent in present-day Andhra Pradesh, India. However, they did not abandon the imperatives of Hinduism and Hindu culture, thus making the present-day diaspora Hindu Andhra culture more flexible. Similarly, they did not completely discontinue some religio-cultural activities of the village Hinduism which are unknown to most of the modern immigrants to the USA (see chapters 3-5).

2.7.2 Early conditions and later changes on the plantations

As mentioned earlier, over 80% of the immigrant Andhras in the three former British colonies were Hindus and mostly hailed from the small villages of Sṛīkākuḷam, Viśākhapatnam and two Gōdāvari districts of the present-day Andhra Pradesh. So, naturally they transported their village religio-cultural activities and rituals which they transmitted with them to the diaspora. In the case of Mauritius, no academic documentation is constituted regarding the early religious activities of the Andhra country except for the casual mentioning made by Nirsimloo-Anenden (1990 : 115-6). She mentions that during the fieldwork of her research on the Andhras in Mauritius she was told by the informants that the early Andhras enacted religious dramas (*Nāṭakams*). She maintains that these events have disappeared from the present Andhra community. Besides this, there is no separate documentation available to assess the early Mauritian Andhra situation on the plantation. According to one of the informants who is a religious preacher and priest from Mauritius (interview : *Sri Satyakama Appiah* 1993) the immigrant Andhras in Mauritius practised village Hinduism where they performed animal sacrifices and rituals. They worshipped village female deities such as *Peddamma*, *Yellamma*, *Pōṣamma* and *Āṅkāḷamma* and male deities such as *Nūkarāju* and *Pōtarāju* (see chapters 3 and 4 for more details).

However, in the case of both South Africa (Prabhakaran 1992 b) and Malaysia (Arasaratnam 1970) academic documentation is available on the Andhras to analyze the early religio-cultural activities in these respective countries.

Prabhakaran's work (1992 b : 56-75) focuses on the informal religio-cultural activities of the community which later led to the formation of the Andhra *Maha Sabha* in South Africa. Her work demonstrates that on moonlit nights the early Andhras dramatised many religious dramas (as in the case of their counterparts in Mauritius), sang religio-cultural songs, rendered *bhajans* and narrated religious stories to their younger generation. She also maintains that these immigrant Andhras did not have the socio-economic status to celebrate their religio-cultural activities on a grand scale. However, they had the desire to maintain their Hindu religion and culture and carried their Hindu *Dharma* authentically.

They were not given any special considerations or funds either by the plantation owners or by the government to construct their Hindu temples or shrines. However, they built a few small temples for their village deities and gods with their own funds and continued to perform their religious duties. The South African Telugus also made animal sacrifice to their smaller deities hoping that they would protect all the Telugus in Natal. They sacrificed goats, chickens and cockerels (see chapter 3 and 4 for more details) and believed in all the superstitious stories about bad spirits and witchcraft which exist in the villages.

The Telugus, after the 1920's "imported" a few Andhra priests from India, who could conduct various prayers and rituals in their traditional Andhra customs. Between the 1930 and 1960 the Andhra community, along with the other immigrant Indians, thrived economically and a few more temples were constructed in Tongaat, Bellaire, Puntans Hill and other places. However, with the arrival of the National Party to power in 1948, all the relations between India and South Africa have been aborted due to the socio-political sanctions applied by the Indian government on South Africa (cf. Prabhakaran 1992 b : 164-174).

Although the intentions of the Indian government were good, these sanctions and boycotts affected thousands of Hindu Indians in South Africa because "importation" of all the religio-cultural items, priests and teachers ceased after 1947. Above all, the Group Areas Act (1960's) had not only dismantled the close-knit Telugu (Indian) community but also destroyed some of the Telugu (and Indian) temples in Natal. Due to the 'much-hated' ill-treatment of the Indians by the white government, the Indians did not get any socio-economic or political encouragement to reconstruct their own temples (Prabhakaran 1992 b : 165-66). The

documentation made by Kuper (1960 : 60) illustrates that during the 1960's, the Andhras were the lowest income earning group of all the Indians in South Africa. It will be fascinating for any foreign reader to note how some of the religio-cultural activities of the Hindu Andhras survived thus far in South Africa against all the socio-political challenges of the country.

However, the plantation situation in Malaysia was much different and far better than their correlatives in South Africa. In order to please the labourers in the plantations, from the outset of the Indian immigration, the Malaysian plantation owners tried their best to help them to retain and nurture their Hindu religio-cultural activities. They constructed various small temples and shrines with their own money in every plantation where Hindu immigrants worked. The researcher visited various such small temples constructed for small village deities such as *Gaṅgānamma*, *Nūkālamma*, *Pōtarāju* and *Mārieamman*, and noticed numerous shrines near many Telugu homes in the plantations. During the early twentieth century, some big, well organized temples were constructed by the Malaysian Hindus themselves. The plantation owners not only gave them financial aid to construct and to maintain temples, but also helped them import Telugu and Tamil priests from India and later from Sri Lanka. They also took part in the religio-cultural activities (cf. Arasaratnam 1970) of their employees. Although modes of worship and ceremony in these small temples which were dedicated to village deities were diversified, larger temples which were dedicated to universal gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon (Arasaratnam 1970 : 163) were made uniform due to the efforts of the Malaysians. The *Āgamic* temples in Malaysia were mostly dedicated to Lord Muruga and to *Mārieamman* due to Tamil domination over the other linguistic groups.

In estates, the small temples (there are more than 200 such temples in the present-day Malaysia) were managed by plantation *pañcāyats* (village courts), which were usually formed out of Asian Hindu staff (mostly Tamil-speaking) and '*Kāṅgānyas*' under the vigilant eye of the management. In urban areas, if the temples were built from the public contributions, the *pañcāyats* were elected from the public (interview : Madini Soma Naidu 1993). The plantation owners not only encouraged them to celebrate all the festivals and rituals but also personally participated in such activities. In order to please their white plantation owners, the Malaysian Andhras (Indians) celebrated these festivals and rituals on a grand scale with pomp and glory. They slaughtered goats and distributed that meat to their employers and to various

other racial groups viz. Chinese, Malays and Whites. This resulted in the habit of cooking meat even on auspicious religio-cultural festivals such as *Dīpāwālī* and *San̄krānti* (*Pongal*) (see chapter 5 for more details). Preparing meat dishes on religious days became an exclusive habit of the Malaysian Andhras in the diaspora because the Andhras in South Africa and Mauritius abstain from meat on such religious occasions.

Due to Tamil domination over the other linguistic groups, in Malaysia the main emphasis was on Śaivism. The worship of the female deity in its various forms was and still is very popular in Malaysia. For many of the village rituals the Malaysian Hindus (in which the Telugus are included) accomplished blood sacrifice (like the Natal Telugus) by slaughtering buffaloes, goats and cockerels and distributed the meat to others. However, as it is demonstrated in the following chapters (see chapters 3 and 4), many present-day Malaysian Telugus, due to various reasons, are abandoning such sacrifices.

The religious reforms that took place in India reached Malaysia very late. Many of the Malaysian Hindus were ignorant of what had happened in India before the end of the second world war. After the second world war Malaysia had intensive religio-cultural contacts with India and it led to the revival and revivification of Hinduism in Malaysia. At this period due to the efforts of some Hindu religious leaders, governmental pressure was induced on these small temples to stop the blood sacrifice and the two conspicuous Tamil rituals viz. *Kāvadi*-bearing and fire-walking (see chapter 4 for more details). Various legislative laws were enacted by the government to stop these rituals in the Malaysian Hindu community (Arasaratnam 1970 : 116-7). Although, the blood sacrifice to the village deities had almost been stopped, the other two Tamil rituals of self-immolation viz. *Kāvadi*-bearing and fire-walking did not erode in Malaysia. Due to Tamil influence the Telugus also sincerely and with dedication take part in these two Tamil rituals and they became an inevitable part of the Telugu religio-cultural activities in Malaysia (see chapter 3-5 for more details).

2.8 CONCLUSION

The foregoing sub-sections illustrates that the Andhras are a minority community within the minority Indian community in South Africa, Malaysia, the USA and in Mauritius where the

Indians form the majority group. Similarly, it is also true that the Hindus form a minority group in South Africa and in the USA (Christian majority countries) and in Malaysia (Muslim majority country). In this sub-section an attempt is made to demonstrate briefly the sociological aspects of the attitudes and behavioural patterns of the minority groups (eg. the Andhras in the diaspora) towards the dominant "out-group" culture (eg. Western or African) or religion (Christianity or Islam). Brand (1966 : 29) comments that :

It is a general phenomenon that most minorities are in the long run assimilated completely into the larger system of which it formerly was a part. Group boundaries become blurred and eventually minority cease to exist as a distinct entity.

The Dictionary of Social Sciences (Gould and Kolb 1984 : 38) states that the term "assimilation" denotes a process whereby a group, generally a minority of an immigrant group, through contact relinquish one set of cultural traits and acquire a new set. Prabhakaran (1992 b : 139) assumes that Brand uses the terms "absorption" or "assimilation" to describe the process of a minority identifying with the dominant group (eg. in the case of Malaysia the Andhras identify with Tamils) and states that this assimilation takes place under different stages. To quote Brand (1966 : 29-30) :

The groups with indignant attitudes slowly move into a stage where they are on the margin between two groups. In this stage their attitude is very 'typically ambiguous' and they readily distinguish themselves in increasing numbers with the dominant group values. They are exposed to the new group's language and also their culture and learn the values of the dominant group. As the assimilation proceeds, the minority group continuously loses its original cultural distinctiveness

In the context of Mauritius, South Africa, Malaysia and the USA, the Andhras due to various reasons (Prabhakaran 1992 b : 135-147), assimilated mostly with Tamil-speaking Indians and with other Indian communities since their arrival as immigrants to their respective countries. They learnt the dominant 'in-group' (Tamil) language and the more dominant 'host' language (French Creole, English and Malay respectively) and their religio-cultural habits, intermarried and in many cases abandoned their own language and cultural habits.

However, a small group of loyal Andhras in the three former British colonies and the USA resist complete assimilation and in recent years there has been a conscious revival in the

interests of the minority Andhra group (like any other minority groups in the diaspora) all over the world to retain their religio-cultural identity in an alien environment. An attempt is being made (eg. in Mauritius, South Africa and Malaysia) at the micro and macro levels to intensify the group's identity and to claim specific rights for themselves as an independent minority group (Nirsimloo-Anenden 1990 : 111). As Nirsimloo-Anenden (1990 : 111) states, that claim is done partly by reverting to old cultural practices that may have been completely or almost forgotten (eg. celebrating Andhra *Ugādi* separately in the diaspora).

The minority communities, while trying their best for the revival of their ethnicity, resist complete assimilation with the host community where the latter demands complete discarding of their cultural traits brought from their land of origin. However, the immigrants in many instances, regard assimilation as reciprocal, involving mutual adjustments between both the host and the immigrant groups. In such situations (eg. South African Indian community), the immigrants are willing to assimilate by introducing elements of their own religio-cultural traits, discarding only the impractical and recalcitrant. The Andhras in the diaspora are no exception to this norm.

The Andhras, being the minority community in the diaspora, have to face many challenges, and problems while resisting complete assimilation with the dominant host culture. They resist such complete assimilation into a 'melting pot' through their religio-cultural dynamics which not only enhance the maintenance of their Andhra identity in the diaspora but also contribute to the maintenance of Hindu religious activities in the diaspora. The following chapters focus on the religio-cultural activities of the present-day Andhras, the challenges and problems they encounter while trying to maintain their Andhra identity in the diaspora. An attempt will be made to analyze the successes, failures and setbacks they encountered while they resist complete assimilation with their respective host cultures through their religio-cultural activities.

CHAPTER THREE

RELIGION AND PERSONAL LIFE

3.1 Abstract

The content of this chapter and the following three chapters, being phenomenological in nature, is largely based on the findings of the survey conducted in the Hindu Andhra diaspora. Data from empirical research, personal participation and interviews conducted (see chapter 1.4) among the Andhras are extensively reflected in these chapters.

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the influence of religion on the personal lives of the Hindu Andhras in the diaspora. Firstly, the personal backgrounds of the respondents are documented in 3.2. Personal specific religious affiliations of the respondents and their religio-cultural attitudes are analyzed in 3.3. The Hindu scriptures and literature which are mostly read by the respondents are briefly discussed in 3.4. The main *Samskāras* performed in the present-day Andhra diaspora are discussed in 3.5. Finally, the home based individual religio-cultural activities (excluding the Pan-Hindu festivals observed) are depicted in 3.6. The erosion/ preservation of Hindu Andhra culture in the diaspora and the extent of such erosion/ preservation are discussed in the conclusion (3.7). The challenges and problems they face as individual Hindus in the Hindu diaspora are also discussed in these sub-sections.

3.2 Respondents' background

The 50 respondents from each country's sample include both male and female from all age groups and from different generations. All the personal information of the respondents from different countries are elucidated in the following tables (see tables 3.1 - 3.4).

TABLE 3.1
SEX DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS

	MAU	S A	MAL	USA
D N A	--	--	--	2%
MALE	54%	56%	84%	50%
FEMALE	46%	44%	16%	48%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%

D.N.A = Did not answer this question

The above table depicts that 54% of the respondents from Mauritius are male and the rest, 46% of them, are female. Almost the same percentage of sex distribution is extracted from the South African respondents. However, the researcher could not obtain a balanced ratio of sex distribution from the Malaysian respondents even though the questionnaires have been distributed equally to both sexes (see 1.5 for more details). In the case of the USA, 50% of the respondents are male and 48% of them are female. However, one respondent (2%) did not indicate his/her sex.

TABLE 3.2
AGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE RESPONDENTS

	MAU	S A	MAL	USA
UNDER 18	14%	6%	6%	2%
19-34 YEARS	32%	22%	20%	40%
35-50 YEARS	28%	38%	58%	34%
ABOVE 50	26%	34%	16%	24%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%

The age distribution of the respondents from the four countries as evidenced in table 3.2 depicts almost a balanced age distribution. However, it is pertinent to note that in the case of the USA the percentage of the respondents under 18 years is far too low compared to Mauritius which has drawn 14% of its respondents from that age group.

TABLE 3.3
OCCUPATION OF THE RESPONDENTS

OCCUPATION	MAU	S A	MAL	U S A
D N A	--	4%	2%	--
PROFESSIONAL	34%	16%	12%	50%
BUSINESS/ SELF-EMPLOYED	14%	14%	30%	12%
WHITE COLLAR JOB	14%	14%	34%	6%
STUDENT	16%	12%	8%	12%
HOUSE WIFE	6%	16%	6%	20%
FARM/ AGRICULTURE	6%	2%	2%	--
OTHER	10%	22%	6%	--
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%

The background of the respondents as reflected in the table 3.3 demonstrates that the sample drawn from the Andhra community of Mauritius, South Africa and Malaysia consists of various social classes thus making the sample a cross-sectional representation of the community in the diaspora. However, this equal social class distribution cannot be seen or expected from the respondents of USA where most of the immigrants are "technocrats" and academic professionals. In this context, the term "technocrats" is employed to indicate all the professionals who are experts in technology. Similarly, most of the respondents who are housewives are also highly qualified professionals and graduates. This situation contradicts the situation of the housewives from the other three countries because the Telugu women in

the former three British colonies are not as highly educated when compared to the immigrant Andhras of the USA.

In addition to the qualitative research the writer also conducted scheduled and unscheduled telephonic and casual interviews with various members of the Andhra diaspora. While interviewing the community (in some cases they have interview questionnaire) the researcher tried not to elicit information from only one community.

RELIGIO-CULTURAL ATTITUDES AND RELIGIOUS AFFILIATIONS

In this sub-section an attempt is being made to analyze the religio-cultural attitudes and to identify the personal religious affiliations of the Hindu Andhras in the diaspora because the writer feels that the personal attitudes of the respondents influence their religio-cultural dynamics. Thus it is imperative to know the respondents' attitudes towards Hindu religions and culture and their specific religious affiliations.

3.3.1 Personal attitudes

The response elicited from the Andhras to the question 'how important is Hinduism in your daily life?' is tabulated in the following table (see table 3.4).

TABLE 3.4

HOW IMPORTANT IS HINDUISM IN YOUR DAILY LIFE ?

	MAU	S A	MAL	USA
VERY IMPORTANT	66%	58%	68%	30%
IMPORTANT	32%	40%	30%	56%
NOT SO IMPORTANT	2%	2%	2%	14%
I DON'T CARE	--	--	--	--
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%

The above table (3.4) demonstrates that a sizeable percent of the respondents viz. 66% from Mauritius, 58% from South Africa and 68% from Malaysia felt that Hinduism is very important in their daily life. However, only 30% of the respondents from the USA indicated that Hinduism is very important in their daily life. While considering the response to the same question, 32% of the respondents from Mauritius, 40% from South Africa, 30% from Malaysia and 56% from the USA were of the view that Hinduism is important to them. A small percentage i.e 2% of the respondents from the three former British colonies responded that Hinduism is not so important in their daily life. However, it is of concern to note that a considerable percent (14%) of respondents from the USA demonstrated a negative attitude towards the relevance of Hinduism in their daily lives when they maintained that Hinduism is not so important. This negative attitude was also reflected in the responses given by some of the interviewees in the New York state. This could be attributed to the erosion of the Hindu cultural values in the USA.

When questioned ‘do you apply the religious precepts and teachings of Hinduism in your daily life?’ a very positive response was forwarded from all the countries. The replies are documented in table 3.5.

TABLE 3.5
DO YOU APPLY THE RELIGIOUS PRECEPTS IN YOUR DAILY LIFE?

	MAU	S A	MAL	USA
D N A	6%	--	12%	10%
YES	88%	90%	76%	68%
NO	6%	10%	12%	22%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%

A considerable percent of respondents varying between 6% to 12% did not answer this question. However, 88% of the respondents from Mauritius, 90% from South Africa, 76% from Malaysia and a lower 68% from the USA answered positively to this question. The remaining respondents answered negatively from all the countries.

The responses given to these above questions indicate that religion is not only important in the daily lives of the well-established Hindu Andhras in the three former British colonies but also they apply the Hindu precepts they know in their daily life. The writer, being an immigrant herself and having studied the immigrant situations and attitudes of the Telugus in other countries, viz. Singapore, Canada and the former "homelands" of South Africa (Transkei, Ciskei and Boputhatswana), while analyzing the American Andhras' attitudes, feels that in most cases it is natural to give primacy to his/her physical needs rather than to his/her inner and spiritual needs (cf. Prabhakaran 1992 b : 61). The '*Pravāsāndhras*' (immigrant Andhras) of the USA are no exception to this norm. Similar attitudes were displayed towards Hindu culture and religio-cultural activities which are substantiated in the following table.

TABLE 3.6
ATTITUDES TOWARDS HINDU ANDHRA CULTURE

	MAU	S A	MAL	USA
D N A	4%	--	2%	--
VERY POSITIVE	52%	66%	42%	48%
POSITIVE	42%	34%	54%	50%
NEGATIVE	2%	--	2%	2%
I DON'T CARE	--	--	--	--
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%

This above table clearly demonstrates that only a small minority (2% in all the countries) of the respondents had a negative attitude towards Hindu Andhra culture and the remaining percentage exhibited either a very positive or a positive attitude towards their culture.

Similarly, the replies furnished to the questions "whether the respondents' children take part in the Andhra religio-cultural activities or not and do/would the respondents insist that their children take part in such religio-cultural activities?" the majority of the respondents (\pm 65%) reflected positively. The rest of them either do not have children or their children do not take part in the religio-cultural activities. In this respect the researcher feels that their children

may be too young to take part in such activities or do not show an interest to take part in such activities.

3.3.2 Religious affiliations

In Hinduism there is traditional sectarian sub-divisions and many Hindus exhibit specific affiliations to a particular sub-division viz. Śaivite, Vaiṣṇavite, Śakta or Vēdāntin. Traditionally most of the Andhras are either Vaiṣṇavites or Śaivites. It is also true, as Singh (1991 : 141) notes, that there is an increasing tendency amongst the neo-Hindus not to associate themselves with any traditional sub-divisions. However, various religious leaders regard these sub-divisions as important parts of Hinduism. When asked to specify their personal religious affiliations, a variety of responses were elicited from the respondents and they are reflected in the following table (see table 3.7).

TABLE 3.7
WHAT IS YOUR SPECIFIC RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION?

	MAU	S A	MAL	USA
D N A	4%	22%	8%	14%
ŚAIVITE	6%	2%	10%	10%
VAISNAVITE	50%	22%	60%	16%
ŚAKTA	2%	2%	--	--
VĒDĀNTIN	8%	2%	--	6%
OTHER (SPECIFY)	2%	2%	--	4%
NO SPECIFIC AFFILIATION	28%	48%	22%	50%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%

The above table (3.7) reflects that 50% of the respondents from Mauritius and a higher 60% of the respondents from Malaysia, both mostly being followers of traditional and village Hinduism (see chapters 3.7 and 4.4 for more information), identified themselves with Vaiṣṇavism. However, as a contrast to these two former British colonies, only 22% of the respondents from South Africa associated themselves with Vaiṣṇavism and another 22% of them did not answer this question. Similarly, only a small percent (16%) of the respondents from the USA claimed affiliation to Vaiṣṇavism. While a significant percent (almost 50%) of the respondents from South Africa and the USA had no specific affiliation, and less than 30% of the respondents from the two remaining countries claimed no specific affiliation to any traditional sectarian sub-divisions. This supports the researcher's observation that the neo-Hindus do not associate themselves with any traditional sub-divisions. In the case of Malaysia most Telugus, being devotees of the *Srī Satya Sāi Bāba* Movement, did not claim any affiliation to the above given sub-divisions.

Based on these findings, the researcher assumes that neo-Hinduism has gained sturdy ground in South Africa and the USA rather than in the other two countries due to the tireless efforts of the neo-Hindu movements in South Africa and the USA (see table 3.9). This assumption of the researcher has also been based on the numerous interviews conducted in these four countries and on the experience she gained from the participation in the religio-cultural activities of the Telugus in the diaspora.

Similarly, almost 70% of the total respondents from the three former British colonies either belonged to or supported one of the religious movements in their respective countries (see tables 3.8 and 3.9). However, once again a conspicuous 76% of the American Telugus did not associate themselves with any religious movement or associations in their country. These findings once again support the hypothesis of the researcher about the immigrant Telugus in the diaspora (see 3.3.1).

TABLE 3.8
ARE YOU A MEMBER OF ANY RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT?

	MAU	S A	MAL	USA
D N A	6%	--	2%	4%
YES	72%	62%	72%	20%
NO	22%	38%	26%	76%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%

TABLE 3.9
IF YES, PLEASE SPECIFY TO WHICH MOVEMENT?

	MAU	S A	MAL	USA
N/A	22%	38%	26%	76%
RĀMAKRISNA MISSION	--	10%	2%	4%
DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY	--	16%	10%	--
HARE KRISNA MOVEMENT	--	12%	--	--
SĀI BĀBA MOVEMENT	30%	20%	48%	2%
VENKATĒSWARA SAṄGHAM	42%	4%	14%	--
CINMĀYĀNANDA MISSION	6%	--	--	6%
OTHERS (SPECIFY)	--	--	--	12%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%

As mentioned previously, although there was a revivification in Hinduism after 1870, many Andhras who emigrated to various former British colonies were not aware of these positive changes which took place in the socio-cultural aspects of Hinduism at the time of their emigration. Many nineteenth century Andhras, being illiterate in the western sense and coming from small villages, did not associate themselves with any of the neo-Hindu

movements. However, the Andhras of Mauritius and Malaysia (cf. Nirsimloo-Anenden 1990 and Arasaratnam 1970) tend to associate these neo-Hindu Movements such as Rāmakṛṣṇa Mission, *Ārya Samaj*, Divine Life Society and Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement with the Aryan culture (source : personal interviews with Mauritian and Malaysian Telugus).

Similarly, the Mauritian and Malaysian Andhras associate the Sāi Bāba movement and the Veṅkaṭēswara *Bhakti* Movement with the Dravidian culture and more specifically with the Andhra culture due to the presence of Lord Veṅkaṭēswara temple in Tirumala and the birth place of Sāi Bāba in Puṭṭaparti which are in the modern Andhra Pradesh, India. Above all, these Andhras along with the American Telugus have good relations with Andhra Pradesh which facilitated a special Andhra identity for themselves (see chapter 5 for more details).

Although it formed part of the former British colonies, the situation in South Africa depicts a different picture because the response furnished by the South African Andhras contrasts with that of Mauritius and Malaysia. It is interesting to note that a wide range of religious affiliations were furnished by the South African Andhras. 10% of the respondents claimed affiliation with Rāmakṛṣṇa Mission, 16% of them with Divine Life Society, 12% with Harē Kṛṣṇa Movement, 20% with Sāi Bāba Movement and only a 4% to Veṅkaṭēswara Movement.

Prabhakaran, in her academic work on the Andhras in South Africa (1992 b & 1993), maintains that the Andhras, like other linguistic groups in South Africa, were "cut-off" from their ancestral home due to various socio-economic and political reasons and are not aware of the changes taking place in the Andhra country. Moreover, due to the popularity of the neo-Hindu movements in South Africa and due to the lack of previous religio-cultural relations with the Andhras of Mauritius or Malaysia, the South African Andhras, like their counterparts of Mauritius and Malaysia, did not have any such reservations towards these neo-Hindu movements.

The situation is very markedly different in the case of the American Andhras. The majority of the American respondents (76%) did not belong to any religious organization. Only a small 4% and another 2% of them affiliated themselves to the Divine Life Society and to Sāi Bāba Movement respectively. However, 12% of the respondents confederated themselves as

the supporters of ‘Bhāratīya Hindu Temple’ in Detroit which is in Michigan State. This could be attributed to the forceful personality and leadership of the Telugu priest of that temple viz. Sri Janaki Rama Sastri (Vide : research findings) (see 3.4 and 3.5 for more details).

Lastly, it is pertinent to note that although they did not belong to any religious movements, almost 80% of the respondents displayed respectful attitudes towards the religious movements in their respective countries. Another considerable percent of the respondents maintained tolerant (see table 3.10) attitudes towards the neo-Hindu movements. A minor percent of 2%-4% were uncertain about themselves regarding their attitudes with the other religious movements.

TABLE 3.10
ATTITUDES TOWARDS OTHER HINDU ORGANIZATIONS

	MAU	S A	MAL	USA
RESPECTFUL	86%	80%	80%	76%
TOLERANT	12%	16%	14%	22%
UNFRIENDLY	2%	--	2%	--
INDIFFERENT	--	2%	--	--
UNCERTAIN	--	2%	4%	2%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%

3.3.3 *Ista Daivam*

Hindus worship God through many male and female deities, called *Dēvatas* and *Dēvis*. In Indian Hinduism almost every family or a village has its own favourite deity called *Iṣṭa Daivam* or a chosen deity and the choice varies from person to person or from family to family. The family deity is also called home deity and the other as ‘village deity’ (see chapters 3 and 4 for more details). As Adhopia (1993 : 109) states, this Hindu worship of God in various forms ‘leads to the misunderstanding that Hinduism is a polytheistic religion’. However, whatever name we attribute to the deity we worship, the Hindu scriptures have

many evidence to demonstrate that Hinduism is monotheistic. For the reader of Hindu religion, it is a well known fact that all the *Vēdas* and scriptures refer only to one Supreme Being. *Rg Vēda* (1.164.46) states, " The One Existence the wise call by many names as *Agni*, *Yama*,". The *Atharva Vēda* (ii.1.3) states, "He is one indeed (*Ēka Ēva*); there is no second, third or fourth or tenth; He is only One". There are many other scriptural evidence to demonstrate that there is only one Supreme Being in Hinduism, but we can refer to Him or worship to Him as we want to see Him. Thus, the Hindus believe in the principle of Unity in Diversity. This unity in diversity of Hinduism is reflected in the response elicited to the question ‘who is your home deity or *Iṣṭa Daivam*?’ (see table 3.11).

TABLE 3.11
WHO IS YOUR *IṢṬA DAIVAM* OR HOME DEITY?

	MAU	S A	MAL	USA
RĀMA	2%	34%	54%	14%
KRISHṆA	4%	46%	18%	16%
ŚIVA	2%	28%	4%	16%
VEṆKAṬĒSWARA SWĀMI	34%	38%	38%	50%
DURGA	6%	14%	16%	14%
VINĀYAKA	2%	20%	28%	18%
HANUMĀN	--	20%	8%	16%
LAKṢMI	4%	44%	14%	16%
SARASWATI	--	42%	8%	12%
VIṢṆU	16%	24%	18%	12%
PĀRVATI	--	22%	4%	12%
NO SPECIFIC DEITY	30%	24%	8%	36%

The above table (3.11) reflects that many respondents have more than one specific *Iṣṭa Daivam* and a considerable percent of them do not have any specific *Iṣṭa Daivam*.

3.4 SCRIPTURE READING

The holy scriptures of Hinduism consist of the *Rg Vēda*, *Yajur Vēda*, *Sāma Vēda* and *Atharva Vēda*, six *Vēdāṅgas* viz. *Śikṣa*, *Vyākaraṇa*, *Nirukta*, *Chandas*, *Jyōtiṣa* and *Kalpa* and their four supplements viz. *Purāṇa*, *Nyāya*, *Mīmāṣa* and *Dharma Śāstra* (Ayer 1987 : 2-3). The word 'Rik' from which *Rg Vēda* is derived, means 'praise' and *Rg Vēda* consists of 1 017 hymns addressed to various gods. Sri Satyakama Appiah (interview : Mauritius 1993) and Sri Lakshmi Narayana Bhatt (interview : South Africa 1994) say that these hymns are grouped in ten *maṇḍalas*, each hymn being called a *Śukta*. The *Yajur Vēda* is purely devoted to use in rites or rituals. Sri Bhatt also (interview : 1994) states that the *Sāma Vēda* is ritualistic in content and highly poetic and musical in form. Lastly, *Atharva Vēda* explains the rituals connected with various *Vidyas* i.e, for cure of diseases, gain of wealth and is for specific materialistic purposes in human life (Ayer 1987 : 6).

The *Vēdas* also called as the *Śrutis* and they are the foundational scriptures of the Hindus. The *Purāṇas* are the supplementary *aṅgas* (branches) and the main character of the *Purāṇas* is that they contain five essential features viz. *Sarga*, *Pratisarga*, *Varṇśa*, *Manvantara* and *Varṇśānucarita* and they are eighteen in number. Each *Purāṇa* has several verses and also has several *Upa-Purāṇas* which are sacredly read by millions of Hindus all over the world.

The Hindu *Itihāsa* epics such as *Mahābhāratam*, *Rāmāyaṇam* and *Bhagavad Gīta* form part of *Dharma Śāstras*. These *Itihāsas* possess everything which is in the *Vēdas*, but in a simpler mode and called *Suhṛit-Samhitas* (Swāmi Sivananda 1993 : 23). Swāmi Sivananda (1993 : 23) states that these *Itihāsas* give the human beings fascinating stories with all the fundamental teachings of Hinduism and they facilitate the common man to grasp the essential philosophy of the *Upaniṣads*. The most well known *Itihāsas* are the epics of *Rāmāyaṇam* and *Mahābhāratam*. It is pertinent in this context to mention that the *Bhagavad Gīta* forms the most important part of the *Mahābhāratam* and it is a fabulous dialogue between Lord Kṛiṣṇa and Arjuna.

Millions of Hindus in the diaspora frequently read these scriptures. Literature and scripture reading forms part of the religious activities of many Hindus. The diaspora Andhras also read

these scriptures and various other religious literature and it is reflected in the following table.

TABLE 3.12

RELIGIOUS SCRIPTURES READ BY THE TELUGUS

	MAU	S A	MAL	USA
<i>RĀMĀYANAM</i>	50%	34%	54%	24%
<i>BHAGAVAD GĪTA</i>	54%	44%	22%	58%
<i>MAHĀBHĀRATAM</i>	26%	4%	16%	20%
<i>PURĀNAS</i>	20%	6%	10%	12%
<i>VĒDAS</i>	16%	6%	4%	10%
OTHER LITERATURE	20%	14%	28%	20%

The above table (3.12) demonstrates that *Bhagavad Gīta* is the mostly read text in Mauritius (54%), South Africa (44%) and in the USA (58%). However, it seems in Malaysia *Gīta* is not so popularly read (only 22% of the respondents indicated that they read *Gīta*). The researcher attributes this unpopularity of *Gīta* to the Tamil influence over the Telugus where *Kamban Rāmāyaṇam* is more popularly read than any other religious scripture. This table also illustrates that *Rāmāyaṇam* is also very popularly read epic in these four countries.

It raises the question why the *Gīta* is so popularly read religious scripture in the Hindu Andhra diaspora? The researcher attributes the popularity of *Gīta* to its appeal to the Hindus as it has universal religious aspects because Kṛṣṇa says to Arjuna (Chapter 18, *Ślōka* 66) :

*"Sarva dharmān parityajya māmēk śaraṇam vraja
aḥam tvā sarvapāpēbhyoḥ mōkṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ"* .

"Abandoning all forms of rites and duties, take refuge in Me alone. I shall free you from all sins. (Therefore) do not grieve" (Swāmi Gambhirananda 1991 : 737-38). Kṛṣṇa also says to Arjuna that (Chapter 18, *Ślōka* 61) :

*"Īśvaraḥ sarvabhūtānām hṛddeṣe Arjuna tiṣṭati
bhrāmayān sarvabhūtāni yantra-ārūdhāni māyayā"*

"O Arjuna, the Lord resides in the region of the heart of all creatures, revolving through Māya all the creatures (as though) mounted on a machine" (Swāmi Gambhirananda 1991 : 735).

While describing the advantages of reading the *Bhagavad Gīta* very often it is said that (ślōkas 12-13) :

"*Tribhāgam paṭmānasthu gaṅgā snāna phalam labhēt
sḍaśam japamānasthu sōmayāga phalam labhēt*"
"*Ēkādhyaṅanthu yōnitwam paṭatē bhakti samyuktah
Rudralōka mawāpnōti gaṇōbhūtwā wasēcciram*"

Gīta clearly states that those who read six chapters of *Bhagavad Gīta* everyday will be blessed with the benefits of taking holy bath in the river Ganges; those who read three chapters a day will obtain all the benefits of performing a *Sōma Yāgam*. Those who read at least one chapter a day will obtain a permanent place in Lord Rudra's (Śiva's) place and live along with his followers.

Almost all the religious leaders have interpreted the *Gīta* according to their own school of thought and it has been translated into various languages. About the *Bhagavad Gīta*, the Encyclopedia Britannica (1990, Vol.8 : 937-8) writes "The influence of the *Gīta* has been profound. It is a popular text open to all who would listen and fundamental for all later Hinduism".

3.5 SAMSKĀRAS

The term *Samskāra* is taken from Sanskrit and the nearest English word for *Samskāras* is sacraments. The purifying Hindu rites that pertain to the four stages of human life are called *Samskāras*. Like in other religions, Hindus are also prescribed a number of *Samskāras*, the rites which not only purify the Hindus but also sanctify, refine or reform them (Interview: Sri Bhatt 1994). They cover a Hindu's entire life from the moment he/she is conceived in the mother's womb till his/her death and includes all the funeral ceremonies, and further on, as Ayer (1987 : 22) states, for the smooth passage of his soul to another world.

Ayer (1987 : 23) lists various objectives of the *Samṣkāras*. They are : the removal of hostile or evil powers that beset human life at various stages and to invoke beneficial results from the kindly gods, so that the performer can benefit and prosper. He states that the main aim of performing a *Samṣkāra* is for material gains to the individual which later contributes to the domestic and social felicity. He also adds that by performing the *Samṣkāra* an individual also gains socio-cultural and moral benefits such as attainment of social status, privileges and attainment of *Mōkṣa* (Ayer 1987 : 23-4).

The researcher interviewed various priests in the Hindu Andhra diaspora and they indicated that the earliest suggestions of *Samṣkāras* are found in *R̥g Vēda* and the hymns now used in the rituals such as *Vivāha* (marriage), *Garbhādhāna* (the nuptial ceremony) and *Antyēṣṭi* (funeral) are to be found there. However, the *Atharva Vēda* is a rich source of *mantras* (holy chants) which are recited at several *Samṣkāras* like marriage, funeral, initiation for *Vēdic* studies (Interview : Sri Satyanarayana Acharyulu 1993). Based on the information given by various Andhra priests and *Brāhmaṇas*, there are forty two important *Samṣkāras* out of which only sixteen *Samṣkāras* are mostly performed by the Hindu Andhras in the modern Andhra Pradesh. The sixteen important *Samṣkāras* are: *Garbhadhāna* (nuptial ceremony), *Pumsāvana* (ceremony for a male child), *Sīmantōnnayana* (ceremony for child's good health), *Jātakarma* (ceremony to introduce the child into his caste), *Nāmakaraṇa* (naming the baby ceremony), *Niṣkramaṇa* (first outing for the baby), *Annaprāśana* (solid food feeding ceremony), *Cowla* or *Cūda-karaṇa* or *Cūda-karma* (ceremony of removing the baby's hair for the first time), *Karṇavēdha* (ear piercing ceremony), *Vidyārambha* (initiation to education ceremony), *Upanayana* (investiture of sacred thread ceremony), *Vēdārambha* (beginning of the *Vēdic* study), *Kēśānta* (shaving of beard ceremony), *Samāvartana* (end of studentship ceremony), *Vivāha* (marriage), and *Antyeṣṭi* (funeral ceremony) (Pandey 1969 : 23).

During research it was observed that out of these sixteen *Samṣkāras* mentioned above, only eight or nine of them are popularly performed by the immigrant Andhras in the USA (also in countries like Canada, Australia and Singapore) and by most of the Hindu Andhras in India. An attempt is made briefly to discuss these important *Samṣkāras* as they are being performed in the four countries under study.

3.5.1 Sīmantōnnayana

Sīmantōnnayana is better known as ‘*Sīmantam*’ in Telugu. It is third in the series of pre-natal *Samśkāras*, and one of the most important rites to be performed in the case of a pregnant woman for good growth of the foetus. This *Samśkāra* is discussed elaborately in the *Grhyasūtras* (eg. *Śāṅkhāyana Grhyasūtras* 1.22) (Dange 1985 : 15). The Hindu Andhras, based on the literary evidence such as *Āpastamba* and *Bhāradvāja Grhyasūtras*, expressly say that this rite is to be performed only once, i.e., at the first conception between the fifth and eighth months of pregnancy (Interview : Sri Bhatt 1994). The Telugu dictionary (Brown 1987 : 1342) states that the term *Sīmantōnnayana* means ‘parting of the hairs of the pregnant woman at the centre of the head’. As Ayer (1987 : 31) states, the ceremony thus derives its name from the act of parting the hair in the centre.

Based on *Śāṅkhāyana Grhyasūtras* Dange (1985 : 15-16) briefly describes this *Samśkāra* as a rite which is to be performed on a chosen auspicious day. During the rite, the husband offers cooked rice, which contains sesame and green gram, as oblations to the house-hold fire (*havana*) uttering *Bhūh*, *Bhuvah*, *Svah* and the other relevant *mantras*. The wife, having taken her bath, dressed in new clothes, sits next to the husband and touches the hand of her husband. The husband, after the oblations, parts her hair with an upward movement with a porcupine quill that has three white spots and with three blades of the *darbha*-grass (the sacred grass used in the sacrifices). The use of porcupine quill is to ward off evils from the pregnant woman. The *Brāhmaṇ* priests recite *Vēdic mantras* invoking the goddess *Rāka*, presiding deity of the full-moon (Ayer 1987 : 31). The harmonious vibrations of such *mantras* recited during the *Samśkāra* help in shaping the body and the soul of the child beautifully (Swāmi Sivananda 1993 : 93). At the end of the rite, the women are asked to sing music to bless the lady and to play *Vīṇa* or any instrument to increase the mother’s suckling powers (Interview : Smt Nallamothe Leelavathi 1994).

In modern Andhra Pradesh although performed by most of the Telugus, the performance of this rite has changed. It is performed mostly as a socio-cultural festival (except in *Brāhmaṇ* caste) rather than a religious *Samśkāra*. It is performed mostly by women and in many cases it does not involve a priest or a *havana*. The husband is made to decorate his wife with

bangles of different colours, flowers and jewellery. The elderly, married women smear turmeric powder on her cheeks, place a *kurikumam* dot on her forehead, put some bangles and decorate her hair with flowers. They make her taste many sweetmeats (the number of sweetmeats cooked depend on the number of months of her pregnancy). The womenfolk sing various Telugu songs to bless the pregnant woman and her foetus. However, in the upper caste families, the priest is invited to perform a *havana*. The husband and the wife together offer oblations of cooked rice to the fire while the priest chants *Vēdic mantras*. Lastly, the pregnant woman touches the feet of all the elders and takes blessings from them.

This *Samskāra* is not commonly performed in Mauritius or in South Africa. Only 4% of the total respondents from both these countries indicated that they perform *Sīmāntam*. The researcher assumes that this 4% of the response came from the immigrant Andhras who arrived recently to these countries. An interesting higher percent (30%) of the total respondents from Malaysia indicated that they perform *Sīmāntam* in their country. A much higher percent, i.e 48%, of the respondents from the USA indicated that they perform this rite for a pregnant woman in their families. In both Malaysia and the USA, the rite is celebrated in the modern way with a few differences. For example, the ceremony is held on a convenient Sunday rather on an auspicious day. Due to western influence, the pregnant woman in the USA is asked to cut a cake during the *Sīmāntam* ceremony and is given gifts by the friends and relatives during the ceremony (called baby shower) (Interview : Nallamothu Leelavathi 1994). In some American Telugu homes the priest is invited to conduct a *havana* and oblations are offered to the fire (*Agni*) (Interview : Sri V Janaki Rama Sastri 1994).

One or two present-day Mauritian Telugus indicated that they have seen this ceremony being performed in the immigrant Andhra homes (in some districts where their numbers are noticeable) where they were invited to attend. When questioned about this rite, some Mauritian Telugus informed the researcher that they associate most of the Sanskritic rites or rituals with 'north Indian culture'. This finding is supported by the research conducted by Nirsimloo-Anenden (1990 : 114) when she states that "there seems to be a semi-conscious choice in the utilisation of religious practices as symbols of identity" in the Mauritian Andhra community.

A few South African Telugus have mentioned that they have noticed the *Sīmāntam* as being performed in the recently available Telugu (video) movies. During her stay of six years in South Africa, the researcher has never witnessed this *Saṁskāra* being performed in any South African Telugu home. However, many South African Telugus, due to western influence, perform the baby shower function for a pregnant woman.

