

Summary of the dissertation

Not that religious

A study of young Tamil religiosity in North-Western Norway

In this article based dissertation the aim is to shed light on how young Tamils, mainly Hindus, view their religion and how they practice it. Yet, the aim is more than describing views and practices, the dissertation also intend to suggest how it is generated, in other words why it appears as it does. In order to achieve these aims, I have analysed how the young Tamil Hindus relate to the materiality of religion, in which ways experiences living in North-Western Norway influences their religiosity and how public places of Hindu worship matters for them. These perspectives are reflected in three articles published in academic journals.

Background

Research on religiosity among young people in Norway mainly concerns young Christians or young Muslims. Much less is known about young people that adhere to other traditions. The young Tamils in my study have lived most or all of their lives in North-Western Norway, in contrary to their parents who started to arrive this region in the mid 1980s. These two generations then have very different life experiences and life stories.

Material

This dissertation approaches religion from an everyday lived perspective. This requires a rich empirical material, which I have achieved by using three different methods. I conducted a positioned fieldwork which was initiated early 2014, and lasted for about a year. In this type of fieldwork, appointments are made for when and where the researcher will be present. Later in 2014 I conducted a qualitative questionnaire with 25 respondents. Early 2015 I did 7 photo-elicitation interviews. Together this provided a data material consisting of field notes, written questionnaire answers and transcripts of interviews and photos.

Findings

This dissertation demonstrates how spatiality is a key to understand young Tamil religiosity. The participants orient themselves according to maps that are created in the interplay between places, things, persons and groups. These maps have implications for their religious practices

and views in their everyday lives. I will summarise the findings in four features. First is the spatially rooted complexity in the participants' religiosity. The participants navigate between different spaces that request, motivate, and produce different (religious) experiences, emotions and behaviours. The second feature is the widespread self-identification *not that religious*, an emic phrase that is also reflected in the title of this dissertation. The spatial underpinnings for this self-identification is discussed in this study. The third feature is the practice of selecting which religious elements to maintain or not. In addition to electing or rejecting certain elements, the participants make choices of where, when and in which form to express religiosity. This selective agency requires structural and cultural competency of many spaces. The fourth feature concerns the participants' interest and agency to choose and maintain religious elements that share similarities across different spaces and traditions. They engage in many spaces and make efforts to bridge them.

Relevance

The present study throw light on an understudied theme in a Norwegian context, namely young Hindu religiosity. It thereby contributes to the body of sociological literature concerning young people and religion. That the study is situated outside the larger urban areas in Norway, fills a gap in minority religion research in general. Theoretically this study contributes to sociology of religion by demonstrating of how the participants' everyday religiosities have spatial underpinnings.