

CHAPTER III

***THE HISTORY, THE FEATURES
AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF
NIMBARGI SAMPRADAYA***

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The history, the salient features, and the philosophy of Nimbargi Sampradaya form the three important aspects of this chapter. The material that is drawn for the elaboration of the present chapter is largely based on secondary sources of data.

THE HISTORY OF NIMBARGI SAMPRADAYA

The saint of Nimbargi (1712* sake - 1807 sake) was born in Solapur (Maharashtra) but spent all his life in Devar Nimbargi - a village in Bijapur district (Karnataka). He belonged to Neelawani sub-caste of Lingayat caste. His surname was Misalkar. Narayana or Nagappa was his horoscopic name. His disciples used to address him as Narayanrao or Bhausahab. He was also known as Gurulinga Jangam Maharaj which was in fact the name of his Guru (the spiritual preceptor). But he used this as his ensign, in the songs composed by him.

One of the ancestors of the saint of Nimbargi was the head of Kuppenur - a village in Dharwad district (Karnataka). Later, his descendant Sri Siddappa went from Kuppenur to Gadag-Betgeri and then to Mangalwede near Pandharpur. Laxmanappa, the great-grand-father of the saint of Nimbargi came to Devar nimbargi and settled there permanently. Laxmanappa had three sons - Dongrayappa, Nagappa, and Dhondappa. Bheemanna, the son of Nagappa, was the father of the saint of Nimbargi.** Sow. Ambabai was the mother of the saint of Nimbargi who expired when the saint of Nimbargi was five years old. Bhimanna - the father, and aunt Devakibai (Bhimanna's sister) brought up the child.¹ Bhimanna and Ambabai had in all two sons - the saint of

* Chaitra Suddha Poornima (Hanuman Jayanti).

For details see Apte K V "Sri Nimbargikar Maharaj"; (Santakripa Prakashan, 1035, Sadashiv Peth, Pune-30 First Edition 1983 reprinted 1986) p. 3.

** For details see the map- Kotnis Hanumant Pandurang; "Kaivalya Purusha, Khand Pahila Athava Sri Gurulingajangamavijaya" Sangli, 1933) p. 20.

Nimbargi, Kadappa, and one daughter-Subhadra.² The saint of Nimbargi went to school only for a few days.³

The recent originator of Nimbargi Sampradaya is, of course, the saint of Nimbargi. But the history of Nimbargi Sampradaya has been traced back to Revanasiddha or Revan-nath by some scholars. Sri K. D. Sangoram⁴ analyses the divergent viewpoints expressed by various scholars on this subject in the following manner in his foreword to 'Jeevan Gange' - (Kannada) - written by Sri M. S. Deshpande.

1. A Marathi book, Navanath Bhaktisar (Published in 1819) by Malukavi contains life sketch of Revananath. In the three chapters (34th, 35th and 36th) of this book, one can see the descriptions about this story. Chamasnarayana -one among Navanarayanas for the sake of welfare of the world incarnated near Revateer and grew up in the family of an ordinary farmer. One day while engaged in agricultural work he had the vision of Sri Dattatraya and by his grace he attained 'Mahima' Siddhi (occult power). On the basis of which he had performed several miracles. Therefore he became famous as 'Revanasiddha' in that region. After sometime Machindaranath paid a visit to that region. Owing to the occult power tiger, lion and other such wild animals forgetting their enmities were found to be with Machindaranath. On seeing this, Revananath was flabbergasted. Revananath realized that Mahimasiddhi that he had attained was not of any help. This could be accomplished only by God - realization (Brahmajnana).

According to his wish Machindaranath took Revananath to Sri Dattatraya. Sri Dattatraya initiated Revananath into spiritual life and Revananath spent sometime in penance under the guidance of Sri Dattatraya and Revananath realized God and then Revananath went to Mogalayi, Kanchi, Balehalli and other places. After that for sometime he lived in Vite-Renavi (Renagiri) of Mandesh.