3.5.2 Nāmakarana

This is one of the important post-natal rites in which the new born child is given a name. The common day for the *Nāmakarana* is said to be the eleventh day (ten days after the actual day of birth). *Sri Janaki Rama Sastri* and *Sri Bhatt* inform (interviews : 1994) that the names of the boys should have an even number of syllables and whereas for girls it should be odd number of syllables. It is for the gain of material and religious fame (cf. Ayer 1987 : 34 and Dange 1985 : 21). Many Hindu Andhras feel that the names given to the child should be easy to pronounce, pleasing to the ear, and should have good meaning. Many Andhras choose the baby's name after the *Nakṣatras* (constellation) of birth, after the ancestors and some times after the deities. In many cases, the first syllable of the baby's name is chosen according to the birth star or "sign". However, some of the Telugus in Andhra Pradesh believe that the name of a boy should correspond to that of constellation but the name of a girl should not correspond to that of a constellation. They feel that a girl having the name of a constellation should not be accepted for marriage (vide : research findings).

After preliminaries such as parents and baby taking a bath and wearing new clothes, the priest initiates the rite by lighting the sacred *havana* fire. He invokes the appropriate deities and the parents offer their oblation to the deities. After the invoking, the father touches the breath of the child and says in its ear : "Your name is" thrice. The touching of the breath of the child symbolises the awakening of its consciousness (Ayer 1987 : 35). The *Brāhmaṇ* priest blesses the parents and the child with appropriate *mantras* and the important elder members of the family are asked to repeat the name of the child three times in its ear and bless the baby with gifts.

This *Samaskāra* is very popularly performed in the Hindu Andhra diaspora. 62% of the respondents from Mauritius, 88% from South Africa, 60% from Malaysia and 50% from the USA indicated that they perform the *Nāmakaraṇa* ceremony of their newly born children. In Malaysia the Telugus, due to a lack of properly trained priests to perform this rite, take their new born children to the *āgamic* temples and perform this rite. In Mauritius, many informants stated that they perform this ritual either in their homes where the priest will be invited or in the temples where they have priests. A few Telugus indicated that they perform this rite in *Sri Paramēswari Ānanda Nilayam* and in the presence of their spiritual *guruvu Sri Satyakama Appiah*.

In South Africa the situation is completely different and this *Samaskāra* has lost its scriptural value because neither the priest nor the *mantras* were involved in blessing the child during the ceremony. It is merely performed as a family gathering. On the eleventh day the grandparents (if alive) from both sides come and utter the previously chosen name in the child's ear. When the child is born, many of the Telugus go to the available priest, inform him the time of the child's birth and ask for suitable letters for the name. The priest chooses three or four letters according to the child's *nakṣatra* (birth star) and the parents choose names to match the letters (not syllables) given by the priest. They choose any name which pleases them, most of the time, without even worrying about the meaning of the name. This is because of the erosion of Telugu language in South Africa which results in a lack of understanding of the names given.

In some homes where the Andhras perform prayers for *Kāṭēri* and *Munēswaran* (see 3.5.3 and 3.6.2.4 for more details), the parents give a secret name to the child. If it is a female child the baby will be named *Munimma* and *Mūnsāmy* in the case of a male child. While the mother holds the baby along with some neem leaves, the father sprinkle water three times on the baby (to ward off the evil which might beset on the future of the baby). Only then do the parents give the real name to the child (Interview : *Smt Sundara Naidoo* 1994).

The information given by two American Telugus in Detroit, USA (Interviews : *Sri Janaki Rama Sastri* and *Sri Achyuta Rao* 1994) illustrates that the *Nāmakaraṇa* ceremony is performed by many immigrant Andhras either in the temple or in their homes. The

information provided by the priest of the Bhāratiya Hindu Temple, Detroit (Sri Janaki Rama Sastri 1994), indicates that the *Nāmakaraṇa Saṁskāra* is performed in the same Sanskritic way as it is performed in Andhra Pradesh. He states that, some Andhras although living very far from Detroit (for example, Andhras living in San Francisco), send air-tickets for him to go and perform the *Nāmakaraṇa* (or any other *Saṁskāra*) for their new born children. He further adds that it is not unusual for the American Telugus to send air-tickets for him to go and conduct these rites in their homes and in many cases they can afford to send air-tickets to priests.

3.5.3 Cowla or Cūda-karma

The ceremony of tonsure or shaving off the hair of a child for the first time is called *Cowla* or *Cūda-karma* in Telugu and is performed in the child's third year. Many Hindu Andhras in India believe that cutting the hair of the child before that year, except in the case of diseases, is forbidden. The main aims of this ceremony are to ensure long life to the child, to contribute to the child's vigour, purity and beauty.

The Telugus in Andhra Pradesh first choose an auspicious day for the ceremony, invite the priest, the family members and the close relatives. The usual preliminary activities are gone through like any other ceremony. While the appropriate *mantras* are being chanted by the priest, the father symbolically cuts small locks of hair from four sides of the child's head, and throws them in different directions. The gist of the *mantras*, as stated by Ayer (1987 : 37) are : "May the child live long, past the hundred years; may his eye-sight remain unimpaired, may he become prosperous, wealthy so as to feed others liberally...". After the recitation of the *mantras*, the barber is asked to shave off the whole head of the child. In the end the severed hair will be hidden in cow dung or thrown away into a small pond or covered in the vicinity of water (Pandey 1969 : 100-101). The hair was regarded as a part of the body and believed to be subject to magic and spell by enemies. The ceremony ends with the bath given to the child after shaving the head.

The *Cowla Saṁskāra* is not commonly performed in the Hindu Andhra diaspora. In Mauritius, as mentioned earlier, this ceremony is mostly conducted in the temples involving

priests in many cases. In Malaysia, as one informant (Interview: Mr B Nookiah 1993) states, it is not commonly performed but by a few of them. The Malaysian informant says that the Telugus who want to perform this *Samśkāra* mostly go to any temple and cut the hair of the child. In the USA also this ceremony is performed mostly in the temples. Very few Telugus invite the priest to their homes to conduct the ceremony and completely shave the hair of a child.

An interesting variation observed in the performance of this *Cowla Samśkāra* in the South African Andhra community is that of performing the ‘*Kāṭēri*’ and ‘*Munēswara*’ prayers in association with the *Cowla*. Many South African Telugus, due to Tamil influence perform these non-Sanskritic rituals along with *Cowla* and *Nāmakaraṇa* (see 3.6.2 for all the details) thus combining Sanskritic *Samśkāras* with non-Sanskritic rituals.

3.5.4 Vivāha

Vivāha, the *Samśkāra* which enables the Hindu to enter the second stage of his life, is considered to be the most important of all the *Samśkāras* because it is the origin and centre of all the domestic rites and rituals. Even from a social point of view this *Vivāha* is at the core of the group’s identity because the family is a standard social unit of today. By marriage, certain existing relationships, particularly those of the bride and her family, are changed. It creates a new relation not only between two persons of different sexes but also connects their families (Prabhakaran 1990 : 1-2).

The *Grhyasūtras* prescribe that the marriage should take place on auspicious constellations and also one should marry on a day in the bright half of the *Uttarāyana* (the northern course of the sun) (Dange 1985 : 2). The term *Vivāha* literally means ‘to carry with the best of abilities’ and in ancient Hindu India there were eight forms of recognized marriages viz. *Brahma*, *Daiva*, *Asura*, *Prājāpatya*, *Gāndhāra*, *Rākṣasa*, *Arsa* and *Paiśāca* (Interview : Sri Bhatt 1994). However, the modern Hindu Indian society recognizes only two forms, viz. the *Brahma* and *Asura*, the former being considered as the purest. In the *Brahma* type of *Vivāha Samśkāra*, the girl is given by the father, with whatever ornaments and gifts he could afford, to a man of good character and learning in the presence of his family members, relatives and

friends.

In an academic study of this nature it is not possible to discuss in full how the *Vivāha Saṁskāra* is performed and the significance of the events involved. However, an attempt is made to briefly discuss the main aspects of *Vivāha Saṁskāra* as it is performed in Andhra Pradesh, India. This description later enables the researcher to assess the degree of erosion/preservation of the Hindu Andhra culture in the diaspora in respect of the *Vivāha Saṁskāra*.

In Andhra Pradesh, Telugu marriages are mostly arranged by the parents and the marriage proposal usually comes from the girl's party. The primary feature of Andhra marriages is based on the importance of cross-cousin marriage (eg. brother's daughter given in marriage to his sister's son) and prohibition of parallel cousin (eg. a sister's daughter given in marriage to her sister's son) marriage. As Nirsimloo-Anenden (1990 : 57-63) states, the basic Telugu marriage rule involves two prescriptions and one prohibition : the prescriptions are cross-cousin marriage and maternal uncle-niece marriage and the prohibition applies to parallel cousins. That means, in Andhra culture, the children of parallel cousins of the same sex should not marry, while children of parallel cousins of different sex and children of cross-cousins, may. Such marriages are described by the Andhras as within *propre* kin marriages, considered as traditional and many Andhras follow this tradition. In cases where there is no suitable bride or groom available within the cross-cousin kinship or when the Andhras are not willing to marry within their cross-cousin kinship, then only do the Andhras look for a suitable bride/groom outside the cross-cousin kinship, but within their caste group.

Once the favourable negotiations begin, in most of the Andhra homes, the horoscopes of the boy and the girl are consulted. If the horoscopes agree, the family priests and astrologers check the genealogies and "pedigrees" of the two families because the Andhras do not intermarry within the same *Inṭi pēru* (family name) (Prabhakaran 1990 : 3-4).

An auspicious date is set for *Vāgdānam* (betrothal) which is the preliminary part of the *Vivāha* ceremony whereby the oral giving away of the bride to the groom takes place. The parents of the bride and the groom exchange the areca nut and betel leaves where they both

agree that "this girl has been orally given by me for progeny and accepted by you. Be happy in inspecting the girl, having made up your mind". The father of the bridegroom would reply, "The girl has been orally given by you for progeny and accepted by me for progeny. Be happy in seeing the bridegroom, having made up your mind" (Pandey 1969 : 208). Then the bride and the groom take blessings from all the elders. Having finished the betrothal and after consulting the almanac, the priest suggests an auspicious day (based on the horoscopes of the girl and the boy) for the wedding. It is the Andhra custom to have the wedding conducted at the expense of the girl's parents.

One day before the wedding the bride and groom are given the sacred nuptial bath with scented water and this ceremony, which is a family affair, is called '*Nalugu Snānam*'. While the *Brāhmaṇ* priest chants the holy *mantras*, the bride is decorated for the wedding. The same procedure is done for the groom in his residence.

On the day of the wedding, a few hours before the wedding, the bridegroom, dressed in white *dhoti* (a man's garment) is taken to the *Kula Daivam* temple where the priest performs *Gaṇahōma* (*Havana* for Lord Gaṇēśa). Similarly, the bride is asked to perform *Gouri Pūja* (prayer for Goddess Pārvati) asking for good, prosperous and happy married life. From the temple the groom is taken to the bride's house (or wedding hall). The bride's brother and parents come forward, wash the groom's feet and take him inside the house. The bride's father washing the feet of the groom with *Pañcāmutram* (an auspicious drink prepared with coconut kernels, plantains, sugar, honey and melted butter) is the first honour bestowed on the bridegroom. This ceremony is called offering the *Madhuparka*. After the ceremony the bridegroom is brought into the wedding alter.

At the set auspicious time the bride holding the *Jīlakaṛṇṇa Bellam* (a paste made with cummin seeds and Jaggery) is brought to the wedding alter by her maternal uncle. The priest holds a white cloth as a screen in between the bride and the groom. At the preset time (*Muhūrtamu*) first the bridegroom places the *Jīlakaṛṇṇa Bellam* paste on the bride's head and then the bride places the paste she was holding on the groom's head. This is the most important event in the Hindu Andhra wedding. The Andhras believe that this act symbolically signifies the permanent and strong bondage between the bride and the

bridegroom. While chanting the *mantras*, which mean that there are no more barriers between the couple, the priest removes the cloth that was serving as a screen. After this removal, the priest asks the husband to press his wife's left foot with his right foot which symbolises that first physical contact has been established between the husband and the wife.

Then comes the ceremony of '*Kanyādāna*' (or the ceremony of properly giving away the bride) which is the highlight of the *Brahma* type of weddings. According to the *Yājñavalkya Smṛti* the father, the grand-father, the brother, the guardian of the bride can perform *kanyādāna* during the wedding. During this ceremony the Hindu bride is properly given away by the father or guardian to the groom while he utters, "for the obtainment of absolute happiness, as the consequence of *Kanyādāna*, for our forefathers; ... I make this gift" (Pandey 1969 : 215). Then the groom utters, "*Dharmēca, arthēca, kāmēca, mōkṣēca, nāticarāmi*" (for *Dharma*, for money, for love and for salvation, I take thee as my wife and she will not be transgressed) (Prabhakaran 1990 : 6). After this *Kanyādāna*, the husband ties the sacred *tāli* (*maṅgaḷa sūtram*) around his wife's neck.

Then follows the ceremony of *Pāṇi-Grahaṇa* where the husband seizes the right hand of his wife and says, "I take thy hand for the sake of my happiness" and they walk around the holy *havana* fire three times (called *agni-pradakṣaṇa*). This event of *agni-pradakṣaṇa* is followed by the famous rite of *Saptapadi* (taking seven steps together) in which the husband offers prayer for their love, brilliance, progeny, holiness and others. The Hindu Andhras whole heartedly believe that this *Saptapadi* seals the marriage bond between the couple.

There are other important aspects of *Vivāha Saṁskāra* such as *Lājāhuti* (offering parched corn to the *havana*), the husband decorating the wife's feet with toe rings, tying black beads' necklace, husband invoking and wife looking at the *Arundhati* star (a star in the Pleiades), and couple playing some wedding games such as exchange of *talambrālu* by pouring the rice, which is coloured with turmeric powder, on each other's head for good luck.

After the wedding, the *Nāgavalli* is performed. *Nāgavalli* is an Andhra customary ceremony whereby the bride is given a traditional "send off" by her parents. This is the concluding ceremony of a *Vivāha Saṁskāra* in which, after bestowing her with various presents, the

parents of the bride present areca nut and betel leaves to the parting bride. This presentation of areca nut and betel leaves denotes taking leave from the family. Lastly, when the bride arrives in her husband's home, the newly married couple are asked to perform *Satyanārāyaṇa Vratam* (a prayer to Lord Viṣṇu). Performing this *Vratam* is another important aspect of Hindu Andhra culture (unlike the Tamil culture) and it is associated with the *Vivāha Saṁskāra*.

The *Vivāha Saṁskāra*, which is a long and time consuming ceremony in Andhra Pradesh, has been shortened into a mere half an hour ceremony in the South African Andhra community. Although previously performed in a traditional way, at present the *Vivāha* ceremony in the South African Andhra context has changed very significantly from a religio-cultural ceremony to a social event. This is because most of the above mentioned Andhra religio-cultural aspects of the wedding have been forgotten by the South African Andhras. For example, the Andhra traditional habit of placing *Jīlakaṛṇa Bellam* on the heads of the bride and groom is not known to the present-day Andhras in this country. Similarly, in most cases, the separation of the bride and the groom by placing a cloth as a screen, washing the feet of the groom by the bride's father, the involvement of a *brahmaṇa* priest who could recite *Vēdic mantras*, the significance of *Saptapadi*, the *Lājāhuti*, the groom tying the black bead necklace to the bride, and *Nāgavalli* are obsolete in most of the South African Andhra weddings. It is of great concern to note that although the other Hindu weddings of South Africa (eg. Hindis, Gujaratis and the Tamils) contain many of the aspects mentioned above, most of the Telugu weddings lack these essential aspects of *Vivāha Saṁskāra*. This is largely due to the lack of proper training for the Telugu priests or involvement of north Indian priests who could perform these rites during the *Vivāha Saṁskāra* (see chapter 5 for more details on South African Telugu priests and the Telugus refusal to use the non-Telugu priests).

Lastly, it is of great concern to note that the South African Andhras are not aware of the *Satyanārāyaṇa Vratam* and do not perform it at any time of the year. These aspects of Andhra religio-cultural practices have already eroded in South African Telugu culture and at present no efforts are being made to revive these religio-cultural practices due to a lack of exposure to the modern Telugu culture in the diaspora and also to a lack of proper initiative or leadership from the AMSSA in these aspects (see chapter five more details).

Almost 100% of the Telugus in South Africa choose their spouses themselves and the main priority is given to the compatibility rather than to traditional customs. Prabhakaran's study on the South African Andhra community (1992 b) demonstrates that most of the Telugus intermarried with Tamils and in such marriages the Tamil language and culture dominates over Telugu culture. A very few marriages are still based within the cross-cousin kinships (eg. some *Gavaras* living in Puntans Hill area marrying their cross-cousins) or on the caste system. The weddings always take place on week-ends, mostly on Saturdays. Due to a lack of *Brāhmaṇ* priests most of the South African Telugu weddings are devoid of *mantras* (except in the case of some weddings where the Telugus hire a priest from other linguistic groups). Although *havana* is performed, no offerings (eg. *Lājāhuti*) are made by the couple. The couple, as noticed in many instances, come together into the alter, hand-in-hand. They exchange garlands instead of placing *Jīlakaṛṇa Bellam*. It was evident that many Andhras are not even aware of the significance of some aspects of the marriage ceremony. It seems that many of the South African Telugus do not give any real importance to the vows taken during the *Vivāha Saṃskāra* because divorce is common in the South African Indian community (in which the Telugus are included).

The whole ceremony, along with the meal served, comes to an end within one hour. The researcher attributes these short weddings not only to the western influence, where the Christian weddings finish in a very short period, but also to the shortage of wedding halls for the community. Sometimes there will be two or three weddings taking place in one hall on a particular Saturday (eg. the City Hall in Durban). However, another important underlying reason for conducting short weddings amongst the Telugu community is the lack of a *Brāhmaṇ* priest who could conduct the weddings in the traditional Hindu Andhra custom.

In an Andhra betrothal performed in a house and a wedding conducted in a temple in Selangor, Malaysia, the researcher observed that both were performed in traditional Andhra custom, almost similar to that of the Telugu weddings in Andhra Pradesh. This particular wedding (as with most of the Telugu weddings in Malaysia) was an arranged marriage in which the bride and the bridegroom were complete strangers. On a chosen auspicious day the betrothal took place as an family affair in which the parents exchanged vows, areca nuts and betel leaves. They decorated the bride in traditional way and she was made to sit in front

of the *Kalaśam* which was established by the officiating priest. The priest recited the necessary *mantras*. The wedding took place fifteen days after the engagement ceremony and was similar to the Andhra weddings described above. The essential events of the wedding such as placing the *Jīlakarṛa Bellam* paste, *Kanyādāna*, *Saptapadi*, exchange of *talambrālu* and taking wedding vows, although time consuming, were also performed systematically.

Some Malaysian informants stated that many of the present-day Malaysians give priority to cross-cousin kinship marriages and are very particular about inter-linguistic marriages. One Andhra informant (Interview : Mr B Nookiah 1993) stated that about 90% of the Telugu weddings are arranged marriages and people choose spouses within the Telugu community. They are not very particular about the caste system. However, they are particular about the linguistic differences. It was noted that the informant was not happy about one of his nephews who married a Tamil girl. During research it was observed that many of the Malaysian Telugus are very strict about choosing a spouse for themselves (including the present younger generation) and a few intermarriages take place between the Tamils and the Telugus (unlike the South African situation). The Malaysian Telugus seem to resist such marriages and claim that intermarriages with Tamils are destroying their Telugu identity in Malaysia. They state that in such marriages, due to Tamil numerical majority, the Tamil bride and/or groom is 'converting' the Telugu spouse into Tamil culture. This statement made by the informant was later supported by many Telugus. They state that in such instances the Telugus are losing such Telugu boy or girl. It appeared that in some of the intermarriages in Malaysia, the Telugus who marry Tamil are either unconsciously excluded from the Telugu community, or they themselves keep away from the community.

However, it appears that more and more of the present younger generation Telugus, being educated, are gradually leaving the plantations, seeking 'white collar' jobs in cities. Such educated Telugu men are not finding suitable, educated Telugu women. In these cases they are opting for educated Tamil brides rather than Telugu brides from the plantations where they lived.

Lastly, it is interesting to note that the *Vivāha Saṁskāra* and the vows taken during the wedding are considered very sacred in the Malaysian Telugu context. Almost all of them

regard marriage as a life long bondage. They are not used to divorcing their spouses and feel that it is very wrong to divorce one's wife. Above all, the researcher noticed that in some instances, the Telugus are following polygamy in Malaysia and both wives are living happily under one roof. The researcher attributes the Telugu polygamy to the Islamic cultural influence on the Telugus in Malaysia because in Islamic culture polygamy is not prohibited.

There is no academic documentation available on this *Vivāha Samskāra* as it is performed in the Mauritian Andhra community. However, based on the available documentation made on the sociological aspects of the Telugu weddings by Nirsimloo-Anenden (1990), an attempt is made to discuss a few aspects of the Telugu weddings in Mauritius.

Nirsimloo-Anenden (1990 : 58), while discussing the marriage patterns in Mauritius, states that "cross-cousin marriages were widely practised until about twenty years ago, after which there seems to have been more of a preference for marriage outside this immediate consanguineal sphere". She attributes this change was due to North-Indian influence where they view this cross-cousin marriage as 'deviant form of marriage'. However, she also documents that over the past few years, the Telugus are once again reverting to their traditional cross-cousin marriage patterns and such marriages are frequently taking place since the 1980's. She attributes this revival and going back to their old traditional customs to the general interest of the Telugus in reviving their Telugu identity in Mauritius (against the North-Indian influence).

The sociological aspects of the Andhra weddings in the USA displaying a generational gap and the western influence on the American born Telugus is clearly evident. Most of the immigrant Andhras, born and raised in the traditional Andhra customs are seeking spouses from within their caste and linguistic groups. They arrive in the USA with their spouses or seek a bride/groom from India. Many present-day immigrant Telugus are placing advertisements for a suitable spouse in the Telugu newspapers and/or magazines (vide : research findings). Most of these advertisements display particulars about the caste and *gōtra* of the bride/bridegroom and they generally seek a spouse from the same caste. It is evident from the oral information given by some Telugus that caste and dowry issues play major roles in immigrant Andhra weddings in the USA. However, some Telugus are neither particular

about the caste nor dowry.

The American first generation born Telugus do not care for caste, dowry and linguistic barriers. During discussions with many adult and young Telugus in the USA, the informants stated that the younger generation do not worry about such issues and they are self-independent. They do not stay with their parents after their marriages. Some American born Telugu youth even expressed their confusion and disgust about their parents' attitudes about the caste system and state that they are Americans and should not worry about such social issues.

In some instances the researcher observed that amongst the American born Telugus there are no language, caste and racial barriers for their marriages. Mixed marriages across the Hindu religion and Indian race are taking place as there are no such restriction or official discriminations in the country (unlike the previous 'Apartheid' South Africa). In these instances, some parents are happily welcoming such bride/groom into their families. In these marriages the weddings are conducted in both Hindu and Christian ways. For example, in a wedding that took place between an American born Telugu male and a Catholic white female, the groom's parents whole heartedly accepted the girl into their family. After the wedding ceremony, the couple were asked to perform the *Satyanārāyaṇa Vratam* according to the Andhra custom. In an other wedding the bride being an American born Telugu married an American white man and the wedding was conducted in a temple according to the Hindu *Dharma*. It was also conducted in the traditional Andhra custom involving all the important aspects of the *Vivāha Saṁskāra*.

3.5.5 Other Saṁskāras

After discussing the most popularly performed *Saṁskāras* in the four countries under study, an attempt is made to tabulate the popularity of the other *Saṁskāras* performed by the Andhras. Since they are not commonly performed by the Telugus, the researcher simply tabulates them and feels that the table is self-explanatory (see table 3.13).

TABLE 3.13**OTHER SAMSKĀRAS PERFORMED IN THE HINDU ANDHRA DIASPORA**

<i>SAMSKĀRAS</i>	MAU	S A	MAL	USA
<i>NIŠKRAMAṆA</i> (FIRST OUTING)	24%	22%	36%	--
<i>ANNAPRĀŚANA</i> (FIRST SOLID FEEDING)	--	--	--	20%
<i>KARṆAVĒDHA</i> (EAR-PIERCING)	16%	10%	16%	10%
<i>UPANAYANA</i> (INITIATION TO THE COMMUNITY)	2%	2%	4%	26%
<i>VIDYĀRAMBHA</i> (LEARNING OF ALPHABETS)	46%	10%	20%	22%
<i>ŚRĀDDHA</i> (OFFERINGS TO THE DEAD)	16%	4%	20%	34%

This above table demonstrates that while most of these *Samskāras* are eroding in South Africa, they are being performed by the Telugus in the other two former colonies. In the USA, one more *Samskāra* is being performed by the immigrant Andhras. This table also demonstrates that Mauritius, being a Hindu dominated country, facilitates the maintenance of performance of certain *Samskāras* which are being eroded in South Africa and Malaysia. Similarly, it is apparent that the presence of dynamic Hindu *Brāhmaṇ* priests in some parts of the USA is facilitating not only the performance of all the important sixteen *Samskāras* according to the Hindu *dharma* but also performance of some other rites and rituals (eg. *Prājāpatya Pūja* which performed at the high school graduation ceremony where the *guru* and *guru patni* are involved). These *Samskāras* are unknown to the Andhras living in the three former colonies.

While there is no evidence of *Niṣkramaṇa Saṁskāra* being performed in the western influenced American Telugu society, it is still being performed by many Andhras in the three former colonies. It is also relevant to state that this *Niṣkramaṇa Saṁskāra* is not performed by many Andhras who are living in cities and large towns. Thus, most of the American Telugus who came from cities like Hyderabad and Visakhapatnam are not aware of these *Saṁskāras*. Although the Telugus living in South Africa and Malaysia are not aware of the term *Niṣkramaṇa*, they perform this *Saṁskāra* as a home based activity involving all the family members and close relatives.

3.6 HOME BASED INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITIES

In this sub-section an attempt is made to document the home based religious activities of the Hindu Andhras in the diaspora, viz. both Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic activities. In an academic study of this nature it is difficult to discuss each religious activity in detail and to analyze the significance of such prayer or ritual, because the scope of this study does not permit such description. The main aim of the study is to examine the religio-cultural expressions of the Hindu Andhra community and to establish the modes of their worship. Thus the researcher tries to focus her attention on the activities as they are taking place rather than on the significance of such activities. It will be an interesting topic of socio-anthropological research for any academic in future.

The first half of this sub-section treats with the individual activities of the diaspora Andhra community whereas the second half focuses on the prayers and rituals performed by them. It is imperative to state that most of the activities documented in 3.6.2 (except 3.6.2.1) are exclusively performed by the Andhras in the three former British colonies. These rites and rituals (except 3.6.2.1) are not performed by their counterparts in the USA. Thus this sub-section deals with the major difference in the religio-cultural practices of the three former British colonies and the USA.

3.6.1 Individual activities and prayers

3.6.1.1 Daily Pūjas - ritualistic worship

The term *pūja* is a Sanskrit word which means "to worship" and it is the most popular form of ritualistic worship in Hinduism. It is a duty of any Hindu to perform daily prayers in his house for the benefit of good health and prosperity in his family. It is a traditional Hindu Andhra cultural habit to have a small *pūja mandir* (prayer place) in a separate specified place in a house. A *pūja* involves a series of ritualistic offering of goods, invocation and praise of the deity, offering of water and sipping the water while chanting the related *mantras*. Having taken their bath, the Andhras render their morning prayers in front of their *Iṣṭa Daivam* by lighting a sacred lamp called ‘*dīpam*’ and utter their *mantras* (if known) or recite prayers in Telugu/Sanskrit. They pour butter, ghee or oil in the lamp, light it, wash their *sālagrām* (if any) or deities with water, decorate the deities with flowers, *Tulasi* (Basil) leaves while uttering their *mantras* or recitations. They also read *ślōkas*, *sahasranāmas* (1 000 names of God praising Him) and place one flower each while uttering the *nāmas* (Vide: research findings).

The diaspora Andhras who practise the *Bhakti mārṅa* (devotional path) set up a small shrine in a separate room or unused closet by adorning it with various *mūrties*. The response elicited to the question ‘do you have a shrine/*pūja mandir* in your home?’ is tabulated in the following table (see table 3.14).

TABLE 3.14

Do you have a shrine/pūja mandir in your home?

	MAU	S A	MAL	USA
D N A	--	32%	--	6%
YES	98%	66%	86%	76%
NO	2%	2%	14%	18%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%

Of all the four countries under study, a very high percent (98%) of the Mauritian Andhras indicated that they have shrines in their homes. The researcher visited several Telugu homes in Mauritius and every house has a special place in a corner of a room or a separate room for their prayers. The Mauritian Andhras informed the researcher that, being Hindus, it is their first priority to have a prayer place in their homes. Mauritius, being an Indian dominated country with a Hindu majority, facilitates such a religious place for each Hindu either inside or outside the house. This was also confirmed by the information given by the Mauritian Andhras who visited South Africa in 1992 (members of MAMS). The government of Mauritius or the social structure of the country, unlike the other three countries under study, do not object to the construction of small shrines in front of every Hindu Mauritian home.

However, the situation is not the same in the Christian dominated and westernized countries of South Africa and the USA. Only 68% of the total South African respondents have such a prayer place in their homes whereas the percentage is slightly higher (76%) in the USA. The socio-political situation of the South African Andhras did not allow them to construct any *pūja mandirs* outside their homes. However, it does not stop the Hindus from having a specific prayer place within their homes. The researcher feels that in the South African context, the Andhras did not indicate having a *pūja mandir* if they did not have a special prayer room because some wealthy Indians (Andhras) have very spacious and luxurious prayer rooms and they feel very proud about such a structure. During research it was also evidenced that many South African Andhras pay less importance to their prayer rooms than to the other luxurious rooms in their homes. This notion was also supported by the statement made by one of the Mauritian Andhras who visited South Africa recently (Interview : *Sri Satyakama Appiah* 1993).

The Malaysian Telugus have numerous shrines and temples in their country which were constructed by the plantation owners. Encouraged by the tolerant attitude of the present government and with the plantation owners' support, the Malaysian Andhras have constructed hundreds of small temples and shrines all over the country some of which were illegally built on government property (Interview : *Sri Dadi Sri Ramulu* 1993). Similarly, almost every house has a small prayer place dedicated to the house prayers. The researcher was fascinated to see the peaceful co-existence of numerous Hindu temples along with many beautiful

Muslim mosques in and around Kaula Lumpur. This type of peaceful co-existence of these two major religions of the world facilitates a harmony between the Hindus and Muslims in Malaysia.

The situation in the USA contrasts with the other three countries. The American Telugus, compared with the other Telugus, are not a well-established or well-settled community. Most of the immigrant Andhras who responded to the questionnaire have been living in that country for just over a period of five years, and some less than five years. They enter the USA either with student visas or with sponsorships made by their blood relatives. Some of the American Telugus are ‘green card visa holders’ and they struggle to adjust and survive in the new environment. Most of them do not own a house. The houses are custom-built to suit the needs of western civilization rather than to the needs of Hindus. Due to the extremely cold weather conditions, they have centrally air-conditioned homes built with wood. Such houses which are prone to fire accidents are built with smoke detectors and fire alarms are connected to the fire-stations.

Some Andhras living in such homes stated that they hesitate to even light their lamps or burn camphor due to the fear that the wooden house might catch fire or a smoke alarm might go off bringing the fire brigades to their homes (Interview : *Smt* Nirmala 1994). In such situations, it is normal for any Hindu to have his daily prayers conducted in his own mind. However, even in these opposing situations 76% of the total respondents indicated that they do have a special prayer place, whether it is in a cupboard of their kitchen, in a passage or under the staircases. The researcher noticed such prayer places in Detroit, Knoxville and New York.

Most of the respondents who possess a prayer place conduct their daily prayers in their homes and their percentages are reflected in the below given table (see table 3.15).

TABLE 3.15

DO YOU PERFORM DAILY PRAYERS NEAR YOUR PŪJA MANDIR/SHRINE?

	MAU	S A	MAL	USA
N/A	2%	32%	16%	6%
YES	92%	66%	64%	50%
NO	6%	2%	20%	44%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%

It is pertinent to mention in this context that over 90% of the Andhras in Mauritius, Malaysia and South Africa do not know the elaborate procedure to perform a proper *pūja* ordained by the scriptures. They just light a lamp and or an incense stick in front of their deity, stand with their palms together, eyes closed and utter a short prayer either in Telugu or English. Some of the Andhras of Mauritius (members of *Sri Veṅkaṭēswara Bhakthula Saṅgham*) and the USA (from *Brāhmin* caste) know the elaborate ritualistic worship and perform a proper *pūja*. However, some such Andhras from the USA complained that they do not have enough time to conduct these daily *pūjas* which are always time consuming (cf. Adhopia 1993 : 151-52).

It is interesting to note that some American and Mauritian Telugus pray every morning as soon as they wake up, with their eyes still closed. They bring their hands together, rub them and chant the Sanskrit *ślōka* "*Karāgre vasate Lakṣmi, kara madhyē Saraswati, karamūlē kṣite Gouri prabhāte kara darśanam*" and then open their eyes and look into their palms. This Sanskrit *ślōka* means "Goddess Lakṣmi lives at the top of our palm, Saraswati lives in the middle of our palm and Pārvati lives in the corner of our palm and we see them all together in our hands". It is uttered by many Andhras who believe in *Advaita* philosophy and regard that God is within themselves.

This *ślōka* is not known to any of the Andhras in South Africa and Malaysia and thus is not recited by them. However, a few Andhras from these countries indicated that as soon as they wake up, they first look into their palms, without knowing why they are doing that. When

questioned about it, many informed the researcher that it is their Andhra cultural habit to do so, because their forefathers did this. In this context, the researcher maintains that due to a lack of Sanskrit knowledge the immigrant Andhras to these three former colonies implanted just the habit of looking at their palms without the *ślōka* and that habit became part of the daily activity of many Hindu Andhras in these countries. However, the researcher feels that due to their religio-cultural contacts with modern Andhra Pradesh, some of the Mauritian Andhras learnt this *ślōka* and utter as soon as they wake up.

3.6.1.2 *Sūrya namaskāram*

It is the injunction of the Hindu *Dharma* to cleanse the body first and then pray to God. Many Hindus believe in the power of the sun as the sole energy source of the Universe and worship it as '*Sūrya Bhagavān*'. The Andhras are no exception to this norm.

Prabhakaran (1992 b : 235) states that many South African Andhras perform *Sūrya namaskāram*. Such Andhras after having taken a bath and dressed, go out to the backyard where they usually have a *Tulasi* plant which symbolises Lord Viṣṇu, and perform *Sūrya namaskāram*. They take a can of fresh water with them which they later pour on the *Tulasi* plant. Firstly, they bring their palms together, chant *Raśmi (Sūrya) mantram* and pray to the Sun God. Those South African Andhras who do not know *Raśmi mantram*, recite '*Ōm Namaṣivāya*' seven times, or one hundred and eight times, and bend down to touch the ground as they chant. Those who chant one hundred and eight times hold a *rudrākṣa mālā* (a rosary made with *Elaocarpus ganitrus* beads) and count as they chant (Interview : Miss Kribaloschni Naidoo 1994).

One interviewee (Smt Kamala Naidoo 1994) indicated that after the *Sūrya namaskāram*, she carries the can of water to the *Tulasi* plant, turns the water three times around the plant and pours water on the *Tulasi* plant. The researcher has witnessed that in some homes they also light camphor and offer *ārati* to the *Tulasi* plant. When questioned about the origin of this *Sūrya namaskāram* and prayers to the *Tulasi* plant, the South African Andhras replied that it was an age old Hindu custom passed on to them from their previous generations. Most South African Andhras believe that Sun is the strength and energy giver to all living beings.

This Hindu Andhra habit of *Sūrya namaskāram* and *Tulasi pūja* is carried out by many in Mauritius and by a handful of Andhras in Malaysia.

However, *Sūrya namaskāram* and *Tulasi pūja* are not conspicuously performed by the American Andhras. Very few Andhras in the USA indicated that they offer morning prayers to the Sun God and the reasons advanced by the others varies from person to person. Some stated that they do not have time for such prayers because they have to go to work early; some mentioned that most of the time they do not even see the sun in their area before they go to work due to the cold weather; and some stated that they are in modern times where they treat the Sun as a star. Similar replies were elicited from many South African Andhras also. However, a few elderly Andhras and a few housewives in the USA stated that they perform *Sūrya namaskāram*. They also stated that they do not have a *Tulasi* plant in their homes.

This *sūrya namaskāram* is performed by various Andhras in the diaspora as a means of nurturing and retaining the Hindu belief that the Sun is one of the *Pañca Bhūtamulu* (five elements viz. earth, fire, water, air and ether) who will be protecting our universe.

3.6.1.3 Veṅkaṭēswara prayers

Lord Veṅkaṭēswara, as the Andhras believe, is the *Kaliyuga* (modern times from the Deluge) incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu and the favourite home deity for millions of Hindu Andhras in present-day Andhra Pradesh. Tirumala-Tirupati is the most sacred Vaiṣṇavite temple in Andhra Pradesh and is one of the most popular pilgrim centres, where thousands of pilgrims from every part of India arrive to worship Lord Veṅkaṭēswara (Source : The *Brahmōtsavam* - a documentary film taken by the Tirumala-Tirupati *Dēvasthānam* 1994). The shrine of Lord Veṅkaṭēswara stands over the cluster of seven hills and the Telugus identify their religious-cultural activities with ‘*Ēḍukonḍalawāḍu*’ (Lord who lives on seven hills). Almost all Hindu Andhra homes have a Veṅkaṭēswara *Swāmi* deity, a *vigraha* (statue) or a photograph in their *pūja mandir*. Most of the present-day Hindu Telugus dedicate every Saturday to Lord Veṅkaṭēswara and take fasting vows in his name. In India, the name of Lord Veṅkaṭēswara is associated with the Hindu Andhra culture and has almost become a synonym to the Telugus.

In Andhra Pradesh every Hindu Andhras perform special prayers for Lord Veṅkaṭēswara on every Saturday. They bath early in the morning, recite Veṅkaṭēswara *Suprabhātam*, which consists of 28 Sanskrit *ślōkas*, fully and Veṅkaṭēswara *Sthōtram* which consists of 11 *ślōkas*. Those who can not recite on their own, read from the book which is written in Telugu or play an audio tape of that *Suprabhātam* and *Sthōtram*. After the *pūja* they break a coconut to Lord Veṅkaṭēswara, render *ārati* to the deity and offer *naivēdyam* (oblation) to him. Over 95% of the meat-eaters in modern Andhra Pradesh abstain from meat-eating on that day because of this prayer (Vide : Research findings and interview : Smt Kotagiri Lalitha 1994).

However, similar prayers of this type are performed mostly in Mauritius and the USA, but not in Malaysia and South Africa. Many of the Malaysian Andhras and almost all the South African Andhras do not fast on Saturdays and that day is not dedicated to Lord Veṅkaṭēswara (see *Puraṭṭāsi pūja* for more details). However, the very few immigrants to these countries observe a strict fast which in some instances indicates abstaining from meat-eating, whereas in some cases it includes complete "dry fasting" (a type of fasting where the devotees abstain from even drinking liquids such as water and milk along with abstaining from eating any solid food for twelve or twenty four hours), as it is performed in modern Andhra Pradesh. The Mauritian Andhras, due to the influence of the priests coming from the Tirumala-Tirupati *Dēvasthānam* and due to the dedicated work of the Sri Veṅkaṭēswara *Bhaktula Saṅgham*, sincerely observe the Saturday "dry fasting". They perform special prayers to Lord Veṅkaṭēswara and render *Bhajans* to the Lord and perform *anna dānam* (serving a meal) to the needy or poor.

The priests of Bhāratīya Hindu Temple in Detroit, Veṅkaṭēswara Temple in New York and Pittsburg (all in the USA), and in Mauritius informed the researcher that they conduct the Saturday prayers in their temples in the same way as the prayers in Tirumala-Tirupati *Dēvasthānam* are conducted. This was witnessed by the researcher during her stay in these specific countries. Many American Telugus perform special prayers on Saturday dedicated to Lord Veṅkaṭēswara, recite themselves or play an audio cassette of *Suprabhātam*, break a coconut and fast on that day. However, due to the high cholesterol levels in that coconut, they do not eat the oblation as *prasādam* as it is done in India. They do not want to throw the coconut away immediately however, due to the religious value attached to the coconut.

It is interesting to note that many of them safely keep that coconut in their fridge for one or two weeks and then throw it away saying that it is old.

3.6.1.4 Visiting temples and activities in the temples

From ancient times, the temples are the holy places where every Hindu has to do his *pūja* and worship the Divine. It is the traditional Hindu belief that one should not live in a town where there is no temple. The temples are the consecrated ground of the Hindus, from which they can obtain divine blessings. The Hindu traditionally believe that the worship of God or Goddess in temples purifies one’s heart, controls the passions, and also enables the devotees to remember the Lord always (Interview : *Sri Satyakama Appiah* 1993). The temples in Andhra Pradesh and elsewhere in India are so decorated that a devotee feels an air of sanctity as soon as he/she enters a temple. In ancient times, the temples were the busiest part of the village, and most of the community activities were centred upon the routine of the temple or in and around the temple. The *Āgamas* give full details regarding the rituals and other ceremonies to be performed in the temples (Ramesan 1988 : 6-7). The Gods that are worshipped in the temples are varied and almost all the Gods of the Hindu pantheon are represented in some temples (vide : research findings).

As mentioned earlier, the Hindu Andhras in the diaspora have numerous shrines and temples built in the areas of their settlements as is reflected in the following table (see table 3.16).

TABLE 3.16
DO YOU HAVE A HINDU TEMPLE IN YOUR AREA ?

	MAU	S A	MAL	USA
D N A	2%	22%	--	4%
YES	98%	78%	100%	94%
NO	--	--	--	2%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%

The above table (3.16) reflects that almost all the respondents live in the areas which have a small or a big temple. Almost all respondents from all four countries stated that they visit the temples either daily, frequently and some of them occasionally.

The researcher had an opportunity to visit many such temples in the four countries, for example, *Prasanna Veṅkaṭēswara Temple*, *Sri Paramēswari Ānanda Nilayam Āśramam* and *Sreemadree Appanna Temple* in Mauritius, *Havenside Veṅkaṭēswara Temple*, *Andhra Viṣṇu Temple* and *Sri Rāma Temple* in South Africa, *Mārieamman Temple*, *Muruga Temple* in Batu Caves in Malaysia and *Bhāratīya Hindu Temple*, *Veṅkaṭēswara Temples* in Pittsburg and New York, and *Sri Vallabha Maha Gaṇapati Dēvasthānam* in New York in the USA. She had an opportunity to observe and participate in the activities taking place in these temples. These activities differ from the devotees' participation in daily prayers and in special prayers performed by the temple priests, *Saṁskāras* performed by the devotees, vows undertaken and religious discourses.

