

CHAPTER II

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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The research methodology is perhaps the most significant in the technical report, as it indicates a fellow researcher the hold the investigator has over the technical apparatus and directs him to the validity of its application and the results thereof. What is attempted in the present chapter is only a short account of: (1) The Universe and sample; (2) The rationale for selecting the topic; (3) The objectives; (4) Operational definitions of a religious person in broader and narrower senses of Nimbargi Sampradaya; (5) Procedure followed in securing data; (6) The field work; (7) Data processing. It has been proposed to trace the outlines of the remaining part of the present thesis towards the end of this chapter.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter on research methodology is primarily concerned with the description of the research procedure adopted for collecting data in the present study. The following points are taken into account :

1. The considerations involved in selecting the universe (population), and the sample.
2. The research techniques employed for collecting data and the procedure adopted for conducting the field work.
3. Scope and limitations of the study.

Universe and Sample

A population is sometimes called a universe, because it includes, the entire existence of a specific characteristic or combination of characteristics.¹ Whether the population is finite or infinite, it is from this totality of cases that a SAMPLE is drawn.²

An in-depth study of Siddhagiri-Mulapitha (the original seat), Devar Nimbargi-Mulakshetra (the original centre) of

Nimbargi Sampradaya, and of Chimmad, Umadi, Inchageri- the original centres (Mulakshetras) of Chimmad and Inchageri Sampradaya -the two sampradaya that have emerged from Nimbargi Sampradaya, and the main centres of Chimmad and Inchageri Sampradaya has been made from sociological viewpoint. I would like to pay only a marginal attention to the sub-centres of the main centres of Chimmad and Inchageri Sampradaya as many a time the exact number of them is not known and also due to financial and time constraints of the research design. At Inchageri one person informed me that there were 720 sub-centres of Sri Girimalleshwar Maharaj (the disciple of the saint of Umadi) line about 15 years ago mostly situated in Maharashtra, and Bombay Karnataka. More or less the same statement holds good regarding the sub-centres of Sri Siddharameshwar Maharaj (the disciple of the saint of Umadi) line. However, a marginal attention has been paid to Jamkhandi (Paramartha Mandir of Gurudev Ranade - the disciple of the saint of Umadi) and two academic institutions established of Gurudev Ranade at Belgaum and Sangli, Shantikuteer at Kannur established by Sri Ganapatrao Maharaj- the disciple of Sri Siddharameshwar Maharaj. A muth that has been established by the disciples of Virakta Swami (the disciple of the saint of Nimbargi) at kannur, Samadhi of Narasappa Shapeti at Hire Masali are beyond the scope of my study. Almost no study of the temples of Sri Bhausahab Maharaj Umadikar (the saint of Umadi) in and around Devachi Alandi, Sub-centres that are situated at Agra of Sri Siddharameshwar Maharaj line, and at Jodhpur and Bikaner of Sri Gurudev Ranade-cum-Sri Amburao Maharaj line and all other sub-centres has been made.

Five districts -three from Maharashtra (Kolhapur, Solapur, Sangli), two from Karnataka (Bijapur, Belgaum) are selected to investigate the matter for the original seat, original centre of Nimbargi Sampradaya and the original centres, main centres, and a few sub-centres of Chimmad, and Inchageri Sampradaya. I do not, however, claim that the list of the centres of Nimbargi Sampradaya is exhaustive but the list of the centres sufficiently represents Nimbargi Sampradaya.

The rationale for selecting the topic - "Sociological Analysis of Nimbargi Sampradaya : A case study in Sociology of Religion" are as below :

1. I have been associated with Nimbargi Sampradaya in general and its Nimbargi centre in particular since childhood.

This does not mean that I have been closely associated with several other centres and sub-centres of Nimbargi Sampradaya. I have visited for the first time Kaivalya Dham - Sangli, Yallatti (Ashram of Sri Narasihmeswar Maharaj - the disciple of the saint of Umadi), Jat (Samadhi of Sri Shivalingavva - the lady disciple of the saint of Umadi), Sri Prabhakar Swami Maharaj Mandir Solapur (Sri Prabhakar Maharaj - the disciple of the saint of Umadi), Basavan Bagewadi (the samadhi of Sri Siddharameshwar Maharaj).

2. Another rationale for selecting this topic is most of the followers of Nimbargi Sampradaya are from Maharashtra and Karnataka and knowledge of both Kannada (especially Bijapur dialect) and Marathi is essential for the study. I know both Kannada (Bijapur dialect) and Marathi and hence can carry out the study of Nimbargi Sampradaya.