2. Some chapters related to the story of Revanasiddha are found in the Marathi work 'Siddhanta Sar'. This work was composed in the year 1713 A. D. (1635 sake) at Kumte-on the bank of the river Krishna in Vairatdesh. Maharashtra Saraswatas opine that this work has been written by Kesarinath who was in the line of Machindaranath. Revanasiddha incarnated from the phallic (Linga) of Someshwara. His disciple was Marulasiddha and Ekoram was the disciple of Marulasiddha. Thus

the tradition of Siddhas began from Revananath according to this work. There was a woman called 'Mayi' in the region of Karaveer who used to scare and capture Siddhas by challenging them to drink poison which was with her.

At the instance of Marulasiddha, Revanasiddha drank all the poison and hence Mayi was defeated and surrendered to Revanasiddha. Revanasiddha initiated Mayi and released all the Siddhas. This story is found in many other works.

Regarding this Revanasiddha's time there are different versions (i) The phallic of Chandramouleswara was handed over to Adi Shankaracharya by Revanasiddha only and therefore Revanasiddha must be regarded as a contemporary of Adi Shankaracharya. (ii) But R. B. Halakatti in his 'Amaraganadhiswara charitregalu (P.70) indicates that Revanasiddha lived during the life time of Bijjal (1157 A. D.-1168 A. D.). The palace of Bijjal began burning when Bijjal became arrogant and put boiling rice in the 'Jolige' (a kind of shoulder bag) and the fire got extinguished only when the king Bijjal begged the pardon of Revanasiddha. (iii) Dr. Nandimath in his 'Kannada Nadin charitre' (Part-II p. 200.) opines in the following manner.

Revanasiddha, Panditaradhya and Ekoramacharya who might have lived around 11th or 12th centuries have laboured hard for the progress of Veerasaivism. It is not possible to state clearly whether Revanasiddha, Panditaradhya, Ekoramacharya were among the Panchacharyas or different from them. If it is proved that if they were among Panchacharyas their period is somewhere between 11th and 12th centuries.

iv) Taking Shirival's inscription as the basis, in his article published in 'Shivanubhava', Sri Jirige Basavalingappa writes that Renukacharya or Revanasiddha the one among the Panchacharyas was the contemporary of Basava.

v) Dr. R.C. Hiremath observed that Renukacharya was also called by name Revanasiddha. A lot of research is yet to be undertaken on this subject.

4. This Revanasiddha and Kadasiddha are said to be one and the same person because he troubled mayi and he practised his penance in the forest. In kannada 'kadu' means to trouble (verb); and also means forest (noun):

Another version is that Kadasiddha was the disciple of Revanasiddha and therefore they were different persons.

Chandrashekhar Shastri has written a preface to the work, "Sri Kadasiddheshwar Vachanawu. It reads (on page 27)". Having born in the family of Gowda of Shegunishi, Sri Mool Kadadevaru practised penance in the places such as Gundewadi and settled in Siddhagiri Kshetra towards the end of his life. Chandrashekhar Shastri writes that there is no doubt that Sri Kadasiddha lived in the twelfth century but whether he lived in earlier half or in the later is not intelligible.

5. In the work titled, "Edoorkshetra Varnane" Revanasiddha and Kadasiddha are regarded as different persons. Revanasiddha was the spiritual teacher of Kadasiddha in the opinion of the author of this work. The author also opines that Sri Adya Kadadevaru was born in Sindu Veerasaiva Jangam family in 1120 A.D. and went to Balehalli without getting married and there he was blessed by his spiritual teacher Revanasiddha.

Moreshwara - the disciple of Veerabhadra in his Marathi work 'Veerabhadra Charitra' (1741 A.D.) writes that Kadasiddha and Revanasiddha are not only contemporaries but Kadasiddha was the disciple of Revanasiddha.

6. The saint of Umadi (sake 1765-1835) had left the note in which he had asked his disciple to compose a Bharood. And a Bharood was composed accordingly. The Bharood could be seen in 'Nitya Nemavali'. From this Bharood one can conclude that Kadasiddha was the disciple of Revanasiddha. In one of the famous Kannada songs of Nimbargi Sampradaya - Aravininda stotra Maduve Gurumula pitha' the same Guru tradition has been expressed.