It is imperative to mention that 90% of the small temples in Mauritius, South Africa and Malaysia do not have a properly qualified priest to conduct daily prayers in these temples. For example, the *Veṅkaṭēswara Temple* in Havenside, the only temple initiated and exclusively built by the members of the South African Andhra community, does not have any priest to conduct the daily prayers or celebrate all the festivals (also see chapter 5 for more details). The Andhra community hardly visits this temple for their daily prayers and very few religious activities are taking place there. It is very alarming to notice that thus far none of the members from the Andhra community have displayed any interest to study and to obtain training in the priesthood either from India or from anywhere in the Hindu diaspora. This was reflected in the negative attitude of the community when they refused free training from the Andhra priests of Mauritius, who volunteered to come to South Africa to train the locals in the *pūja vidhānam* (prayer methods) and in methods of performing *havans* (Interview : Sri Satyakama Appiah 1993). The researcher maintains that neither the officials of the AMSSA, nor any wealthy individuals, made any concerted efforts to "import" Telugu priests from India or to train any local Andhra to become a priest and to conduct such prayers.

In Malaysia, the numerous small shrines and temples do not have any specific priests at all. The devotees come individually and offer their prayers. However, the major *āgamic* temples in Kuala Lumpur and other places have permanent priests who conduct daily traditional prayers and hundreds of the devotees go there every day. The prayers are all conducted according to the Tamil customs and in the Tamil language as far as possible (Vide : research findings).

The Andhras of Mauritius and the USA are more fortunate in this regard. Both these countries have regular contacts with the Tirumala-Tirupati *Dēvasthānam* in Andhra Pradesh and also with the government of Andhra Pradesh (see chapter 5 for more details). They have priests coming from the Tirumala *Dēvasthānam* on a contract basis to conduct their religio-cultural activities in their Venkateswara Temples. According to the information given by the residing Telugu priest (Interview : Sri Janaki Rama Sastri 1994) at the Bhāratiya Hindu Temple in Detroit, there are sixty temples in the USA and almost forty temples have trained permanent priests who came from India. In the remaining temples, the Indian born 'technocrat' *Brahmanas* who know how to conduct religious prayers, rites and rituals are volunteering to be priests and work as priests during the week-ends. He also said that the Andhra Pradesh government sends priests to the Venkateswara Temples only, however, the other priests are brought by the temple organizers i.e the Board of Trustees. Each priest is given a reasonable salary, work permit, free accommodation and air-tickets for him and his family to come to the USA.

The researcher feels that both in South Africa and in Malaysia due to the absence of trained Telugu priests with an Andhra background, who could perform and conduct rites and rituals in the Telugu traditional way, Telugu religio-cultural erosion is rapidly taking place in these countries. Compared to the Mauritian situation, a conspicuous religio-cultural fusion took place between the Tamil and Telugu cultures in these two countries, and there is no separate identity for the Andhras in most of their religio-cultural activities. The following sub-section focuses on those activities which are prominently performed by the Andhras in the two countries under Tamil domination.

3.6.2 Family based Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic prayers

While discussing the interaction between the little and great traditions in mother goddess cult in India, Henry (1983 : 175-76) divides the beliefs and practices of village Hinduism into Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic. He further states that the great tradition is the tradition in which Sanskritic texts and *Brāhmaṇ* priests are involved. He describes the little tradition which is found in the rural areas and revolves around a non-*Brāhmaṇic* priest, local customs and habits as non-Sanskritic tradition. Following Henry (1983 : 176), the researcher uses the terms little tradition and great tradition respectively to refer to the non-Sanskritic and Sanskritic beliefs and customs followed by the diaspora Andhras.

3.6.2.1 Ancestral prayers

Mahālaya Amāvāsyā is a day of great significance for Hindus in the diaspora. The Hindu *Itihāsas* say it is the annual festival for propitiating the spirits of our ancestors (*Swāmi* Sivananda 1993 : 102). On *Mahālaya Amāvāsyā*, the day when the sun enters the sign Virgo, the departed souls of the ancestors leave their abode in the world of *Yama* and come down to the world of mortals (*Swāmi* Sivananda 1993 : 102-3). It is the common Hindu belief that the returned ancestral souls occupy the houses of their descendants. *Sri Bhatt* (Interview : 1994) states that the *Kṛṣṇa Pakṣa* (the fortnight) of *Āśwayuja* month (September-October) is specially consecrated for the propitiation of such departed spirits. Most of the Hindu Andhras in India offer *Śrāddha* in propitiation of their ancestors during this period. Following *Ayer* (1987 : 46), the important items of a *śrāddha* are the *arghya* (water libation), *Havana* (fire-offering), *pinda-dāna* (offering of a lump of cooked rice) and *tarpaṇa* (water offering). Millions of Andhras go to a river or to the sea, where they take holy bath, and with the help of a *Brāhmaṇa* priest offer *arghya* and *tarpaṇa* to their ancestors of three generations who are identified with *Vasu*, *Rudra* and *Āditya* on the paternal or maternal side, as the case may be (Interview : *Sri Satyanarayana Acharyulu* 1993).

The Andhras also offer their propitiation for their ancestors in the month of *Makaram* (December-January). When the sun passes from Sagittarius to Capricorn the transit is called *Makara Saṅkrānti* (*Prabhakaran* 1992 b : 232) and this is a most prominent festival day for

the villagers. When the sun travels through the southern hemisphere it is called *Dakṣiṇāyana* and that period is very dear to the ancestors. The Hindu Andhras believe that the *Dēvatas* open the gates of Heaven (Laxmikantha Mohan 1988 : 51-54). Thus it became the traditional Hindu Andhra culture to offer *arghya* in a rite to close family members who were deceased. Many dishes are cooked on that day and offer them as oblations to their deceased family members.

These two specific days are being observed by the immigrant Andhras in the diaspora and are being referred to as 'ancestral prayers' by the South African Andhras. Although, both these auspicious days are being observed, the latter day is more commonly observed by the Andhras in the diaspora. Although the *Makara Saṅkrānti* day is being celebrated as an 'ancestral prayer' day by these Andhras, the original important items of the ritual viz. offering *arghya*, *pinḍa-dāna* and *tarpaṇa* and performing *Havana* are lost in the present-day Andhra activities in South Africa and Malaysia. However, some of the Andhras in Mauritius indicated that they offer *arghya*, *pinḍa-dāna* and *tarpaṇa* near the sea. Some of the immigrant Telugus in America (mostly from the *Brāhmin* caste) offer their oblations in their own homes. Many American Telugus say that they do not have time for such rites and rituals. However, a few of them informed that they perform these prayers without involving any priest.

It is necessary to mention that both in Malaysia and South Africa the significance of *arghya*, *pinḍa-dāna* and *tarpaṇa* is completely lost, and the ritual has changed into a mere domestic ritual involving no priest at all. The month of *Puṣya* (December-January) is called '*Nelagaṇṭa*' in Malaysia and the Malaysian Telugus believe that the deceased ancestors are set free to visit their descendants (Interview : Smt S Nookiah 1993). Many Malaysian Telugus said that they pray for their ancestors during *Nelagaṇṭa*. They merely cook many foods and place them in front of the shrine where they have photographs of the deceased family members. They also place a set of new clothes for each deceased member and after the prayer wear them as '*prasādam*'. She also stated that these offerings are made only to the deceased ancestors from her husband's side and she is not allowed to give offerings to her parents. They should be made by her brothers. This reflects the maintenance of the Andhra culture because it is the Andhra custom that the married daughter does not belong to the same family as her father.

An interesting variation noticed in the South African Andhra 'ancestral prayer' is that of cooking meat for the dead, offering it to the photograph of the deceased along with other items such as a packet of cigarettes, a bottle of alcohol. On one instance the researcher was amazed to notice 'dāgga' (marijuana) being offered to the deceased father of an Andhra. When questioned, it was revealed that 'dāgga' was liked by his father, and it is his duty as an Andhra to satisfy his father's likings on this special day of propitiation. However, this is not commonly done by other Andhras of South Africa.

3.6.2.2 Purattāsi Prayer

The term *Purattāsi* is taken from the Tamil language and means the month of *Āśwayuja* (September-October) in the Telugu calendar. During this whole month special prayers and festivals are conducted in Andhra Pradesh. In the month of *Āśwayuja* the ancestors are worshipped (*Mahālaya Amāvāsya* - see 3.6.2.1) because it initiates *Pitru Pakṣa* (the time of ancestors), the *Navarātri* (nine nights) festival observed to please Goddess Śakti and the incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu as Lord Veṅkaṭēswara on seven hills, in Tirumala-Tirupati. The Andhras consider the fifteen days of the *Āśwayuja* month viz. from the *Āśwayuja Śuddha Pādhyami* to *Āśwayuja Śuddha Pournami* as auspicious in *Śaratkāla* (autumn) time and perform *Śarannava Rātris* (*Dasara* festival) (Interview : Sri Janaki Rama Sastri 1994 and Sri Satyanarayana Acharyulu 1993).

The Hindu Andhras believe that Lord Viṣṇu's incarnation as Lord Veṅkaṭēswara took place in the month of *Āśwayuja* and thus *Brahmōtsavam* festival is rendered in Tirumala-Tirupati *Dēvasthānam* (Source : *Brahmōtsavam* - documentary film taken by the Tirumala-Tirupati *Dēvasthānam*). This festival is the very first *Utsavam* for Lord Veṅkaṭēswara and is said to have been conducted by *Brahma*, the Lord of Creation (Sitapati 1989 : 163). At present, the temple conducts four *Brahmōtsavam* festivals a year, the first in *Purattāsi* month. The four Saturdays of this *Purattāsi* month are also regarded very auspicious days and special prayers are offered to Lord Veṅkaṭēswara (called *Bālāji* by the North Indians) at Tirumala-Tirupati *Dēvasthānam*.

The Andhras and the other Hindus go on a pilgrimage to Tirumala-Tirupati *Dēvasthānam* during *Āśwayuja* month and take part in this *Brahmōstavam* which commences on the day when the *Śrāvaṇa Nakṣatram* is prominent (Sitapati 1989 : 168). There are two important customs the Andhras follow during this month in this temple. The first one is preparing a lamp with *tsalimidi* (a mixture of rice flour and jaggery) and lighting that lamp with ghee for Lord Veṅkaṭēswara. The second custom is tonsure of the devotee's (both male and female) head and offering the hair as a sacrifice to the Lord. The *tsalimidi* lamp is consumed as *prasādam* once the wick is fully burnt. This is a very important Hindu Andhra custom observed during this *Āśwayuja* month (Interview : Sri Satyanarayana Acharyulu, 1993).

Sri Satyanarayana Acharyulu, one of the priests from Tirumala-Tirupati *Dēvasthānam* who is now residing and working as a priest in the *Prasanna* Veṅkaṭēswara Temple, Mauritius, states that it is not an Andhra custom to fast during this month of *Āśwayuja*. However, he states that it is a Tamil custom to fast in this month for Lord Veṅkaṭēswara. He also informs that although *Purattāsi* is not an auspicious month for the Andhras, the Tirumala-Tirupati *Dēvasthānam* performs special prayers and *Bhajans* for the sake of Tamils during this month. This custom was introduced at the time when both the Andhra country and the Tamil country were under Chōḷa rule (between the tenth and eleventh centuries). In Tirupati all these fasts and festivals come to an end on *Vijaya Daśami* Day (tenth day of the first fortnight of the month of *Āśwayuja*).

According to the information given by the Andhra priest in Detroit (Interview : Sri Janaki Rama Sastri 1994), it is a Hindu Andhra custom to observe *Maṇḍala Dikṣa* usually for Rāma *Navami* when the Andhras want to perform Sīta-Rāma *Kalyāṇam* (wedding). He informs that some Andhras living in the borders between Andhra country and Tamil country, due to Tamil influence observe this *Maṇḍala Dikṣa* for Lord Veṅkaṭēswara in the month of *Purattāsi*. The term *Maṇḍala Dikṣa* means 'taking a fasting vow for forty days'. Whenever the Andhras want to achieve something or to fulfil a vow already taken, or to perform some special prayers to God, they fast for forty days. They feel that they can attain physical and mental concentration by fasting for forty days and can fulfil their vow without any hinderance.

In South Africa both the Hindu Andhras and Tamils consider the month of *Puraṭṭāsi* a sacred month and most of them observe a strict fast during this month in the name of *Gōvinda* (Lord Viṣṇu). Due to Tamil influence and language shift that took place towards Tamil language and culture (cf. Prabhakaran 1992 b, 1993, 1994 a and 1994 b) none of the present-day South African Telugus use the term *Āśwayuja* but refer to the month as '*Puraṭāsi*' or '*Peraṭāsi*'. They state that they perform '*Puraṭāsi* prayer' which indicates fast for one month during the month of *Puraṭṭāsi*. The term fasting in South African Andhra context denotes mostly to abstaining from meat-eating rather than to dry fast. Very few Telugus observe dry fast on the Saturdays of *Āśwayuja* month.

Although not aware of the *Mandala Dikṣa*, some Telugus abstain from meat-eating for the whole month, some only for two weeks. At the beginning of the prayer the Telugu house is washed and kept clean. They remove all the meat from the fridge and freezers. Most Telugus who observe this type of fasting even go to the extreme of using new vessels for their cooking in this month stating that the old pots were used for cooking meat. Young and adult alike observe this fast and offer special prayers to Lord Venkaṭēswara. They also attend the special services and prayers offered to *Gōvinda* in the important temples on the four Saturdays. During this month most of the Andhras not only abstain from eating meat but also abstain from smoking and drinking alcohol. Some Andhras even observe sex abstinence during the month of *Puraṭṭāsi*.

In this *Puraṭṭāsi* prayer, observed at the home level, on the first and last days of the month, the whole family comes together to pray to *Gōvinda* (many South African Telugus are not aware of the name Lord Venkaṭēswara, but use the term *Gōvinda* due to north Indian influence). They offer Him fruits, milk, sweetmeats and coconut. At a set time each member of the family comes to the prayer place, lights camphor, offers *ārati* to God. They break a coconut to Lord Venkaṭēswara. One important aspect of this prayer is observing strict cleanliness by the household members during this prayer. The fast is completed after the thirty days by cooking and eating fish and meat dishes in the family (Interview : Miss Kevashini Naidoo 1994).

Some Telugus in South Africa, particularly some members of the AMSSA, associate the *Purattāsi* prayer as a Tamil cultural prayer and resist the observance of *Purattāsi*. Some of the Telugus informed that their parents never performed this prayer and thus it is not their religio-cultural practice to observe this fast. It is interesting to note that the number of the Telugus who associate this prayer with Tamil culture is gradually increasing and such Telugus are slowly discarding the observance of this so called Tamil prayer. The South African Telugus, coming in contact with the few immigrant Telugus from Andhra Pradesh who do not observe this type of one month fasting, feel that as Telugus it is not part of their culture to observe the *Purattāsi* prayer. The researcher attributes this resistance to the observance of *Purattāsi* to the revival of the interests of the South African Telugus in nurturing and maintaining their own Telugu identity against Tamil influence (see chapter 5 for more details). Also their inability to resist meat-eating for one month could be another reason for this non-fasting. To achieve their identity the Andhras unconsciously abandon some of the religio-cultural habits of the Tamils. The same attitude was displayed by most Malaysian Telugus towards *Purattāsi* and the same reasons are forwarded (as in the case of the South African Telugus) by them.

The main difference between this Venkaṭēswara prayer as it is performed in South Africa and Mauritius is that of its level of performance and the way it is performed. In South Africa this is strictly a home based religio-cultural activity giving importance to abstaining from meat-eating, smoking and drinking alcohol. At the community level it is not observed separately by the Telugu *Sabhas* and no separate *bhajans* are rendered at any branch level (except the *bhajana* festival held by the AMSSA during September month - see chapter 5 for more details). Even the AMSSA does not give much significance for this prayer because it is considered a home based ritual. However, in Mauritius this prayer is called as *Gōvinda Pūja* and is observed as a community based main festival. During this month special *bhajans* and *havans* are performed by the Telugus all around the island and at all main branches of the Andhra *sabha*. Due to the combined efforts of the members of *Sri Venkaṭēswara Bhaktula Saṅgham* and MAMS, this whole month is celebrated as a festival month (see chapters 4 and 5). Most of the Telugus, being already strict vegetarians, observe dry fast this month (they observe *Māṇḍala Dikṣa* for forty days).

Since this prayer is called *Gōvinda Pūja* in Mauritius and is observed at the community level as an important religio-cultural activity by the Mauritian Telugus, this prayer is discussed in the following chapters.

In Malaysia this fast is not observed by many Telugus. It is very interesting to note that although under heavy Tamil influence, many present-day Malaysian Telugus do not observe this *Purattāsi* fasting (Interview : Mr Nookiah 1993). It seems that this fasting is not popular among the Malaysian Tamils compared to the South African Tamils. The American Andhras are also not used to this type of fasting and do not observe this *Purattāsi* prayer.

This findings prompt the researcher to state that the *Purattāsi* fasting is one of the exclusive South African and Mauritian Telugu religio-cultural activities, observed by most present-day Telugus in these countries. Due to the popularity of this prayer amongst the present-day younger generation, the researcher feels that the *Purattāsi* (fasting) prayer will remain as one of the main home based prayer of the South African Andhra community. She also feels that it will contribute to the maintenance of Hinduism in South Africa.

3.6.2.3 Porridge Prayer

The Andhras who believe in the Mother Goddess conceptualize the goddess universally by the term "*Amma*", and specifically identify the deities by attaching names as prefixes to the conceptual category *Amma*. There are numerous such *Amma* goddess in the Indian Telugu villages viz. *Nūkālamma*, *Peddamma*, *Pōlēramma*, *Gaṅgānamma*, *Bhūlōkamma*, *Marīḍamma*, *Pānakālamma* and many others. They are conceived of as various manifestations of one *Amma*. Some of these manifestations are worshipped exclusively by particular caste groups or tribes. For example, the *Kāpus* and *Yādavas* of Telangāṇa region in modern Andhra Pradesh, consider *Yellamma* as their chief house goddess and caste deity.

The Andhras associate the goddess with prosperity, wealth, protection, fertility, virginity, goodness and life. However, she is also connected with decline, danger, disease, destruction, wrath and death and thus, as Jacob-Pandian (1983 : 202-3) states, she combines various contradictory aspects of human experiences.

During the nineteenth and up to the mid-twentieth centuries, it was a traditional Andhra village custom to perform divinatory rituals for *Amma*. Various such rituals are annually, or sometimes more frequently, performed by the villagers of lower *varṇas* in order to seek answers to their problems of ill-health, to pray for the future events, as well as to try to eliminate past calamities from recurring, to prevent her wrath and lastly to thank her. It is pertinent to mention that some Telugus from the higher castes also take part indirectly in these rituals. Some Telugus just send their offerings such as coconuts, fruits and flowers to *Amma*. The researcher even witnessed a few Telugu *Brahmaṇas* contributing money to purchase roosters and goats to be sacrificed during the prayer.

Amma is also appeased for the elimination of negative aspects. For example, when there is an epidemic disease, like small-pox (in the nineteenth and middle twentieth centuries small-pox was a fatal disease and there was no cure for it, although at present small-pox has been eradicated), chicken-pox, measles, famine and/or personal misfortunes the Andhras perform prayers for *Amma*. The *Ambali* (rice gruel) *pūja* is one of these various village rituals performed in honour of *Amma*, where the whole community is involved (see chapter 4 for more details).

There is no oral or literary documentation available in the modern Andhra Pradesh on the 'Porridge Prayer' (as it is called and performed in South Africa) because this ritualistic prayer is not performed in this manner in the Andhra country. The *Amma* prayer differs from one caste to the other and also from one village to the other depending on the local customs and traditional practices and does not involve the type of porridge cooked in South African Telugu prayers. It is necessary to mention that these *Amma* prayers are not performed at home level. They are performed jointly as a community based ritual once a year (see chapter 4) involving the whole Telugu community in a village, town or in some instances a city. When it is performed at a village level it involves particularly one type of caste. For example, the *Gavaras* or the *Cinna Kāpus* living in Rāvipāḍu village in the district of Tādēpalligūḍem, Andhra Pradesh, perform '*Ammavāri Jātara*' (Mother's Festival) once a year and the whole community contributes towards the rice to be cooked, as well as the roosters or goats to be sacrificed. It involves a *Gavara* priest, a shaman who represents the *Gavaras* who will be usually called upon to render service to the community and the members of that particular

Gavara caste. Families who have vowed to participate in the ritual, will contribute and participate in the '*Jātara*' and people from all *varṇas* take part in the ritual. The '*Jātaras*' the researcher has attended when she was residing in Andhra Pradesh, India, involved only cooked rice, rooster/goat sacrifice and mass feeding of the community (*anna dānam*), along with the presence of a non-*Brahman* priest and a shaman. Chariot pulling is one of the important features of any *Amma's Jātara* in Andhra Pradesh.

Based on the oral information, it was evident that the nineteenth century immigrant Andhras in South Africa who brought these village rituals and customs along with them, due to various socio-economic and political situations, could not perform these rituals at community level. Being the victims of dreadful diseases on their way to Natal (Prabhakaran 1992 b : 44-45), the immigrant Andhras took vows to please *Amma* when they arrived safely in Natal. Scattered all over Natal, they were unable to fulfil their vows jointly and thus initiated their rituals individually. In the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century when diseases were rife and with no readily available health facilities, the immigrant Andhras solely depended on the mercy of *Amma* for a cure. They tried their best to keep her happy by offering her roosters, goats and sincerely believed that *Amma* will be satisfied with their offerings and will not harm them. However, after the initial indentureship, they achieved some economic stability. Once they settled as a community in one particular area, the Andhras tried to organize themselves into one group (for example the *Gavaras* of Puntans Hill) and initiated the revival of performing the *Amma Jātara* (festival) on a community level (see chapter 4).

It is a Tamil village custom to distribute '*Kūlu*' (a type of porridge made with ground *Natcheny* - a type of grain called '*Kēlvaragu*' in Tamil) on the day of *Mārieamman* Prayer in the month of *Vaigāsi* (April-May) and *in the month of Ādi* (July-August). They distribute the cooked '*Kūlu*' to the poor as charity and the whole community contributes for the cost of the grain. They perform this festival once a year depending on their village customs, and that festival is called '*Kūl ūttum viḷa*' (Gravy festival) and it is performed outside the village. The Tamils grind the *Natcheny*, cook it with onions, salt and with an abundance of water and distribute this gruel to the members of the village after the prayer as *prasadam*.

During the Andhra cultural contact with the Tamils a certain amount of cultural fusion took place between these two Dravidian cultures in Natal (Prabhakaran 1993 : 69-80). Due to Tamil influence the South African Andhras substituted the rice feeding with the porridge and called it porridge prayer (see 4.4). The researcher also assumes that at the time of their arrival due to a shortage of rice in Natal and due to the availability of millie meal in this country, the Telugus, along with the Tamils, substituted the cooking of rice or *Natcheny* with the cooking of millie meal. During the cultural contact with the Zulus, the Andhras also borrowed from the Zulus the habit of soaking millie meal for two or three days (from the habit of making *Mahēwu*, the Zulu sour porridge) to make it sour before cooking.

It is the traditional Hindu Andhra custom to make *anna dānam* (mass feeding of the poor by distributing free cooked rice) as frequently as possible and that custom has eroded in South African Andhra culture due to a lack of paddy growing in Natal. The present-day South African Andhras do not have the custom of mass feeding (compared with other immigrants or with the well-settled Andhras in the diaspora).

Another major variation observed in this 'Porridge Prayer' as performed by the South African 'marginal' Andhras (Prabhakaran 1992 b : 138-146) is that of its performance at the home level. Many South African Telugus who take a vow perform this porridge prayer in the month of *Ādi* as a home based activity by involving the family members, close relatives and friends. They soak millie meal powder three days before the chosen Sunday and cook porridge as mentioned earlier. In many homes roosters or goats are sacrificed and they cook them in the evening. However, the rest perform this prayer without "blood sacrifice". After the prayer they distribute the porridge to at least three or five women (representing *Amma*) and make them consume the porridge in front of the prayer place.

At a porridge prayer conducted in a Telugu home in Merebank, South Africa, in which the researcher participated, the owner of the household took a vow to perform this ritual when he was very sick and was operated on, the previous year. The ritual took place in the month of *Srāvaṇa*, called *Ādi* in Tamil, in three different stages. The morning prayer was dedicated to '*Mārieamma*' and the evening prayer, which appeared to be more popular for the male members of the family, was dedicated to '*Madurai Vīran*', a male village deity whose name

is associated with *Mārieamma* in the South African context (compare Dumont 1970, p. 23 who associates *Mārieamma* with *Aiyanār*). The expenses were born by his family and three or four roosters were sacrificed during the prayer. Porridge was cooked and distributed as mentioned earlier.

There are some interesting variations noticed in this particular porridge prayer. The prayer was accompanied by drum beatings, presence of a 'shaman' who was fed in the evening with roasted rooster and was provided with alcohol and cigarettes. One very fascinating thing observed at this particular ritual was the provision of '*dāgga*' to the shaman who was supposed to be inhaling it. He ate all the baked foods and sweetmeats, the roasted rooster, drank and inhaled the '*dāgga*' and entered a trance. The head of the family said that if the prayer was not satisfactory to *Amma*, if she was not happy with the offerings, she would inform the head of the family through the shaman when he enters the trance. If *Mārieamma* is happy she will bless the family through the shaman. In this particular case, the *Amma* was very pleased with the whole ritual and blessed the family with long life. The government of South Africa does not permit the use of '*dāgga*' and has passed various laws to prohibit the consumption of such narcotics in crude or refined form. However, in a few houses the '*dāgga*' is still being used secretly, and outsiders are not invited to such rituals.

The prayer officially came to an end only on Tuesday (two days after the main prayer and constitutes the third stage of the prayer) when the household performed another closing ritual which once again involved cooking of a sweet liquid gruel (with *mūṅg dhāll*, coconut powder, sugar and white rice) in a big pot. The ladies placed the cooked sweet gruel in seven cups, lit seven pieces of camphor for Seven Sisters (see 3.6.2.5 for more details), cracked a coconut, offered milk and fruits to *Ammas*. After the prayer they distributed the sweet gruel to friends and relatives. This was the end of the porridge prayer in that household and the neighbours informed that it is performed every year with more pomp and show by this family.

This kind of porridge prayer performed as a home based ritual is an exclusively South African Andhra cultural trait and not performed by the other Andhras in the other three countries under study. This could be due to the initial dispersal of the Telugus and Tamils throughout Natal which did not facilitate a joint festival (see chapter 4 for more details). Over 80% of

the South African Andhras the researcher has interviewed, informed that they perform this prayer, however, in many instances blood sacrifice is not made. Such Andhras claim that they always perform 'clean' (*Sātvic* in Sanskrit and Telugu and *suttam* in Tamil which means 'pure') prayers and do not like to perform impure (*Asātvic* in Sanskrit and Telugu and *asuttam* in Tamil) prayers.

In Malaysia there are evidences of performance of '*Nūkālamma Paṇḍaga*' (festival) or '*Mārieamma Paṇḍaga*' (Interview : *Smt Surekanthamma* 1993). However, they are performed as community based rituals on the plantations where all the Telugus living in that plantation are involved (Source : interviews conducted in Malaysian plantations 1993) (see 4.4). Although, the influence of certain Hindu organizations and community leaders led the government of Malaysia into passing various official laws banning animal sacrifices in these Hindu rituals; many plantation dwellers still perform these blood sacrifices under the Muslim influence. The latter perform '*Bakri Eid*' festival in which they sacrifice goats (vide : research findings). However, most of the present-day city dwellers are not keen in participating in such rituals, and they demonstrate negative attitudes towards such rituals. Even the *Sāi Bāba* devotees are trying to discourage these ritual practices in Malaysia (see chapter five for more details).

The Mauritian Andhras living on plantations presently hardly ever perform these types of rituals where roosters or goats are sacrificed. Most of them reported that they have stopped performing "blood sacrifices" because they are more "civilized" now than their forefathers were (cf. *Nirsimloo-Anenden* 1990 : 119). The researcher feels that this is due to the *Sri Veṅkatēswara Bhaktula Saṅgham* members who are discouraging the Telugus from these practices. They disseminate the knowledge that such sacrifices are not necessary to please *Amma* (Interview : *Sri Chinayah Cuniah* 1993). However, they perform *Ammōru Paṇḍaga* as a community festival in a Sanskritic manner (see 4.4 for all details).

In the USA, the immigrant Telugus do not perform these prayers at all. Being technocrats, coming from modern towns and cities, many of them even expressed their disgust at these sacrificial rituals. Some of them could not even believe that such rituals are still being performed in South Africa. It is imperative to note that in the present-day Andhra Pradesh

many villagers are gradually abandoning these rituals and the Andhra Pradesh government officially banned these "blood sacrifices" (Interview : Sri Janaki Rama Sastri 1994).

Due to its popularity, porridge prayer is gaining importance (with or without blood sacrifice) and having witnessed the staunch devotion the Andhras attach to the prayer, the researcher feels that the porridge prayer will continue to be performed in South Africa. It will remain, along with the '*Puraṭṭāsi* prayer', an important religio-cultural activity in the South African Telugu community.

3.6.2.4 *Kāṭēri* Prayer

The term '*Kāṭēri*', a Tamil term coined with two words '*Kāṭṭu*' (belongs to the forest) and '*Ēri*' (belongs to the lake), means a little forest goddess. The Tamilians believe that her power lies in sending diarrhoea or cholera to the village, particularly to the children. As mentioned earlier, the villagers who follow little traditions conceptualise the Mother Goddess in many forms and associate '*Kāṭēri*' with ill-health. The Tamils associate her with darkness and thus the prayer is performed in the evening when it is dark. To prevent her wrath falling on the new born child in the family, they perform the *Kāṭēri* prayer. This is a traditional Tamil village custom, to perform a ritualistic prayer to please *Kāṭēri Amman* and *Munīswaran*, a village male deity whose name is associated with her. The South African Telugus, due to their religio-cultural contact with the Tamils, borrowed this ritual and many of the present-day Andhras perform this ritual worship to *Kāṭēri Amman* when the new born child is three months old (see 3.5.2 also).

One very interesting aspect of this *Kāṭēri* prayer, as borrowed and performed by the South African Telugus, is that they fused this little tradition, which is a non-Sanskritic ritual, with one aspect of the great tradition (Sanskritic) viz. the *Cowla* (see 3.5). As mentioned earlier, although this *Samskāra* is to be performed in the third year, the South African Telugus perform *Cowla* and the *Kāṭēri* prayer jointly on the third month of the baby's birth (vide : research findings).

The researcher had an opportunity to observe the *Kāṭēri* prayers performed in a Telugu home in Reservoir Hills, Durban, in which blood sacrifice was made. It took place in two stages as described hereunder. Some of the Telugus who perform this prayer do not sacrifice any roosters to *Kāṭēri*, but give money to someone else to buy and slaughter the rooster outside their homes for their baby's health.

The said family chose a particular (convenient) Sunday for the prayer to be performed to *Kāṭēri*. On that morning, the baby was given a bath and the mother dressed the baby in a new set of clothes. The household members cleaned the "back-yard" of the house and decorated the ground with *muggulu* (ritual patterns). An elderly lady from the family washed three stones with turmeric water and decorated two of them (it is a South Indian custom to always have two *ammas* called *jōḍi ammas*, never one *amma*) with *Kuṅkumam* dots (to represent *Kāṭēri* and any other *amma* from the Seven Sisters). The third stone was decorated with *vibhūdi* (religious white ash) (to represent the male deity, *Munīswaran*). They cooked three different vegetable curries, sweet rice, *capātis* (*rōṭis*), bought three roosters to be sacrificed, coconuts and many other ritual items. Two *Kāṭēri* stones were placed on one side and the *Munīswaran* stone on the opposite side of the *muggulu*. They placed the baby on the side of *Munīswaran*, brought all the cooked food and placed it along with the baby. They took a white cloth, held it between the baby and the *Kāṭēri* stones and slaughtered the three roosters for *Kāṭēri Amma* and offered it to her.

Then the father cut a small strand of hair from the baby's head, lit camphor, turned it around the baby and the three stones. Each member of the family came to the baby and turned the camphor three times around the baby. This ritual which was performed in the morning, is called *Munīswaran* prayer and, just like the porridge or the ancestral prayer, no priest was involved in this domestic ritual.

In the afternoon the ladies of the household cooked a curry with the sacrificed roosters and kept it ready for the evening prayer. The evening aspect of the ritual called *Kāṭēri* prayer was much simpler and less time consuming. Almost the same procedure was repeated, but the baby was placed near the two stones and the rooster curry was the additional offering made together with the other items. They once again cut a small strand of the baby's hair and

offered it to *Kāṭēri Amman*.

The South African Telugus do not know why this *Kāṭēri* prayer is associated with *Cowla*, the Sanskritic *Samskāra*, and also why it should be performed in the third month. Many of them reported that their parents performed these prayers and that they are following the tradition. Even educated Telugus reported that they fear that if this prayer is not performed by them, ill-health may fall upon their newborn children. The researcher assumes that due to the mention that during the *Cowla Samskāra* the severed hair must be hidden in the vicinity of water (see 3.5.3) because the hair is regarded as part of the body. The South African Telugus believed that severed hair could be subjected to magic and evil spells by their enemies and they should protect their new born baby from such evil spirits. Thus, due to Tamil influence, they pray to *Kāṭēri Amma* who is associated with water, to safeguard their children.

The *Kāṭēri* prayer is not performed in Mauritius. Many Andhras stated that their previous generation performed some special prayers for *Amma*, but not the *Kāṭēri* prayer as it is performed in the present-day South African Telugu community. Many of the devotees of Venkateswara *Bhaktula Saṅgham* and a few Telugu immigrants were even surprised to hear about the *Kāṭēri* prayer. They expressed their concern about the "blood sacrifices" which are performed amongst the South African Andhra community. *Guruvu Sri Satyakama Appiah*, the spiritual head of *Sri Paramēswari Ananda Nilayam* (Interview : *Sri Satyakama* 1993) in Mauritius stated that they are strongly discouraging the "blood sacrifices" and very few Telugus are still performing the rituals which involve "blood sacrifices". As Nirsimloo-Anenden (1990 : 118-9) states, the local Telugu societies and the *pūjāris* (priests) in Mauritius are emphasising the need for strict vegetarian rituals and the practice of animal sacrifices is dying out very fast in Mauritius.

In Malaysia, the researcher was told that *Kāṭēri* prayer is a Tamil custom borrowed by the Malaysian Telugus and it was previously performed by many. However, according to one interviewee (Interview : *Sri B Nookiah* 1993), the *Kāṭēri* ritual is not popular at present and many Telugus merely cut their baby's hair in a temple close to them. This aspect of Tamil influence on the Malaysian Telugus is eroding very fast and only a few Telugus, still living on the plantations, are performing this prayer. Many present-day Malaysian Telugus, due to

the renewal of their religio-cultural contacts with the Telugus in Andhra Pradesh and with the other Telugus in the diaspora, and also due to the influence of *Srī Satya Sāi* Movement are questioning the relevance of such a Tamil cultural ritual on their lives. Thus, they are trying to abandon this custom which was not originally their Telugu custom (vide: research findings).

This sacrificial ritual, mostly performed by the South African Telugus, has become another exclusive feature of the South African Telugu culture. However, it is important to mention that, although performed by many Andhras, the *Kātēri* prayer is not a conspicuous ritual in South African Telugu culture. Many loyal Andhras resist this ritual saying that it is not their Telugu culture to perform it. Similarly, many neo-Hindu Telugus vehemently object performing these rituals which involve "blood sacrifices".

3.6.2.5 Seven Sisters' Prayer

Another major variation found in South African Andhra culture is that of performing the Seven Sisters' Prayer as a home based ritual. They perform it at any time of the year and as often as they want to. In the Andhra culture, the Seven Sisters' prayer is performed differently, as a community based festival (see 4.4). Each individual Telugu village has one of the Seven Sisters as its village deity and the villagers perform an annual *Jātara* for her individually or jointly (cf. Dumont 1970 : 22). This prayer, when it is *Vēdic* in nature, is called *Sapta Mātruka Pūja* (Seven Mothers' prayer) and no blood sacrifice is involved in such prayers. The Seven Mothers are described by Sri Janaki Rama Sastri (Interview : 1994) as: "*Pradhamam Śīlaputrīte, dwitīyam Brahmācārīnī, trutīyam candra kaṇṭēte, kūśmāṇḍēte caturdhakam, pañcamam Skandamātēte, ṣṣṭam Kārtīyāyanīca, saptamam Kamalātrīca, sapta mātrukām*".

"The first is the daughter of virtue, the second is a spinster, the third has moon as a necklace, the fourth is holding a pumpkin, the fifth is mother of *Skanda*, the sixth is *Kārtīyāyini*, and the seventh is with three lotus flowers and they are all together called Seven Mothers" representing the seven different aspects of Goddess *Śakti* (Source : *Āndhra Prabha Sacitra Vāra Patrika* 9 September 1994 : 22).

Some South African Telugus perform special ritualistic prayers for all Seven Sisters and in many instances it involves "blood sacrifice". The South African Telugus, like their counterparts in Mauritius and Malaysia, cannot name the Seven Sisters. The Seven Sisters are : *Pōṣamma*, *Peddamma*, *Yellamma*, *Bālamma*, *Maicamma*, *Eddamma* and *Māṇikkālamma* (Nirsimloo-Anenden 1990 : 118). The South African Telugus associate all the Seven Sisters with disease, illness and in some houses with witchcraft. The Seven Sisters ritualistic prayer is the second most important Telugu ritual in Mauritius and most important prayer in some parts of South Africa eg. in Puntans Hill district (see 4.4.4).

When one of the family members falls sick, that person's mother, wife or sister takes a vow to perform this ritualistic prayer. The woman who takes a vow for the sick person performs this prayer near a river or on the beach. The particular prayer which was attended by the researcher was conducted by some Telugus who are influenced by the Tamil culture. It took place in the following manner on a secluded beach on the Natal North Coast.

On a chosen Sunday, the mother took her thirty-five year old sick son to the beach where she made a small canopy with sticks and neem leaves. She bought various goods for the prayer, all in seven numbers, such as fruits, coconuts, small packets of *kurikumam*, turmeric, betel leaves, incense sticks, milk, cotton threads, one rooster and several other items. She made her son sit on neem leaves outside the canopy. She first prepared an effigy of Lord Ganēṣa with turmeric powder, offered her prayers to Him, then prayed to the Sun God. She offered the cracked coconuts and fruits to Sun and immersed them in the sea. After this initial prayer, she picked seven stones to represent Seven Sisters, washed them with turmeric water, decorated them with *Kurikumam* dots, chose a place inside the canopy and performed the Seven Sisters *pratiṣṭa* (installation). She placed seven betel leaves with seven one cent coin in each, areca nuts, and placed three kinds of seven fruits. She prepared liquids in seven cups, water, milk, turmeric, *kurikumam*, sugar, sandal powder and rose water. She re-decorated the stones with *kurikumam* and turmeric and tied the seven stones with thread (seven rounds). She placed a white cloth between her sick son and the Seven Sisters, slaughtered the rooster and offered the blood to the deities. She lit seven pieces of camphor and turned each of them seven times around the deities. She made her son take a few sips from all seven cups and lastly, she poured the remaining liquids into the sea.

There was no priest involved in this ritual, nor were there any mantras recited. Information given by the Tamil priest of the Andhra Viṣṇu Temple in Reservoir Hills (Interview : Mr Moodley 1994) states that although he is trying to discourage such sacrificial rituals, many Tamils and Telugus still continue to practice these rituals secretly.

The mother did not know the significance of what she had performed. However, she believed that the Seven Sisters were holding her son and that they had drained out all his strength. She also believed that by performing this ritualistic prayer, the Seven Sisters will be pleased with her and release her son, one or two days after the prayer. She also informed the researcher that after the prayer, the slaughtered rooster, the remaining fruits and the other *pūja* materials must be donated to some poor person (in this case, she offered them to a Zulu boy who was passing by). She also said that once she takes her son home, he must have a bath to wash the evil spirits off from his body and they will donate the clothes he was wearing during the prayer to an "outsider". When questioned later, she informed the researcher that her son was relieved of his sickness within two days after the prayer. She even believes that her son has regained all the strength after the prayer and is looking more healthy.

This ritualistic prayer is not very popular among present-day Malaysians due to the influence of *Satya Sāi* Movement (see chapter 5.5.3 for more details). However many Telugus who live on plantations are still performing this type of ritualistic prayers. On the other hand the city dwellers are performing the *Navagraha Śānti* in *Āgamic Amman* Temples rather than the Seven Sisters' ritual (Interview : Smt S Nookiah 1993).

The situation in Mauritius is completely different and, as Nirsimloo-Anenden (1990 : 118-9) states, their Seven Sisters' ritual illustrates the major change from non-vegetarian to vegetarian forms of worship. This ritual as it is performed in present-day Mauritius forms part of the collectivization of a particular ceremony and thus discussed separately in the following chapter (see chapter 4 for more details).

3.7 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter an attempt is made to discuss the main home based individual religio-cultural dynamics of the Hindu Andhras which are almost common for all the four countries in the diaspora. An attempt is made to analyze the personal background of the respondents (3.2) and to document their religio-cultural attitudes and religious affiliations (3.3). The mostly popularly read Hindu scriptures by the diaspora Hindu Andhras and the reasons for their popularity are examined (3.4). The main *Samskāras* performed, the difference in their performance and their norms and values are discussed (3.5). This sub-section clearly demonstrates the difference between the Andhras living in the three former colonies on one hand and the USA on the other. This sub-section also focuses on the erosion/preservation of the performance of the *Samskāras* and the Hindu Andhra cultural values in the Hindu Andhra diaspora.

The latter half of this chapter deals with the main home based activities which include both vegetarian and non-vegetarian prayers (3.6). This sub-section attempts to focus on the major difference in the home based activities between the Telugus living in the three former colonies and the USA viz. observance of the great and the little religious traditions. Although form part of the former colonies, there are striking difference in the attitudes, the modes of worship, norms and values of the Telugus living in Mauritius, South Africa and Malaysia. Tamil influence was evident on the Andhras living in South Africa and Malaysia which led to the cultural erosion of the Andhras in these two countries.

From this chapter it is evident that being the descendants of indentured labourers during the colonial era, the Telugus in Mauritius, South Africa and Malaysia imported and maintained their village Hindu customs and beliefs in their respective countries. On the other hand, the Hindu Andhras of the USA, the result of the modern day voluntary migrants to the west, imported neo-Hindu beliefs and different modes of worship to the USA. These two groupings, which represent the 'plethora' of the Andhra diaspora, have their own problems, setbacks to maintain their own Andhra religio-cultural activities at home level.