3. Sociologists of religion have not paid enough attention to the study of Sampradaya. Only a few thinkers like J. Wach³ have written a few lines on Hindu Sampradaya. Hence, curiosity in my mind did arise to study Nimbargi Sampradaya from sociological viewpoint.

Objectives

A study of 'Sampradaya' with special reference to "Nimbargi Sampradaya" from the sociological standpoint is the cardinal objective of the contemplated investigation. Along with this basic objective, there are quite a few minor objectives of the present work. Some minor objectives of this work are given below:

1. To trace the historical development and the problems faced by the centres, the Sadhakas (the followers and close associates) of Nimbargi Sampradaya;

2. To project regional, rural and urban distribution of the centres of Nimbargi Sampradaya;

3. To understand what kind of people are attracted towards Nimbargi Sampradaya and why do they continue to adhere to it even though there is a wider ambit of Hindu religion, its philosophy and rituals;

4. To investigate the impact of Nimbargi Sampradaya on the beliefs, rituals, and food habits of the Sadhakas;

5. To evaluate critically the stand taken by Mandelbaum that religious observances necessitate much participation by family members;

6. To assess critically the viewpoint of R.A. Schermerhorn that castes and sacred practices are almost fused together in the Indian context;

7. To scrutinize Max Weber's concepts of leadership in the context of the leadership of Nimbargi Sampradaya;

8. To examine the view of K. Davis that non-rationality is the essence of religion; and

9. To envisage the significance of miracles and morality in religious (spiritual) life of the leaders and the Sadhakas of Nimbargi Sampradaya.

Operational definitions

Definitions of religion and religious persons invite wide differences of opinion. To serve the present purpose an operational definition of a religious person has been given from the standpoint of Nimbargi Sampradaya.

A religious person is one who remembers with devotion divine Nam imparted by the spiritual teacher or in the name of the spiritual teacher symbolically and carries out the worldly activities that are conducive to spiritual realization and follows minimum two vows not to touch other persons' women (in case of men)/men (in case of women), and wealth.

Followers of Nimbargi Sampradaya may be defined both in narrow and broad senses :

a) Followers of Nimbargi Sampradaya in a narrow sense of the definition are those who remember with devotion divine Nam imparted to them by the spiritual teacher or in the name of the spiritual teacher of Nimbargi Sampradaya symbolically and who has taken oath at the time of initiation not to touch other persons' women (in case of men)/men (in case of women), and wealth and engage in the worldly activities that are conducive to spiritual realization.

b) In a broader sense followers of Nimbargi Sampradaya are those who participate in the activities of Nimbargi Sampradaya though not formally initiated into Nimbargi Sampradaya.

For the following stated reasons no strict sampling (probable and non-probable) technique is tried of the followers of Nimbargi Sampradaya both in narrow and broad senses of definitions.

1. Followers and close associates of Nimbargi Sampradaya are scattered over different places and when we go to the centres they are usually too busy in the activities of the centres to get any rigid sampling;

2. I have tried, however, to give representation to the followers and close associates of Nimbargi Sampradaya who belong to different sex, age, occupation, caste, sub-caste, class, region, rural and urban communities, and other peculiar cases;

3. I have been able to conduct interviews of many sadhakas (followers) of Nimbargi Ashram on account of my close association with that centre as stated earlier and it is easy for me to travel from Bijapur (Native Place) to Nimbargi by train and sometimes to stay in the Ashram. I have mailed sometimes interview schedules to some of the educated followers of Nimbargi Sampradaya. An attempt has also been made to interview followers and close associates of other centres of Nimbargi Sampradaya.

Procedure followed in Securing Data

A considerable bibliographic and reference work has been done at the Libraries of Karnataka, Pune universities and the libraries of St. Aloysius College-Mangalore, Poornprajna Collages- Udupi; and from the borrowed and purchased materials on Nimbargi Sampradaya in the form of books, (unpublished/published), journals, letters, diaries of various centres and followers of Nimbargi Sampradaya. This is about secondary sources.

Interview schedule is my main research tool. It is a set of questions cyclostyled on a form (sheet) which the interviewer asks the interviewee. In its form and content, a

schedule is similar to the questionnaire. Like the questionnaire, it can be structured or unstructured. A structured interview has predetermined questions and standardized techniques. The number of questions is also fixed. An unstructured interview has a flexible form. A part of each interview schedule is structured and the other part is mostly unstructured in order to know some uniqueness about each centre and follower (i.e. the respondent). In fact, two types of interview schedule - one for the centre and the other for the follower or close associate of Nimbargi Sampradaya are used. The two interview schedules : (i) Some important spiritual and academic centres of Nimbargi Sampradaya; (ii) Followers of Nimbargi Sampradaya are given in the appendices* of the present work.