7. Dr. R. D. Ranade in his 'Pathway to God in Kannada literature'⁵ observes, "Revanasiddha is regarded as one of the earliest Acharyas or Siddhas, or sometime they are also called the Nathas. That raises a very difficult question. Which was the birth - place or native place of Revanasiddha? It has been found on the whole that he lived at Balehalli in the Mysore state. But according to Dr. Nandimath, 'there is another place which has been found; it is older than even Balehalli'..... But near about Karad there is a place called Renavi on the road from Karad to Kolhapur. There are about six or seven temples near it. The great Revanasiddha

appears to have had some very good Ashramas at that place..... Mr. Halebhavi has written on Revanasiddha in the Sivanubhava Journal..... From this (article) it seems that Revanasiddha might have lived at Renavi for some time at least and his influence might have been spread all round the place as may be seen from the temples. Those who live near Kolhapur may know that Revanasiddha is connected with the great saint Kadasiddha. There is some difficulty in this connection as to whether Kadasiddha was a disciple of Revanasiddha or whether, as Shri Sivmurti Shastri has put it, Revanasiddha himself became known as Kadasiddha, because he practised penance in 'Kadu' (a forest) near Kolhapur. It is a very fine hill, and there is a valley where Kadasiddha had merged into infinite....

The saint of Nimbargi had his initiation from a saint called Muppinmuni, who lived about the year 1810 in Siddhagiri, and who was in the Kadasiddha line. Later he shifted to Sirasangi on account of the conflict between Kolhapur and Kagal. Manuscripts and documents relating to his are found even at Sirasangi. Muppinmuni is a historical figure because the saint of Nimbargi in one of his songs has directly referred to him: Muppina muniya pididu vachana kappugorala kadasiddhaniddedege hogi Sastanganago ni, obey the word of Muppinmuni, go to the place where the blue - throated Kadasiddha stays and prostrate yourself before him. Hence it is quite definite that the spiritual teacher of the saint of Nimbargi, namely Muppinmuni, lived in Siddhagiri. Siddhagiri was also the place of Kadasiddha. There is also a hill nearby, which is named after Revanasiddha. In any case, it is interesting to see that this name Revanasiddha is paralleled by another name Revananath in the Natha Sampradaya,..... It is not difficult for Revananath to have come to this side of the country and become known as Revanasiddha. The following Sanskrit verse contains the names of the nine Nathas or siddhas of which Revana is one.

Gorakasa jalanidhara carapatasca
Adbhanga Kanipha machindaradayah,
Cauranga revana ca bhartṛsanjnah
Bhumyam babhuvuh navanathasiddhah.

"Nine Nathas or Siddhas, whose names are Gorakasa, Jalandhara, Carpata, Adbhanga, Kanipha, Machindara, Cauranga, Revana, Bhartr, have flourished in this world".

From the above description it is clear that in the opinion of Dr. R.D. Ranade Muppinmuni* is the spiritual teacher of the saint of Nimbargi.

Now let us turn to the remaining life history of the saint of Nimbargi. When young, he was excessively fond of games and would spend most of his time in playing. His father used to reprimand him for this. Once when he was scolded by his father for wasting his time in playing, he replied "My game is different from that of ordinary boys. I am going to play an entirely different game."..... Once he returned home very late after playing holi, on the full moon day. He was severely remonstrated by his father. He was hurt and left the house the very night without informing anybody. He was then about twenty years old. He went to Pandharpur and fasted there for three days.⁶ On the third day, the Lord Vithal appeared in his dream and assured him. "Child, don't worry! Go to Siddhagiri. You will find your Master to guide you".⁷ He came back to Devar Nimbargi.

The saint of Nimbargi was married and a daughter was born to him. He went to Siddhagiri - (a place of his family deity) on the pretext of performing the Javala ceremony (tonsure) of his daughter.⁸ After paying his respects to the deity in the temple, he was passing by a cave situated outside the temple. At that time an old sage in the cave beckoned Shri Nimbargi Maharaj (The saint of Nimbargi) to come to him. Thinking it was not intended for him, Nimbargi Maharaj did not go to the sage. But afterwards the sage signalled him by both of his hands to come to the cave. Shri Nimbargi Maharaj rushed to him

* To regard Muppinmuni as a spiritual teacher of the saint of Nimbargi is a mere speculation and both in Chimmad Sampradaya and 'Nitya Nemavali' of Inchageri Sampradaya kadasiddha is considered to be the spiritual teacher of the saint of Nimbargi according to Dr. K. V. Apate. Dr. K. V. Apate further argues that Nimbargi Sampradaya has its link with Siddha Sampradaya of Veerasaiva Saints like Revanasiddha, Marulasiddha and kadasiddha and not with Nath sampradaya.