In conclusion, it is pertinent to state some facts about the religio-cultural activities of the Andhras in the diaspora. There are some specific religio-cultural activities which are performed viz. the *vratas*, by the Telugus living in the USA are not discussed in this chapter. The American Telugus, being immigrants, perform various *vratas* such as *Satyanārāyaṇa vratam*, *Srāvaṇa Gouri vratam*, *Kanyakā Paramēswari vratam*, *Varalakṣmi vratam* and *Kēdāra Swāmi vratam*, at their home level and as well as at community level. However, these *vratas* are not performed by the Telugus in the three former colonies. Above all, most of the informants stated that they are not aware of such *vratas* and the significance of performing such *vratas*. Although *Varalakṣmi vratam* and *Satyanārāyaṇa vratam* are performed by individual American Telugus at home level, they are dealt in the following chapters due to their performance also at the community level. Similarly, the various activities taking place in the Hindu temples, in which the American Telugus participate as individuals, are not discussed in this chapter but in the following chapter.

The *Gōvinda pūja* or *vratam*, which is popularly performed at home by the Mauritian Telugus is also not discussed in this chapter because the Mauritian Telugus while performing the *Gōvinda pūja* involve the whole community in that prayers. In the South African context, the neo-Hindu and Sanskritic activities of the Telugu community such as performing *havana*, rendering *bhajans* at home (eg. *Rāma bhajan*), fasting observed on specific festival days and attending weekly *satsaṅghs* are dealt within the next chapter. In the case of Malaysia also these activities are discussed in the following chapters. Lastly, the neo-Hindu festivals celebrated by all the Telugus in the diaspora are also discussed in the following chapters.

CHAPTER FOUR

RELIGION AND SOCIETY

4.1 ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses the various religio-cultural activities of the Andhras which are performed at societal level involving the Telugu community in general, as opposed to the individual activities as discussed in the previous chapter. However, the religio-cultural activities of the various Telugu organizations are not discussed in this chapter (see chapter 5 for such details).

The Sanskritic rites and rituals that are observed and performed by the Andhras are examined in 4.2. The Pan-Hindu festivals that are commonly celebrated at the temples by the diaspora Telugus (excluding the festivals celebrated by the Telugu organizations or *sabhas*) are briefly reviewed (4.3). Dravidian or non-Sanskritic rituals, as noted in the previous chapter, which are exclusive religio-cultural features of the three former colonies, are documented (4.4). The problems, challenges and setbacks the Telugus encounter as a community, their adjustments and their successes in maintaining their activities are analyzed separately (4.5).

4.2 SANSKRITIC RITES AND RITUALS

While the collective religious practices followed by the Telugus in the three former colonies seem to fluctuate mid-way between Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic traditions, the religio-cultural activities of the American Andhras are Sanskritic in nature. The Telugus, where they are in propinquity with Tamils (eg. in South Africa and Malaysia), tend to practice more Tamil rituals than the Telugus in Mauritius and the USA. However, when the Telugus are juxtaposed in relation with the North Indian Hindus, they tend to adopt new religio-cultural habits (eg. observing the *Janda* and *katha* prayers in South Africa and Mauritius).

While this sub-section deals with the Sanskritic rites and rituals observed mostly by the immigrant Andhras in the USA, the community based Dravidian rituals are considered separately (see 4.4).

4.2.1 · Havan

In most of the Sanskrit rites, rituals and *Samskāras*, the sacred sacrificial fire is lit in a *Hōmagundam* (*Hōma Kund*), a hole in the ground for receiving the fire for an oblation, because *Agni* (the God of Fire) is the first and most permanent constituent in Hindu rituals. *Rg Vēda* (VII.15.2) states that *Agni* assumes the role of "house-lord" and is a constant source of help in the sacred life of a Hindu householder. In *Rg Vēda* a number of hymns are devoted to describing and praising *Agni*. He acts as a mediator between men and gods by carrying the offering made to the gods (Interview : Sri N L Bhatt 1994).

As described by *Swāmi Harshananda* (1982 : 8), *Agni* has two heads, a big belly and six eyes, seven arms in which he holds different objects and wears red garments as well as *Yajñōpavita* (the sacred thread). *Swāmi Harshananda* (1982 : 8) also describes him as having smoke in his banner, and ram is his vehicle.

Agni is not only 'house-lord' to the Hindus but is also believed to be a great protector against illness, demons and other evil spirits as the *Rg Vēda* states (*Rg Vēda* VII.15.2):

"*Kavimaghi mupasthuhi satyā dhamanimakṣwahe*

Dēvamamīva cātanam" (*Ślōka* 12.7)

"To the sage *Agni* render praise, Him of true rules in sacrifice. God banisher of illness" (Pandey 1969 : 37).

"*Agni rakṣāmsi sedhati Śukraśōciramatyih*

śuciḥ pāvaka idacah

Agne rakṣānō ahamhasah prati syam dēva rīṣataḥ

tapiṣtau rajaro daḥa" (*Ślōka* 15.10.13)

"*Agni* expels the *Rākṣasas*, God of clear radiance, deathless one, bright cleansing, worthy to be praised. *Agni* protect us from distress, with hottest flames, unaging god, burn those against our enemies" (Pandey 1969 : 37).

To light the *Havana Kunda* the devotees use two dry pieces of wood. The dry pieces of wood, which symbolise the body and soul of the *Havana* performer, are brought together in friction. As *Shakun Narain* (1990 : 22-23) states, the lighting of this type of fire symbolises

that "the physical body should start a quest for spiritual life".

As mentioned earlier, the Hindus perform *Havana* as a rite during various *Samskāras* such as *Simantōnnayana*, *Nāmakaraṇa*, *Vivāha*, *Antyēṣṭi* and *Upanayana* (see 3.5). During this rite the Hindus offer nine types of grains including rough rice, wheat, bengal gram and others; butter ghee, coconut (if *Havana* is performed for Lord Ganēṣa), some medicinal herbs, roots, dry fruits and sandal wood pieces amidst the chanting of *Havana mantras*. This offering to the fire is called *āhuti* and the Hindus chant 'Swāḥa' (we offer), every time they offer the oblation into the *Havana Kunda*. Offering *āhuti* into the *Havana Kunda* is a symbol of placing our abilities into a field of activity in a spirit of *Yajña*, i.e in a spirit of dedication (Narain 1990 : 23).

In Andhra Pradesh the Andhras perform the *Havan* only during *Vivāha*, *Antēyṣṭi*, *Upanayana* and other *Samskāras*. The Andhras attend the *Maha Yajñas* and *Havans* taking place in the temples. It is not a common religio-cultural habit of the Andhras to perform *Havans* at home for every occasions.

As Prabhakaran documents (1992 b : 193), the South African Andhras, as individuals at home level, perform *Havans* on various auspicious occasions such as moving into a new house or starting a new business, opening a shop or surgery and during the *Vivāha Samskāra*. Some South African Andhras also perform *Havana* while laying the foundation in the construction of a new house or building. They involve the only Telugu priest available in the community or use Tamil *Brāhmaṇ* priests from Sri Lanka.

However, the Andhra community renders *Havana* as a joint rite during the important occurrences for the AMSSA such as *Ugādi* festival day or AMSSA foundation day. The officials and constituents of the AMSSA annually perform *Havana* on Telugu *Ugādi day* (also see chapter 5 for more details) involving all the community members from the area. On such occasions the members of the community bring their own oblations such as *ghee* and the grains for *Havana Āhuti*, mix and offer them to the fire. The AMSSA makes most financial contributions for these occasions, and also pays for the priest.

In the present-day South African Andhra context the *Havana* has lost its ritualistic effectiveness because most South African *Havans* performed by the only Telugu priest are deficient of *Vēdic mantras*. The South African Telugu priest is neither fully familiarized with the performance of the *Havana* rite nor with Sanskritic *mantras* to be chanted during this rite. On one occasion the researcher noticed that the *Havana* rite, officiated by the Telugu priest and performed by the officials of AMSSA while celebrating the sixty-third anniversary of the establishment of their *Maha Sabha*, was lacking any *mantras* except the mention of the names of the Hindu gods and goddesses. The priest, a Sāi Bāba devotee, invoked Lord Jesus, Allha and many saints during the *Havana*, which was concluded in less than ten minutes. As mentioned earlier (see chapter 3), the South African Andhra community do not possess sufficient priests who can perform rites and rituals in a Sanskritic procedure.

However, the traditional *Sanātana Dharma Havana*, conducted by the members of *Sri Venkatēswara Bhaktula Saṅgham* and officials of MAMS in *Srī Parāśakti* Temple, Merebank, was well attended. In 1992 a group of 6-8 members from Mauritian Andhra *Maha Sabha* (MAMS), well-versed in *Vēdic* rites and rituals, arrived in South Africa in order to initiate friendly relations and religio-cultural links between the Andhras of these two countries. During their visit they travelled throughout Natal, conducted *bhajans*, gave religious lectures and discussions, and performed *Maha Yajña* (great *Havana*). The researcher, who witnessed this *Maha Yajña*, presumes that thus far in the South African Andhra context this was the only *Havana* which was performed according to *Vēdic* custom.

The lack of a proper *Brāhmaṇ* priest in the South African Andhra community is thus eroding the authentic performance of the *Havana* and the ritualistic procedure in which a *Havana* should be performed. It is pathetic to note that many present-day South African Andhras regard *Havana* as a north Indian culture as opposed to their South Indian culture. Some such Andhras are not prepared to perform *Havana*, but their numbers are small. On the other hand most members of AMSSA and its branch *sabhas*; and the community members are not even aware that the *Havans* performed by the present-day Telugu priest are not precisely conducted. They do not want to hire or use priests from other linguistic groups who can execute a *Havana* as a *Vēdic* rite. This resistance to other priests is an unconscious choice of the members of AMSSA and other branch *sabhas* through which they are trying to retain

their cultural identity as Andhras.

In Mauritius, as Nirsimloo-Anenden (1990 : 114-115) states, most Pan-Hindu practices are closely identified by many present-day Telugus with the Hindi-speaking group, and they are seen as a threat to their South Indian separateness and specificity. It is noted that, although they will not cease to worship the Sanskritic deities and perform Sanskritic rites and rituals, most Mauritian Telugus are trying to separate themselves by not performing these rites and rituals on a grand scale (unlike *Ammōru Pandaga* and *Rāma Bhajans*).

However, the members of both *Sri Venkātēswara Bhaktula Saṅgham* and MAMS, devotees of *Sri Paramēswari Ānanda Nilaya Āśramam* and the immigrant Andhra *Brāhmaṇ* priests of *Sri Prasanna Venkātēswara Dēvasthānam* are performing *Havans* and *Maha Yajñas* as a pure Sanskritic rite. For example, during the 1991 MAMS elections, the *Venkātēswara Bhaktula Saṅgham* members were elected as officials of the *Sabha*, and the MAMS performed a grand *Maha Yajñam* (they call it *Mahā Yagiamu*) on 14 th July at Grand River North West (Source : MAMS brochure 1991). This *Havana* was attended by various political leaders and parliament members along with a vast number of Mauritian Telugus and other Indians.

In the USA, both the Hindu Temple Society of North America (*Sri Vallabha Gaṇapati Dēvasthanam*, New York), and the Bhārātīya Hindu Temple, Detroit, along with other various Hindu temples in the USA, perform many *Havans*. During her first and second visits to the USA, the researcher witnessed various *Havans* being performed in the above mentioned temples. For example, during the *Bhāva Nāma Samvastara Ugādi* celebrations, the *Sri Maha Vallabha Gaṇapati Dēvasthānam* performed *Sri Maha Gaṇapati Havana* in which several American Andhras of both immigrant and first generations participated, having bought tickets for that *Havana*. In the USA some families also perform the *Havans* alone in their homes or as a community based activity where they join others (Indians). The priests, being *āgamic* priests, perform the *Havana* according to the *Vēdic* tradition. Similarly, the other American Hindu temples also perform various *Havans* on different occasions in which the Telugus, along with the other Hindus, participate regularly. In the USA performing *Havana* is becoming popular due to the presence of *āgamic* priests and due to the numerical majority of the north Indian Hindus.

4.2.2 Vratas

‘*Vrata*’ is a Sanskritic as well as Telugu term which means ‘a self-imposed task’ or ‘a religious vow or observation’ followed by a Hindu devotee. The merit procured by performance of the *Vratas* are many. They destroy all sins and evils, ensure peace of mind, bliss, prosperity, happiness and good health for the observer and his/her family members.

There are various kinds of *Vratas* observed by the Hindu Andhras in present-day Andhra Pradesh viz. *Vratas* which can be performed by the whole family; some to be performed only by married women; some specific *Vratas* for unmarried girls and *Vratas* for children. Performing some of the *Vratas* became specific religio-cultural activities of the Andhras. For example, in South India, performing the *Satyanārāyaṇa Vratam* is almost a synonym with the Andhra culture because almost all the upper caste people perform this *Vratam*. However, in Tamilnadu only some of the *Brāhmaṇ* caste Tamils perform this *Vratam*.

To the question ‘Are there any specific *Vratamulu* (*Vratas*) performed in your house? If yes, please list them”, the respondents indicated that they perform the following *Vratas* (see table 4.1).

TABLE 4.1

VRATAS PERFORMED IN THE TELUGU DIASPORA

VRATAS	MAU	SA	MAL	USA
<i>SATYANĀRĀYAṆA VRATAM</i>	6%	--	--	46%
<i>(VARA)LAKṢMI VRATAM</i>	32%	4%	32%	42%
<i>GŌVINDA VRATAM</i>	94%	76%	2%	--
<i>ŚRĀVAṆA GOURI VRATAM</i>	--	--	--	4%
<i>KANYAKĀ PARAMĒSWARI VRATAM</i>	--	--	--	4%
<i>SANTŌṢI MĀTA VRATAM</i>	--	--	--	6%

From the above table it is obvious that *Vratas* (except *Gōvinda Vratam* and *Lakṣmi Vratam*) are not performed in the three former colonies. However, in Mauritius 6% of the respondents (who are immigrants) pronounced that they perform *Satyanārāyaṇa Vratam*. In the USA a higher percent (46%) of the Telugus informed that they perform this *Vratam*. Although the *Varalakṣmi Vratam* (a *vratam* performed by married Telugu women for the long life and prosperity of their husbands) is performed by the Mauritian, Malaysian and the USA Telugus, only 4% of the South African Telugus indicated that they perform this *Vratam*. In this context, the researcher, having witnessed the South African religio-cultural situation for the past six years, presumes that many Telugus, who also perform this *Vratam*, did not manifest positively due to the lack of comprehensive knowledge of the Telugu language and also because of their language shift towards English. The researcher asserts that the South African Telugus are not aware of the term '*Varalakṣmi Vratam*' and did not answer this question positively. This argument is based on their performance of *Lakṣmi Pūja* at the home level and at temples in the month of *Śrāvaṇa* (July-August), like the immigrant Andhras elsewhere.

The *Satyanārāyaṇa Vratam* (a *vrata* jointly performed by a married couple for the sake of their family welfare) can be observed either on *Śaṅkrānti*, *Ēkādaśi* or *Amāvāsyā* (the day of new moon) or *Pūrṇima* (full moon day). In Andhra Pradesh the Telugus mostly observe this *Vratam* on *Amāvāsyā* or *Ēkādaśi* during the month (Interview : *Smt* Padmavathi Jonnalagadda 1994). *Satyanārāyaṇa* means 'the Lord of Truth', and it is another name for Viṣṇu. There are various stories connected with this *Vratam*. Lastly, in Andhra Pradesh this *Vratam* is performed only by married couples, and not by widows.

The performance of *Satyanārāyaṇa Vratam* firstly involves fasting by the couple, the *Pratiṣṭa* (the consecration) and *Āvāhana* (the invocation) of Lord Gaṇeśa, *Kalaśa Sthāpana* of Viṣṇu (the preliminary rite of solemnly placing a metal vase filled with water in front of God), *Navagraha* (nine constellations) *Pūja* and *Aṣṭa Dikpālaka Pūja* (*Aṣṭa Dikpālakas* are the regents of the eight points of the compass viz. *Indra*, *Agni*, *Yama*, *Naiṛuti*, *Varuṇa*, *Māruti*, *Kubēra* and *Iṣāna*) by placing 45 betel leaves and areca nuts. Then follows the Viṣṇu *pūja*. The *Brāhmaṇa* priest chants sacred *mantras* while they place flowers singly upon the *Kalaśam*. After the *pūja*, the couple should perform *ārati* (oblation of camphor light) to the *Kalaśam* and make other oblations called '*prasādam*', made of wheat-flour or *sūji* and sugar. Last, but not least, this *Vratam* involves the story telling of the glory of Lord *Nārāyaṇa*, His grace, the importance of taking His *pūja prasādam*, and also of the incalculable benefit derived by observing this unique *Vratam* (*Swāmi Sivananda* 1992 : 3). The *Kalaśa Visarjana* (repulsion - officially removing the *Kalaśa* which indicates the end of the *vrata*) will be performed on the next day.

Regarding the *Satyanārāyaṇa Vratam* *Swāmi Sivananda* states that (1992 : 6):

He who observes this *Vrata*, which is even being observed by the *Dēvatas*, with faith, devotion, self-surrender; he who hears the sacred story of the Lord *Satyanārāyaṇa* with faith and devotion; he who attends the *Pūja* and takes the *prasād*, attains health, joy, wealth and all prosperity.

Many Telugus feel that the *Satyanārāyaṇa Vratam* is the easiest and least expensive way of self-purification and self-surrender at the lotus feet of Viṣṇu. Many Hindus feel that one who observes this *Vratam* with full devotion and faith is sure to attain his heart's desire.

In the USA some Telugus perform this *Vratam* individually at home involving priests from the nearby temples. As noticed in some homes, the Telugus who cannot afford to bring the priest (due to time or expenses involved - see 3.5) to their place, perform this *Vratam* on their own by using a pre-recorded audio cassette instead of a priest. As the Detroit Bharatīya Hindu Temple Telugu priest informs (Interview : Sri Janaki Rama Sastri 1994), these audio cassettes are recorded either by priests in the USA or by priests from Andhra Pradesh. These tapes instruct devotees how to perform this *Vratam* (or *Varalakṣmi Vratam*) step by step and are recorded in Telugu and Sanskrit. As mentioned earlier, it is a Telugu custom for newly married couples to perform this *Vratam* for their future prosperity before the onset of their new married life.

The American immigrant Telugus also perform the *Satyanārāyaṇa Vratam* on a community level where 15-20 couples jointly perform this *Vratam* in one temple. For example, the researcher witnessed one *Satyanārāyaṇa Vratam* which was jointly performed by many Telugus (and other Hindus) in the Pittsburg Veṅkaṭēswara *Devasthānam* in 1992. Some Telugus from as far away as Knoxville in the State of Tennessee, arrive at this temple, husband and wife both wearing traditional Hindu silk clothes to perform this *Vratam*, with *Brāhmaṇa* priests officiating the *Vratam*.

It is unfortunate to note that this unique *Vratam* is not known to the Telugus in the three former colonies and is not performed by them. In South Africa, although the neo-Hindu Organizations such as Divine Life Society and the Hare Kṛṣṇa Movement propagate this *Vratam* and encourage their devotees to perform it, very few Telugus get involved in this Sanskrit rite. Most South African Telugus associate this *Vratam* with North Indian culture and are not keen in performing it. Research has demonstrated that this same attitude is displayed by many Telugus in the other two former colonies.

Thus, an important religio-cultural activity of the Telugus in Andhra Pradesh and in the USA is unknown to the Telugus of the three former colonies. The researcher attributes the lack of performance of this *Vratam* in the three former colonies to : a) the caste background of the indentured labourers; b) the Tamil influence on the Telugus in South Africa and Malaysia, and c) to the lack of fresh immigrants, with knowledge of these *vratas*, to these colonies for

more than six decades.

The others *vratas* mentioned in this section are performed at home by all the Telugus in Mauritius, South Africa and Malaysia. However, the American Andhras perform the *Varalakṣmi Vratam* both at home and at the community level as in the case of *Satyanārāyaṇa Vratam*.

4.2.3 Rāma Bhajans

Rāma *bhajans* are held both in Mauritius and South Africa in the Telugu month of *Āśwayuja* (see 3.6.2.2) or at the time of the *Sri Rāma Navami* festival. As mentioned earlier, there are some Telugu rites and rituals, which are exclusive features of the three former colonies, not rendered by the immigrant Telugus in the diaspora. Rāma *bhajan*, a Telugu ritual, conducted only in these two countries is a good illustration for such an assertion.

It is the special religio-cultural habit of the Hindu Andhras to observe *ēkāhavam* (a rite of observing an entire day of fasting), or *saptāhavam* (a rite of observing a seven days of fast eating only one meal a day) in the name of a certain deity when they want to fulfil some important vow. For example, in the Telugu temples in Andhra Pradesh, the temple priests hold *ēkāhavam* or *saptāhavam* of *Rāmāyaṇam* or *Bhāgavatam* or *Gīta* in which the temple priest reads these sacred scriptures for one day or for seven days. The devotees, who attend these religious discourses in the temple, fast during these religious rites, and go to the temple to listen to the scripture reading (Interview : Sri V Janaki Rama Sastri 1994).

Some respondents and interviewees from Detroit stated that the *Brāhmaṇa* priest of the Bhāratīya Hindu temple in Detroit holds the *Bhāgavata Kathā Kālakṣēpam* (reading the holy *Bhāgavatam*). He reads it in Telugu for seven days, and has done so annually for five years. About 20-25 young and adult American Telugus attend this religious discourse.

The Telugus in India hold *maṇḍala dīkṣa* on the occasion of taking a vow to conduct *Sīta-Rāma Kalyāṇam* (wedding), a sanskritic rite in which the concerned Telugu family grandly conduct the wedding of Sīta and Lord Rāma. However, as mentioned earlier, the Mauritian

and South African Telugus perform Rāma *bhajans* while fasting during the month of *Purattāsi* or at the time of *Sri Rāma Navami*. Performing Rāma *bhajans* became an unique Telugu religio-cultural feature in these two countries because no other Telugus, whether in modern Andhra Pradesh or in the diaspora, nor any other Hindu linguistic group perform this type of Rāma *bhajans*. However, it is relevant to mention that the traditional Andhra culture of performing *Sīla-Rāma Kalyāṇam* is unknown to the Telugus in these former colonies.

In the Andhra country, Rāma *bhajans* are different depending on their context viz. where and by whom they are held. During the nineteenth century there were specific *bhajana* groups, consisting of twenty to twenty-five members. They held *ciratalu* (castanets) and *tālālu* (cymbals); wore *gajjelu* (dancer's bells) on their legs and sang and danced rhythmically during the *Rāma Navami* and *Kṛṣṇāṣṭami* festivals. They held *Dīpapu samme* (a kind of oil lamp used during singing *bhajans*) while rendering *bhajans*. However, these *bhajans* were executed only in the temples during the festival seasons (Ellora 1981 : 91-93).

As Prabhakaran (1992 b : 228-29) states, "*bhajana* is solely an expression of devotion by a Hindu devotee towards God. While musical knowledge is required to sing classical music and *kīrtans*, to render *bhajans* the only prerequisite is devotion to God. Any humble or lay person can render *bhajans* and Telugu *bhajans* are no exception". However, rendering Rama *bhajans* are difficult because the singers have to express their devotion, beat the bells and dance in tune with the *bhajans*.

As informed by various immigrant interviewees in the diaspora, the *bhajana* groups rendering these *bhajans* in the temples are obsolete in twentieth century Andhra Pradesh and many city-dwelling Andhras are not even aware of such a religio-cultural activity.

The indentured Andhra immigrants to Mauritius and South Africa, once freed, established within a few years various *bhajana* groups. They offered their services to the community freely and sang *bhajans* in Telugu. They laboured between sunrise and sunset on farms and then found solace in singing *bhajans* praising Rāma or other Hindu deities at night and over the week-ends. The early *bhajana* groups were very popular and were regarded as loyal custodians of Hindu religion and Telugu culture. At present there are various *bhajana* groups

in Mauritius and South Africa who offer their services to any Andhra who wants to hold Rāma *bhajans* in the month of *Āśwayuja* or at the time of *Sri Rāma Navami*.

Nirsimloo-Anenden (1990 : 115-118), in her academic study on the Telugus in Mauritius, elaborates on the manner in which the Rāma *bhajans* are rendered in her country. The Rāma *bhajans* the researcher witnessed at the residence of *Smt & Sri Seemadree Nursimulu*, who resides at Le Hochet, Terre Rouge, Mauritius; and *Smt & Sri K A Naidoo* who resides at Umhlatuzana Township, Durban, South Africa are rendered almost in the same manner with only a few variations.

In Mauritius the Rāma *bhajans* are held both at home and at society level in the temples. "High-status" families of the Telugu community could choose to patronize a nearby temple by giving a large-scale feast. If held in temples at society level, the whole Telugu community and the Telugu *sabhas* contribute finances for the expenditure. However, if held at home, all the expenses are solely met by a rich individual by involving his family members and close kinsfolk. However, in South Africa, unlike the Mauritian context, the Rāma *bhajans* are held only at the home level, with only one family to meet the expenses. South African Rāma *bhajans* are very much a kin-based activity and the Andhra *sabhas* do not contribute for such expenses (cf. Nirsimloo-Anenden 1990).

A person wishing to hold the Rāma *bhajana* ritual, must fast for one month along with his family members consuming only vegetarian meals (Interview: *Sri K A Naidoo* 1994). Holding Rāma *bhajana* once in three years, a tradition maintained for three to four generations, has become an exclusive Andhra cultural trait and a status symbol in these communities. As Nirsimloo-Anenden (1990 : 116) states, indications of the lavishness of the ritual holder include : the large quantity of oil used in the lamps in the ritual, the canopy erected, the number of people who were invited and fed with a grand meal, the *prasādam* distributed and the reputable *bhajana* group hired.

The preparations start in the evening of the chosen day when the *pūjari*, and the close kinsfolk of the "ritual holder" arrive. The womenfolk start cooking for the meal and the *prasādam* to be served, the latter being cooked first. The *pūjari* prepares the "testing

solution", called *pannel* in Mauritius (which will be later used to test whether the prayer is a success or not), with nine different ingredients including milk, *ghee*, honey, sugar and others. Meanwhile, the Rāma *Bhajana* group arrives with their bells, uniforms and a big and beautifully decorated prayer lamp. They decorate a corner with *muggulu* and establish the prayer lamp around which they later sing and dance. The guests arrive and take their seats.

Inside the house, the householder and his family worship *Simhādri Appana*, the incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu and the presiding deity of the Simhācalam temple in Andhra Pradesh (Sundaram 1980 : 136). The priest offers the prayer and lights two heavy iron-torches, (called *Kollu* in South African Telugu) for *Simhādri Appana*. Meanwhile, the singers start singing outside. The householder, or some close relative on his behalf, picks up the burning torches and start to sway to the *bhajana* music outside. Normally at this stage, the torch-bearer enters a trance. The household members follow the torch-bearers and the priest in a procession. While the singers are singing *bhajans* in Telugu, all the household members holding the *bhajana* ritual, walk around the lamp seven times. As the torch-bearer places the torches in front of the lamp, the guests who have come with oil, coconut, fruits, incense sticks and other offerings, queue up near the lamp and move slowly to offer their prayers to the deity. Each person pours some oil into the lamp, gives the offerings to the priest and waits until the priest breaks the coconut. Dinner is then served to all the guests.

The singing of Rāma *bhajans* continues until 6 h 00 the next morning with the group of *bhajana* singers dancing intermittently. Most of the friends and neighbours leave by 20 h 00 or 21 h 00, and only close kinsfolk and family members remain up to the next morning. Early the next day, the men and the priest go to a river or sea, where they symbolically extinguish the prayer lamp and offer their prayers to the Sun God. When they return, the priest opens the earthen clay pot, in which he prepared the "testing solution", to see whether the prayer has been a success or not. The Mauritian householder informed the researcher that if the *pannel* has become clotted then it means that the Rāma *bhajana* held was not a successful ritual and *Simhādri Appana* did not accept the prayer; and if the *pannel* was found uncoagulated then the prayer is considered to be a success (Interview : Sri Seemadree Nursimulu 1993). Testing the deity is an important aspect of this ritual and in the Mauritian Rāma *bhajana* the *pannel* remained clear. In South African Rāma *bhajana* this aspect of

testing the deity is not prominent and conspicuous as in the case of their counterparts in Mauritius (Interview : Sri K A Naidoo 1994). Both in Mauritius and in South Africa the Hindu Indians identify holding this type Rāma *bhajans* only with the Andhra culture and many members of the South African Andhra *sabhas* perform this ritual once every three years without fail.

Holding Rāma *bhajans* in this manner is unknown to the Tamil dominated Malaysian Telugus. However, many Malaysian informants told the researcher that they sing Rāma *bhajans* in the Rāma temples during *Sri Rāma Navami* festival for two or three hours continuously. Men, women and children sitting in rows sing *bhajans* in Telugu. They also render Siva *bhajans* during *Śivaratri* festival and render Sāi *bhajans* every Thursday on a communal level. However, they do not perform the Rāma *bhajans* as a Telugu ritual in Malaysia. Similarly, the American Telugus sing *bhajans* during the weekly *satsaṅghs* (see 4.2.4), during *Sri Rāma Navami* festival or at any festival in the temples. Some of them also attend Sāi *bhajans* held at individual homes and sing *bhajans* along with other linguistic groups.

4.2.4 Weekly Satsaṅghs

The weekly prayer services that are held in the Hindu Andhra diaspora are seen as a significant aspect of religious expression because many Andhras consider it very essential to attend such religious services. The weekly prayer services (*satsaṅghs*) are an important collective form of religious activity which bring all the devotees together regardless of differences in their social status. The Hindu Andhras in the diaspora express their devotion and love for God through *bhajans* sung during the *satsaṅghs*. The *satsaṅgh* is a popular medium of religious expression in the Hindu diaspora. It displays and strengthens the religio-cultural identity of the Hindu Andhras in the diaspora because the *kīrtans* and *bhajans* are mostly sung in Telugu.

The usual format of *satsaṅghs* held in religious institutes comprises of prayers, the holy chanting of the sacred *Ōm*, singing *bhajans* and *kīrtans*, ritualistic worship of deities, religious discourses, group discussions, reading from the sacred scriptures such as *Gīta* and *Rāmāyaṇam* and lastly meditations and *yōga* (cf. Sooklal 1990 and Adhopia 1993).

If the *satsaṅghs* are attended in any temple or *āśramam* (religious abode) it is more meaningful because there will be a spiritual *guruvu*, *swāmiji* or a priest who can inculcate unaffected *bhakti* and peace. By achieving these, one can concentrate easily on any form of God. As Singh (1991 : 173-174) notes, "*satsaṅgh* is more powerful than individual worship because praying and chanting of sacred *mantras* together, in a group, brings about tremendous spiritual vibrations, peace and bliss".

The Telugus in Mauritius have regular *satsaṅghs* in their country at the branch *sabha* level. As informed by the spiritual *guruvu* Sri Satyakama Appiah (Interview : 1992 and 1993), almost all the Mauritian Telugu *sabhas* have a building, a temple or a cultural hall where the Telugus meet and render their weekly services to God. More than twenty Telugu *sabhas* in Mauritius held these weekly services on Friday (Interview : Sri Chinayah Cuniah 1993). The Telugus living in that area and the members of that branch *sabha* congregate together and sing *kīrtans* and *bhajans* in Telugu. The Mauritian respondents' answer to the question, "do you sing *bhajans/kīrtans* in Telugu?" illustrates that 85% of them sing their *bhajans/kīrtans* in Telugu and 88% of them think that the *bhajans* should be sung in Telugu.

The weekly services start with chanting of the sacred *Ōm* three times and they recite prayers to Lord Ganēśa. Devotees pray and invoke gods and goddess of the Hindu pantheon. Numerous *bhajans* are sung to the deities accompanied by Indian musical instruments.

The *satsaṅghs* are also held in various Telugu temples where the Telugus congregate to worship their *iṣṭa daivam* in the presence of the temple priests or spiritual heads. For example, in the *Prasanna* Veṅkaṭēswara temple in Mauritius, many Telugu devotees attend daily prayers and special Saturday prayers, and sing *bhajans* and *kīrtans* during and after the ritualistic prayers held to Lord Veṅkaṭēswara (Vide : research findings). Similarly, the *Paramēswari Ānanda Nilayam*, an *āśramam* at Beau Climat, La Flora, holds daily and regular weekly service prayers and *kīrtan* sessions. At these *satsaṅghs* the spiritual *guruvu* of the *āśramam* imparts religious discourses where he studies and explains parts of sacred religious texts such as the *Rāmāyaṇam*, *Mahābhāratam* and *Bhagavad Gīta*. The *āśramam* also gives regular courses on Hindu rites and rituals.

The weekly service is concluded with the singing of *ārati* in Telugu and rendering ritualistic *ārati*, accompanied by sounding prayer bells, to the deities. Lastly, after the *ārati*, the Mauritian Telugus end their weekly *satsaṅghs* by reciting *śānti pāṭam* and then distribute the *prasādam* to the devotees. The weekly services are compulsory in almost all the branch *sabhas* in Mauritius and a peaceful and sanctified atmosphere of *bhakti* prevails in the weekly services held by the Mauritian Telugus (vide : research findings).

However, the weekly services held in the South African Telugu context lack the presence of any spiritual *gurvus* or priests. Almost all the branch *sabhas* of the AMSSA hold regular weekly prayer services which most members attend regularly. Every *sabha* has its own routine form of conducting its *satsaṅghs*, viz. a group of singers to lead the *bhajans* accompanied by musical instruments and lastly *ārati* and *prasādam* distribution. This routine may vary slightly from one *sabha* to the other. As Prabhakaran in her study of the South African Telugu community (1992 b : 236) states, the Telugus who cannot communicate in Telugu, who have shifted their ethnic mother tongue (EMT) towards English and those who are not interested in learning and speaking in the Telugu language also sing the *bhajans* in Telugu. 80% of the South African respondents stated that they sing devotional *kīrtans*/*bhajans* in Telugu and also recite the prayers in Telugu. A high percent (92%) of them even suggested that the *bhajans*/*kīrtans* be sung in Telugu only. The researcher identifies that this is an unconscious choice made by the Andhras because due to their EMT shift towards the host language, the Telugus in South Africa associate the Telugu language with their religio-cultural activities only (cf. Prabhakaran 1993).

A problem encountered by the South African Hindu Telugus in the weekly prayer service is the lack of suitable facilities to accommodate regular *satsaṅghs* in temples or cultural halls. Compared to the Mauritian Telugu situation, the South African Telugus do not have sufficient Telugu temples or cultural centres where they can congregate as one group to render their weekly *satsaṅghs*. They choose a school premises or a small temple, which have no priest, to conduct weekly prayers. The researcher perceives that the prayers thus held lack an atmosphere of peace and gaiety because there is no spiritual leader to inspire inner calmness and thus lacks spiritual concentration. In most cases the chairs or the benches, on which they sit during the *satsaṅgh*, do not motivate a feeling of obedience in front of the Almighty.

Another problem of these weekly services held in South Africa is the lack a spiritual head. Some Telugus, who are the devotees of the Pan-Hindu movements, attend the regular *satsaṅghs* held by the *āśramams* and are exposed to the religious discourses and scripture readings. Other Telugus who are more traditional in their approach and religio-cultural practices (see 4.4), are not exposed to these significant aspects of *satsaṅghs*. Such Telugus avoid attending the *satsaṅghs* held either by the Divine Life Society, the Rāmakṛiṣṇa Movement or by other such movements, thus restricting their religio-spiritual and philosophical knowledge. The children of such families are not exposed to any religious discourses or to the meanings of the verses taken from sacred Hindu scriptures. Above all, the lack of priests to teach them the accurate modes of worship exacerbates the situation.

The ex-president of one of the Andhra branch *sabhas* in Asherville, a staunch devotee of the Rāmakṛiṣṇa Centre of South Africa (Interview : Sri Veerasamy 1994), states that the *satsaṅghs* held at various Telugu *sabhas* display no love and no true *bhakti*. He substantiates this by stating that during the weekly prayers the devotees display their petty quarrels and have unnecessary arguments instead of concentrating on the spiritual aspects of the religion or meditating. He further pronounces that the weekly prayer services held at some Telugu *sabhas* appear to be fashion parades and socio-cultural gatherings rather than devotional religious congregations. The researcher, who has attended numerous *satsaṅghs* held by the Telugu *sabhas* in South Africa, Mauritius and Malaysia, opines that most of the weekly services of South African Telugu *sabhas* need to be resuscitated. She is of the view that they should be moulded towards more religious aspects such as scripture reading, religious discourses, discussions and debates on philosophical and spiritual aspects of religion rather than the mere singing of *bhajans*.

In Malaysia the Telugus also hold weekly *satsaṅghs* as stated by various informants living in urban areas (vide : research findings). The Malaysian Telugus organize and conduct Telugu *bhajans* in various places and render *bhajans* during weekly *satsaṅghs*. Many *sabhas* accommodate regular weekly prayer services and according to one Malaysian informant Telugu is kept alive in Malaysia through religion (Interview : Sri Dadi Sri Ramulu 1994). 85% of the respondents from Malaysia indicated that they sing *bhajans/kīrtans* in Telugu and a high percentage of respondents i.e 94% of them think that they must be sung only in Telugu.

The Malaysian Telugu weekly prayer services appear better than the *satsaṅghs* held by their counterparts in South Africa. They have enough temples where they can meet regularly in an auspicious milieu. The presence of Tamil priests in the temples add further sanctity in their *satsaṅghs*. Some of the Malaysian Telugus, being staunch devotees of *Sri Satya Sāi Bāba* and being exposed to pan-Hindu religio-cultural activities, impart knowledge on spiritual, philosophical and humanitarian aspects of Hinduism during these weekly *satsaṅghs* (Interview : *Smt Subraya Sarma* 1993). In such places they have scripture reading from *Bhagavad Gīta*, *Rāmāyaṇam* and discourses on the lives of *Swāmi Vivēkānanda*, *Srī Rāmakriṣṇa* and others. The Malaysian Telugus are also fortunate in the sense that they have some priests from India who imported some aspects of the Indian religious revivification that took place in recent years. Similarly, many Malaysian Telugus go to Andhra Pradesh whenever they want to visit the *Sāi Bāba Āśramam* in Puttaparti which enables them to have continuous contacts with their co-relatives in India.

However, in Malaysia there are thousands of uneducated Telugus who still dwell on plantations and who are not exposed to neo-Hindu aspects of religion (see 4.4). A Telugu living in Kajang said that most of the plantation domicile Telugus do not know why they go to temples, or attend weekly services where they conventionally sing *bhajans* in Telugu. They are not aware of the concepts behind such religious rites and rituals (Interview : *Sri Nuk Naidu* 1993). He also adds that such Telugus should use the *āgamic* temples for their weekly services and should be given religious discourses which can be comprehended by them.

It reflects sadly that although Hinduism has all the information needed for a person to lead a good life, that information is not being distributed to the Malaysian and South African Hindu masses in which the Telugus are included. The researcher presumes that this lack of true knowledge about the essences of Hinduism leads to conversions to other religions both in South Africa and Malaysia.

Compared to their counterparts in the three former colonies, the American Telugus (both immigrant and first generation) have well organized weekly services in most areas where there are temples. The American Telugus do not have any regular weekly or daily prayer services restricted to the Telugu organizations only. However, as Hindus they attend regular

weekly or daily services held by the temple authorities in a well organized procedure. Living in a affluent western society, many of the American Telugus are fortunate to have spacious temples with highly qualified full time priests (some of them possess masters degrees in religion, Sanskrit and philosophy). Most of the American Hindu temples are spacious, built to accommodate hundreds of devotees in an air of sanctity. The weekly *satsaṅghs* attended by the researcher in the Bhāratiya Hindu Temple in Detroit and the New York *Maha Vallabha Gaṇapati* Temple display the same high standards of a sacred *satsaṅgh*.

Hundreds of devotees congregated and sat silently on the carpets in rows waiting for the *satsaṅgh* to begin. The devotees sat in front of the deities in *padmāsana* (lotus feet), the traditional Hindu posture for prayer or meditation. The temple priest commenced the initial prayers to the Gods and Goddesses while the adherents remained in silence.

The *satsaṅgh* was initiated with the chanting of *Ōm* three times accompanied by the blowing of a conch. The vibrations of the sacred *Ōm* and the sounds of the conch filled the temple with an atmosphere of peace, bliss and *bhakti*. It was followed by *guru mantra* and various *bhajans* sung in different languages eg. in Gujarati, Hindi and Telugu. As a contrast to their correlatives in the three former colonies, only 40% of the total American respondents stated that *bhajans/kīrtans* should be sung in Telugu. After the various *bhajana* singing, the priest explained the significance of chanting the sacred *Ōm* three times and various aspects of religion. He read *ślōkas* from the *Bhagavad Gīta* and explained the meaning of each *ślōka* in English. The scripture reading was followed by religious discussions by young Indians, which included the importance of Hinduism for an Indian American. The *satsaṅgh* came to an end with a rendering of *ārati* by the priest and then by the devotees.

In the American Telugu religious context it appears that the Telugus give primacy to the universal religion rather than to the separate Telugu identity of the *sabhas*. Trained priests from Andhra Pradesh, who are able to explain the philosophical aspects of Hinduism in technical terms, appeal to the younger generation American born Telugus. For example, the explanation given by the Telugu priest at the Bhāratiya Hindu Temple, Detroit, about the significance of *Ugādi* (Hindu New Year) and the explanation of the planetary positions according to the Hindu scriptures through scientific terms was very pleasing (vide : research

findings).

The researcher feels that the logical and scientific explanations given by this dynamic priest is highly acceptable to the American born Telugus and he is successful in gaining their attention during the religious discourses. Due to his dominant influence on the younger generation, it was noted that more devotees (particularly the Telugus) are attending the *satsanghs* regularly at this temple.

4.3 PAN-HINDU FESTIVALS

There are numerous colourful festivals in the Hindu calender starting from the month of *Caitra* to the month of *Phālguna* which are celebrated in a very grand manner by the Hindus in the diaspora. Some of these festivals are very ancient and it would be arduous to trace the origins of such festivals in this study. Some of these festivals are regional while others are universal in nature. The unity in diversity nature of Hindu India reflects in the celebration of any particular festival in different ways by different regional groups for different reasons. There are various stories and myths associated with each Hindu festival in India, which are based on the regional beliefs of the different linguistic groups.

Basically there are four types of Hindu festivals, viz. a) religious festivals which are directly connected with religion; b) social festivals in which the Hindus celebrate the birthdays of great heroes and personalities (Adhopia 1993 : 170); c) seasonal festivals, celebrated while welcoming changing seasons; and d) tribal festivals and fairs which are unique only to certain tribals in India. While festivals such as *Sri Rāma Navami*, *Kṛṣṇa Aṣṭami* and *Ganēṣa Caviti* come under religious festivals, festivals such as *Mahavīra Jayanti*, *San̄karācārya Jayanti* and *Gāndhi Jayanti* fall under the second category of festivals. Festivals such as *San̄krānti*, *Ugādi* and *Hōli* are categorized as seasonal festivals, the *Gaṅgā Dēvi* festival, *Nandi* festival and *Pūsa Paṇḍōyi* are Andhra tribal festivals.