The questions of the interview schedules are framed in a simple English language. I have translated and explained them to the informants at the centres and to the followers whenever necessary in Kannada, Marathi, and English and language as such has posed no problem. Brevity of the questions is maintained to avoid confusion on the part of the followers (respondents)/informants and to elicit exact and precise information as far as possible.

The questions are arranged in a sequence so that the followers of Nimbargi Sampradaya can automatically respond to the questions successively. The order of the presentation of the questions in the schedule for followers (Sadhakas) has two parts: (i) The first part of the schedule is devoted to the personal information of the Sadhakas (respondents); (ii) the second part mostly to the views of the Sadhakas (respondents).

A full assurance of confidence in the use of information has been given to the respondents.

Each interview has taken about 45 mts. I could communicate with respondents and informants at ease and the scheduled items

* The Hindu Calendar (to enable the readers to comprehend the Hindu months and days of Saptahas of Nimbargi Sampradaya) Glossary (to enable the readers to grasp the meaning of non-English words used in this work), Bibliography constitute three other appendices of the work.

listed in English could be translated uniformly in every interview situation. The contact persons are not allowed to meddle into our formal interviews, the extent to which it is possible for me.

The schedule is prepared in such a way that not more than 45 mts. would be required to finish it up and the respondents should not get bored and tired. But sometimes the visit to centres and gathering information from the informants of centres has taken more than 45 mts. and in certain cases some kind of interruption has been experienced by me.

Field Work

For collecting data on centres, followers and close associates of Nimbargi Sampradaya, I have relied mostly on secondary sources and structured and unstructured interview schedules. A comparative method has been used to point out similarities and differences between Chimmad and Inchageri Sampradaya. While collecting data concerning Nimbargi Sampradaya no much difficulty is being faced from the viewpoint of money and time. The assignment of Lokasabha election training and duty, invigilation work during vacation in 1991, refresher course at Ahmedabad in Oct. 1991, and cancellation of 'X'mas holidays in Dec 1991 and some other difficulties have considerably hampered my field work. In two places, however, I have faced some difficulty which is worth mentioning :

1. The present spiritual teacher of Sri Sadguru Samartha Siddhalingeswar Muth/ Hire Muth Sukshetra-Kannur has taken me to task to convince him about the authenticity of the research work and its usefulness to his centre. Once convinced about the authenticity of my research work, he has treated me well with offerings of jaggery, groundnut and tea and has come forward to offer some books of his centre free. However, only with great difficulty I could make him accept the cost of the books.

2. The present pointiff of Kaneri Muth Siddhagiri has provided me the information regarding his centre to the extent to which it was possible for him and instructed me to approach one C.A.* who looks after the accounts of Kaneri Muth for

* Chartered Accountant

further information. But inspite of several requests through correspondence, and personal meeting with him, he has not given information giving one reason or another.

3. No systematic record of participants during daily activities and on festive occasions and the number of initiated etc. is kept except at Nimbali Ashram. When I asked the question regarding the number of initiated, some present spiritual leaders have given the reply that it might enhance their ego and hence they have not kept the list of the initiated. Although some informants of the centres have promised me to send further details and photos to my Udupi address, only a few of them could keep up their promise. To a certain extent indifference and disregard for documents (including the particulars about trustees and trust) is evidenced.

In order to maintain complete anonymity and to maintain respondents' routine undisturbed, I have mailed the 'interview schedule' to them with due instructions along with my address. Of them, fourteen persons have responded. In a vast majority of cases, I have personally traced the residences with the help of friends and relatives and conducted their interviews.

I have tried out the interview schedule meant for the followers on myself and on some of my close relatives before trying them out on other followers of Nimbargi Sampradaya. Three respondents have asked me to explain my personal views on the interview schedule meant for the followers.

The field work has been carried out in a period of two years from 1990 April to 1992 April both on the centres and the respondents. Participant observation has been carried out by me in three different centres- Bhausahab Maharaj Muth (Bijapur), Academy of Comparative Philosophy and Religion (Belgaum), Sri Gurudev Ranade Ashram (Nimbali). From the preceding description, it is obvious that case study⁴ of Nimbargi Sampradaya in all its aspects requires employment of various research techniques and case study is not an independent method. (Case study is said to be an in-depth investigation of a single case of a given phenomenon).

