

# **Proselytization in Socially Discriminated Estate Tamil Community**

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The paper focuses on the proselytization of Estate Tamils by evangelical groups. It is evident that some Estate Tamils who are attracted to these groups come from socially and emotionally depressed backgrounds. The up country Tamil population called “Indian Tamils of Sri Lanka” have been discriminated since their arrival here in the 19th and 20th centuries to work in coffee, tea and rubber plantations. In general socio-economically their standard of living has been below that of the national average. The objective of the study was to socially analyze the cause of the religious emigration from their ancestral folk Hinduism to evangelical Christian groups.

With the research carried out in 2014 and 2015 in the district of Kandy in Sri Lanka it manifests that rapid conversion growth of Christian Evangelical groups among estate Tamil community is something of phenomenal magnitude. The unmitigated reality is that socially discriminated estate Tamil community has become a happy hunting ground for proselytizing into evangelical resurgence. Inability and lack of interest of religious traditions and social institutions to respond to crisis emerged due to caste discrimination; social status and identity crisis, unequal distribution of resources, deprivation of basic needs such as education, hostilities by certain Buddhist groups have aggravated the religious emigration. Missionary zeal and out-reach approach are effective strategies of evangelical activity where conversion marks the birth of a new identity in the process of transition. The research manifests that affiliation into evangelical groups by up country Tamil converts has gained upward social mobility. Hence the rapid influx of Christian evangelical groups in the predominantly Hindu localities has absolutely altered the landscape of religious pluralism.

**Keywords:** religious emigration, evangelical resurgence, out-reach approach, social mobility.