The Hindu Andhras in India traditionally celebrate all the festivals of the Hindu calender viz. *Ugādi*, *Srī Rāma Navami*, *Hanuman Jayanti*, *Narasimha Jayanti*, *Caturamavāsya*, *Nāgula Caviti*, *Kṛṣṇā Aṣṭami*, *Vināyaka Caviti*, *Ananta Padmanābha Caturdaśi*, *Vijaya Dasami*,

* Dīpāwālī, Dasara, Sankrānti, Ratha Saptami, Mahā Śivarātri, Holi and Batukamma Pandaga (festival) among others. Although most of these festivals are jointly performed by all the Hindus in India, some festivals are celebrated on a special day according to the lunar calendar the Andhras use. For example, the South Indians celebrate Dīpāwālī, the festival of lights, one day before the North Indians due to the mythological stories attached to the festival. x

In an academic study of this nature it is not feasible either to discuss all the festivals that are celebrated by the Hindu Andhras in India and in the diaspora; or to examine how each festival is celebrated at home level, at communal level or at the organizational level.

Based on the data obtained from the questionnaire survey, an effort is made to analyze the frequency of observance of Hindu festivals by the Andhras in the diaspora. The results which are derived from the Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric test conducted on the frequency of observance are examined in the concluding chapter of this study (see chapter 6 for all statistical details). Since the festival celebration in the Hindu Andhra diaspora is dealt with separately it is not viable to discuss all the festivals celebrated individually. Also due to the frequency and similarity in the celebrations of the festival by the Andhras, the researcher feels it is not necessary to discuss all the festivals in this sub-section. However, a brief attempt is made to discuss three main festivals celebrated in Telugu temples in which the Andhras attend at a societal level. Lastly, the religio-cultural festival of the Andhras, viz. the Telugu *Ugādi* festival, celebrated grandly by the various Telugu organizations in the Hindu Andhra diaspora, is dealt within the following chapter (see 5.3 for all details).

4.3.1 Mahā Śivarātri

The term '*Mahā Śivarātri*' etymologically means the 'Great Night of Śiva' and a day meant for worshipping Lord Śiva. There are different myths affiliated with the origin of the *Śivarātri* festival viz. it was the day on which Lord Śiva was born in the form of a *Liṅgam* (the Hindu *phallus* - a round, upright black rock worshipped as the image of Lord Śiva). Another myth was that it was the night on which one of the Śiva's devotee, a hunter chased by a cruel animal, kept an unconscious vigil sitting on a bel tree (*Aegle marmelos*, called *Mārēḍu ceṭṭu* in Telugu); plucked the leaves one by one and dropped them on a Śiva *Liṅgam*

which was under the tree and attained *Mōkṣa* (Interview : *Pandit Sambasiva Gurukkal* 1994). Whatever the legend may be, the *Mahā Śivarātri* is annually celebrated on the night of *Kriṣṇa Caturdaśi* (fourteenth day of the dark fortnight) in the month of *Māgha* (January-February).

Although there are many Śiva temples in Andhra Pradesh, the Śiva temples at Dākṣāramam, Śrī Śailam and Kālēswaram are renowned temples. Every year thousands of Śaiva devotees go to these holy places on a pilgrimage to these temples during the *Mahā Śivarātri* festival and keep awake throughout the night (called *jāgarāṇa* in Telugu). The night vigil is regarded sacred and auspicious by the devotees. Most of the Śaiva devotees observe a strict dry fast on this day, some going to the extreme of not consuming even liquids, such as water or milk, until the next morning. They chant Śiva's name continuously, listen to songs on Lord Śiva and sing Śiva *bhajans*.

In Mauritius, the Telugus celebrate all the major festivals at homes, by holding a morning prayer in the family and eating only a vegetarian meal during the day (vide : research findings). On the *Mahā Śivarātri* day the Telugus also hold prayers at home and in all the Telugu temples on the island. The Telugus from nearby areas attend these prayers. Although *Śivarātri* is a major festival for all the Hindus, as Nirsimloo-Anenden (1990 : 114) notes, it does not bring a fusion of all the Hindus in Mauritius. Nirsimloo-Anenden substantiates her assertions on the findings that this festival does not lead to a cohesive Hindu consciousness in Mauritius because each linguistic group celebrates this festival separately. Above all in the Mauritian Telugu community, as mentioned earlier, there is an unconscious affiliation of the *Mahā Śivarātri* with the Hindi-speaking people, and the Telugus do not perform its celebration along with the Hindi-speaking community.

Both in South Africa and Malaysia, influenced by Tamil Śaivism, many Telugus celebrate *Mahā Śivarātri* at various temples. As informed by the resident Sri Lankan priests at various Śaiva temples, the Hindus of all linguistic groups celebrate *Mahā Śivarātri* together in their temples (unlike the Mauritian Telugus). The Telugus fast, attend the temple special prayers, singing *bhajans* and keeping vigil the whole night. The *Mahā Śivarātri* festival in which the researcher participated in 1994 in the nearby Cato Manor Hindu Temple, in Durban was held in the following manner.

The prayer commenced from 18 h 00 on the day of *Śivarātri* until 6 h 00 the next day and was divided into four *jāmus* (one Telugu *jāmu* is a space of time equivalent to three English hours). The first *jāmu* prayer commenced at 18 h 00 when the priest installed eleven *Kalaśas* and performed *Kumbhābhiṣēkam* (a sacred rite of washing the *Lingam* with 108 pots of water) for Lord Śiva. It was followed by Lord Śiva's *pañcamukha viśeṣa pūja* (a sacred rite of performing *pūja* from five directions simultaneously by five different people) and *triśata Śivanāma arcana* (performing *pūja* while uttering the name of Lord Śiva three hundred times). Five of the temple *sthānigars*, attired in traditional Hindu manner, helped the priest to perform this *Śivarātri pūja*. The same *pūja* was repeated for the next three *jāmulu* (for 9 hours).

The devotees came with milk, honey, *vibhūdi*, *havana* goods and other *abhiṣēkam* goods. In between the *Rudrābhiṣēkams* the devotees rendered various *bhajans* in Tamil, Telugu and Hindi languages, continued fasting and kept vigil until the next morning.

Almost the same type festival celebrations for *Mahā Śivarātri* are held in Malaysia and the USA. The common problem faced by most of the Hindu Andhras (and others) in these countries is to keep vigil the whole night, if the festival occurs on a working day. The Andhras who are of working class and business class can not keep vigil the whole night. However, many housewives and elderly people keep their vigil by going to the temple.

There are some specific problems encountered by the South African and the USA Telugus to keep vigil for this festival. For example, in South Africa many Hindus fear to go to the temples in the night (unlike India) due to the fear of robberies and other crimes. In South Africa, during the past few years the crime and violence rate is very high compared to the previous years and this is a socio-political challenge the Hindus have to confront during the nights. However, a few Telugus informed that they stay in temples during the entire night and God will be with them to protect them against any such predicaments. In the case of the Telugus in the USA, the cold weather do not permit them to travel and to attend the *Mahā Śivarātri* festival prayers which always occurs in the winter season in the USA. Usually various parts of the USA (eg. in the states of Michigan and New York) the snow falls continue even in the months of February and March. However, many Telugus in the USA

informed that they fast, attend the *Śivarātri* prayers held in the temples in their areas and observe a strict vigil the whole night.

4.3.2 *Srī Rāma Navami*

Ugādi, the Hindu New Year, marks the beginning of the nine-day celebration of *Srī Rāma Navami*, the birth anniversary of Lord Rāma, the seventh incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu. *Srī Rāma* is one of the most popularly worshipped Hindu deities in the Hindu diaspora. The Sanskrit and Telugu term *Navami* means ‘nine’ and indicates the ninth day in a Hindu month. Rāma was born on the ninth day of the bright half of the *Caitra māsa* (March-April) in Ayōdhya, in the *Trēta Yuga*, the Second Age. The Hindus revere Rāma as a personification of all that is good and great in human behaviour and the *Rāma Navami* festival offers to all the Hindus an opportunity to absorb at least some of the ideals and spirit enshrined in the life of Rāma.

In India *Srī Rāma Navami* festival is celebrated for nine days as the *Vasanta Navarātris* (Nine Spring Nights). The celebrations start from the first lunar day of the bright fortnight of *Caitra* and lasts up to *Rāma Navami* day (Luxmikantha Mohan 1988 : 10-14). Every temple in Andhra Pradesh celebrates *Srī Rāma Navami* with great pomp and gaiety which includes *Hari Kathā Kālakṣēpam* (narrating the story of Rāma) and *Rāmāyaṇa Pārāyaṇam* (reading the *Rāmāyaṇam*) where the moving story of Lord Rāma is told and enacted (Prabhakaran 1992 b : 218). On the ninth day the glorious celebration of *Sīta-Rāma Kalyāṇam* (performance of the wedding of Rāma and Sīta) takes place in all the temples in which the expenses are met by wealthy Telugus. The needy devotees are served a free meal on the occasion of *Sīta-Rāma Kalyāṇam*. For nine days the temple holds Rāma *bhajans* in which hundreds of devotees participate and render *bhajans* in Telugu.

During this festival every small village or town in Andhra Pradesh erects a canopy in which the deities of Rāma, Sīta, Lakṣmaṇa and Hanumān are installed. The devotees conduct *Hari Kathā Kālakṣēpam*, religious discourses, reading from *Rāmāyaṇam*. The artists enact various scenes from *Rāmāyaṇam* such as *Laṅkā-dahanam* (burning Lanka by Hanumān) and *Rāma-Rāvaṇa yuddham* (battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa) among many others. The expenses are

met from the funds collected from all the devotees and some wealthy Telugus. During these nine days, the organizers of the festival distribute *pānakam*, a beverage made with a mixture of jaggery, cardamoms, black pepper powder and water. This *pānakam* is essential in *Rāma Navami* in Andhra Pradesh because of the hot summer weather and is issued along with *vadapappu*, prepared from split green gram soaked in water to which a pinch of salt, onion, and *ghee* are added (Prabhakaran 1992 b : 218-219). The distribution of *pānakam* and *vadapappu* during *Rāma Navami* became a synonym with the Andhra culture in India. Similarly, some wealthy Telugus freely distribute hand-fans made with paper.

Srī Rāma Navami is celebrated in Andhra Pradesh with songs, dance, drama, story telling and other entertainments, thus happily blending religion and culture in the festival celebration in which the whole community gets actively involved. On the ninth day, after the *Sīta-Rāma Kalyānam*, the whole Telugu community is involved in pulling the chariot of the newly wedded Rāma and Sīta.

In Mauritius as noted in the instance of *Mahā Sivarātri festival*, the Telugu community celebrates the *Rāma Navami* festival also in their homes by holding morning prayer and observing strict fasting by eating only vegetarian meals. The Telugu temples celebrate *Rāma Navami* festivals all over the island and the Telugus attend these prayers. The various *sabhas* render Rāma *bhajans* (unlike the Rāma *bhajans* discussed in 4.2.3) in which the members take part actively. One of the officials of Upper Dagotière Telugu *Sabha* (Interview : Sri Chinaya Cuniah 1993) informs that during the annual *Rāma Navami* festival all the Telugus from the island come together and render *Mahā Rāma Bhajana* for the entire night. Meal will be served to the community with the expenses met by the MAMS and the other branch *sabhas*.

In South Africa as documented by Prabhakaran (1992 b : 218-219), *Rāma Navami* festival is celebrated as a family or *sabha* function. Unlike the *Ugādi* celebrations (see 5.3.1 for all details), the *Rāma Navami* festival is not celebrated as an AMSSA function and is purely religious in nature. The Telugus in South Africa mostly join the Hindi-speaking and Gujarati-speaking communities to celebrate the *Rāma Navami* festival for the nine days. They also attend the nine day celebrations held in various temples, *āśramams* and societies where the *satsaṅghs* are conducted as discussed earlier (see 4.2.4). Special religious discourses on any

specific topic taken from the *Rāmāyaṇam* are held. Later *ārati* is rendered and lastly *prasādam* is distributed.

Although similar modes of worship and festival celebrations are reported from the Telugus of Malaysia, it is obvious that *Srī Rāma Navami* is not a major festival in Śaivite dominated Malaysia. As mentioned elsewhere, the Telugus visit Vaiṣṇava temples and render *bhajans* in Telugu.

The USA Telugus, as noted earlier (chapters 3 and 4) celebrate all the festivals magnificently in the temples in which the modes of worship are almost similar to that of India. Although it is cold during the months of March and April in most parts of the USA, some of the Telugu priests prepare *pānakam* and *vaḍapappu* to be distributed as *prasādam*. This is done merely to maintain the Andhra tradition but not an essential item as in Andhra Pradesh. Similarly, many temples, where the residing priests are Telugus, lavishly perform *Sīta-Rāma Kalyāṇam* for which all the Hindu devotees make generous financial contributions.

These specific Andhra religio-cultural activities are unknown to the present-day Telugus living in the three former colonies. The performance of *Sīta-Rāma Kalyāṇam*, an exclusive Andhra culture in India, has been eroded in these countries. However, in Mauritius, in certain Telugu temples priests, who came from the Tirumala-Tirupati *Dēvasthānam*, are introducing the *Sīta-Rāma Kalyāṇam* in which all the Telugus are participating.

4.3.3 Gōvinda Festival in Mauritius

As mentioned earlier all the Mauritian Telugus celebrate the *Gōvinda* festival during the month of *Āśwayuja* by observing a strict fast for forty days and holding *Rāma bhajans* at home. However, this *Gōvinda Pūja* is also celebrated as a festival at various Telugu *sabha* levels, in Telugu temples and by *Sri Venkaṭēswara Bhaktula Saṅgham* since 1985. In this sub-section an attempt is made to discuss briefly the festival activities of the Telugus during the month of *Āśwayuja* at the communal level.

During the beginning of the previous decade there was a stage when the Telugus in Mauritius realized that their Telugu identity and the existence of the whole community is at stake due to various conversions taking place to Christianity (Interview : Sri Satyakama Appiah 1993). Some important Telugus from the community felt that various aspects of village Hinduism such as "blood sacrificial rituals" and other unwanted superficial beliefs are very rife in the community. They also felt that there is no one in the Telugu community to guide them in the religio-cultural aspects of their life and to bring a religio-cultural awareness among the masses. With these sacred objectives, a group of Telugu devotees of Lord Veṅkaṭēswara, with the help of the spiritual *guruvu* Sri Satyakama Appiah of *Sri Paramēswari Ānanda Nilayam*, established *Sri Veṅkaṭēswara Bhaktula Saṅgham* in 1985 to disseminate the Hindu Andhra culture amongst the Telugus in Mauritius (Source : Brochure of *Sri Veṅkaṭēswara Bhaktula Saṅgham* 1992 : 4).

Since then the devotees of the *Veṅkaṭēswara Bhaktula saṅgham* plunged into the work of propagating the high thought of the Hindu sages among the masses all over the island. The devotees visit all the small plantations and villages and disperse the knowledge of religio-spiritual aspects of Hinduism. They explain the importance of religio-cultural activities such as fasting, observing *vratas*, conducting Sanskritic rites, *Havanas*, and *āgamic* prayers. Devotees render religious discourses and read texts and *slōkas* from *Vēdic* literature and explain the meanings in Telugu and Creole. The devotees stress the importance of non-violence, vegetarianism and discourage blood sacrifices in the Telugu rituals. They also propagate the need for uniform religio-cultural activities of the Telugus, for retention of their Telugu identity; and lastly appeal to the community to lead a "civilized spiritual life".

The *Veṅkaṭēswara Bhaktula Saṅgham* devotees progressed and within one decade of the *Saṅgham's* establishment gained recognition and support not only from the MAMS, branch *sabhas*, and the Telugu community at large, but also from the Mauritian Government. Although it is not an easy task, their success is accompanied by renewed contacts with the Andhra Pradesh government, the religio-cultural guidance gained from the officials of Tirumala-Tirupati *Dēvasthānam*. Above all as one official states, they also procured the grace of Lord *Srī* Veṅkaṭēswara (Interview : Sri Ellanah Lukshmudu 1993).

Due to the tireless work of their *guruvu* Sri Satyakama Appiah and the dedicated philanthropic services of the devotees, the *Sanigham* is able to introduce the *Gōvinda Vratam*, a festival of forty days of fasting in Mauritius. They gradually introduced the *Gōvinda* festival as a solemn occasion for all the Telugus to surrender to the Almighty Lord by observing a strict fast (Interview : Sri Satyakama Appiah 1993). As informed by various informants above 70% of the Mauritian Telugus are vegetarians during the whole year and most of the others remain vegetarians during the *Gōvinda pūja* for forty days.

On the first day of these forty days fasting, each Telugu awakes early in the morning. Having finished all the preliminaries necessary for the prayer such as washing the house, decorating the front yards with *muggulu*, and tying garlands of mango leaves to the doors, they perform *Kalaśa pratiṣṭa* for Lord Sri Venkateśwara in their homes. This symbolically initiates the forty days fasting. Eating only one meal a day, they conduct special prayers twice a day for *Gōvinda* chanting appropriate *mantras*. They sing *bhajans* in Telugu, offer oblations and *ārati* to the Lord.

During this period every Telugu temple in Mauritius, having hoisted the flag, holds special prayers for Lord Venkateswara which is attended by hundreds of Telugu devotees from all over the island. Every Saturday special prayers are performed in different venues viz. one week in *Sri Prasanna Venkateśwara Dēvasthānam* in Curepipe, one week in the Ichit Taban in Flaq and so on. Every day some of the temples conduct *nitya pūjas*, *pavalimpu sēvas* (a Sanskrit rite of making the Lord sleep) and the chariot-pulling. Thousands of devotees from all linguistic groups take part in these festival prayers for forty days.

On the last day of the prayer festival, the Mauritian Telugus perform *Kalaśa visarjana* (relinquishing) which symbolically ends the *Gōvinda* prayer festival celebration in Mauritius. Those who do not know the *kalaśa visarjana mantras* just chant "*Ōm Sri Venkateśwara swāminē namaḥ, visarjana mantram samarpayāmi*", sprinkle sacred yellow rice (called *akṣitalu* in Telugu) and water on the household members (Vide : research findings 1993). The sacred water from the *Kalaśam* is sprinkled in all the corners of the house and distributed to the other Hindus of different linguistic groups.

The *Gōvinda pūja* is becoming more popular amongst the Mauritian Telugus and is annually celebrated by the Telugus as a festival. This *pūja* became a synonym with Mauritian Andhra culture not only in Mauritius but also in the Hindu Telugu diaspora. The Mauritian Telugus gain their group identity through the celebration of this forty-day festival. The MAMS and the Veṅkaṭēswara *Bhaktula Saṅgham* annually launch a brochure to commemorate this festival. Various political leaders of the Mauritian government send their good wishes and greetings to the Andhras through these brochures (see 5.3 for more details).

4.4. DRAVIDIAN FESTIVALS AND RITUALS IN THE THREE FORMER COLONIES

As demonstrated in the previous sub-sections (4.2 and 4.3) and due to various other reasons mentioned elsewhere (see 3.6.2), most of the Telugus living in the three former colonies (with a little exception of Mauritius) are not completely exposed to Pan-Hinduism. They celebrate "blood sacrificial" rituals even at the societal level and in many cases they resist change. In this sub-section an attempt is made to depict the important Dravidian rituals that are commemorated by the Telugu community as a whole in the three former colonies. As observed in the previous chapter, these rituals are not followed by the American Telugus or any immigrant Telugus in the diaspora (which includes the previous homelands of South Africa).

4.4.1 Geṅgaiamman Annual Garagam Festival

This is a Tamil festival observed in South Africa both by Tamils and Telugus as a communal annual festival since 1909. The Tamil term 'Geṅgai' is taken from the Sanskrit term 'Gaṅga' which means 'water'; 'Amman' means mother and 'Garagam' means a 'decorated pot with water carried in procession'. The village deity propitiated in this communal festival is 'Geṅgaiamman' (called *Gaṅgānamma* in Telugu). The water goddess *Gaṅgānamma* is associated with *Pōturāju*, a male village deity (and brother of the Seven Sisters) in the Telugu villages in Andhra Pradesh, India (Andhra Prabha *Vāra Patrika* 9 September 1994 : 25). In Tamil culture 'Pōtirāja' (as they call him) is associated with *Draupadi-Amman* (Pandian 1983 : 207-208). Thus, in the South African context during this festival the Tamils and the

Telugus do not propitiate *Pōturāju* (see *Ammōru Pandaga*). The *Geṅgiamman* annual *garagam* festival is held at the *Geṅgiamman* Temple and the Cato Manor Hindu Temple, in Cato Manor, Durban. The festival held in the *Geṅgiamman* temple is one of the major Dravidian festivals held in the greater Durban area.

The description of this festival reflected in this sub-section is based on the researcher's participation in the eighty-fifth annual *Garagam* festival held in the *Sri Geṅgiamman* temple, Cato Manor on 15 th May 1994 and the annual festival held at the Cato Manor Hindu Temple. The researcher, while describing the manner in which the festival is celebrated, attempts to illustrate the change from non-vegetarian to vegetarian forms of worship and how it strengthens the South Indian identity in South Africa.

The *Geṅgiamman* Temple is situated in Cato Manor, an area which was declared a 'white area' in the 1960's during the apartheid era. The origins of this temple dates back to the indentured period and it was built by one of the indentured Tamil labourers in the 1860's for *Geṅgiamman* on an ant-hill in front of the river *Umkumban* which meets the river Umbilo near the sea (Interview : *Sri T K Moodley* 1994). Due to the declaration of the whole Cato Manor area as a white area and the municipal road that was built dividing the temple, the South Indian devotees could not expand this temple, however, it did not prevent them from propitiating the *Amman* in this temple. In 1990 the temple area was declared a monument by the Durban Corporation.

In this type of academic study it is not possible either to discuss the history of the temple which dates back more than one hundred years or to trace the origins of this festival. However, as mentioned earlier (see 3.6.2), the freed indentured labourers initiated the communal festivals to fulfil the vows taken in the name of *Amma*.

The temple consists of a huge ant-hill which is growing annually and another smaller ant-hill which is only forty-seven years old (Interview : *Smt Yogi Govender* 1994). The temple has images of *Lord Ganēṣa*, *Muruga*, *Nāgarāja* (cobra king), *Trivēṇi Gaṅgānamma*, *Tiruvērkāḍu Māriāṭta* and *Draupadi Amman* (a Tamil village goddess, taken from the epic of *Mahābhāratam*). Although regular devotees come and offer their prayers to this *Amma*, it is

only during the month of *Vaiśākha* (April-May) and when the annual *Garagam* festival is held that large numbers of devotees come into this small temple. This *Garagam* festival has been celebrated annually for the past 85 years and is becoming one of the most important festival of the South Indian community in Natal.

This festival is celebrated in honour of *Garigānamma*, who is responsible for the health and well-being of the members of a household and of the village. Formerly, the ritual used to be a non-vegetarian one, and blood sacrifice was made (Interview : *Sri D V Naicker* 1994). At present both the temple management and the *pūjaris* (priests) stress the importance of performing this ritual as a strict vegetarian one (Source : The *Genigai Amman* temple pamphlet 1994) and the practice of animal sacrifice has been phased out in this temple festival.

This festival is celebrated annually over the period of ten days between the *Ēkādaśi* (the eleventh day of each lunar fortnight) of *Caitra Māsam* (April-May) to *Pañcami* (the fifth day of each lunar fortnight) of *Vaiśākha Māsam* (May-June). The festival expenses are shared by the contributions and donations from the community and by the temple management. On the last day all the devotees are served a vegetarian meal. The temple announces the festival in advance so that the devotees can reserve the *garagams* and *Obayam* (grant) prayers.

The festival celebrations are initiated by hoisting the *Amman Kodi* (flag) on a Friday, ten days before the actual *garagam* carrying, in front of the *Genigai Amman* temple (in this instance on the opposite side of the road as the temple itself is situated on the edge of the Bellaire road) where the temple officials, some important members of the local community and devotees will be present. The priest hoists the flag in the manner of a ritual. The resident priest of the Cato Manor Hindu Temple (Interview : *Pandit Sambasiva Thanikasala Gurukkal* 1994) told the researcher that in his temple the flag will be hoisted for only three days before the festival. In the Cato Manor Temple, the flag hoisting is followed by the *Kalaśa Pūja* and *Hōmam* with *Gāyatri Mantram*. *Pūrṇāhuti* is made to *Amma* after *sahasranāma arcana* (ritualistic adoration and worship while chanting one thousand names of the god or goddess) of *Amma*.

The hoisting of the flag symbolically means that the festival is formally initiated (Interview : *Pandit Sambasiva Gurukkal* 1994). In Tamilnadu, India, it is a Tamil and Telugu village custom to inform all the community members in the village about the forthcoming festival by beating drums (although every one is aware of it). In Tamil (not Telugu) culture they also advertise the flag hoisting on the next day. In accordance with the Tamil village custom, the drummer also informs the community that once the flag has been hoisted for the festival, no community member should leave the village, which includes the visitors coming to the village, until the festival ends with lowering the flag on the last day. Due to the western living conditions and to the modern social conditions of the South African Hindu South Indian culture this Tamil custom cannot be practised in the South African situation and is not known to the present generation.

After the flag hoisting, for eight days, the *āgamic* temple holds *Obayam Pūja* in the evenings and fifteen to twenty families of devotees, with prior bookings, will come and propitiate *Amman* jointly each day. During this festival, for ten days, the devotees, who have taken vows for *Amma*, observe fast viz. abstain from meat-eating, smoking and drinking alcohol.

On the tenth day, the actual *garagam* carrying festival was held in the *Geṅgiamman* temple. In the morning the *garagam* festival commenced at 9 h 00 and by the afternoon thousands of devotees arrived to attend the festival. Those who have taken a vow, male or female (including children) arrive attired in white *dhōti* and yellow *śāri* (*śāree*) respectively, with their clay or brass pots, flowers, turmeric powder, *kuṅkumam*, coconuts and neem leaves to decorate the *garagam*. All the *garagams* (at this particular festival the researcher noticed 55-60 *garagams*), including the main *Amman garagam*, were placed in a row on neem leaves, called *garaga pīṭam* (platform). The *garaga pīṭam* was decorated with *muggulu* (religious patterns), neem leaves, banana plants, marigold or any yellow flowers. Previously, for the past eighty-four years, the *garagams* were set on white rice poured on fresh banana leaves. This year for the first time, informed one of the trustees of the temple (Interview : *Sri D V Naicker* 1994), the setting of the *garagams* on the banana leaves and white rice has been substituted with neem leaves. The temple *Sthānigars* (important officials) and other trustees informed the researcher that this change from the old custom of using white rice and banana leaves with neem leaves is due to the shortage of banana leaves. They also felt that it is a

waste to use white rice which is expensive.

Once the pots are filled with water and placed in a row by the devotees who have taken vows for *Amma*, one main *garagam* and the devotees' *garagams* were decorated beautifully with coconuts, neem leaves, marigold flowers, turmeric powder and *kunkumam* dots in a cone shape by the experts. The priests are not involved in decorating the *garagams*. The people who beat the drums are experts in decorating these *garagams* and are involved in the decoration ritual.

During this ritual of decorating all the *garagams*, which was very time consuming, the devotees who arrived with trays full of fruits, milk, betel leaves, flowers, areca nuts, in some cases a yellow *saree* or a piece of cloth and sweetmeats, entered the small temple in a queue and offered their ritualistic prayers to the *Amma* with the help of the non-*Brahman* *pūjāri* of the temple. The *pūjāri* took their offerings and performed *pūja* and *ārati* to *Amma*.

Inside the temple the *Geṅgaiaṁman* was decorated with a red *saree*, turmeric powder, *kunkumam*, garlands of marigold flowers, *gandham* (sandal wood), neem leaves and 'Vaḍai *Mālai*' (garland made with a kind of round savory cake made with black gram called *Phaseolus Mungo*). The devotees also offered prayers to the ant-hill and to *Nāgarāja* (cobra king) along with *Geṅgaiaṁman*. When questioned, one of the devotees waiting to propitiate *Amma* in the queue, said that he took a vow to carry *garagam* because his problems were solved by *Amma*. He explained further that when he lost his job in a good company he took a vow to participate in the annual *garagam* festival for three years, and to carry a *garagam* himself if he gets his job again. However, he did not get the same job, he continued, but within a few days of taking a vow for *Amma*, he obtained a better job in one of the major companies in Durban. The devotee stated that *Amma* is very kind to him and his family and he came to this festival to fulfil his vow. He also felt that it is his duty to give thanks to *Amma* for her generous gift to his family.

Once all the devotees completed their initial prayers, the priest tied a lemon in a yellow cloth, knotted in a ritualistic manner. He then tied the lemon to the clothes of a small boy carrying the temple sword. It is a traditional Tamil and Telugu custom for two men to carry two

swords to ward off any evil spirit approaching the procession. The men walk in front of the procession, chanting loudly to raise the spirits of the devotees. While the sword-carrying boy walked in the front of the procession, the non-*Brahman* priest, the drummers, the *garagam* bearers and the other devotees joined the procession. The *Amma*'s main *garagam* was carried by the female temple priest, whose grandfather was the founder of the temple.

When the procession entered the road, where the traffic was controlled by the city police, the temple priest made a sacrifice of a pumpkin instead of a rooster. Two more pumpkins were sacrificed, the first when they entered the flag post shrine on the opposite side of the road, and the second as they entered the temple area. As they entered the temple, the rhythm of the drum beatings increased and some devotees entered a trance. The devotees in trance made self-mortification by piercing their tongues with small forked spikes, representing Lord Śiva's *Triśūlam* (forked weapon). After walking three times around the temple, the procession returned to the place where they first began i.e to the *garagam* platform.

Thereafter followed another important ritual of the festival viz. throwing sacrifice into water. Previously (five or six decades earlier), some of the devotees and the trustees of the temple stated that the devotees used to sacrifice goats and roosters and throw the heads of the roosters into the *Umkumban* river. As the Durban Corporation objects to such sacrificial rituals, the devotees substituted the roosters with lemons.

A more recent variation in this ritual is that of throwing the cut lemons into a bucket of water instead of throwing it into the *Umkumban* river. The trustees, priests and *Sthānigars* informed the researcher that this variation is due to the fencing of the *Umkumban* River by the Durban Corporation blocking access to the river for the devotees. The devotees feel that since ritualistic prayer being made for *Gaiḡānamma*, it is not complete unless the sacrifice is given to Her. Thus, as they cut the lemons, they throw the lemons into buckets of water filled from a tap and consider it to be a river.

Another important variation observed in this South African festival is that of the male participation in carrying the *garagam*. In Dravidian culture in India and in the other two former colonies under study, only girls and women carry *garagams* for *Amma*. However,

recently in the South African context, men, who have taken vows for *Amma*, are also carrying *garagams* during this annual festival (Interview : *Pandit Sambasiva Gurukkal* 1994). After the completion of the ritualistic prayer, all the devotees were served meals by the temple. Large pots of vegetarian food was cooked from the contributions and donations given by the devotees, wealthy people and money from Temple funds. The festival came to an end in the evening when the priest lowered the flag from the platform.

The *Geṅgaimman* festival is becoming a very popular festival amongst the Tamils and many Telugus also take part in this ritual. Annually it attracts thousands of devotees from far and wide. This festival, although performed in the other temples of Natal, is popular only in the Cato Manor *Geṅgaimman* temple. Although it attracts hundreds of onlookers, it is mostly considered a South Indian festival by the North-Indian groups, and a Tamil festival by many Andhras who do not participate in this ritual. A few members from the North-Indian community took part in this festival. However, in 1994 the researcher noticed some devotees from other racial groups who were also observing the ritual from beginning to end with keen interest.

To conclude, although this festival forms part of the Dravidian (non-Sanskritic) rituals, it is completely vegetarian when held at the non-*āgamic* *Geṅgaimman* temple, where blood sacrifice is discouraged. In the other non-Sanskritic prayers (see 3.6.2 and 4.4) blood sacrifice is made. Thus, this prayer demonstrates the change from non-vegetarian ritualistic prayer to a vegetarian form.

This annual festival is held in South Africa only. Although the Mauritius and Malaysian Telugus annually conduct *Amma* prayers and festivals, they are discussed under separate headings in this sub-section due to the difference in the modes of their worship. In the USA, as mentioned earlier, these prayers are not performed by the immigrant Telugus.

4.4.2 Nūkāamma Pandaga in Malaysia

The Telugu term '*Nūka*' means 'grit' or 'pollard' and is associated with paddy and grain. The Telugu goddess who is responsible for the bounteous crops during harvesting is

‘*Nūkālamma*’ (Mother of Grains). The Telugus living in villages who depend on agricultural products believe that if *Nūkālamma*, one of the Seven Sisters (see 3.6.2.5), is soothed annually, she will bless them with an abundance of food grains and other crops; and will curse them if she is angry with them. She is held responsible for plant diseases, cattle epidemics and many other epidemics. Along with her other six sisters, the (Malaysian) Telugus postulate that she is the cause of dreadful disease on the plantations. Thus, many Telugus who are dependent on agriculture in small villages, celebrate the *Nūkālamma Pandaga* (festival) annually.

The Malaysian Telugus, many of them still living on plantations, celebrate the *Nūkālamma Pandaga* annually as a communal festival. It is one of the major festivals (next to *Dīpāwali* and *Sanīkrānti* festivals) celebrated on the plantations. Annually 20-25 Telugu families are involved in this collective festival and celebrate this festival in a non-vegetarian form. Although the government of Malaysia is trying to stop the blood sacrifices, this festival still involves blood sacrifice.

The documented description in this sub-section of the manner in which the festival is celebrated, is based on the oral information given by many women living in Sedgedly Plantations and Ladang ‘Prang’ Besar Rubber Estates near Kaula Lumpur, in Selangore. It is pertinent to add that there is no separate documentation available on this festival or modes of worship of *Nūkālamma* in Malaysia.

Available information indicates that the *Nūkālamma Pandaga* is held at the same time as *Genīaiamman* festival, in the month of *Vaiśākha* and also involves *garagam* carrying. This festival is held in various plantations where the planters have a temple for *Nūkālamma*. Those who do not have a *Nūkālamma* temple in their plantation, perform animal sacrifice in their own homes. Some Telugus go to *Muniyāṇḍi* (a Tamil village deity associated with *Nūkālamma*) temple in Kaula Lumpur and extend their prayers there (Interview : *Smt Suryakanthamma* 1993).

Those who have taken a vow for *Amma* observe a three day fast which not only involves abstaining from meat-eating but also a dry fast where they have only one meal per day. On

the plantations three days before the festival the devotees (only women) who have taken a vow for *Nūkālamma* proceed from one house to the other seeking '*bikṣa*' (a Telugu word which means asking for alms), holding the end of their *sāree* so that the alms of rice, money and vegetables can be dropped into the *sāree*. This ritual of asking for alms is called '*Maḍi Biccai*' (a Tamil term which means taking alms on the body) in Malaysian Telugu. All the households on the plantations contribute generously for such *maḍi biccai* and the rice thus collected will be utilized for cooking *ambali* or *gañji* (rice-gruel) and is distributed as *prasādam* to all the devotees during the festival. A *gavara* caste priest is involved in this prayer, which attracts people from all castes and other linguistic groups living on that particular plantation.

One week before the festival the priest and the community choose an unmarried, virgin girl of 17-18 years to carry the *Amma garagam*. She will be made to observe a strict fast and will be served one meal a day in the *Nūkālamma* temple. On the first day of the three day festival, the "*garagam* girl" and the other women who have taken vows, attire themselves in yellow cotton *sārees*, wash *Amma* with turmeric water and decorate her with garlands made of neem leaves, marigold flowers and *kuṅkumam* dots. They bring the *Amma mūrti* from the hill (where the *Nūkālamma* temple is situated) and install her in the outskirts of the plantations. This symbolically represents that *Amma* is brought to her mother's place to celebrate the festival.

On the second day, the temple priest and the devotees who have taken vows for *Amma* wash the temple, their houses, front and backyards and decorate them with *muggulu*; tie neem and mango leaf *tōraṇam* (garlands) to their front doors. The whole plantation community gathers in front of the deity of *Amma* in a festival mood and a festival atmosphere prevails everywhere. The womenfolk cook the *ambali* and after offering it to *Amma*, it is served to all the devotees who are present. The devotees bring various items for *pūja* (see 4.2.1) and offer their prayers to *Nūkālamma*.

The *garagam* carrying festival will be held on the third day. In a ceremonious procedure the priest cuts a mango tree or a neem tree and halves the trunk into two. The priest ritualistically washes the two halves of the trunk with turmeric water and decorates them

beautifully as *Jōdi Nūkālamma* (two *Ammas*) with *kuṅkumam* dots and *gandham* (Interview : Smt Suryakanthamma and other women 1993). The decoration of the main *garagam* and the devotees' *garagams* will be done by the men (see above for *garagam* decoration details). The devotees who have made vows to give blood oblations to *Amma*, slaughter goats and roosters and offer the blood to *Amma*.

The *garagam* procession starts from the place where they installed *Amma* two days ago, moving slowly towards the *Amma* temple. Like the South African *Gerigaiamman* festival, the traditional drums accompany the procession. While the priest leads, the virgin girl holding the *Nūkālamma garagam* walks slowly while swaying her body in rhythm to the musical drum beats. As she walks, she slowly enters a trance. The Malaysian plantation Telugus believe that if the prayer is not a satisfactory ritual to *Amma* she informs them through the virgin girl when she is in trance. When she enters the trance, the devotees fear that *Amma* might show her wrath through her. In order to prevent *Amma*'s anger and cool her down, the Malaysian Telugus pour turmeric water on the girl throughout the procession. The devotees sing *bhakti* songs in Telugu praising *Amma* and dance while walking in the procession.

The procession circles once around the plantation giving all the devotees a chance to propitiate *Amma*, before they take *Amma* back to the temple from where she was brought initially. This ritual of bringing *Amma* back to the temple symbolises that *Amma* was sent back to her mother-in-law's place.

In the Malaysian plantations this *Nūkālamma* festival and *Mārieamma* festival (in which no blood sacrifice is offered) are being performed since the time of their arrival in Malaysia. However, some urbanized Telugus informed that these festivals are not as popular as they used to be. The urban dwellers and the Telugus who live outside the plantations indicated that they go to the *Nūkālamma*'s or *Mārieamma*'s *āgamic* temples and perform *arcana*s (worship) to *Amma* (Interview : Smt & Sri B Nookiah 1993). Such people do not take any active role in the sacrificial rituals even if they happen to be on the plantation during the festival.

As mentioned in the previous chapter (see 3.6.2) although the Malaysian government enacted various laws prohibiting blood sacrifices in these rituals, such rituals still continue on the plantations. However, as Arasaratnam (1970 : 171) observes, such sacrifices are slowly fading in Malaysia.

4.4.3 Mārieamman Prayers in South Africa

In South Africa '*Mārieamma*' is more idolized than the other Seven Sisters and is considered more powerful than the others. She is associated with all the dreadful diseases and illness of a particular family and also to the whole community living in one village. In South Africa both the Tamils and Telugus worship this village deity and please *Amma* annually by worshipping her with or without blood sacrifice.

In South Africa, *Mahā Mārieamman* annual festivals are conducted twice a year viz. in the month of *Phālguna* (March-April) and *Śrāvaṇa* (August-September) in various temples in Natal. For example, the annual festival held in the *Mārieamman* temple, Isipingo, in the month of *Phālguna*, the *Mahā Śakti* prayers held in the *Ammen Ālayam* in Woodhurst, the *Durgādēvi-Sathie* prayers held in the Cato Manor Hindu Temple and the *Mahā Mārieamman* festival held in the *Stree Vaithianātha Ēsvarar Ālayam* in Umgeni and others in the month of *Śrāvaṇa* are important festivals held in Durban. While the prayer festivals held in the month of *Śrāvaṇa* in these above mentioned temples are *āgamic* in nature, the annual festival held in the month of *Phālguna*, in the *Mārieamman* temple in Isipingo, is non-Sanskritic in nature and involves blood sacrifice (see also 4.4.4 for more details).

The prayers held for ten days in the *āgamic* temples involve a flag hoisting, *kalaśa pūja*, *Śakti Hōmam*, daily *Amma Abhiṣēkam* (holy bathing) at 6 h 00 and *Dīpārādhana* (a Hindu rite of lighting a lamp for God) in the evening, 18 h 00.

The Sri Lankan *Brāhmaṇ* priests, having dressed in traditional Hindu silk dresses, perform these prayers chanting appropriate *mantras* praising *Amma* and conduct *arcanas*. The devotees attend the *abhiṣēkam* and *ārādhana*s in large numbers. The devotees also take part in daily *Obayam* prayers (see 4.4.1) held for nine days and is conducted by the priests in the

temples.

The main festival commences at 8 h 30 on the tenth day and involves carrying *garagam* and *Agni Kundam* (a burning pot of clay which is carried with neem leaves on the palms of the devotees as an act of self-mortification) by the devotees who have taken vows for *Amma*. After the procession the *Mahā Kumbhābhiṣēkam* is performed by the priests in which six devotees (*Sthānigars*) dressed traditionally in a *dhōti* without a shirt, help the priest in carrying the sacred water for the *abhiṣēkam* and in performing the *abhiṣēkam* itself. The remaining devotees observe the *abhiṣēkam* with *bhakti* (devotion) and *śraddha* (concentration). This *Mahā Kumbhābhiṣēkam* will be witnessed by hundreds of devotees. Lastly, the '*Kaṇḍi Vārthal*' (cooking and serving of the rice gruel) is performed, and all the devotees are served a vegetarian meal, cooked on the temple premises by female devotees. The expenses of the meal for the community is contributed by wealthy devotees, temple trustees and other sponsors from the community. After all the devotees have taken their meal, the priest lowers the flag which symbolically ends the *Mārieamman* prayer in the *āgamic* temple.

The *Amma* prayer, conducted annually in the *āgamic* temples, attracts hundreds of devotees from both the Tamil and Telugu linguistic groups. Many devotees carry *garagam* and *agni kundam* in order to fulfil their vows. Although this festival is conducted by Tamil priests and regarded as a Dravidian annual festival, many north Indians also take part in this festival. However, few north Indians from Hindi-speaking background take an active part in carrying the *garagams* and *agni kundam* because they identify such a ritual with Dravidian culture.

While this annual ritual held in this *Āgamic* temple contributes to the Sanskritic worship of the Mother Goddess in South Africa, the annual festivals held in the *Mārieamman* Temple in Isipingo and Puntans Hill (see 4.4.4) display maintenance of Telugu village traditions in South Africa.

The *Mārieamman* Temple in Isipingo is a major non-*āgamic* temple in South Africa. Although devotees come to worship *Amma* throughout the year, it is only at the time of this annual festival (held between 25 March–4 April in 1994) in the month of *Phālguna* that it

attracts thousands of Hindu devotees from all the linguistic groups. This annual prayer is also called the Good Friday Prayer by many Telugus in South Africa because the main festival is always held during the Good Friday holidays, a week of public holiday in Christian majority South Africa.