Data Processing

Most of the data related to the Sadhakas' (the respondents') views and to a certain extent data related to the centres have been machine processed (in the Computer). The extremely precise method of statistics has never been tried. At first the primary tables are prepared and then the simple method of cross tabulation has been adopted and a few graphs are drawn.

To facilitate comparisons the empirical research in the field of Sociology is reported in tabular and graphical forms and also in the form of maps and charts. A map and a flow chart, pie charts of some important centres of Nimbargi Sampradaya situated in five districts-3 in Maharashtra (Kolhapur, Sangli, Solapur), and 2 in Karnataka (Bijapur, Belgaum) are prepared. Besides, some important xeroxed photos of the centres, leaders, and rituals are arranged to provoke thoughts and to make points visually that could not be expressed in words.

Limitations

1. The findings of this study are based on the information given by the respondents may have their own limitations. While mailing the schedules some followers of Nimbargi Sampradaya have given vague, incomplete, and almost one word answers which necessitated further elaboration. Every possible effort has been made to write them again and to contact the persons who know the respondents. In brief, every possible effort has been made to elicit authentic information.

2. Some difficulties are experienced in clarifying the purpose of inquiry to the respondents. Some persons have thought that I am going to write encyclopaedia and publish it while some others have considered the work a matter of waste. This is not an encyclopaedia on Nimbargi Sampradaya as several sub-centres of Nimbargi Sampradaya do not come under our study at all. Some temples that are situated in and around Devachi Alandi and Virakta Swami Muth at Kannur and Narasappa Shapeti's Samadhi at Hiremasali are beyond the scope of the study. No research work is regarded as completely useless and can give clues to further studies and a few practical suggestions could be given and one can get insight into

problems. However, conclusions of this study have their own limitations and they can be made applicable selectively with certain precautions.

Before closing the chapter on 'Research Methodology', the outlines of the remaining chapters are presented. The chapter that follows is on 'The History, the Features and the Philosophy of Nimbargi Sampradaya'. This chapter not only traces the history of Nimbargi Sampradaya but also sheds light upon how some of the socio-economic, religious, political, geographical and other such conditions prevailing during the life time of the saint of Nimbargi in and around Bombay Karnataka are mirrored in the sayings, poems of the saint of Nimbargi and also incidences in the life of the saint of Nimbargi. The two other important aspects of this chapter are, of course, the features, and the philosophy of Nimbargi Sampradaya.

The Fourth chapter is on "The Centres of Nimbargi Sampradaya". Attention in this chapter is mainly focussed on the original seat, original centre of Nimbargi Sampradaya, and original centres and main centres of Chimmad and Inchageri Sampradaya (the two divisions in Nimbargi Sampradaya). Only a marginal attention is paid to a few sub-centres of Nimbargi Sampradaya. Finally, in this chapter, similarities and differences between Chimmad and Inchageri Sampradaya are pointed out.

The Fifth chapter is on 'The Sadhakas of Nimbargi Sampradaya'. Two parts in this chapter can be made (i) Personal information of the Sadhakas of Nimbargi Sampradaya - sex, age, region, community, religion, caste and sub-castes, marital status, education, languages, class (occupation, approximate income), food habits etc., (ii) The Sashakas'/ Respondents' views. The respondents' comments on their initiation into Nimbargi Sampradaya (by whom, when, where, how, why), initiation of close relatives, visits to the centres of Nimbargi Sampradaya, and how do they feel about organizations, spiritual leaders, rituals, philosophy or any other matter such as political involvement are taken into consideration. Further, the comments of the respondents as to whether they intend to stick to Nimbargi Sampradaya or not, (and if so why and if not why) are taken into account.

"Summary and conclusions" is the last chapter. The summary is, a brief resume of the important findings,

conclusions, and recommendations and it must reflect faithfully the earlier phases of the investigation. The conclusions are, in fact the investigator's final assessment of what the data and the findings mean. The conclusions, have to look backward to the work done - to the facts, findings and implications - and look forward to the applications of these findings and implications.⁴ In the light of above the last chapter not only presents a bird's eye view of all the preceding chapters but shows how major findings of the investigation can be fit into sociological perspectives and concepts. Trends in Nimbargi Sampradaya are treated in the last chapter. The last chapter suggests remedies to tackle the problems of Nimbargi Sampradaya, and a few hints for future study of Nimbargi Sampradaya from the standpoint of sociology of religion.

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CHAPTER II

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