Vide for details Apate K. V., "Sri Nimbargikar Maharaj" (Santakripa Prakashan, Pune, First published in 1983) pp.10-11.



with all eagerness. Shri Nimbargi Maharaj was immediately initiated by the sage in that cave. The sage told Shri Nimbargi Maharaj - "If you practise as I have instructed you, you will be famous in the world". From the records in muths of Kadasiddha in Siddhagiri and Sirasangi it seems that this sage was Muppina Muni. Possibly the reference to Muppina muni in one of the songs composed by Shri Nimbargi Maharaj may be to this same person. On his return to (Devar Nimbargi) for about six years Shri Nimbargi Maharaj did not practise meditation seriously. So the old sage came to Devar Nimbargi with the purpose of reminding Shri Nimbargi Maharaj to meditate regularly. Sri Nimbargi Maharaj received him respectfully. After a befitting lunch, he offered his four annas as 'Daxina' but the old sage demanded two rupees as 'Daxina'. Shri Nimbargi Maharaj could not afford to give this amount. But he borrowed the amount from his neighbour and offered it to his Guru. The sage returned them and said, "You take one rupee for your worldly family life and the other rupee for your spiritual life." On this, Shri Nimbargi Maharaj asked, "Can the worldly life be made happy, by meditation on God?" The sage replied, "Nothing is impossible to the grace of God!".⁹ He solemnly promised his Guru that he would attend to meditation without fail, in future. Overwhelmed with emotion he lay prostrate at the feet of his Master. And before he could rise and express his humble gratitude the Yogi suddenly left him.¹⁰

This incident brought about a revolutionary change in the outlook of the saint of Nimbargi and the saint abandoned his hereditary profession of dyeing the yarns and he became a shepherd as that was more congenial to his spiritual life. He would go out with the flock, and a few shepherd boys in the neighbouring villages in the radius of five to seven miles i.e., Satalgaon, Jigajivani, Katrala, Sonagi, Umadi, Jirankalgi, Bardol, Hadalsang, Dumaknal etc., He used to leave the sheep to graze under the supervision of the boys and he himself would sit for meditation at some quiet place till evening.¹¹ Thus he practised the penance secretly for thirty six years (From 31st to 67th years of his life) and was successful both in his material and spiritual life.¹² He entrusted the management of his household to his son and devoted the remaining twenty eight years of his life for the meditation and blessed quite a few deserving aspirants and gave discourses on Dasbodha. After leading such a blissful life, the saint of Nimbargi breathed his last in his own home in Devar Nimbargi at the age of 95, in 1885; leaving behind him a

few valuable songs*, sayings and disciples. The samadhi of the saint of Nimbargi is at Devar Nimbargi. No photograph of his is available. But we are told that he was a tall, stout and mighty man. He was fair in complexion and had large ears. He was bearded.

The sayings of the saint of Nimbargi neither were written by him nor did he dictate them. The sayings of the saint of Nimbargi were collected and written by Shri Raghunathcharya Adya and Shri Babacharya Kavya. However, Babacharya Kavya added a number of suitable passages in Kannada, Sanskrit and Hindi to explain the basic thoughts and published them as "Maharajarawar Vachana" in Devanagari script in Bijapur - 1908.¹³

Prof. R.D. Ranade with the help of a couple of his disciples went through all the available editions about the sayings of the saint of Nimbargi and arranged all thoughts according to the principles of ethics and mysticism. Four parts of the book (Bodhasudhe) are :

- 1) Fundamentals of Conduct
- 2) Renouncement of vices
- 3) Acquiring of virtues
- 4) Pathway to God

* Twenty five songs (24 in Kannada and 1 in Hindi) that are composed by the saint of Nimbargi are published in 1968 in "Kaivalya Kunj" with their meaning in Marathi. Vide Apate K.V. "Sri Nimbargikar Maharaj" (Santakripa Prakashan, Pune, First Published in 1983) pp. 57 - 60.