The temple is situated in a densely populated "Indian" area adjacent to a very large "African" settlement called Umlazi and is close to the sea. The temple is built next to a small river and is painted brightly blue, red, yellow, green and white. Outside the temple there is a *Geṅgiamman* prayer place, deities of Lord Vināyaka, *Pōturāju*, *Muniāṇḍi* and *Madurai Vīran*. The inside of the temple contains the deities of *Mārieamman* and Lord Vināyaka where the non-*Brāhmaṇ* priest lights camphor and turns it around the beautifully decorated *Amma*. There are two ant-hills behind the temple decorated with neem leaves, marigold flowers, turmeric powder and *kunikumam*.

The modes of worship appears to be the same throughout the year except in the month of *Phālguna* when some of the devotees make blood sacrifice to *Amma*. The devotees bring fruits, marigold flowers, lemons, raw eggs and incense sticks called *Agarabatti* to worship *Amma*. As they enter the temple premises, the devotees firstly wash their feet and go to the *Geṅgiamman* statue which is installed in a pond of water. *Amma*, who stands on the left hand side of the main temple, is firstly revered by the devotees with fruits, incense sticks and by lighting camphor. After the prayer, as witnessed by the researcher, the devotees throw coins (either cents or rands) into a small pot, which is filled with water and held in the hands of *Geṅgiamman*, for good luck. This pot is regarded as a wishing pot and the act of throwing money into *Amma*'s hand is considered an important ritual by the devotees (Source : the attendant at the *Geṅgiamman* statue, Isipingo Temple 1994).

Thereafter the devotees walk 10-15 steps up-hill and around the main temple three times, lighting camphor in a small *agni gundam* (fire pit) in the four corners as they walk. During their third round, they place some raw eggs and flowers on to the ant-hill (the area is always kept under lock) as well as some cartons of milk for snakes (if any are present) to drink. Many Telugus, being traditionally animists (Prabhakaran 1992 b : 29) believe that if offerings are done to please *Nāgarāja*, the snakes will not harm them. The age-old Andhra custom of

animism is still being maintained in the South African context (Prabhakaran 1992 b : 236-237). Many present-day South African Telugus (Tamils as well) believe that performing this prayer for the cobra king annually will provide protection from cobras or other snakes. After the prayer, the devotees enter the inner parts of the temple where the priest lights camphor and gives *kurikumam* as *prasādam* to the devotees.

During the annual festival at the temple, the devotees who made vows of blood sacrifice to *Amma* slaughter roosters either at home (before going to the temple) or in the backyard of the temple. Wealthy devotees who can afford to do so feed the needy from all racial groups. Hundreds of people eat the lunch served during the festival by the devotees. It appears that the temple authorities do not contribute funds towards this festival meal.

Another aspect of this annual prayer is the presenting of miniature silver objects shaped as parts of the body eg. eye, leg, hand etc. to *Amma*, by devotees who have taken vows during sickness. For example, if a person was suffering with an eye problem and gets cured after taking a vow to *Amma*, then he will take a miniature silver eye to the temple during this annual festival as an offering to *Amma*.

Recently, some variations in the rituals of this annual festival have taken place eg. the slaughtering of roosters for *Amma*. Many devotees who do not want to slaughter the roosters themselves, throw the live roosters onto the temple, after turing them three times around the temple. One interviewee (Interview : *Smt* Kamala Naidoo 1994) informed the researcher that whoever grabs the rooster can take it home, to cook and eat. There are some controversies arising from this throwing of live roosters: some informants claimed that the temple authorities are re-selling such roosters to other devotees.

To conclude, this annual festival is popular amongst the Hindu Indians and mostly attended by Tamil, Telugu and Hindi-speaking communities. When queried about the details of this annual festival and the modes of worship in the temple, the *Sthānigars* and the non-*Brāhmaṇ* priest displayed a negative attitude towards the researcher and were very suspicious about her motives in asking for information. They were very un-cooperative towards her task. They even refused to mention their names. The attitude of the temple officials surprised the

researcher as much as the big notice boards hung outside the temple, stating "no enquiries, no trespassing and no photography". She presumes it could be due to the various controversial articles which recently appeared in the Natal newspapers about the blood sacrifice ritual at the temple.

It is not feasible to discuss and debate questionable aspects of such a ritual. However, the researcher feels that the attitude of the temple authorities is very discouraging.

4.4.4 *Ammōru Pandaga*

The last but not least of the *Amma*'s rituals celebrated both in Mauritius and South Africa is the '*Ammōru Pandaga*'. '*Ammōru*' is a Telugu term from the Telugu word '*Ammavāru*', which means Mother. In Mauritius the *Ammōru Pandaga* is a ritual which involves mollifying the Seven Sisters on the whole island of Mauritius. In Puntans Hill District, South Africa it is to appease *Maridamma* (another name for *Mārieamma*) (see 3.6.2.2 for details). This Telugu annual festival, which is performed at a communal level both in Mauritius and in South Africa, involves all the Telugus living in a particular district.

This festival places more emphasis on the collective form of an exclusive Telugu ritual, since the whole Telugu society of that district is actively involved, rather than an occasion being patronized by any temple organization or any one particular wealthy individual. Another common feature of this *Ammōru Pandaga* as held in these two countries is that of the involvement of the Telugus without status-differences arising.

The contrasting difference in performance of this *Ammōru Pandaga* in these two countries observed recently, is the change in forms of festival celebration. While Mauritius is gradually changing the form of its annual celebration from non-vegetarian to vegetarian, the Puntans Hill District's festival (*Inti Ammōru Pandaga*), celebrated as a vegetarian festival for the last two decades, is changing and is presently being celebrated as a "blood sacrificial ritual" (see the following paragraphs for all details).

The *Ammōru Paṇḍaga* is the second major Telugu ritual in Mauritius and as Nirsimloo-Anenden (1990 : 118-120) informs, not only illustrates the change from non-vegetarian to vegetarian forms of worship but also demonstrates collectivization of the Telugu community which strengthens their Telugu identity in Mauritius. One or two decades ago the Mauritian Telugus made blood sacrifices to *Ammōru* by slaughtering goats, if the offerings were made at temples, and roosters, if at home. However, many Telugu priests, local Andhra *Sabha* members and the devotees of *Sri Venkātēswara Bhaktula Saṅgham* (Interviews conducted in 1992 and 1993), informed the researcher that there is a recent change in their performance of this annual festival; they now insist on vegetarian prayers to appease *Amma*.

However, in the South African context, as informed by some *Amma* devotees, the Telugus are reverting to the *Ammōru Paṇḍaga* as a "blood sacrificial" ritual due to various socio-political reasons. They fear that the numerous deaths in Natal occurring as a result of political unrest, violence and tensions in the country may be a sign of *Amma's* wrath. Thus they began slaughtering roosters for *Amma* over the past three years (Interview : *Smt Bapanamma Naidoo* 1994).

In this sub-section a brief description is given to demonstrate how this annual festival is celebrated in these countries which clearly demonstrates the change of modes of worship in South Africa and Mauritius.

As stated earlier, in most places in Mauritius this annual festival is performed by placing strict emphasis on a vegetarian form of worship, involving the Telugu *Brāhmaṇ* priests (in some instances non-*Brāhmaṇ* priests) and *Swāmiji's* (spiritual head of religious institutes or temples) from *āgamic* temples in Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh. The description of the annual *Ammōru Paṇḍaga* held at the Alma Dagotièrre *Ammavāri* temple in Verudan, Mauritius demonstrates the change in modes of worship in Mauritius. The description of the modes of worship given hereunder is based on the annual festival held when the Tirupati *Garāmmavāri* temple donated a new and beautiful *Amma* deity to be installed and worshipped in a Sanskritic manner. On an auspicious day, viz. on the *Uttārāyaṇa Puṇya Kālam*, *Caitramāsam*, *Kṛṣṇa Pakṣam*, *Pañcami tidhi*, *Jēṣṭhānakṣtram* (11.4.1993) Sunday morning, the *Swāmiji* from the above mentioned temple in Tirupati performed the *Ammavāri*

(*Gaṅgānamma*) *mūrti pratiṣṭa* at the Alma Dagotière temple (Source : the Temple festival celebrations brochure 1993). On this auspicious day the temple celebrated the annual *Ammōru Pandaga* celebrations.

On four successive Tuesdays before the ritual is held, the Telugus from the area go from house to house in the village and in the neighbouring villages bearing copper pots (called *garagams* or *ghatālu*) on their heads, asking for donations of rice, ghee or money. Ten days before the actual festival, they beat drums to announce the annual festival celebrations (although everyone already knows about the coming festival this drum beating is performed for the sake of following the Telugu tradition) and ask for alms of rice and groceries for the mass feeding on the festival day.

On the day of the festival all the Telugus living in that district awake early in the morning and take *maṅḡala snānam* (holy bath) and wear new clothes. The womenfolk wash and decorate their homes with garlands of neem leaves and mango leaves and decorate their yards with *muggulu* (see other festivals in this sub-section) (Interview : *Smt Uma Cuniah* 1993).

The *pūjāri* and some young male devotees go to the entrance on the east side of the village and collect "sacred mud" from the out-skirts of the village to prepare the sacred Mud Goddess. Thereafter the priest does the *Dwajārōhana* (flag hoisting - a custom the Mauritian Telugus learnt from the Hindi/Bhojpuri and Tamil speaking communities), and *Kalaśa Sthāpanam* early in the morning by chanting and singing songs about *Amma*. He then prepares the Mud Goddess and performs Her *pratiṣṭa*. The villagers at this stage go to the temple with specially cooked sweet *ponḡali* (*ponḡal*) to offer as oblations.

The previously formulated and beautifully decorated '*Prabhattu*' (also called *pèva* in Mauritius), a bamboo structure built with neem and mango leaves, ferns and flowers, will be carried by any volunteer young man. The women who have taken vows for *Amma* carry their decorated *garagams* and follow the person carrying the *pèva*. The *Ammavāri* procession moves from the temple to the village, following a pre-determined path. While the drums are beaten rhythmically, the procession walks slowly and the young man who is carrying the *pèva* gradually enters a trance. All the Telugus from the village and other Telugus who attend the

annual festival, follow the procession singing in Telugu. The villagers perform *ārati* for the Mud Goddess in front of all the Telugu (and other linguistic groups') homes. During the procession instead of killing roosters, the *pūjāri* cuts seven lemons for the Seven Sisters.

Once the procession returns to the temple, the temple *pūjāri* conducts *Abhiṣēkam*, *arcana* and ritualistic *pūja* to *Amma*. At the temple instead of killing goats for *Amma*, the *pūjāri* once again cuts lemons for the Goddess. Lastly, the Mud Goddess is taken to the sea or to a river where she will be immersed into water.

The description given by Nirsimloo-Anenden (1990 : 173) of a large-scale *Ammōru Paṇḍaga*, held in Rivière du Rempart in 1981, differs from the description given by the Dagotièrre temple brochure in 1993 and they clearly indicate that the modes of worship and the ritual performance have changed greatly. In the 1981 festival there was no mention of collecting mud by the priest to formulate the Mud Goddess, *dwajārōhaṇa*, *Kalaśa Sthāpana* and *Kalaśa Pūja* in Nirsimloo-Anenden's description. These later changes and additions clearly demonstrate that this annual *Ammōru Paṇḍaga* is changing in its form of worship from a non-Sanskritic to Sanskritic ritual. Within a short span of 12 years, the festival has changed its form and the researcher attributes this change to certain religio-cultural factors. The researcher is of the view that because of the influence of the *Swāmi*, and the priests who came to reside and work in the *Prasanna Veṅkaṭēswara* Temple and due to the emphasis placed on strict Sanskritic modes of worship by the members of MAMS and *Sri Veṅkaṭēswara Bhaktula Saṅgham* the form of the annual festival is changing in Mauritius. The tireless efforts of the spiritual *guruvu Sri Satyakama Appiah* of *Sri Paramēswari Ananda Nilayam*, the local *pūjāris* and the immigrant Telugus from the urban areas are also exerting an influence on the positive changes that are taking place in the celebration of *Ammōru Paṇḍaga*.

Conversely, the annual *Inṭi Ammōru Paṇḍaga* which is celebrated by the Puntans Hill Telugus clearly demonstrates that the Puntans Hill Telugus are reverting to their previous religio-cultural habit of performing blood sacrifice to *Amma*.

The annual *Ammōru Paṇḍaga* (in which the researcher participated twice) is held in a cycle of seven days and also involves the other Telugus from neighbouring districts. Puntans Hill

was one of the major Telugu settlements during the early decades of the present century and was mostly dominated by the *Gavara* caste Telugus (cf. Prabhakaran 1992 b). Since their early settlements in Puntans Hill, the *Gavaras* performed the annual district prayers to *Maridamma*, involving the whole community for contributions towards the prayer expenses which include the meals provided during the festival.

As in the case of other *Amma* festivals, the Puntans Hill festival also involves carrying the *garagam* (however only two temple *garagams* are always carried in this festival rather than individual *garagams*), asking for alms, some one entering a trance, drum-beatings and prayers involving a non-*Brāhman* priest. The most prominent feature of this district prayer is the involvement of the whole Telugu community for the entire duration of the festival. Another interesting social aspect is the involvement of the Telugus who left the district and are presently residing in far off areas. Thus, this festival strengthens the collectivization of the Telugus and the Puntans Hill Telugus maintain their group identity through this specific religio-cultural activity.

A young Telugu woman, born and raised in Puntans Hill and who now resides in Reservoir Hills, states that the present-day younger generation Telugus of Puntans Hill is proposing blood sacrifice to be made to *Amma* because they feel that their *Amma* festival will be more grandiose if they do so (Interview : *Smt Jaylali Naidoo* 1994). She adds that this is due to the many recent deaths occurring in their districts as well as in Natal due to various socio-political reasons. She further states that she does not know the future of this festival in this district although the younger generation of the Puntans Hill area and other neighbouring districts are very keen in participating in this annual ritual.

A prominent elderly person of the Puntans Hill Telugu community, residing there for over forty-eight years (Interview : *Smt Bapanamma Naidoo* 1994), informed the researcher that over the past two decades they have abandoned the habit of blood sacrifice due to the pressures brought by the white community residing in the other side of Puntans Hill. However, at present the community is extending blood sacrifice to the village deity due to the community's fear that *Amma* is not happy with the country. She also states that due to the recent deaths of many Telugus in the district, the younger generation is actively taking

part in this ritualistic prayer. She states that the younger generation feels that if *Amma* is pacified annually with blood, she will not harm the Puntans Hill Telugus in the future.

The lapse to the previous religio-cultural traditions which they had abandoned for some time viz. offering blood sacrifice to *Maridamma*, substantiates the researcher's hypothesis that although westernized in their outlook, the South African Telugus, when faced with unexpected challenges, are returning to their Andhra religio-cultural activities and finding a solace in such dynamics.

4.4.5 Kāvadi festival

The term '*Kāvadi*' in Telugu means 'a bangy/pole with burdens at the ends and carried at the shoulder' (Prabhakaran 1994 a : 29). In South African Telugu this term is used, with an elevated meaning, to indicate the Tamil ritualistic festival performed during the time of *Tai Pūsam* (January-February) and *Citrāparvam* (April-May) where the Śaivite devotees carry the *Kāvadi* for the vows taken for Muruga. The term *Kāvadi* in this context is a large wooden decorated arch with milk pots hanging on both sides as weights. The *Kāvadi* is carried by the male devotees on the right shoulders without shirts. The most popular of these two festivals in the three former colonies is the *Tai Pūsam*, when the asterism *Pūsam* is in its ascendant (Interview : Pandit Sambasiva Gurukkal 1994). Most of the Telugus in Malaysia and some of the Telugus in South Africa, observe the *Tai Pūsam* festival (also called *Kāvadi* festival) as a day of penance and atonement.

In Tamilnadu, India, millions of Muruga devotees celebrate this festival in a very grand style from times immemorial. The Tamil indentured immigrants carried this *Kāvadi*-bearing ritual into various parts of the diaspora. Thus, from the time of their arrival in Mauritius (in small numbers), South Africa and Malaysia the Tamil immigrants performed *Kāvadi*-bearing on *Tai Pūsam* and *Citrāparvam*. They transmitted this religio-cultural activity from one generation to the next. Due to the numerical majority of the Tamils in South Africa and Malaysia, the minority enclaved Telugus in these two countries have borrowed this Tamil ritual and incorporated it into their Telugu culture. At present thousands of Telugus in Malaysia and hundreds of Telugus in South Africa take part in these annual Tamil festivals either by

carrying a *Kāvadi* or a milk pot because of the vows taken for Lord Muruga.

The *Tai Pūsam* has become a very important festival for the Tamils both in Malaysia and South Africa. In South Africa, the *āgamic* Śaivite temples initiate the festival by hoisting the Muruga flag ten days before the actual *Kāvadi*-bearing day, and this initiates the ten day fast for the devotees who have taken vows. In Malaysia, the *Tai Pūsam* festival celebrations are performed in many temples such as in the temples of Singapore, Penang, Kedah, Kaula Lumpur and also on many plantations. In Kaula Lumpur the festival is celebrated inside the Batu Caves, a cave that lies thousands of feet above the sea level which can be approached by climbing a steep hill (vide: research findings).

In an academic study of this nature, it is not viable to describe each festival in detail. As this is not a major festival celebrated by the Telugus, only a brief description of how this ritual is performed is given in the following paragraphs.

The Murugan devotees take vows to bear *Kāvadi* if their personal sickness or any family member's sickness is to be cured, for bearing a child, for any major operations to be conducted, weddings to be accomplished and for any family or personal problems to be solved. When the *Tai Pūsam* or *Citrāparvam* festival occurs, they fulfil their vows by observing the day as a day of propitiation and penance. As the temple holding the *Tai Pūsam* festival hoists the flag of Muruga, the devotees start a strict fast (see 4.4.1); some devotees even eating only one vegetarian meal a day.

On the day of the flag hoisting, the temple priest installs four *Mūla Kumbhams* (main *kalaśas* for Muruga) and performs *hōmam*, *nitya abhiṣēkam* and *viśēṣa pūja* for Lord Muruga. For almost nine days, the temple conducts special daily prayers for Muruga in this manner. On the tenth day the devotees, having beautifully decorated their *Kāvadis*, gather in a procession in the temple. While the *Sthānigar* holds the main Muruga *Kāvadi* and another official holds the *Idumban Kāvadi* (*Kāvadi* for *Idumban*, the fabled first person to carry a *Kāvadi* for Lord Muruga and also his personal bodyguard) (Interview : Sri N A Prabhakaran 1994), the devotees follow with their *Kāvadis* of various sizes and colours. They go around the temple singing religious songs in Tamil about Muruga and circumambulate the temple three times.

At this stage, some of the staunch *Kāvadi*-bearing devotees enter a trance. While they are in trance they self-mortify themselves by piercing many spikes, spears and hooks into their body and tongue.

In Malaysia, thousands of devotees are drawn annually to this *Tai Pūsam Kāvadi* festival held in the Batu Caves. During this ritualistic prayer, the Malaysian male devotees hold *Kāvadis* and the female hold milk pots. They walk from the Kaula Lumpur Muruga temple to the Batu Caves all the way singing in Tamil and most of them swaying in trance (Arasaratnam 1970 : 168-169). This procession will be accompanied by the rhythm of the traditional Dravidian drums (see 4.4.1 to 4.4.4).

As Arasaratnam (1970 : 169-70) states, this festival is becoming a very important ritual for the Dravidian identity in Islamic dominated Malaysia. In South Africa also it gives a separate identify to the Dravidian culture against the Āryan culture of the Hindi and Gujarati speaking communities. However, it is pertinent to state that this *Tai Pūsam* held in both countries attracts not only Hindus participation but also participants from the other religious groups such as Buddhist, Chinese, Muslim and Christian.

In the mid-twentieth century the Malaysian government tried its best to prohibit the devotees from seeking indulgence and forgiveness through self-mortification by skewering themselves with steel spikes and spears (Arasaratnam 1970 : 170). However, numerous informants say that the government failed to prevent these self-mortifying acts. Hundreds of devotees resisted such governmental intervention in religious rituals saying that Malaysia is a secular country. At present these acts of piercing are still being carried out not only in Malaysia but also in South Africa. The researcher assumes that the *Kāvadi*-bearing festival will continue in these two countries for generations to come because in both countries the number of devotees who carry the *Tai Pūsam Kāvadi* is growing annually.

This *Kāvadi*-bearing ritual is not observed by the present-day Telugus in Mauritius although Nirsimloo-Anenden (1990 : 121) records that such a ritual was performed in Mauritius during the early period of immigration. Although a few Telugus observe this ritual, *Kāvadi*-bearing is not a popular ritualistic festival in the present-day Mauritian Telugu context. American

Telugus do not observe this Tamil ritual either.

4.5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter undoubtedly demonstrates that certain aspects of the Hindu Andhra culture are being preserved and being practised by the Telugus in the three former colonies. Although certain Sanskritic rites such as *havans* are known to these Telugus, the South African Telugus lack *āgamic* knowledge of how to perform the *havans* as a Sanskritic rite. It is clear that due to a lack of *āgamic* priests amongst the South African Andhras they are deprived of this knowledge. However, it is also clear that they are subconsciously avoiding the use of any non-Telugu *āgamic* priest fearing that their separate group identity will be lost. This chapter also shows that the Telugus in South Africa and Malaysia are not aware of the other important rites such as *vratas* and lag behind their counterparts in Mauritius. The Mauritian Telugus are fortunate enough to be able to renew their religio-cultural contacts with Andhra Pradesh largely due to the strategies and efforts of the Mauritian Andhra *Maha Sabha* and the *Srī Veṅkatēswara Bhaktula Saṅgham* (see chapter 5.5.1 for all the details).

It is interesting to note that the Telugus in the three former colonies have preserved the old Andhra tradition of performing *Rāma bhajans* which actually has eroded in the present-day Andhra Pradesh and is unknown to the immigrant Andhras in the USA. They are performing these *bhajans* with staunch devotion and unlike the old traditional Andhra custom it is performed on a grand scale at the societal level. Similarly, the celebration of all the Dravidian rituals of *Amma's Paṇḍagas* (see 4.4) clearly demonstrate that the Telugus preserved the village "little traditions" which they have implanted in their respective countries during their immigration. It is also evident that these "little traditions" are not fading out in these countries but also becoming more popular annually. Some of the present-day South African Telugus are returning to their traditional religio-cultural activities in the times of socio-political crisis. It is pertinent to remark that the Mauritian and South African Telugus hold *maṇḍala dīkṣa* and observe fasting for forty days, a tradition which is unknown to most of the Malaysian and American Telugus. Although they encounter various socio-political challenges, the Telugus in the diaspora observe the celebration of the major pan-Hindu festivals.

Due to Tamil cultural domination over the Telugus in the former colonies, particularly in South Africa and Malaysia, the Telugus have borrowed certain aspects of Tamil culture and incorporated them into their religio-cultural traits. This sociological aspects of these findings sustain the findings of Prabhakaran's academic work (1992 b and 1993) in which she demonstrates that while interacting with the dominant "in-group" and the "out-group", the enclaved communities are prone to borrow certain aspects of the dominant culture, in which the language is also included.

Finally, this chapter also highlights the challenges, problems and setbacks the Telugus as a minority community encounter while they are trying to maintain their religio-cultural activities in the diaspora. Since organizational protection and support are indispensable for the survival of any implanted religio-cultural aspects of a minority group in an alien environment, an attempt is made in the following chapter to scrutinize the religio-cultural dynamics of the Telugu organizations in the diaspora.

CHAPTER FIVE

RELIGION AND TELUGU ORGANIZATIONS

5.1 ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the religio-cultural dynamics of the Telugu organizations in the diaspora. An attempt is made (in 5.2) to briefly discuss the establishment of various *Maha Sabhas* and their branch *sabhas*. The main festival Andhra *Ugādi* celebrated by the Telugus at organizational level is dealt in 5.3. The World Telugu Conferences held in the diaspora, which reflect the religio-cultural attitude and activities of the Andhras, are discussed in 5.4. The present-day religio-cultural dynamics of the *sabhas* in each country are contemplated separately (5.5.1 to 5.5.4). Lastly, a brief summary and conclusion are made in 5.6.

5.2 TELUGU ORGANIZATIONS IN THE DIASPORA

Although the immigrant Andhras emigrated to Mauritius in the mid 1830's, it was only after one hundred years of their arrival that the South African Telugus first felt the real urge to establish an organized Telugu *sabha*, a seat where all the Telugu people could meet, discuss their socio-economic problems and welfare; by which they could enhance their religio-cultural Andhra traditions and preserve and nurture the same for the sake of their future generations in an alien environment. This sub-section briefly deals with the foundation of such Telugu organizations in the diaspora and analyzes their main aims and objectives in establishing their *sabhas*.

Although the Mauritian Telugus tried to organize themselves into a single Telugu organization as early as 1930's, it was only in 1946 that the solid foundation of the Mauritian Andhra *Maha Sabha* (MAMS) was founded by some eminent Andhras (Bala Gopaludu and Bala Utchanah 1990 : 43). The names of the founders of the MAMS are engraved on a marble plaque and placed at the entrance of the MAMS building at Champ de Mars, Port Louis (Vide : Research findings). The main objectives of this *Maha Sabha* are : a) to promote the socio-economic welfare and educational advancement of the *sabha* members and their families; b) to publicise the study of Telugu language, literature and culture and c) to establish libraries,

schools and temples throughout the country among many others (Source : MAMS constitution : 1957). In 1957, the MAMS was officially recognized by the Mauritian government for subsidies purpose as a parent-body of all the Telugus living in Mauritius (Nirsimloo-Anenden 1990 : 129). Although Nirsimloo-Anenden reports the existence of fifty-eight branch *sabhas* at the time of her academic work (1981-82), one decade after her research, there are seventy-nine branch *sabhas* in existence altogether in the island (MAMS *sabha* minutes 1993).

At present the MAMS looks after the interests of all the Telugus on the island in the following spheres, viz. bringing about unity of the branch *sabhas*, helping branch *sabhas* financially to build their own temples, cultural halls and schools; training Telugu teachers; conducting religio-cultural festivals (see 5.3 and 5.5.1); encouraging local talents through financial help (Razdoe Utchanah 1981 : 180); conducting workshops, seminars and dramas in Telugu; and lastly, bringing the MAMS in the lime light at par with other ethnic groups of Indian origin (Bala Gopaludu and Utchanah 1990 : 44). Recently the MAMS successfully completed a major project of building a grand religio-cultural centre in Port Louis where they can hold their functions and festivals at national and international level (see 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5.1 for more details).

The Andhra *Maha Sabha* of South Africa (AMSSA) was established on 14 May 1931 due to the realization of many loyal Telugus that their Telugu language and Andhra culture were eroding in Natal. During the late 1920's the Natal born Telugu children, due to various socio-political reasons (cf. Prabhakaran 1992 b : 75-77), started questioning the basics of Hinduism and Andhra culture. The younger generation felt that the Hindu Andhra culture is inappropriate to their daily lives; were apathetic towards their language, religion and culture (Prabhakaran 1992 b : 78-79) and many conversions took during this period. The immigrant Andhras were alarmed by this deterioration in the interests of the Natal born Andhras towards Hindu Andhra culture; concerned about the future and doubted the survival of the Hindu Andhra culture and their EMT in Natal. This realization that their religion and culture were eroding led to the formation of the AMSSA in 1931 and to various branch *sabhas* before 1960. At present AMSSA, the parent-body of all the Telugus in South Africa has twenty-five branch *sabhas* affiliated to it.

As in the case of the MAMS, the AMSSA also has various aims and objectives to achieve. To achieve these aims, the AMSSA also institutes certain religio-cultural activities similar to that of the MAMS (see 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5.2 for more details). However, unlike Mauritian and Malaysian Telugus, the AMSSA had to face many challenges, setbacks and failures due to the socio-political situation in South Africa, viz. the austere apartheid system, enforcement of strict Group Areas Acts (1950's and 1960's) which resulted in the breakdown of their close-knit family units and joint-families; and lastly the socio-political and religio-cultural sanctions imposed by India and other countries against South Africa which cut them off from the rest of the Andhras in the diaspora for more than half a century (Prabhakaran 1992 b : 164-174).

The independence movement of the Andhras in the early 1950's and the formation of a separate Andhra State on 17 October 1953 (Satyamurty 1981 : 183) stimulated the Telugus in Malaysia to form their own Andhra *Maha Sabha* which can facilitate them to achieve and maintain a separate group identity against the Tamil domination (Interview : Sri Dadi Sri Ramulu 1993). As a result, the Telugu Association of Malaysia (TAM) was established on 17 August 1955 by the efforts of eminent Telugus (Madini Soma Naidu 1981 : 162).

The TAM was first formed in Lower Perak by ninety-nine enthusiastic Telugus under the banner of Malaya Telugu *Saṅghamu*. On 17 February 1956 the Association was officially registered as Telugu Association of Malaysia (Source : Third World Telugu Conference Malaysian Delegation Brochure 1990 : 8). At present the head office of the TAM is situated in Kuala Lumpur. It represents 300 000 Telugus in Malaysia and has twenty branch *sabhas* (Interview : Sri Paul Naidu 1993). The main objectives of the TAM are : to promote and safeguard the economic, social, cultural and educational interests of the members; to encourage and foster cooperation and fraternity between all the Telugus in Malaysia. The TAM has its own religio-cultural activities to nurture and maintain the Hindu Andhra culture which are discussed under separate headings in the following sub-sections (see 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5.3 for all details).

Finally in the USA, the "technocrat Telugus" established various Telugu associations in every state with almost the same aims and objectives. The immigrant Telugus who have arrived

during the late 1960's were influenced by the First World Telugu Conference held in Hyderabad in 1975. They felt for the need for a Telugu Association of their own which can cater for their religio-cultural needs; can guide them in their socio-economic problems and can help the newly arriving immigrants to settle comfortably in the USA.

The first Telugu Association to be formally established was in 1976 in the State of New York, the state in which most of the Telugus have settled. It is called the Telugu Cultural and Literary Association (TCLA). The main parent Telugu Association, the Telugu Association of Northern America (TANA) was established in New York along with TCLA and at present has various branches attached to it all over the country. However, due to various internal disputes and misunderstandings within the members of TANA, one branch of the Telugus, inspired by their common goals, causes and interests, split from the TANA and established another major independent organization called American Telugu Association (ATA) in New York in 1990. Both TANA and ATA co-exist as two powerful Telugu organizations having thousands of Telugus as life members. At present there are 74 Telugu *sabhas* in the USA affiliated and showing allegiance either to TANA or to ATA. An attempt is made to discuss the religio-cultural activities of both the organizations and other associations equally in the following sub-sections (see 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5.4 for all details).

Another powerful organization viz. the World Telugu Federation (WTF), which was recently established in Madras, India, to cater for the needs of the Telugus throughout the world, has its main branch in Detroit, in the State of Michigan, USA. The WTF was established in 1991 with the aims of preserving, promoting and propagating Telugu cultural heritage and to link all the Telugus in the World (World Telugu Federation Brochure 1992 : 2). One of the main goals of this WTF is that of helping Telugu youth outside Andhra Pradesh to facilitate transcultural adaptation by holding regional and international conferences through regional centres and conduct World Telugu Conventions with regular frequency (Interview : Sri Nallamothu Satyanarayana 1994).

The following sub-sections briefly focus on the religio-cultural activities of the Hindu Andhras at an organizational level. The researcher believes that the activities discussed below clearly demonstrate that the Telugu organizations choose religion and culture as protecting

weapons against complete assimilation with the dominant host "out-group" and dominant "in-group" cultures. The strategies of the Telugu *sabhas* as minority enclaved communities in the diaspora also display that year by year they are returning to their Hindu Andhra culture to protect themselves against complete assimilation with dominant cultures.

5.3 ANDHRA UGĀDI CELEBRATIONS BY THE ORGANIZATIONS

In consonance with Prabhakaran's findings (cf. 1992 b and 1993); in the spirit of the religio-cultural adherence and to achieve the aims and objectives of their parent organizations, the Telugus in the countries under study observe two or three main Hindu festivals at *sabha* level. These celebrations not only provide opportunities for nurturing and preserving their Andhra culture but also facilitate the maintenance of Hinduism in the diaspora. This sub-section focuses on how the Telugu *Ugādi* celebrated in the Hindu Andhra diaspora manifests the Telugu group identity in their respective countries.

Although all festivals, whether small or large, are propitious and sacred, the *Ugādi* festival has a specific significance for the Andhras because it nobly inaugurates the new year of the Andhras, who follow the 'Sālivāhana Śaka' (era) and the lunar calendar (Prabhakaran 1992 b : 215). The Telugu word 'Ugādi' is the combination of two terms, 'Uga' meaning the year and 'Ādi' meaning the beginning. Thus, *Ugādi* is an Andhra new year festival, occurring in *Caitra māsa*. *Ugādi* is celebrated with great eclat in Andhra Pradesh. According to the Hindu tradition there are sixty years in an age and every year has a specific deity as its ruler (Luxmikantha Mohan 1988 : 8). The Andhras have specific names for every Telugu year like 'Prabhava, Vibhava, Śukla etc. The last year in the cycle is called 'Akṣaya'.

Prabhakaran (1992 b : 215-216) in her study documents the manner in which the *Ugādi* is celebrated in modern Andhra Pradesh, India. An oil bath, the wearing of new clothes, plus the preparation of special food for a family lunch are the usual features of any Hindu festival in India. However, a special item, 'Nimba Kusuma Bhakṣaṇam' better known as *Ugādi paccadi* (New Year chutney), is prepared specifically for *Ugādi* with the tender flowers of mango, jaggery or sugar, new tamarind juice, small pieces of raw mango, salt, sugar-cane pieces, tender flowers of neem and *ghee* (Interview : Sri N V Satyanarayana Acharyulu 1993).

The *Ugādi paccādi*, which is a delightful mixture of different tastes, is first offered to the deities, and after the prayer, is consumed as *prasādam* by the Andhras. This *paccādi* has much significance for the Andhras. Different tastes reflect different experiences in human lives and the Andhras believe that those delights and distresses the new year might bring will be reflected by the *paccādi* (Prabhakaran 1992 b : 216).

In the evening the Andhras gather for *pañcāṅga śravaṇam* (listening to the Hindu almanac), when a priest explains the almanac of the year, the planetary position which signifies the prospects of crops, weather forecasts, socio-political changes and international relations. Unlike the other Andhra festivals the *Ugādi* is more secular in nature because it celebrates the changing season.

In Mauritius, the *Ugādi* festival is celebrated at the family level, in the Telugu temples where special prayers are conducted and also at *sabha* level. It is evident from the documentary video film taken by the Mauritian College of the Air (MCA) with the help of the Telugu community and MAMS that the Telugus celebrate *Ugādi* with pomp and glory at all these levels. The festival celebrations start at home level where all the Telugus wake up early in the morning, have an oil bath with a paste of turmeric powder rubbed on to their bodies; they wash their front yards and decorate with colourful *muggulu*. They tie garlands, made with eighteen mango leaves, washed and dipped in turmeric powder with sacred mantras, to their doors (Source : *Ugādi* video film taken by MCA 1993). They wear new clothes and prepare the *Ugādi paccādi* with six different ingredients representing different tastes (small pieces of green chilies are also added to the *paccādi* in this country).

The whole family, adorning new clothes, gather in the *pūja mandir* and offer special prayers. After the home prayers, the Telugus go to the nearest Telugu temples for communal prayers, which is conducted by the priest. After prayer, the priest reads the Telugu *pañcāṅgam* and explains the predictions for the year. The *prasādam* is distributed outside the temple. From the temple the Mauritian Telugus go to their friends' and relatives' houses to exchange presents and *Ugādi śubhākāṅṣalu* (greetings) in Telugu.

In the evening the MAMS holds an annual cultural program at National level either at Plaza Theatre in Port Louis or at Mahatma Gandhi Institute (MGI) in Moka (Interview : Sri Sivarama Murthy 1993). These *Ugādi* shows are held in different villages so that the rural Telugu dwellers would not feel cut off from the mainstream of events. As Nirsimloo-Anenden (1990 : 134) states, these *Ugādi* functions create more opportunity for MAMS to contact various Telugus from different areas as well as different branch *sabhas*. These shows usually consist of Bharata Nāṭyam and/or Kūcipūḍi dances, religio-cultural songs, folk dances, speeches depicting the culture of the Andhras.

However, in South Africa the Andhras celebrate *Ugādi* as a community prayer rather than as a family function due to urbanization, since they do not have any farms or carry out harvesting (Prabhakaran 1992 b : 216). The AMSSA holds the annual religio-cultural shows unfailingly in its Havenside cultural hall or in Doorga Hall in Mobeni Heights, and invites all the Telugus and other linguistic groups to attend. The AMSSA members usually commence this function with a *Havana* followed by a Telugu or Sanskrit prayer, render religious *bhajans*, followed by a speech and cultural dances such as *gobbi*, *kōlāṭam* and Bharata Nāṭyam. Until recently the AMSSA *Ugādi* celebrations was devoid of *Ugādi paccāḍi*, but from the past five years they introduced preparation and distribution of *Ugādi paccāḍi* to all the guests. The arrival of a Hindu Telugu lecturer from India into the community facilitated the awareness and significance of this *paccāḍi* and is presently becoming an important aspect of South African *Ugādi* celebrations. This recent introduction of *Ugādi paccāḍi* into *Ugādi* festival demonstrates that, once aware of the Hindu Andhra religio-cultural habits in India, the South African Telugus would like to incorporate these into their local religio-cultural practices.

Although Andhra *Ugādi* day does not occur during the spring season time in South Africa, the AMSSA celebrates this festival on the same day as with the rest of the Telugus in the diaspora. Recently, some South African Andhras are questioning the relevance of Andhra *Ugādi* in South African context and criticising the AMSSA for holding such an "ethnic festival". However, on the other side of the same coin, many young AMSSA and branch *sabha* members are positive towards such a function and are trying their utmost to participate in such a religio-cultural activity (Interview : Mr Pravine Naidoo 1994). It is also true that

the festival celebration is annually gaining more audience and participants and becoming very popular. Thus the Andhra *Ugādi* celebrations in South Africa, although devoid of *pañcāṅga śravanam*, is becoming the symbol of Hindu Andhra cultural identity in South Africa and many Christian Andhras also participate in this festival.

Up to 1955 there were no separate *Ugādi* festival celebrations for the Telugus in Malaysia except the *Nūkālamma Paṇḍaga* or *Bhūlōkamma Paṇḍaga* (see Seven Sisters' Prayers) on the plantations and in small villages which were celebrated on the *Ugādi* day (Interview : Sri Dadi Sri Ramulu 1993). They were not aware of Andhra *Ugādi* as it was not celebrated by Tamils in *Caitra Māsam*. After its formation the TAM and branch *sabhas* felt that they must have a special festival, which is exclusively celebrated by the Telugus and through that festival they could achieve and maintain their Telugu identity (Sri Ramulu G V 1981 : 28).

Thus TAM introduced the celebration of the Andhra *Ugādi* as a religio-cultural festival of the Telugus in Malaysia. Initially this festival was initiated at TAM level and local branch *sabha* levels. Due to its authentic propagation, the TAM was able to motivate the Telugus to celebrate the Andhra *Ugādi* at home level also. At present, it is celebrated at home level, in Telugu temples, at branch *sabhas* and at TAM level. The TAM also motivated its members, officials and other Telugus to send *Ugādi* greeting cards in Telugu both locally and to their friends and co-relatives in India.

The present-day Malaysian Telugus celebrate *Ugādi* almost similar to the Mauritian Telugus both at home level and at temple level. However, at temples, after the *arcana*s and prayers, the Telugu *sabhas* and rich individuals distribute free food parcels to the poor and needy as an act of humanity. On the plantations also fifteen to twenty families together celebrate *Ugādi* with pomp and grandeur inviting all the Telugus, Tamils and other racial groups to attend and feast lunch with them. The plantation owners are always invited to take part in the festival celebrations in which they slaughter goats and cockerels. Meat is cooked and served in the lunch. On some plantations the meat is presented to the plantation owners, in return the Telugus receive *Ugādi* gifts from their employers.

At the *sabha* level, the branch *sabhas* organize cultural shows which include rendering Telugu *bhajans*, religious songs and folk dances. They also have religio-cultural debates, competitions in singing and dramas. The members and visitors are all served delicious lunch. The TAM sometimes takes responsibility of holding *Ugādi* at national level bearing all the expenses and hosting all the *sabhas*. On such occasions, the TAM launches regular brochures covering the religio-cultural dynamics of the Hindu Telugus and releases it to the public. On such occasions they are able to procure the greetings and good wishes from the officials of the government and from the rich plantation owners.

One important aspect of this Telugu *Ugādi* in Malaysia is the participation of rich plantation owners and people of all racial groups; politicians and communal leaders are invited to be guest of honours to deliver the key note address. The main reason for inviting such important community members at national level is to demonstrate their separate Telugu group identity and to secure governmental recognition for subsidy purposes (Interview : *Sri Dadi Sri Ramulu* 1993). It is evident that this interaction helps them to acquire extra grants from the plantation owners and from the government for their religio-cultural activities, to build or renovate their own temples.

The Telugus in the USA, being immigrants from Andhra Pradesh, celebrate *Ugādi* on a grand scale at home level, at Temples and at Telugu *sabha* levels. However, if the *Ugādi* festival day falls on a working day, as informed by various housewives, the American Telugus celebrate *Ugādi* simply at home level, attend the prayer services held at the temples and celebrate the *Ugādi* grandly in all associations on a Sunday closer to the festival day (Interview : *Smt Challasani Uma* 1994).

For example, the Bhāratiya Hindu Temple in Detroit holds the Telugu *Ugādi* festival in which many Telugus participate the evening prayers and *pañcāṅga śravaṇam* made by the residing priest. The priest explains the significance of the tastes of the *Ugādi paccadi* as the combination of *satwa*, *tamō* and *rajō guṇas* (the three qualities of human beings viz. vigour, strength and passion respectively). He explains that the human being is prone to have these *guṇas* and thus he/she will have ups and downs in his life. He advises the Telugus to accept all these experiences of life equally by comparing the different tastes of the *paccadi* with

different experiences of their life. Then he reads the *pañcāṅgam*, translated as "fortune telling" for the sake of the American born younger Telugus, and makes predictions at county level, for the state, universe, for kings, presidents, governors, senators, congress men, individual families and family effects on individuals (Vide : research findings).

It is very interesting to note that the Telugu priests even explain the astrological aspects of the planets using scientific terms so that the younger generation can comprehend it easily. The Bhārātīya Hindu Temple priest informed the researcher that many American born Telugus are questioning the relevance of the Andhra *Ugādi* in their American context (Interview : Sri V Janaki Rama Sastri 1994). As an interviewee in Detroit (Interview : Sri Achyuta Rao 1994) informs, the Telugu priest deals very carefully with such questions; explains the younger generation about how according to the Hindu *Sanātana Dharma* the new year is called "*Vēdic* New Year" and also why it occurs on that specific day. The researcher assumes that these explanations convince the younger generation due to the scientific explanations the priest attaches to the Hindu Telugu religio-cultural activities. For example, he explains the *Vēdic* statement "*aṇuwōrāṇyān mahito mahiyān*" with the "Big Bang Theory" of the Universal Civilization and Creational process which is very appealing to the American born Telugus.

At the organizational level, the *Ugādi* celebrations are held on a grand scale (Vide : Personal participation in the *Ugādi* celebrations held in 1994 in New York). The *Bhāva Nāma Ugādi* celebrations organized in New York by the TCLA consisted of *pañcāṅga śravaṇam*, reading from religious scriptures, religio-cultural dances rendered by younger generations from all linguistic groups, music concerts, religious songs and *Kīrtans*, folk dances (unlike the South African situation, in the USA married women did not take part in any folk-dances) followed by delicious traditional Andhra meal. It is interesting to note that unlike other *Ugādi* celebrations in the former three colonies, the religio-cultural dances and songs included items rendered by young artists from other linguistic groups. For example, there were no restrictions on or fear in the minds of the American Telugus that presentation of Gujarati *garbha* and *Kathak* dance items rendered by young dancers would dominate their cultural dances. It is pertinent to mention that although many youngsters were attentive to hear about the predictions for the new year, the immigrant generation displayed apathy towards the *pañcāṅga śravaṇam* and were busy talking to their friends and relatives.

The major associations such as TANA, ATA and the WTF annually publish their own special issues of magazines to celebrate the Andhra *Ugādi*. They publish their messages, greetings and religio-cultural articles both in Telugu and English. One interesting recent incident occurred regarding the WTF monthly magazine is that the USA branch of WTF dedicated their *Ugādi* issue of April 1994 to the Telugus in South Africa, for the which first time exposing the various religio-cultural aspects of the Telugus in South Africa (Source : WTF magazine Vol II, issue IV, April 1994).

5.4 WORLD TELUGU CONFERENCES

In order to bring all the Telugu-speaking people and those who are interested in the Telugu language on a common platform for exchange of their views and to share their rich cultural heritage, the Andhra Pradesh government, under the leadership of the International Telugu Institute, initiated to hold International Telugu Conferences in the diaspora. The first of these Conferences was held at Hyderabad, the capital city of Andhra Pradesh, between 12-18 April 1975. This conference did not only contributed to the emotional and cultural integration of the Telugu community but also helped to foster a feeling of fraternity among the Telugus in the diaspora (Krishna Rao 1981 : 31-32). At the first conference the Malaysian Telugus invited other Telugus to hold the Second World Telugu Conference in their country (Interview : Sri Madini Soma Naidu 1993).

The Second World Conference was held in Kaula Lumpur, between 14-19 April 1981 where the Telugus met first time outside Andhra Pradesh and exchanged their religio-cultural heritage. This resulted in new bonds of friendship and strengthened their Telugu identity in the diaspora. Several decisions were taken at the Kaula Lumpur Conference which defined and identified the fields of religio-cultural dynamics to keep Telugu culture alive in the diaspora. At this conference various religio-cultural activities took place viz. seminars which were held on Hindu religion and philosophy, contribution of the Telugus in this fields, Telugu cultural heritage, social and religio-cultural problems of the Telugus in the diaspora (Interview : Sri B Nookiah 1993). The conference also held an exhibition representing various aspects of Telugu religio-cultural life. To commemorate this conference two bilingual special brochures were published by the Andhra Pradesh government and were edited by the

Malaysian Telugus.

The conference also included religio-cultural programmes such as songs, concerts, dance and dramas depicting the Hindu Andhra culture in the diaspora. This six day conference did not only procure a separate identity for the Telugus in Malaysia but also stimulated an awareness and interest to nurture and maintain their religio-cultural identity. It is sad to note that the South African Telugus could not attend this conference due to the socio-political and religio-cultural sanctions imposed by the world against South Africa. Thus the South African Telugus were deprived off their entry into such a stimulating conference which might have exposed them to the religio-cultural activities of their co-relatives and counterparts in the diaspora.

Encouraged by the initiation and invitation extended by the Mauritian Telugus and supported by the Mahatma Gandhi Institute (MGI), the Third World Telugu Conference was held in Mauritius for a period of five days between 9-13 December 1990. This conference helped the Mauritian Telugus to exhibit various elements of their religio-cultural heritage such as *Rāma Bhajans* and *Simhādri Appanna Pūjas*. It also helped them to revive love and respect for their Telugu language and Andhra traditions; to promote their religio-cultural ties with the Telugus in the diaspora (including South Africa) by holding academic conferences, film festivals and art exhibitions (Lutchmoodoo Reddy 1990 : 6). Main emphasis was placed on academic seminars in which numerous academics and scholars from various countries delivered papers on religio-cultural aspects and problems of maintaining Hindu Telugu culture in their respective countries. This conference in which sixty South African delegates were present, provided an opportunity to the South African Telugus for the first time to establish religio-cultural contacts with the Telugus in the diaspora and foster worldwide Telugu brotherhood.

Inspired by the conference, the then president of the AMSSA volunteered to hold the Fourth World Telugu Conference in Durban, however, on the condition that the socio-political scenario of South Africa facilitates such an international conference. At the time of the Third World Telugu Conference, South Africa was undergoing change and facing various socio-political challenges and turmoils such as political unrest, violence and upheavals. The

situation was not favourable for an immediate positive decision to be made. Due to various requests from the delegates from various countries, it was agreed that the next international conference should be held within a period of four or five years in Durban, depending on the political situation in South Africa.

Meanwhile the members and officials of the newly founded ATA took their own initiative and held the Fourth World Telugu Conference in New York for a period of three days between 3-5 July 1992. This Fourth World Telugu Conference, however, was neither recognized by the International Telugu Institute nor by the members of AMSSA, TAM, MAMS and TANA. Whatever the disputes, the Telugus of South Africa and members of AMSSA were deprived off their golden opportunity to host such an international Telugu conference which might have revived the religio-cultural awareness and identity of the Telugus in South Africa. At present the AMSSA is not considering to negotiate for the next conference to be held in Durban.

5.5 RELIGIO-CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

In an academic study of this nature it is not practical to discuss the early religio-cultural activities of the Telugu *sabhas* of the three former colonies or the USA due to the limitations of the chosen topic. However, to understand the differences, change, erosion/preservation of the Andhra religio-cultural activities, it is necessary to concisely focus on their previous activities. Thus, the researcher briefly deals with the early and present-day activities of the Telugu *sabhas* in each country under separate headings.

5.5.1 Mauritius

5.5.1.1 Simhādri Appanna Pūja

Since many of the Mauritian immigrant Telugus arrived from the district of Visakhapatnam (Veturi Ananda Murthy 1990 : 56-57), they worshipped *Simhādri Appanna* (called *Simmādre Appanna* in Mauritian Telugu), the presiding deity of Simhacalam Temple, as their *iṣṭa daivam* (see chapter four). The term Simhācalam etymologically means "the hill of the lion" and refers to *Varāha Narasimha*, an incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu as a combination of *Narasimha* (man-lion) and *Varāha* (boar) (Sundaram 1981 : 135). *Simhādri Appanna* in

Simhācalam is usually worshipped according to the rituals found in the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas* (Interview : Sri N V Satyanarayana Acharyulu : 1993).

The early Mauritian immigrant Telugus constructed various Telugu temples and *mandirs* and worshipped their *iṣṭa daivams* in those temples. The first known *Simhādri Appanna* temple in Mauritius dates back to the 1920's and was built in Beau Vallon in the south of the island (Ramsamy Appadu et al 1990 : 30-31), and a branch *sabha* was formed in the same place. Later various small temples and *mandirs* were established for *Simhādri Appanna* all over the island.

The immigrant Telugus offered special prayers to *Simhādri Appanna* reciting *mantras*, *slōkas*, rendering *bhajans* while holding the lit iron torches (also see *Rāma Bhajans*). They sacrificed pumpkins for the deity.

At present these prayers are held both at home level and at *sabha* level either simply or lavishly. The rich individuals not only invite all the Telugus from their district and other districts but also other linguistic groups and religious groups to attend the prayer held in their homes (similar to *Rāma Bhajans*). They perform *anna dānam* during the prayer. They hold *kollu*, walk around the temple or house chanting and singing "*Gōvinda Nārāyaṇa Ādi Nārāyaṇa*" (names of Lord Viṣṇu) (Interview : Sri Satyakama Appiah 1993). Then they render *bhajans* up to 22 h 00 and break the pumpkin which symbolically ends the prayer.

At the *sabha* level this prayer also takes place. Any *sabha* intending to hold the *Simhādri Appanna pūja* (eg. the Telugu *Sabha* in Quatre Bornes or at Beau Vallon) invites all the Telugus, Hindus and other religious groups to attend this religio-cultural celebration. During the prayer selected Telugu carries the burning torches, swaying in trance to the rhythm of the music of the drums, walks in the front of the procession accompanied by the *bhajana* singers, priests and chariot procession. The whole procession walks around the village. Those Hindus who could not attend the *pūja* held in the *sabha* building/temple bring their specific offers to the roadside chariot procession (Interview : Sri Satyakama Appiah 1993). As in the case of *Rāma Bhajana* prayers, the person who wishes to bear the burning torch must observe a *mandala dīkṣa* and fast for a period of forty days without fail.

5.5.1.2 Annual Drama Festival

Drama is a vehicle which reflects the culture of a particular community and also acts as the preserver of a language in an alien environment. During the nineteenth century the most popular themes for the Telugu dramas in Andhra Pradesh (country) were the stories taken from the *itihāsas* and epics. However, during the present century, social dramas dominate the Andhra stage, followed by religious dramas (Prabhakaran 1992 b : 99-100). From the information obtained from some of the elder members of the Mauritian Telugu community, it is evident that the immigrant Andhras brought these religio-cultural dramas with them and performed them wherever they settled. They passed their free time by enacting the Telugu dramas and entertained people. Later, due to their language shift they abandoned these religio-cultural dramas.

However, the present-day Mauritian Telugus, the officials of MAMS and the branch *sabhas* realized the fact that if nourished properly, these dramas could easily maintain their religion and culture in Mauritius. This realization could also be attributed to the renewal of their contacts with the Andhra Pradesh government and with the Telugus in the diaspora. Thus from the past three decades (since 1966) they revived the Telugu dramas by holding annual Telugu Drama Festival at National level. At present, encouraged by the MGI, MCA and sponsored by the government subsidies, the MAMS holds annual drama festivals at district level, at regional level and finally at national level on a grand scale. The *sabhas* are encouraged to write and enact their own Telugu dramas to compete at local level. Finally, the festival will be held at National level, in which the ministers and members of parliament are guests of honour (Source : Brochure of the National Drama Festival held in Moka in 1993). The youth actively participate in this drama festival.

5.5.1.3 Television and Radio propagation

Mauritius being an Indian dominated country, the Mauritian Telugus have access to radio and television for their religio-cultural propagation. Although the national *lingua franca* is French Creole, all the Indian languages acquire adequate share of time for their religio-cultural propagation in the mass media. For example, every week one Telugu film, depicting the

religio-cultural aspects of the Andhras, is broadcast in one of the available channels. They also broadcast any religious documentary, eg. *Rāma Bhajans*, *Ammōru Paṇḍaga* etc, prepared and directed by the MGI, by the MAMS officials or its branch *sabhas*. The MGI also directs documentaries on Andhra culture such as how to perform a *Nalugu*, the pre-nuptial rite for a bride or a groom or the Andhra wedding itself.

During the Third World Telugu Conference the proceedings of the main events of the conference were broadcasted daily, either live or pre-recorded for the convenience of the Telugus who could not attend the conference. Similarly, any important religio-cultural activity of the Telugus will be broadcast on air and through television if the MAMS makes an appeal and prior arrangements with the media.

5.5.1.4 Annual Andhra Day Celebrations

The idea of having a separate Andhra state in India dates back to the latter half of the nineteenth century because many socio-cultural reformers like Kandukuri Veeresalingam *Pantulu* and others felt suffocated in the orthodox set-up of Hindu Andhra culture and became pioneers of the social and political reform movement. The political movements such as *Vandēmātaram* and *Swadēśi* movements created amongst the Andhras a lively interest in their language, literature and their culture (Raghunadha Rao 1990 : 86-87). Although the Telugus consisted of 58% of total population of the Madras Presidency, they did not have a separate identity up to early 1950's. Ardent Telugu socio-political reformers like Seshagiri Rao and Narayana Rao felt that the Andhras cannot become a great race unless they were given opportunities which stimulate growth (Source : Letters of Narayana Rao and Seshagiri Rao to *Dēśābhīmāni Patrika*, 21-26 December 1911). Due to various conferences held during the first half of the century and later due to the inspiration provided by eminent Andhras such as *Poṭṭi* Sriramulu, Gopalakrishna Gokhle, Mahatma Gandhi, Lokamanya Gangadhar Tilak and *Allūri* Sitarama Raju among many others, a separate Andhra State was formed on 10 October 1953 and the *Viśālāndhra* (greater Andhra State) was formed on 1 November 1956.

To commemorate the sacrifices made by the eminent Telugus like *Poṭṭi Sri* Ramulu achieving a separate Andhra State for the Telugus in India, the MAMS celebrates the annual Andhra

Day at national level since 1960's as a religio-cultural activity (MAMS Andhra Day Brochure 1966 : 2). The programme consists of singing "*Mā Telugu talliki malle pūdanda*", written by Saṅkarambādi and is a national song for the Andhras in India. It is followed by singing the Mauritian national anthem, lighting of prayer lamps by chief guests and MAMS officials; singing of traditional Hindu prayers and various dance and dramas. The MAMS invites all the Telugus and other linguistic groups and celebrates the festival on a grand scale. Some times they publish brochures depicting various aspects of Hindu Andhra culture in the English, Creole, and Telugu languages.

The celebration of Andhra Day in the Mauritian context does not serve any political purpose as it does in Andhra Pradesh but merely serves to foster and strengthen their Telugu identity and fraternity. By holding this annual religio-cultural function the MAMS tries to strengthen its group identity and to contribute towards the peace and harmony in a multi-racial, multi-lingual and multi-cultural Mauritius (MAMS Andhra Day Brochure 1988 : 1).

5.5.1.5 Training priests in Andhra Pradesh

In Mauritius the Telugus view religion, language and culture as the main symbols of identity in a communicative sense as well as in an de-segregative sense. As Nirsimloo-Anenden states (1990 : 133), the Mauritian Telugus, although survived as a distinct group since immigration, resisted integration with the host community, felt the need for an objective identity which can be expressed at various level viz. at national and at diaspora level. Thus, within the sphere of their religious objective identity, the MAMS, decided to encourage young Telugus to learn and organize religious rites and rituals in every small village through giving loans and material help (Interview : Sri Satyakama Appiah 1993). As mentioned earlier, they finance the branch *sabhas* or lend loans to construct, maintain or renovate Telugu temples in every corner of Mauritius.

The MAMS is aware that their responsibility does not end in building temples alone. They are also aware of the fact that the Telugus need to know their religion and adhere to *sanātanist* practices because they are associated with higher forms of Hinduism (Interview : Sri Satyakama Appiah 1993). They stress the importance of *sanātanist* rites and rituals to

elevate their social status and group cohesion. They want all the Telugu rites and rituals to be uniform and the Telugus should know the proper way of conducting various *nitya pūjas*, *arcanas*, *abhiśēkams* and *havanas*. They emphasis on collective rituals (see chapter 3-4) rather than practising home based individual rites and rituals.

To achieve this group cohesiveness, the MAMS provides scholarships and grants for young Telugus to study formally at various Telugu universities in the fields of language, religion and culture. Numerous priests are undergoing systematic training in Tirumala-Tirupati *Dēvasthānam* (Interview : Sri Satyakama Appiah 1993). Such scholars are expected to bring ‘purer’ and ‘civilized’ forms of religious worships back to Mauritius and spread that knowledge to the others. As Nirsimloo-Anenden (1990 : 134) comments, such trained priests are expected to ‘prune borrowed practices from other Mauritian cultural influences’.

At present the MAMS is also increasing its contacts and tightening its religio-cultural links with the Andhra University at Visakhapatnam (Waltair) and with various temples and *āśramams* in Andhra Pradesh (Interview : Sri Sivarama Murty 1993). The Mauritian Telugu religio-cultural identity goes beyond the Mauritian borders and as Nirsimloo-Anenden (1990 : 134-135) claims, they are showing a real, stronger allegiance to modern Andhra Pradesh. This religio-cultural activities discussed in this sub-section also support the claims made by Nirsimloo-Anenden.

5.5.2 South Africa

After their initial indentureship, many Telugus in South Africa established various informal Telugu *pāṭaśālas* with the aim of teaching their children the Telugu socio-cultural habits, religious rites and rituals, Hindu *dharma*, Andhra traditions, habits and taboos through oral communication. They related stories to each other about religious characters, stories taken from *Rāmāyaṇam* or *Mahābhāratam*. Those among them who could read and write Telugu, would recite from the religious texts and explain the meaning to the others. They sang religious songs and *bhajans* and kept their religio-cultural traditions alive for almost ninety years before the formation of the AMSSA. In 1915 the South Coast Junction Andhra *Bhajan Sabha* Telugu Night School was informally established to teach the religio-cultural *bhajans*

to the Telugu children living on the South Coast (Prabhakaran 1992 b : 66-67).

After its establishment the AMSSA, as a parent-body for all the Telugus in South Africa, established various formal *pāṭaśālas* to induce formal teaching to the younger generation about the issues they were deprived off for a long time viz. Telugu literacy and religio-cultural activities. AMSSA wanted to facilitate the maintenance of the Telugu language and Hindu Andhra culture by initiating the student to the formal education by performing *Upanayanam* (see 3.5) (Rambiritch 1960 : 67). The Telugu alphabet was taught to the beginner starting with a Hindu prayer "*Ōm Namaśśivāya siddham namaḥ*" (O, Lord Śiva, I am praying to You for a fruitful education) (Prabhakaran 1992 b : 70-71). The students were taught verses from *Rāmāyaṇam*, *Mahābhāratam* and *Bhagavad Gīta* and religio-cultural dance-drama which were enacted in the annual Andhra Eisteddfod.

5.5.2.1 Annual Andhra Eisteddfod

Prabhakaran (1992 b : 221-224 and 1993), while discussing the religio-cultural activities of the present-day Hindu Andhra community in South Africa, demonstrates that holding the annual Andhra eisteddfod is one of the most significant contributions made by the AMSSA for the retention and maintenance of the Telugu language and Hindu Andhra culture in South Africa. The term "eisteddfod" is derived from Welsh, and means "sessions". The root word is "eistedd" which means to "sit". The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines the word "eisteddfod" as the "Congress of Welsh bards" or "national or local gathering for musical competitions" and others (Prabhakaran 1992 b : 105).

The AMSSA introduced the holding of annual Andhra eisteddfod in 1939 as a result of the concerted efforts made by *Sri L Kris Naidoo* (the late father of the present president of the AMSSA, *Sri V K Naidoo*) who headed the committee for many years (Source : The Andhra Eisteddfod Golden Jubilee Souvenir Brochure 1989 : 10). The Andhras were the first among the Indian linguistic groups in South Africa to introduce this Annual Eisteddfod on a regional level and national level. The present-day members of the AMSSA and the Andhras are proud of this fact. From 1939 up to the present year the Andhra Eisteddfod has survived despite many socio-political challenges and problems such as the Group Areas Acts of the 1950's and

1960's, which broke the joint family system and dismantled the close-knit Andhra community. This survival is due to the steady determination and endeavourance of the officials and members of the AMSSA. Holding successful Andhra eisteddfod annually became an exclusive religio-cultural activity of the AMSSA and is not seen anywhere else in the Andhra diaspora including the modern Andhra Pradesh.

Telugu children as well as adults, representing different branch *sabhas* take part in this annual religio-cultural function. The individual branch *sabhas* and the *pāṭaśāla* teachers teach and train their candidates in religio-cultural music, dance (eg. *gobbi* and *kōlāṭam*) and other items such as sketches, speeches and operetta all rendered exclusively in Telugu. The syllabus usually comprises of religious verses taken from *Rāmāyaṇam*, *Bhāgavatam* and *Mahābharatam*, Telugu devotional songs taken from films, Tyāgarāja *Kṛutis* and *Kīrtans*, *bhajans*, religious choirs, musical solos and operetta. Hindu prayers consisting of fifteen to twenty lines in length viz. *śubhakārya prārdhana* (auspicious prayer), *sāyaṅkāla prārdhana* (evening prayer) and *pratahkāla prārdhana* (morning prayer), which also form part of the weekly services of the branch *sabhas* (see 5.4.2.5 for more details), are recited in chorus. Many Andhras who can not communicate in the Telugu language also learn these verses and recite with staunch *bhakti* and *śraddha*. As noted by Prabhakaran (1992 b : 223), this eisteddfod syllabus emphasizes the Hindu religion and Hindu Andhra culture and therefore mostly attracts candidates only from the Hindu Andhra community of South Africa. However, it is pertinent to add that recently the researcher observed some African Christian children, learning Telugu in the state schools, are also taking part in these annual eisteddfod; the parents of such children are very proud and happy that their children are winning trophies in the competitions.

Over the past two or three decades the House of Delegates (HoD), the Indian Affairs governmental body during the "apartheid era", was financing this Annual Andhra Eisteddfod (and eisteddfodau of the other linguistic groups of the Indians as well) and the other main religio-cultural activities of the AMSSA and its branch *sabhas*. However, due to the first democratic elections held in 1994, which ended the apartheid rule and closed the tri-cameral system of the old regime in South Africa, the officials and members of the AMSSA are unsure about the financial support for these religio-cultural activities of 1994 in which the

annual eisteddfod is the most important one. Usually the eisteddfod is held very grandiosely over a period of three week-ends and the HoD subsidizes most of the expenses. This year, at the time of writing this research work, the AMSSA is not certain about whether the new government is going to subsidize in future these religio-cultural activities or not. This is a new challenge for the AMSSA and many AMSSA officials feel that the new government might not contribute financially for these 'ethnic' activities (Interviews : Sri K A Naidoo, Sri M B Reddy and Sri Daya Naidoo 1994). They are not certain about how AMSSA is going to continue holding this annual eisteddfod and other annual religio-cultural functions such as *Ugādi* Festival, *Bhajana* Festival and Tyāgarāja Music Festival in the future.

5.5.2.2 Tyāgarāja Music Festival

The second most important religio-cultural function held annually by the AMSSA is the Tyāgarāja Music Festival. *Swāmi* Tyāgarāja was the greatest of all the Andhra religious and spiritual music composers and produced numerous exalting religious songs and *Kīrtans* in popular musical style. He composed over 24 000 highly inspiring *bhakti* songs in praise of Lord Rāma in Telugu and outshone every other musical composer by his devotional songs. His *Kṛutis* (compositions) are being sung even today in every Andhra house (as well as by Tamils) and they became synonyms with Hindu Andhra culture in India.

Swāmi Tyāgarāja derived great spiritual and devotional solace from his musical creations and believed that one can communicate with God through the medium of pure music, called the *Saṅgīta mārga*. He also composed numerous *bhajans* in Telugu. All his *Kīrtans* and *bhajans* are dedicated to Lord Rāma and Sīta. The immigrant Andhras to South Africa, although illiterate in the western sense, brought these Tyāgarāja *Kṛutis* and *bhajans* with them and celebrated music festivals where the *Kṛutis* of *Swāmi* Tyāgarāja were sung by the Andhra (and Tamil) artists.

Prabhakaran (1992 b : 220) traces the origins of the celebration of the Tyāgarāja Music Festival in South Africa to the 1930's when it was presented by the Ranjeni Music Troupe founded by Sri Soobramoney Naidoo. However, since 1960, the AMSSA, with the help of its various branch *sabhas* and recently with the help of the financial aid given by the ex-HoD,

celebrates this music festival as an annual religio-cultural festival in which hundreds of Telugus and Tamils attend (Source : Tyāgarāja Music Festival Brochures published by the AMSSA between 1986-1992). The recent variation in this festival celebration since 1991 is that of AMSSA's collaboration with the Indian Academy of South Africa in celebrating this festival. The capable organizer and the director of the Indian Academy of South Africa is one of the prominent Andhras, Sri T P Naidoo. At present, the AMSSA presents the Annual Tyāgarāja Music Festival on a grand scale inviting Tamil artists from Sri Lanka.

As Prabhakaran (1992 b : 220) documents, this musical festival is the high-water mark of the South African Indian music calendar as AMSSA honours and pays tribute to the greatest Telugu religio-spiritual music composer ever born in the *Carnatic* Music tradition. Various Telugu and Tamil artists sing the Tyāgarāja *Kṛutis* for two to three hours on three to four week-ends in many districts of Natal. Thousands of Indian Music lovers attend this festival annually and it is not only becoming one of the popular Hindu religio-cultural festival of the Andhras in South Africa but also of the Indians in South Africa. However, it is purely regarded as an Andhra (and Tamil) religio-cultural festival by many north Indians in South Africa because all the *Kṛutis* are sung only in Telugu.

As mentioned previously, the AMSSA at present is faced with a financial constraints and is in dilemma about the future expenses for this festival. The changing South African socio-political scenario is posing a great challenge for most of the annual religio-cultural festivals and activities held by the AMSSA. It will be interesting to observe how the AMSSA and the Andhras are going to react for this economic impediments in the near future.

5.5.2.3 Bhajana Festival

As discussed earlier, the month of *Āśwayuja* is considered sacred for the Hindu Andhras and many South African Andhras hold Rāma *Bhajans* (see 4.2.3) on grand scale during this month. Similarly, during the month of *Āśwayuja* the AMSSA holds its annual *Bhajana* Festival, usually at Venkātēswara Cultural centre at Havenside for four or five successive Saturdays in which various *bhajana* groups render *bhajans*. There are many Telugu *bhajana* groups in and around Durban who are prominent singers and can render soul elating *bhajans*

on various deities. Similarly, there are many ardent *bhajana* singers from the AMSSA branch *sabhas* who are hired to render *bhajans* on various occasions such as at the funeral services, during *Srī Rāma Navami* prayers and during the month of *Āśwayuja*. The AMSSA invites all these *bhajana* groups and some times *Bhajana* groups from the other linguistic groups of the Indian community to render items in their respective languages (Prabhakaran 1992 b : 229-230).

Between 1985-1988 the Andhra *Bhajana* Festival was held on a competitive basis and trophies were awarded for the best *bhajana* group. However, because only some branch *sabhas* participated in the competition, and because one or two *sabhas* which have proficient choir groups invariably won the annual trophy, the AMSSA decided to convert the *Bhajana* Festival into a purely religio-cultural, rather than a competitive, festival (Prabhakaran 1992 b : 230).

The branch *sabhas* take part in the *Bhajana* festival which culminates in a programme of *Bhajans* rendered by them. This annual festival is usually well supported by all linguistic groups and the artists always have a full audience (Source : AMSSA sixty-first A.G.M minutes : 1993). The expenses are met by the AMSSA and like other religio-cultural activities this festival is also (thus far) subsidized by the ex-HoD. Through this annual *Bhajana* festival AMSSA is not only contributing to the maintenance of the Hindu Andhra religio-cultural identity but also contributing to the maintenance of the Hindu culture in South Africa. By holding this *Bhajana* festival the Andhras also achieve their separate group identity against the dominant "in-group" Tamil culture.

It is relevant to add that the AMSSA thus far did not initiate to bring any Telugu artists from India or from the Andhra diaspora. Although the socio-political and religio-cultural sanctions imposed against South Africa have been relaxed in the past and completely lifted recently, the AMSSA, unlike other linguistic groups, did not devise any efforts to bring Andhra artists of any calibre to perform in South Africa (except the Kūcipūḍi dancer, Uma Bharati in 1975). In this aspect, the South African Telugus are lagging far behind the other linguistic groups and do not have any exposure to the modern Telugu religio-cultural activities.

5.5.2.4 Religio-Cultural Centres

Although there were various Hindu temples constructed by the immigrant Indians and later by the South African born Indians throughout Natal, the present-day Andhras are constructing their own temples where they can pray as a Telugu community or under one *sabha* banner. A few wealthy Telugu individuals built temples in their family names and donated such temples to the local branch *sabhas*. In Port Shepstone, on the South Coast of Durban, two wealthy individuals viz. *Sri* Narsimlu Reddy and *Sri* Jagannayakulu Reddy together contributed funds, built a *Perumāḷ* (Viṣṇu) Temple attached with a cultural centre and donated them to the Port Shepstone Andhra *Sabha*, one of the oldest Telugu *sabhas* in South Africa. This *Perumāḷ* temple and hall, being re-decorated with modern facilities, are used for various religio-cultural activities of the Port Shepstone Andhra *Sabha* such as for *Ugādi* celebrations, to hold weekly *satsaṅghs*, to organize monthly *sabha* executive and general meetings among many other activities.

There were many small temples and a few religio-cultural centres in Natal built by the Telugus during the early years of their indentureship. However, most of such temples and religio-cultural centres were either destroyed by the roads made during the apartheid era when the government demarcated land into different areas, or were abandoned by the Andhras (Indians) because some of the once Indian areas were declared "African" or "White" areas. It will be interesting to note that some of such Hindu temples were beautifully decorated with Zulu art and architecture and converted into comfortable houses or shops at present (Vide : research findings).

At present there are a few temples which are built by the present-day Telugus in and around Durban. Some of the prominent temples are : the Andhra Viṣṇu Temple in Reservoir Hills, the Veṅkaṭēswara Temple in Umkomaas, and the Simhādri Appanna Temples in Illovo and Mt.Edgecombe. Similarly, there some temples and cultural halls built by the contributions made by *sabha* members and rich non-Telugu (in some instances non-Indians) business men viz. the *Srī Rāmulu* Temple in Puntans Hill, the *Cinna Tirupati Srī Veṅkaṭēswara Dēvasthānam* in Tongaat and the Asherville Andhra Cultural Hall among others. The Puntans Hill Telugus at present are busily engaged in constructing a beautiful temple for their *Inti*

Ammōru, Maridamma, where they can propitiate *Amma* annually (see 4.4.4).

Of all the halls and temples, the biggest, exclusively built with the donations from the Telugu community and with AMSSA's funds, is the *Sri Venkateswara* Temple with an attached cultural hall at Havenside, Durban. The officials and members of the AMSSA took the responsibility to re-build the old *Simhādri Appanna* Temple into modern *Venkaṭēsvara* Temple. The Havenside project was successfully completed recently. The temple consists of the idol of Lord *Venkaṭēsvara* imported with the help of Tirumala-Tirupati *Dēvasthānam* Trust, India. The AMSSA holds all its religio-cultural functions mentioned in this chapter in the cultural hall built next to the temple.

However, as mentioned earlier, this major Andhra temple does not possess an *āgamic* priest who could perform *nitya pūjas*, *arcanas*, *abhiśēkams*, *ārādhanas* and other rites to *Venkaṭēsvara Swāmi*. Also, the AMSSA thus far, did not make any real efforts to appoint any *brāhmaṇ* priest from other linguistic groups of South Africa or to import a Telugu priest from Andhra Pradesh or from the Telugu diaspora (see 3.3 to 3.6).

By building separate temples and cultural halls for themselves, the AMSSA and the branch *sabhas* are consciously trying to maintain their group identity. Similarly, the refusal to appoint priests from other linguistic groups and the trivial efforts they are making to get Telugu priests from India may not be entirely conscious endeavourance to retain their identity. This might have started out as a conscious process, but later reaffirmation of certain acts (eg. importation of Sri Lankan priests by the Tamils) as group's identity might have precipitated a sub-conscious resistance by the AMSSA to further assimilation with Tamil culture.

5.5.2.5 Recitations and Prayers

Almost all the branch *sabhas* and the AMSSA have their traditional religious prayers and recitations which are rendered in Telugu and Sanskrit. The Telugus initiate every *sabha* meeting, function or celebrations chanting the sacred *Ōm* three times, recite *Śuklāmbaṛadharam slōka* followed by *Guru mantram*. In some functions they recite one of their traditional prayers viz. *śubhakārya prārdhana*, *sāyaṇkāla prārdhana* or *prātaḥkāla*

prārdhana depending on the time of the function and the subject of the function. They also pray to other deities of Hindu pantheon. Recently, some Christian Telugus, members of certain branch *sabhas* who are also members of the AMSSA, are objecting to such prayers in the *sabha* meetings and the same situation was reported by the Telugus in the USA (vide : research findings).

5.5.2.6 Media broadcast

Compared with the other Telugus in the former three colonies, the South African Telugus are deprived of the radio and television media for their religio-cultural propagation (see the other countries under 5.5). In South Africa although there is a separate channel for Indians in both radio and television broadcasts, the Telugus get very diminutive time allocation due to their minority status. Radio Lotus, the Indians' channel, allots more time share for Tamil and Hindi language and Telugu procures only one hour a week on every Friday evening. During that one hour, due to AMSSA's influence, the Radio Lotus plays mostly religious music (eg. during the Venkaṭēswara prayers in the month of *Āśwayuja* only songs on Lord Venkaṭēswara are broadcast) and film songs. The South African Telugus are not exposed to the latest religious songs (which includes *Sri Venkaṭēswara suprabhātam*) or to any new religio-cultural films not only due to the sanctions made by the Indian government but also to its minority status which is not viable for more Telugu broadcasts by radio and television stations.

However, the Radio Lotus allocates 3-5 minutes to AMSSA to convey its religio-cultural messages on some festival occasions such as Andhra *Ugādi*, *Dīpāwali* and *Kṛṣṇa Aṣṭami*. The members and officials of the AMSSA and branch *sabhas* utilise this festival allocation time and broadcast their religio-cultural messages to all the Telugu listeners both in Telugu and English. They briefly discuss the significance of the festival; its relevance to the Hindu Andhra culture in South Africa and convey their festival greetings to the community on behalf of AMSSA.

Through radio, the AMSSA also informs the listeners about its religio-cultural activities and invites the Hindu community to attend the same. Similarly, the messages are sent through newspaper media to the Telugu community for important functions such as *Ugādi*, *Eisteddfod*

and Tyāgarāja Music Festival. In a small way, the media helps the AMSSA to proclaim its Telugu identity in South Africa.

5.5.3 Malaysia

The immigrant Andhras being mostly *vaiśyas* (merchant caste amongst the Telugus), set up *Srī Rāma* Temples in the regions of lower Perak and Kedah districts and celebrated grand *Srī Rāma Navami* festivals. They held *Rāma bhajans* and performed '*ciratalu*' (stick-play called *kōlāṭam* in South Africa) with devotional songs which gave them their Andhra village atmosphere (Appannah Appanaidu 1981 : 5). The first and second generation born Malaysian Telugus as Appannah Appanaidu (1981 : 10) states, and as discussed in the previous chapters, were able to assimilate completely with the Tamils. Thus, the TAM and the other branch organizations decided to bring an awareness and group cohesiveness in the Telugu community by celebrating their own Andhra *Ugādi* (see 5.3 and 5.4) and other activities.

Although Islam is the official religion of Malaysia, the Federal Government of Malaysia gives financial assistance to non-Muslim Institutions and organizations, when government assistance is sought (Ponniah 1981 : 8). The TAM is not an exception to take this financial assistance rendered by the government. To add to this the government and the estate owners declare holidays for the main Hindu festival such as *Ugādi*, *Tai Pūsam*, *Śaṅkrānti* and *Dīpāwālī* which facilitate the Malaysian Telugus celebrate their festivals with great splendour and radiance. However, the *Dīpāwālī* festival in the Malaysian context appears to be more social event rather than religious in nature.

5.5.3.1 Telugu religio-cultural shows

In accordance with its aims and objectives, the TAM presents various religio-cultural shows on important occasions such as the Silver Jubilee of the foundation of the main Telugu parent association at Selangore or any other branch organizations at other districts. For example, the Silver Jubilee of the TAM was held at Selangore branch in which the programme commenced with singing "*Mā Telugu talliki malle pūdanda*" song, rendering *pūja*, followed by dances

made by eminent Malaysian Telugu dancers from *Padmini Kalālaya* Dance School, national dances, rendering of *ciratalu* by distinguished *Veṅkaṭēswara Brundam*, Bharata Nāṭyam and Kūcipūḍi dance-dramas, religious *tattu bhajanalu* (*bhajans* rendered with beating cymbals), singing religious songs and rendering folk dances. To encourage the maintenance of Hindu Telugu culture they also hold Miss *Ugādi* context and present trophies to the context winner.

At memorable occasions such as this, the TAM publishes a brochure depicting the religio-cultural aspects of Andhras in India and Malaysia. They proffer their tributes to the famous Telugus who founded the TAM twenty-five years ago or later. The brochure also focuses on the Hindu religion, Telugu literature, music, drama, life history of prominent Telugus, articles on the festivals of the Telugus in Andhra Pradesh, commentaries on great musicians and Hindu philosophers. Similarly, the TAM published many brochures illustrating the Hindu Andhra culture in the diaspora and in Malaysia at the time of the Second World Telugu Conference held in Kaula Lumpur in 1981 (see 5.4).

5.5.3.2 Annual Telugu family carnivals and festivals

There are thousands of Telugus living in the district of Selangore and in and around Kaula Lumpur. In order to foster their Telugu brotherhood and fraternity, the TAM branch of Selangore holds annual Telugu family carnival in Batu Caves since 1989 (Source : Telugu Family Carnival brochure 1992 : 8). All the Telugus are invited to participate, to forget their daily problems of life, and to exchange their religio-cultural norms and values. Usually 800 - 1 000 Telugus attend this carnival with the view of strengthening their Telugu group cohesiveness and exposing their younger generation to their religio-cultural activities (Interview : Sri B Nookiah 1993). This carnival consists of various aspects of Telugu activities such as singing *bhajans*, folk dances, dances, dramas and Telugu folk songs.

The TAM and the various branch organizations at Perak, Kedah, Penang, Selangore, Jahore Bahru and Kautan also hold the Hindu Andhra festivals of *San̥krānti*, *Dīpāwalī* and *Srī Rama Navami* on a grand scale inviting non-Telugu Hindus and other religious groups. By holding these festivals and carnivals of this type, the TAM and branch organizations not only enable the Telugus to maintain their religio-cultural identity in Malaysia but also expose the younger

generation to their Hindu Andhra culture.

5.5.3.3 Sāi group activities

As mentioned earlier, most of the Malaysian Telugus are followers of the *Srī Satya Sāi Bāba* Movement and are members of one of the thirty *Sāi* service centres existing in Malaysia (Interview : *Sri M S Sarma* 1993). They greet one another with "*Sāi Rām*" as a token of love with hands folded together in the traditional Hindu custom. As aforementioned, *Srī Sāi Bāba* being born in Andhra Pradesh, the Malaysian Telugus associate him with their Telugu culture and are devoted to him. Although almost all the Telugu organizational members are *Sāi Bāba* devotees, it is interesting to note that the Malaysian Telugus do not bring the *Sāi* Movement into their Telugu organizations and do not even sing *Sāi Bāba bhajans* in their organization meetings (Interview : *Sri Dadi Sri Ramulu* and *Sri B Nookiah* 1993). Although the major Telugu organizations do not fuse their *Sāi* devotion with their organizational activities, having witnessed their staunch devotion for *Sāi Bāba* Movement, the researcher feels it is pertinent to briefly mention some of the important Hindu religio-cultural and humanitarian activities of the Telugus as members of various *Sāi* Councils in Malaysia. The activities documented here are based on a documentary movie called *Hinduism - the movie part I*, produced by the *Satya Sāi* Central Council of Malaysia, commonly known as *Sāi Bāba* Movement and on the interviews conducted with various *Sāi Bāba* followers.

The *Sāi Bāba* Movement, a spiritual movement, is dedicated to foster inter-religious faith and understanding between the members of various religious groups. As one *Sāi* devotee informs (Interview : *Smt M S Sarma* 1993), they believe only in one God and as a sign of respect for all religions they keep all forms of gods from all religions in their *pūja mandir*. They see God reflected in different pools of water according to their traditions, their culture and environment (Source : *Hinduism - the movie part I* 1993).

The alter in the *Sāi* Centre in *Bhāṅgsa* in *Kaula Lumpur*, the researcher visited, consists of various deities of the Hindu pantheon and symbols of various other major world religions such as Islam, Christianity, Jainism, Buddhism, traditional Chinese gods, Confucious, Sikhism and others. An interesting and unusual thing among the other *Sāi* centres, noticed

by the researcher is that of the invocation to Lord Gaṇeśa and every day *nityābhiśēkam* performed for Him.

The documentary video "The Hinduism" part 1, illustrates various religio-cultural and humanitarian activities of the Sāi centres in Malaysia. They differ from group singing of *bhajans* of all gods; publications of religio-spiritual books in Tamil, Chinese, English and Malay languages; productions of *bhajana* cassettes on Hinduism and invoking Hindu gods; educating the youth about human values because they feel that there is a general decline in the norms and values of the Malaysian youth and to teach universal religious values to the devotees. They also plan to produce two more documentary movies in this series of Hinduism covering various gods of Hindu pantheon and various aspects of modes of temple worships viz. methodology, explaining the significance of various rites and rituals observed by Hindus.

The Sāi Centres in Malaysia also provide regular assistance to the poor, the sick and the needy (Interview : Sri M S Sarma and Sri B Nookiah 1993). They distribute food, clothing and medical facilities to the poor. They try to spread happiness by cleaning the environment of Malaysia. They bring relief and comfort to the lonely, aged, orphans, the victims of leprosy and to other dreadful diseases. They also perform various other humanitarian activities such as constructing toilets in the rural areas, emergency relief camps and free health camps all over Malaysia. Prominent Telugu members of the Sāi Centres also read scriptures and give religious discourses on various aspects of Hindu religion.

The Telugus regularly hold weekly Sāi *bhajans* at home level and at community level on every Thursday and sing various devotional songs on all Hindu gods and goddesses.

5.5.4. United States of America

In the USA, the Telugus are not a minority group within the Indian community and are not being dominated by any other linguistic group unlike their counterparts in the other three former colonies. As the ex-president of TANA and present Secretary-General of WTF (Interview : Sri Nallamothe Satyanarayana 1994) states, the Telugus were the first Indian

linguistic group to organize a national organization in the USA viz. the TANA, thus earning them a name of trend-setters in the religio-cultural issues in the USA.

As mentioned earlier, in the USA there are seventy-four Telugu organizations and some of them like the TCLA of New York, the Telugu Association of Los Angels, the Detroit Telugu Association, the Telugu Association of Washington D.C., the Telugu Association of Chicago besides TANA and ATA, are very big and powerful. However, there are no associations in some areas (eg. in Knoxville of Tennessee State) where the Telugus live in small pockets. Although various organizations have their own religio-cultural activities which are some what similar with the same aims and goals to achieve, an attempt is made only to discuss the activities of the major associations in the three states under study (see 1.4) because in a study of this nature is not viable to discuss the activities of all these organizations. Thus, the researcher briefly attempts to document various religio-cultural activities of certain major organizations in this sub-section.

5.5.4.1 Conferences and conventions

The major Telugu associations like TANA, ATA, TCLA and recently established WTF hold popular, major national conferences every two years in which five to ten thousands Telugus attend regularly (Interview : Sri Achyuta Rao 1994). The main aim of these Telugu conferences and conventions in the USA, like any other Telugu cultural conferences in the diaspora, is preservation and maintenance of the Hindu Andhra culture and language in the USA.

The major activity of some of the main organizations is to organize conference with the sole aims of uniting all the Telugus, to identify their immediate needs and to hold brain-storming academic and non-academic sessions to discuss their problems and seek solutions. Due to the reason that most of the American Telugus are Hindus, the organizations which hold the conferences and conventions cater for Hindu religious songs, dances, seminar papers and literature in their programmes. For example, one of the TANA conferences the researcher attended, opened with *Vēda pārāyaṇa* made by eminent *brāhmaṇ* priests followed by religious songs and Tyāgarāja *Kṛtis*. The Fourth World Conference held in New York in 1992 was

initiated with singing *Annamācārya Kīrtans* (religious songs written by the great Telugu saint *Tāllapāka Annamācārya* on Lord *Veṅkaṭēswara*) (Source : personal participation 1992). It was followed by invocation dance, *Kūcipūḍi* (traditional Andhra religio-cultural) dance, a semi religio-cultural drama called "*Ēḍukondalawāḍa Veṅkaṭaramaṇa*" and cultural group dances. Almost same pattern of religio-cultural programmes were noticed on all the days. Various artists, film stars, poets, writers and eminent literary figures implanted their religio-cultural influence on the younger generation. Similarly, the World Telugu Convention held in New York in 1993 consisted of *Vēdic* recitations from *Pañca Vēdas*, invocation to Mother Durga for welfare of the Telugus in North America, *Vēdic* literary discussion by Sanskrit scholars and discussion of various aspects of *Yōga*.

Many American born younger generation Telugus take part in these conferences and conventions which are regularly held with keen interest. They also hold their own Youth Conferences and conventions under watchful guidance of their parent organizations. All the conferences and conventions held in major cities not only facilitate fostering their Telugu fraternity in an alien environment but also regularly expose the American younger generation Telugus to the Hindu Andhra culture and induces an awareness for their group cohesiveness.

5.5.4.2 Monthly publications

Almost all the major associations have their own bilingual monthly magazines or newsletters published regularly covering the religio-cultural aspects of Hindu Andhras in the USA, in Andhra Pradesh and some times in the diaspora. The major organizations such as TANA, ATA, WTF, TCLA and others not only communicate with their members through these magazines but also use them as a device to propagate their religio-cultural norms and values. For example, the monthly *patrika* (magazine) of TANA or WTF consists of religio-cultural articles on *Ugādi*, *San̄krānti* and *Dīpāwalī* festivals; articles on Telugu Hindu Temples in Andhra Pradesh or in the USA; religio-spiritual articles on *Jagadguru Sri Saṅkarācārya*; translation of *Gīta* from Sanskrit to Telugu and English and reviews of World Telugu conferences and conventions. They dedicate every issue to the main Hindu festival which occurs in that particular month (eg. to *Ugādi* festival in the month of March/April and to Goddess Durga in the month of October).

The magazines also consist of various articles on great Andhra philosophers such as Prof Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (WTF magazine Vol II, issue III, March 1994), Prof P T Raju (WTF magazine Vol II, issue IV, April 1994) etc. Similarly, the ATA's monthly magazine called *America Bhārati* focuses on various socio-cultural and religious aspects of immigrant and first generation American born Telugus in the USA.

5.5.4.3 Contests, awards and scholarships

The Telugu foundations of TANA, ATA, WTF and other Telugu organizations have announced various annual merit scholarships and awards ranging from US \$ 500 to US \$ 1 500 each to the Telugu scholars of national merit recognition. One of the main criterion for awarding such merits is the nature and extent of participation in Telugu community's activities and in Hindu religio-cultural propagation. Outstanding youth in these fields are encouraged by giving scholarships in the name of staunch Telugus who sponsor the awards.

To encourage and motivate the younger generation to know their religion and culture, various Telugu associations in America hold essay contests for youth, young adults and for children on various socio-religious and cultural topics varying from caste system and its relevance to the Indian Americans to Indian mythologies, epic heroes and on sacred texts themselves. Thus, the American Telugu associations are using their press media with all the needed facilities such as Telugu computer fonts, direct access to Andhra Pradesh and more needed finances to safeguard their religio-cultural activities and norms and values.

5.5.4.4 Kucipūdi and Bharata Nāṭyam teaching

Various Telugus who are eminent musicians, dancers and experts in other fine arts established various schools where they teach Bharata Nāṭyam and traditional Andhra Kūcipūḍi dance to the American born first generation Telugus or to the India born young immigrants. There are various such dance academies and music schools where the Telugus learn traditional Hindu dances and dance-dramas using Telugu devotional and religious songs. For example, one of the eminent Telugu Kūcipūḍi dancer *Smt Uma Bharati* established her own dance school in Houston, where she trains hundreds of young dancers in the traditional Andhra dance.

The major Telugu organizations encourage such dance-drama and music institutes and sponsor their students and troupes to perform in the various national conferences and conventions. The major organizations also encourage the young artists to perform in the major Telugu festivals such as *Ugādi*, *Sankrānti* and *Dīpāwalī* shows and sponsor the young artists to perform in other areas. The organizations such as TANA, ATA and WTF among others also sponsor various eminent artists from the film industry and from the private sector to perform in their country. Through all these dance, music and dramas, the Telugu organizations impart their religio-cultural norms and values and traditions to the younger generation so that they will not be deprived off exposure to their rich religio-cultural heritage.

5.5.4.5 Religio-cultural audio-videos

In order to propagate their religion and culture, the major Telugu organizations in the USA produce and circulate many audio-video cassettes. There are various religious tapes on how to perform various rites and rituals such as *Satyanārāyaṇa vratam*, and *Varalakṣmi vratam*, *bhajans*, *Hanumān cālisa*, *Annamācārya Kīrtans* and *Tyāgarāja Kṛtis*.

The TANA has recently requested the eminent directors and producers of film industry in Andhra Pradesh to produce a classical Telugu movie called "*Āndhra Vaibhavam*" (the Glory of the Andhras) in Andhra Pradesh. The movie has been produced exclusively for the purpose of nurturing an interest and awareness for the Hindu Andhra culture and is being distributed/marketed by the TANA in the USA. Similarly, another interesting film exclusively produced by *Smt* Uma Bharati, the eminent dancer who is the director of the *Arcana* Dance Academy, called "*Ālayanādālu*" (the Temple Bells) depicts the problems of the American born Telugu children in adjusting to the Hindu Andhra culture. The theme of the film is about the parents' attitudes, challenges, about maintaining their roots in Andhra Pradesh, and about their American born children (Vide : *Ālayanādālu* film seen by the researcher in 1994). The story spins around the importance of maintaining ones religio-cultural identity in an alien environment. Although taken as a commercial movie the film *Ālayanādālu* reflects the Hindu Andhra culture both in the USA and in Andhra Pradesh. There are so many other documentaries and movies taken by the individuals or by the major organizations to instill an awareness about their religion and culture amongst the younger generation Telugus.

The WTF sponsors the World tour of the *Arcana* Dance Academy led by *Smt Uma Bharati* to present various dance-drama programmes for the American Telugu youth. The WTF sponsors and circulates various audio-video cassettes on how to teach the Telugu language to the American born Telugus.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter briefly explored the religio-cultural activities of the diaspora Telugus at the organizational level. There are many major organizations in the Telugu diaspora and their activities vary from celebrating the religious festival to various humanitarian activities. It is evident from this chapter that the religio-cultural activities of the organizations largely differ according to the environment they are living in and on the socio-political situation of their respective countries. The foregoing chapters demonstrate that the Telugus living in Mauritius and the USA, due to their religio-cultural contacts with Andhra Pradesh, are in an advantageous position compared to the Telugus living in Malaysia and in South Africa and it reflects from their religio-cultural dynamics.

This chapter illustrates that the Telugus celebrate the Andhra *Ugādi* on a grand scale in all the four countries; and that celebration clearly serves as a tool for their group identity in the Hindu diaspora. It is also evident that the major organizations in accordance with their aims and objectives are trying their utmost to nurture and maintain their group cohesiveness and Telugu identity in their respective countries through their religio-cultural activities which contribute to the maintenance of Hinduism in the diaspora.

The survival of any "implanted" religion and culture in an alien environment depends on the attitudes of the younger generation, the challenges and the problems they encounter or the successes they attain in pursuing their aims and goals. The following last chapter attempts to discuss that aspect of the Hindu Andhra culture in the diaspora in which the hypothesis of the researcher will be statistically analyzed.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1 ABSTRACT

This concluding chapter discusses the hypotheses of the study within the sociological framework of which this study is conducted. In 6.2 an attempt is made to briefly summarize the diaspora Hindu Andhra situation in which the challenges and problems they encounter as a minority Hindu community are included. The hypothesis of the study is documented in 6.3. The statistical analysis of the data and the findings are illustrated in 6.4. Finally, the attitudes of the youth are analyzed in 6.5.

6.2 HINDU ANDHRA SITUATION IN THE DIASPORA

Although the Hindu Andhra culture originated and developed in India, it did not remain confined only to the boundaries of the Andhra region and to the Indian sub-continent. The *Aitarēya Brāhmaṇa* (c 800 B.C) mentions the Andhras as a tribe who migrated to the south of the Vindhya Mountains (Apte 1896 : VII, 18). By c 300 B.C they were cited as a strong political power in the south-eastern Deccan by Megasthenes, the Greek diplomat during Chandragupta Maurya's regime in India. During the early centuries of the Christian era, the Andhras ventured to cross the rough seas of Bay of Bengal and established trade relations with the Far-Eastern countries and a close-knit friendship developed between these countries and the Andhras. Although this friendship and various trade relations during all these centuries enabled the Andhras to implant their religio-cultural norms and values in these foreign countries, that impact was very nominal because such Telugu traders intermarried and assimilated with the local community. However, it was only during the colonial era that the Andhras were really able to transfer their Hindu Andhra culture to the foreign lands and were able to disseminate their religio-cultural values in these remote countries when they emigrated in large numbers to the former British colonies (and other colonies) where they have settled permanently.

The Telugus who emigrated to the three former colonies during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries hailed from numerous villages of the present-day Andhra Pradesh and naturally carried with them the village Hinduism and the little traditions that existed at the time of their emigration. Being illiterates in the western sense; due to various socio-economic and political problems and challenges, they gave primacy to satisfy their physical needs and were virtually unable to seriously nurture their religio-cultural norms and values in their new environment. The hard working conditions on the plantations did not yield them to formally impart their religio-cultural values and practices, rites and rituals to their younger generations. As a minority group within the minority immigrant Indian group, they were severely influenced by the dominant in-group Tamil or Hindi/Bhojpuri culture and also by the more dominant host cultures viz. Islam or Christianity. They did not have any socio-economic stability to resist these in-group and out-group dominations and most Telugus shifted their language, culture and religion towards the dominant religio-cultural value system (cf. Prabhakaran 1992 b, 1993, 1994 a and 1994 b). Most of them were absorbed by the dominant in-group and out-group cultures (viz. Tamil culture in the case of South African and Malaysian Telugus and the Hindi/Bhojpuri culture in the case of Mauritian Telugus) and also by the more dominant host religion and culture (viz. Christianity in South Africa and Islam in Malaysia). Only the Mauritian Telugus are fortuitous enough to be in a Hindu dominated country which did not pose a threat to their Hindu cultural value system.

The apartheid era and the recent socio-economic and political situations in South Africa posed additional challenges for the South African Andhras. They were literally cut off from the other Hindu Andhras in the diaspora and were not aware of the religio-cultural changes that occurred in the Hindu Andhra culture in the modern Andhra Pradesh. Thus they loyally preserved only what they brought with them during the time of their immigration to South Africa. In the case of Mauritius and Malaysia for almost five to six decades there were no fresh religio-cultural contacts with India or any new Telugu immigrants from Andhra Pradesh. In these situations it is natural for any minority enclaved communities to shift their religio-cultural values, traditions and activities which appear to be alien and superfluous to the younger generation born in these respective countries under study. However, many Andhras in the three former colonies did not abandon their Hindu Andhra culture and as demonstrated earlier (see chapters 3-5) are actually returning to their traditional religio-cultural activities

in some challenging situations.

The situation of the American Telugus although differing in many aspects from the immigrant situation of the Telugus of the three former colonies during the nineteenth century, appears to be same as with any immigrant situation in the diaspora. As informed by various interviewees, many Telugus in present-day Andhra Pradesh are attracted by the American way of life, prosperity and facilities and wish to go to the USA. Such Telugus dream of living in the USA; like to fulfil their dreams and they would like to undertake any sort of adventure. Some of them are even prepared to sacrifice their religio-cultural norms and values. They are easily lured by the "bright-light" theory of western life and once in the USA abandon their religio-cultural identity and start questioning the very basics of their Hindu Andhra culture.

Once they arrive in the USA, they realize the fact that the life in the USA is not so sweet and easy as they have perceived and their struggle for survival begins. They utilise a period of ten to fifteen years to pass the required examinations, to acquire a permanent job and secure residential permit to stay in the country (see chapter 2.6). During this period most of them tend to ignore their language (language shift towards the dominant English language takes place due to its prestige and high official status) and adopt western religio-cultural values. They do not transfer their traditional religio-cultural values to their next generation due to various pressing problems. During this process a valuable period of one or two decades are lost. The younger American born or American raised Telugus in consonance with the findings of Prabhakaran (1992 a : 168-169) are deprived of the essential knowledge about their religio-cultural norms, values and practices and are more exposed to their host American culture which is dominated by western influence.

However, during the second stage, i.e once they have settled, the minority immigrant Telugus experience the religio-cultural insecurity. At this phase, some Telugus feel that the "honeymoon" period in the USA is over and they start to seek for their religio-cultural identity (Interview : *Sri* Nallamothu Satyanarayana and *Sri* Achyuta Rao 1994). They comprehend that their younger generation is showing an apathy towards their own Hindu Andhra culture and feel guilty that they could not implant positive feelings about their religion and culture amongst their younger generation (vide : research findings and personal

experience of the researcher as an immigrant). At this instance they tend to introduce their children to their religion and culture which they themselves neglected for one or two decades. Due to the fear that they are losing their religio-cultural norms and values they tend to revert to some of their old religio-cultural practices (see chapters 3-5) which they have almost forgotten or neglected. It is also because of the fear of complete assimilation by the dominant culture they staunchly follow some of the religio-cultural activities which they reflect that can induce a group identity for them.

Most of the parents, trying to be loyal to their Hindu Andhra culture, tend to impose their religio-cultural behaviour and activities on the younger generation who were not previously exposed to such activities. In this study the researcher uses the term 'loyalty' to define the principle in the name of which the Hindu Andhras rally themselves as a community either consciously or unconsciously and resist changes in their religio-cultural practices. This loyalty of the immigrants towards their religio-cultural norms and values brings a clash between the immigrant generation and the first generation born American Telugus (with a few exceptions) and the younger generation tend to oppose this parental intervention in their life style. Although educated, a very few parents have the time, energy or skills to explain their younger generation why they are trying to backslide to their old religio-cultural practices. This failure to provide explanations to the younger generation might be attributed to the lack of understanding of their own inner unconscious insecure feeling as an individual or due to a lack of cohesive group identity in an alien environment. The strategies applied by the Telugus in the four countries under study as evinced in their religio-cultural dynamics support the researcher's phenomena regarding this issue.

The American children are thus torn between the two cultures, on one side the traditional Hindu Andhra culture which they witness at home and on the other the dominant American culture, a melting-pot of all immigrant cultures. They feel indifferent to the Hindu Andhra culture (see 6.5 for more details). As informed by some young American Telugus in the USA (Interview : Miss Vijaya Malini 1994), as they grow older and gain maturity they accept these two cultures and adjust themselves for both cultures. Such Telugus will be in a position to retain and make use of good values from both the traditional Andhra culture and the host American culture. However, this is not an easy task to perform.

As evinced in the Hindu Andhra situation of the three former colonies (see chapters 3-5) and as demonstrated by Prabhakaran (1992 b and 1993) generation by generation, the Telugus maintain their religio-cultural value system which is traditionally Andhra in the face of various socio-economic and political challenges and problems.

6.3

HYPOTHESIS

* NB

In the light of the problem of the study as discussed in the previous chapters and in 6.2, with the aims and objectives of the study documented in 1.3 and the religio-cultural practices as discussed in the foregoing chapters, it was hypothesized by the researcher that the present-day Hindu Andhras of different generations in the diaspora although westernized in their outlook many retain a religio-cultural value system which is quite traditionally Andhra. It follows that many younger Andhras are trying to nurture and maintain their Hindu religion and culture. The data obtained and illustrated in the foregoing chapters undoubtedly support the hypotheses of the researcher. Her findings also sustain her previous findings on generation as a factor in shift and maintenance of the ethnic culture in an immigrant situation (Prabhakaran 1992 b : 259). It is evident that these findings on the Hindu Andhra situation are new contributions to the sociological aspects of the study of Hindu religion because this study demonstrates that generation by generation the Hindu Andhras select their religion and culture as tools to achieve and to maintain their group cohesiveness, identity and resist change in their religio-cultural values (Vide : research findings). This is evident from their religio-cultural dynamics illustrated in the foregoing chapters. It is also evident that they resist complete assimilation with the host country and cultural domination by other Hindus through their religio-cultural activities.

The following sub-section focuses on the statistical analysis of the empirical data to discuss the family religio-cultural activities (in which some *Samskāras* are included) and observance of the Hindu festivals in the Andhra diaspora.

6.4 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Following Prabhakaran’s work (1992 a : 171), the researcher chose a null hypothesis (Ho) and alternative hypothesis (Ha) before the sample is drawn and the data is analyzed. The null hypothesis usually represents the hypothesis the researcher is trying to reject and the alternative hypothesis represents all other possibilities. However, the researcher is supposed to take a specific hypothesis as null hypothesis. As Kothari (1985 : 257) states, while testing the hypothesis the researcher should choose the usual 5% significance level. According to Kothari (1985 : 257-8) if one takes a significance level at 5 percent, then that implies that Ho will be rejected when the sampling result (i.e observed evidence) has a less than 0.05 probability of occurring if Ho is true (cf.Prabhakaran 1992 b : 252).

In order to compare the frequency of observance of family religio-cultural activities between the different countries, the researcher conducted the Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric statistical test with the data obtained from the empirical research. This test was chosen, not only because it is appropriate for any multiple-sample test situation, but also because the samples were independent and of different generations. In the context of this statistical test, the Null-Hypothesis [Ho] and the alternative Hypothesis [Ha] were used for comparison as shown below:

- Ho - There is no evidence of a difference in the frequency of observance of family religio-cultural activities between the different countries.
- Ha - There are differences in the frequencies of observances of family religio-cultural activities between the different countries.

The data values in the following table represent the total number of people responding positively to the question "What are the family gatherings observed in your family? Tick all applicable answers" (see question C1 in the annexure) corresponding to the different countries (see table 6.1)

TABLE 6.1
FAMILY RELIGIO-CULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN THE TELUGU DIASPORA

C 1.1 -----> C1.10 SAMPLE SIZES

MAU	29	23	34	39	8	13	3	1	8	6	N ₁ = 10
S A	45	38	43	49	11	29	4	2	3	5	N ₂ = 10
MAL	30	39	42	44	17	30	18	2	14	11	N ₃ = 10
USA	25	31	40	15	24	13	17	5	--	--	N ₄ = 8
											N = 38

TABLE 6.2
TABLE OF RANKS OF DATA VALUES OF TABLE 6.1

MAU	S A	MAL	USA
24,5	37	26,5	23
21	30	31,5	28
29	35	34	33
31,5	38	36	17
10,5	12,5	18,5	22
14,5	24,5	26,5	14,5
4,5	6	20	18,5
1	2,5	2,5	7,5
10,5	4,5	16	--
9	7,5	12,5	--
R1 = 156	R2 = 197,5	R3 = 224	R4 = 163,5

In the above tables, R_i = Sum of the ranks of the country C_i [$i = 1,2,3,4$]. The test statistic is with [$n = 38$].

$$\begin{aligned}
 H &= \frac{12}{N(N+1)} \left[\sum_{i=1}^4 \frac{R_i^2}{n_i} \right] - 3[N+1] \\
 &= \frac{12}{38(39)} \left[\frac{(156)^2}{10} + \frac{(197.5)^2}{10} + \frac{(224)^2}{10} + \frac{(163.5)^2}{8} \right] - 3(39)
 \end{aligned}$$

$$H = 1,9745$$

Since $i > 3$, and $n_1, n_2, n_3, n_4 < 5$, the statistic H is approximately χ^2 [chi-squared] distributed with $i-1$ degrees of freedom [$i = 4$]. Also $H \div \chi^2_3 = 4,642$ at the 20% significance level.

Since the calculated value of $H = 1,9745 <$ the value of H from the chi-squared tables (i.e $1,9745 < 4, 642$) even at the 20% significance level (Rice John 1988 : 559), the researcher can not reject H_0 , and therefore concludes that there are no differences in the frequency of observance of family religio-cultural activities between the different countries.

In order to compare the differences in the frequencies of observances of religio-cultural festivals by the Andhras of the different countries under study, the Kruskal-Wallis Test was again applied for the same reasons mentioned above.

- H_0 - There is no evidence to indicate that there is a difference in the frequency of observance of religious festivals by the Telugus in the diaspora.
- H_a - There is a difference in the frequency of observance of religious festivals by the Telugus in the diaspora.

The data values in the following table (see table 6.3) represent the total number of people responding positively to the question "What religious festivals do you observe in your home?" (see annexure).

TABLE 6.3
RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS OBSERVED BY THE HINDU ANDHRAS
IN THE DIASPORA

MAU	S A	MAL	USA
48	33	44	36
40	26	34	17
26	20	15	6
3	4	16	6
14	22	16	13
38	30	24	11
17	21	33	45
12	8	15	21
49	48	48	34
42	13	46	33
39	3	3	3
13	6	4	4
N1 = 12	N2 = 12	N3 = 12	N4 = 12

Sample sizes = N1 + N2 + N3 + N4 = 48

TABLE 6.4
RANKS OF DATA VALUES OF TABLE 6.3

MAU	S A	MAL	USA
46	33	42	37
40	29,5	35,5	22,5
29,5	24	18,5	9
2,5	6	20,5	9
17	27	20,5	15
38	31	28	12
22,5	25,5	33	43
13	11	18,5	25,5
48	46	46	35,5
41	15	44	33
39	2,5	2,5	2,5
15	9	6	6
Ri = 351,5	Ri = 259,5	Ri = 315	Ri = 250

In this above table (6.4) Ri once again represents the sum of the ranks of country and Ci represents the countries themselves i.e [i = 1, 2, 3, 4]. The test statistic with N = 48 i.e

$$\begin{aligned}
 H &= \frac{12}{N(N+1)} \left[\sum_{i=1}^4 \frac{R_i^2}{n_i} \right] - 3[N+1] \\
 &= \frac{12}{48(49)} \left[\frac{(351.5)^2 + (259.5)^2 + (315)^2 + (250)^2}{12} \right] - 3(49) \\
 \Rightarrow H &= 2,922
 \end{aligned}$$

Since $i > 3$, $n_1, n_2, n_3, n_4 < 5$, the statistic H is approximately χ^2 [chi-squared] distributed with $i - 1 = 3$ degrees of freedom [$1 = 4$]. Now according to the χ^2 table values, $H \div \chi^2_3 = 2, 366$ at the 50% significance level but $H \div \chi^2_3 = 6, 251$ at the 10% significance level. Since one can only reject H_0 at the 50% significance level and not at the 10% level (Rice John 1988 : 559-60), the researcher can not reject the H_0 . Thus she concludes that there is no convincing evidence to suggest differences in the frequencies of observance of religious festivals by the residents of the different countries.

From the above statistical analysis it is evident that in both tests, due to the low level of sampling result the H_0 are not rejected and the tests substantiate the hypothesis of the researcher that from generation to generation the Telugus maintain their religio-cultural value system which is traditionally Andhra. Due to these findings the researcher feels that her hypotheses could be attributed to the similar immigrant Hindu situations in the diaspora. She feels that the Hindu Andhra religio-cultural activities will be nurtured and maintained for the sake of their group identity in an enclaved situation. Lastly in the following sub-section the researcher attempts to discuss the future of the Hindu Andhra culture in the Hindu diaspora using the data available from the questionnaire survey.

6.5 YOUTH ATTITUDES AND THE FUTURE OF THE HINDU ANDHRA CULTURE IN THE DIASPORA

To analyze the attitudes of the present-day Telugu youth towards their Hindu-Andhra culture, the researcher posed these questions to the respondents, viz. "Do you think it is important to retain one's religio-cultural identity in a multi-cultural situation?" and "How do you/the youth view the Hindu Andhra culture in your country?". The responses elicited are tabulated in the following tables (see tables 6.5 and 6.6).

TABLE 6.5
IS IT IMPORTANT TO RETAIN ONE’S RELIGIO-CULTURAL IDENTITY IN A
MULTI-CULTURAL SITUATION?

	MAU	S A	MAL	USA
DNA	6%	10%	6%	8%
YES	94%	90%	94%	82%
NO	--	--	--	10%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%

TABLE 6.6
YOUTH ATTITUDES TOWARDS HINDU ANDHRA CULTURE IN THE DIASPORA

	MAU	S A	MAL	USA
D N A	28%	34%	24%	52%
YOU/THEY ARE CONSCIOUS OF IT	10%	28%	26%	20%
YOU/THEY LIKE TO GET INVOLVED IN IT	24%	10%	32%	8%
YOU/THEY ARE INDIFFERENT TO IT	4%	6%	4%	10%
YOU/THEY DON'T CARE IT	4%	--	4%	8%
YOU/THEY PROPAGATE IT	28%	22%	10%	2%
OTHER (SPECIFY)	2%	--	--	--
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%

Tables 6.5 and 6.6 illustrate that the highest positive response came from the Telugu youth from the three former colonies where as a noticeable 10% of the American youth responded negatively to this question and another 8% did not answer this question. Similarly, the data

from table 6.6 reflects that unlike their counterparts in the three former colonies, a sizeable percent (52%) of the American respondents, being immigrant and first generation born in the country, are not sure of themselves and did not answer this particular question. Another considerable percent (10% and 8%) of the respondents answered either being indifferent or as having negative attitude and do not care for their Hindu Andhra culture. However, the well established and later generation Telugus in the former colonies display their positive attitudes towards their religion and culture. The data in these tables are supported by the responses given to the question, "Would you (as youth)/the youth like to see the survival of the Hindu Andhra culture in your country?". It is documented in the following table (see table 6.7).

TABLE 6.7
WOULD YOU AS YOUTH/THE YOUTH LIKE TO SEE THE SURVIVAL OF HINDU ANDHRA CULTURE IN YOUR COUNTRY?

	MAU	S A	MAL	USA
D N A	6%	10%	6%	6%
YES	94%	90%	94%	88%
NO	--	--	--	6%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%

The above table (table 6.7), being self-explanatory, also supports the hypothesis of the study. Lastly, when asked "What are your hopes for the future of Hindu Andhra culture in your country?" the response elicited are tabulated as follows (see table 6.8)

TABLE 6.8
RESPONDENTS' HOPES FOR THE FUTURE OF THE HINDU ANDHRA CULTURE
IN THEIR COUNTRIES

	MAU	SA	MAL	USA
D N A	12%	6%	14%	4%
VERY OPTIMISTIC	18%	30%	16%	20%
OPTIMISTIC	54%	46%	52%	44%
NOT SO OPTIMISTIC	12%	12%	6%	14%
UNCERTAIN	4%	6%	12%	18%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%

The above table demonstrates that an average of over 65% respondents from all the four countries are either very optimistic or optimistic about the future of the Hindu Andhra culture and less than an average of 10% of them feel uncertain about the future of their Hindu culture. These responses undoubtedly demonstrate that the Hindu Andhra culture will survive in the diaspora.

To conclude, when the enclaved minority Telugus in the diaspora feel that their group identity is being threatened by the dominant in-group or out-group communities they choose religion and culture as weapons to safeguard their ethnic identity. At the time of their immigration due to various socio-economic and political reasons they shift their language, culture and religion and tend to assimilate completely with the host country. However, as generations pass they realize that their group identity is at stake and to protect that identity they choose religion and culture as tools. As witnessed in this study through their religio-cultural activities they nurture and retain their group cohesiveness which could achieve their identity. In this process they may even revert to their old religio-cultural traditions which they have abandoned or almost forgotten in the past decades.

In the case of the USA Telugus they being numerically strong and in the process of adjusting and settling in the host country, are not feeling insecure yet about their group identity. However, the Telugus who are already well-settled are gradually realizing that their American born children are neglecting their religion and culture and erosion of their culture and religion might lead to complete assimilation with the host country. This realization and doubts are reflected in the interviews conducted with the Telugus who immigrated to the USA two or three decades ago and with the American born Telugus.

These findings clearly sustain the hypotheses of the researcher about generation as a factor in the shift and maintenance of religio-cultural activities of the minority community. These findings are a new contribution to the minority group activities of Hinduism because they reflect the sociological aspects of religion and culture. This area needs to be further researched. Similarly, there is a large scope for any academic to research the socio-anthropological aspects of the major Telugu festivals and South Indian religio-cultural activities which are discussed in chapter three and four and could bring further dimensions to the findings of the present study.

SUMMARY

CHAPTER ONE focuses on the pertinence of the study viz. the religio-cultural dynamics of the Hindu Andhra community in South Africa and in the diaspora. This chapter while illustrating the aims and objectives of the study also discusses the limitations of the study. This chapter explains the methodology employed in the research and the difficulties encountered during the study.

CHAPTER TWO being historical in nature extrapolates the origin and growth of the Hindu Andhra culture in the diaspora. Since the study of the present-day Hindu Andhras in the diaspora is incomplete without reference to their immigration to the respective countries under study, an attempt is made briefly to document their historical migration and settlements in the diaspora. The latter half of the chapter elucidates the religio-cultural conditions of the Andhra country at the time of the Telugu immigration as indentured labourers to the three former British colonies. This chapter also illustrates that the Telugus are a minority community within the minority Hindu community in the diaspora and briefly discusses the sociological aspects of the attitudes and behavioural patterns of the minority group towards a dominant "out-group" culture or religion.

CHAPTER THREE explores the religio-cultural activities of the Hindu Telugus as individuals. The purpose of the chapter being to demonstrate the influence of religion on the personal lives of the Hindu Andhras, an attempt is made in the first half of the chapter to analyze the religio-cultural attitudes, the modes of worship and the religious affiliations of the Hindu Telugus in the diaspora. The most popularly read scriptures and reasons for such popularity are briefly delineated. The commonly performed *Saṁskāras*, the most purifying rites in the lives of the Hindus, are reviewed. The latter half of the chapter explores both the home based Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic religio-cultural activities of the diaspora Hindu Telugu community. This chapter not only briefly reviews the erosion/preservation of the Hindu Andhra cultural activities, but also sheds light on the specific South Indian (Dravidian) activities which are exclusively performed by the Telugus in the three former colonies.

CHAPTER FOUR deals exclusively the Sanskritic rites and rituals performed at the societal level. The commonly celebrated Pan-Hindu festivals are reviewed briefly. The bulk of the chapter focuses on the major Dravidian rituals which are unknown to the technocrat Telugus in the USA and are grandly performed by the Telugus in Mauritius, South Africa and Malaysia. This chapter illustrates that the Telugus in these countries choose religion as an instrument to nurture and maintain their group identity in an enclaved society. It also demonstrates that Telugus preserved their village little traditions which they have implanted in their respective countries. Generation by generation these traditions are not completely ebbing out because some Telugus are reverting to their traditional religio-cultural activities in the times of socio-political crisis or challenges. While Tamil domination is evident on South African and Malaysian Telugus, North Indian influence is evident on the Mauritian and American Telugus. Lastly, this chapter also focuses on the challenges, problems and setbacks the Telugus encounter as a society and reasons for their accomplishments.

CHAPTER FIVE briefly examines the religio-cultural dynamics of the Telugu *sabhas* and Telugu organizations. This chapter clearly displays that the religio-cultural activities of the different Telugu organizations in the diaspora largely differ from one country to the other depending on their environments and on the socio-political and economic status in their communities. This chapter also exhibits that both the Telugus of Mauritius and the USA, due to their religio-cultural contacts with Andhra Pradesh and Tirumala-Tirupati *Dēvasthānam*, are in an advantageous position compared to the Telugus living in South Africa and Malaysia.

CHAPTER SIX reflects the conclusion derived from the study and demonstrates the statistical tests which are employed to establish the hypotheses of the researcher. The data also clearly demonstrates that generation is an important factor in the maintenance and shift of the Hindu Andhra culture in the diaspora and these findings sustain the researcher's previous findings.

QUESTIONNAIRE TO THE HINDU ANDHRA COMMUNITY IN THE DIASPORA

A. PERSONAL DETAILS

1. Place of birth : city as well as the country _____

2. Sex

MALE	FEMALE
1	2

3. Age in years

BELOW 18	19-34	35-50	ABOVE 50
1	2	3	4

4. Your generation in your country

IMMIGRANT	FIRST	SECOND	THIRD	FOURTH
1	2	3	4	5

Key to the generation :

- Immigrant = born in an other country (eg.India).
First = respondent born in this country.
Second = respondent's parent/s born in this country.
Third = respondent's grandparents born in this country.
Fourth = respondent's great-grandparents born in this country.

5. If an immigrant, how long have you been living in the country?

N/A	LESS THAN 5 YEARS	5-10 YEARS	MORE THAN 10 YEARS
1	2	3	4

6. Occupation

PROFESSIONAL (SPECIFY)	1	HOUSE WIFE	5
BUSINESSMAN/ SELF EMPLOYED	2	FARM/AGRICULTURE	6
WHITE COLLAR JOB	3	UNEMPLOYED	7
STUDENT	4	OTHER (SPECIFY)	8

B. ATTITUDES TOWARDS HINDU ANDHRA CULTURE

1. What is your attitude towards the Hindu Andhra culture?

VERY POSITIVE 1	POSITIVE 2	NEGATIVE 3	I DON'T CARE 4
--------------------	---------------	---------------	-------------------

2. Do your children take part in the Andhra religio-cultural activities?

N/A 1	YES 2	NO 3
----------	----------	---------

3. Would you/do you insist that your children participate in the Andhra religio-cultural activities?

N/A 1	YES 2	NO 3
----------	----------	---------

C. FAMILY - RELIGIO-CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

1. What are the family gatherings observed in your family? Tick all applicable answers.

NAMING THE BABY	1	NALUGU	6
FIRST OUTING FOR THE BABY	2	SĪMANTAM	7
SOLID FOOD FEEDING	3	VAḌUGU	8
EAR-PIERCING CEREMONY	4	WEDDING (VIVĀHAM)	9
GIRLS COMING TO AGE	5	TADDINAM	10

2. Do you use Telugu when praying alone?

YES 1	NO 2
----------	---------

3. If Telugu is used in your house prayers/gatherings do you understand the meaning of the prayers/activities?

N/A 1	YES 2	NO 3
----------	----------	---------

4. Do you have priests who can conduct various Telugu prayers, festivals and *vratamulu* in your country?

YES	NO
1	2

5. Are there any specific variations in your prayers, festivals and other religious ceremonies compared to the Andhras living in Andhra Pradesh/India?

YES	NO	I AM NOT SURE
1	2	3

6. Justify your answer _____

D. RELIGIO-CULTURAL ATTITUDES AND ACTIVITIES

1. What is your specific religious affiliation?

N/A	1
SAIVITE	2
VAISNAVITE	3
ŚAKTA	4
VĒDĀNTIN	5
OTHER (SPECIFY)	6
NO SPECIFIC AFFILIATION	7

2. Who is home deity (*iṣṭa daivam*)?

RĀMA	1	HANUMĀN	7
KṚṢṢNA	2	LAKṢMI	8
ŚIVA	3	SARASWATI	9
VEṆKATESWARA SWĀMI	4	VIṢṢNU	10
DURGA	5	PĀRVATI	11
VINĀYAKUDU	6	NO SPECIFIC DEITY	12

3. Are you a member of any religious movement or organization in your country?

YES 1	NO 2
----------	---------

4. If yes to question 3, please specify

N/A	1
RĀMAKRISHṆA MISSION	2
DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY	3
HARE KRISHṆA MOVEMENT	4
SĀI BĀBA MOVEMENT	5
VENKATESWARA BHAKTULA SAṄGHAM	6
ŚAIVA SIDDHĀNTA SAṄGHAM	7
CINMĀYĀNANDA MISSION	8
OTHER (SPECIFY)	9

5. What is your attitude towards other Hindu religious organizations existing in your country?

RESPECTFUL	TOLERANT	UNFRIENDLY	INDIFFERENT	UNCERTAIN
1	2	3	4	5

E. RELIGION AND PERSONAL LIFE

1. How important is Hinduism in your daily life?

VERY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	NOT SO IMPORTANT	I DON'T CARE
1	2	3	4

2. Do you apply the religious precepts and teachings you heard/know during the satsaṅgh in your daily life?

YES	NO
1	2

3. Do you sing *Bhajans/Kīrtans* in Telugu?

YES	NO
1	2

4. Do you think it is important that the *Bhajans/Kīrtans* are sung in Telugu?

YES	NO
1	2

5. Are there any Hindu temples in your area?

YES	NO
1	2

6. If yes, how often do you visit that/those temple/s?

N/A	DAILY	FREQUENTLY	OCCASIONALLY	RARELY	NEVER
1	2	3	4	5	6

7. How often do you read Hindu religious literature?

DAILY	FREQUENTLY	OCCASIONALLY	RARELY	NEVER
1	2	3	4	5

8. Which religious scripture do you read most often?

<i>RĀMĀYANAM</i>	1	<i>PURĀNAS</i>	4
<i>GĪTA</i>	2	<i>VĒDAS</i>	5
<i>BHĀRATAM</i>	3	OTHER (SPECIFY)	6

9. Do you have a sacred shrine/*pūja mandiram* in your house?

YES	NO
1	2

10. Do you perform daily prayers near the shrine?

N/A	YES	NO
1	2	3

if yes, how often _____

11. What religious festivals do you observe in your home?

<i>UGĀDI</i>	1	<i>VINĀYAKA CAVITI</i>	7
<i>SRĪ RĀMA NAVAMI</i>	2	<i>VIJAYA DAŚAMI</i>	8
<i>HANUMĀN JAYANTI</i>	3	<i>DĪPĀWALI</i>	9
<i>NĀGULA CAVITI</i>	4	<i>SAṆKRĀNTI</i>	10
<i>VARALAKṢMI VRATAM</i>	5	<i>NARASIMHA JAYANTI</i>	11
<i>KRISHNA AṢṬAMI</i>	6	OTHER (SPECIFY)	12

12. Are there any specific *vrathamulu* performed in your house? Please list them in the given space.

13. Do you fast on any specific days in a week?

YES	NO
1	2

14. If your answer is 'yes' which are the days?

SUNDAY	1	THURSDAY	5
MONDAY	2	FRIDAY	6
TUESDAY	3	SATURDAY	7
WEDNESDAY	4	N/A	8

F. TELUGU ASSOCIATIONS AND RELIGIO-CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

1. Are you a member of any Telugu association/*sabha* in your country?

YES	NO
1	2

2. List the main religio-cultural activities of the Telugu organizations in your country.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

3. List the main problems you/your organization have/has encountered in maintaining the Hindu Andhra culture in your country.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

4. List the main successes you/your organization have/has achieved towards maintaining the Hindu Andhra culture in your country.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

5. Is there any specific feature in the religio-cultural practices of the Telugus in your country which is different from the Hindu Andhra activities in India?

YES	NO	I AM NOT SURE
1	2	3

6. If yes, what is that? _____

G. ANDHRA WOMEN’S ORGANIZATION IN THE DIASPORA

1. Are you a member of any Telugu women’s organization in your country?

N/A	YES	NO	NO SUCH ORGANIZATION IN OUR COUNTRY
1	2	3	4

2. What are the language and culture promoting activities of this organization?

- a. _____
- b. _____

3. What are the (Hindu) religious activities of these organizations?

- a. _____
- b. _____

4. Do they encounter any specific problems while trying to maintain Hindu Andhra culture?

If yes, please specify them _____

H. GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. How do you/the youth view the Hindu Andhra culture in the your country?

YOU/THEY ARE CONSCIOUS OF THEM	1
YOU/THEY LIKE TO GET INVOLVED IN THEM	2
YOU/THEY ARE INDIFFERENT TO THEM	3
YOU/THEY DON'T CARE THEM	4
YOU/THEY ARE INVOLVED IN PROPAGATING THEM	5
OTHERS (SPECIFY)	6

2. Would you (as youth)/the youth like to see the survival of Hindu Andhra culture in your country?

YES	NO
1	2

3. Do you think it is important to retain one's religio-cultural identity in a multi-cultural (immigrant) situation?

YES	NO
1	2

4. Is there any conflict between the norms and values of your society and the Andhra cultural value system with special reference to the Andhra youth ?

YES	NO	I AM NOT SURE
1	2	3

5. Please justify your answer _____

6. Do you still have contacts with India?

YES	NO
1	2

8. How are your relations with the other Hindus in your country?

VERY GOOD	1
GOOD	2
FAIR	3
I DON'T WORRY ABOUT THEM	4

9. Do you have any specific Andhra religio-cultural entertainment programs in your country? If yes, tick them all.

TELEVISION (TELUGU) BROADCASTING	1
VIDEOS (TELUGU)	2
RADIO BROADCASTING (TELUGU)	3
TELUGU DRAMAS	4
TELUGU CONCERTS	5
TELUGU AUDIO TAPES	6
CULTURAL THEATRES/CENTRES	7
KŪCIPŪDI DANCES	8
GOBBI,KŌLĀṬAM,TŌLUBOMMALĀṬA	9
ANDHRA CULTURAL EVENINGS/NIGHTS	10

10. What are your hopes for the future of Hindu Andhra culture in your country?

VERY OPTIMISTIC	1
OPTIMISTIC	2
NOT SO OPTIMISTIC	3
UNCERTAIN	4

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR KIND CO-OPERATION AND FOR
YOUR VALUABLE TIME YOU HAVE SPENT ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

GOD BLESS YOU.

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