Prof R. D. Ranade regards only 13 songs as authentic, 12 are published in Nimbargi Maharajarwar Vachanagalu Bodhasudha and 1 in the companion volume to 'Pathway to God in Kannada Literature' (Karnataka University Dharwad '1969 pp. 47-48). Some other songs are supposed to have been composed by the saint of Nimbargi but some of these songs are similar with parts of songs composed by other poets and there is no convincing proof of their being composed by Shri Nimbargi Maharaj.

The language used in the book is naturally the same language as spoken by Shri Nimbargi Maharaj i.e., the Kannada dialect used in Bijapur district.¹⁴

SECTION II

THE BIRTH OF NIMBARGI SAMPRADAYA

Now let me peep into the conditions of the times in which the saint of Nimbargi lived and see how Nimbargi Sampradaya was born responding to some of the challenges generated by the then prevailing geographical, political, socio-economic, and religious conditions of the time.

Devar Nimbargi is a remote village in Indi Taluka of Bijapur district in Karnataka and is about 18 miles to the west of Indi Road Railway station. Bijapur district is known for its dry and hot weather and poor rains. (An average annual rain fall is less than 25" and in some parts even less than 15"). Though this district is blessed with five rivers (Krishna, Bhima, Malaprabha, Ghataprabha, and Doni) and a vast fertile plain, famine* is a common feature. This is reflected in one of the sayings of the Saint of Nimbargi.

"Always you should show mercy to all animals. You should not be harsh and merciless to anybody. Always one Atman stays in all bodies. Atman staying in the others stays in you. Therefore, if you are harsh and merciless to others it is transferred to Atman. And if you are harsh and merciless to

* 1824, 1831, 1833, 1850, 1866, 1875-77, 1883-85, 1991-92 and 1900 were the years of acute shortage of food in Karnataka like in many other parts of india.

Vide for details Srinivasmurthy A. P. (The original writer and translator) "Arthik Sthitigetigal Sammekshe (Adhunikkal)" in "Karnataka Paramapara (Samput 2). Madhykala Mattu Adhunikkal" (Prakashakaru sahitya Sanskriti Abhivridhi Ilakhe, Mysore Rajya Sarkar 1970. Prathmama Mudrana Bangalore 1970) P. 379.

Him, He too will be harsh and merciless to you. All men are merciful towards their own and unkind towards others. For instance, when they let their cattle graze in others' fields and inflict loss on others they are kind to their cattle but unkind to the fields. They kill their birds and offer them as food to their pet dogs; here they are kind to their dogs but unkind to the birds. When relatives and others are sitting together for meals, they serve the relatives more with affection but they serve unkindly and less to others. The relatives are sure to suffer on this.

Now a days people die of starvation due to famine. Such terrific calamities are surely due to merciless behaviour of the people".¹

During the life time of the saint of Nimbargi natural calamities like famines and epidemics used to take a heavy toll of lives. The following incidence throws light upon the prevalence of the epidemic during the life time of the saint of Nimbargi.

Narasappa Shapeti was a disciple of the Saint of Nimbargi. Both Shapeti and his spiritual teacher were sitting together one day on the bank of the stream at Devar Nimbargi. Shapeti at that time felt that the saint of Nimbargi was conversing with invisible person. The saint of Nimbargi was telling, "Oh Lady, don't pass by this side" and directed her to go by the side of a flock of sheep. Then he told Narasappa, "Oh, she was Mari (Cholera deity), I directed her to go by that side". The very next day the sheep of that flock were found dead².

The following statement made by the saint of Nimbargi explains in his own way the evil of epidemics like cholera and also suggests the ways of mitigating them.

"Epidemics like cholera kill many. Cholera is but a sickle in the hands of God. If He wills, He alone can cut off with the sickle. How can a mere sickle by itself can cut anything? Everything rests with Him. If God is propitiated by good conduct how can cholera harm anyone by itself? God should be propitiated by good conduct, bearing this in mind."³

Turning to the political situations we may say that the whole of Karnataka was brought under the rule of Haider Ali and Tippu Sultan from 1760 A.D. to 1799 A.D. The British

consolidated their position in Karnataka by 1800 A.D. The political history of Karnataka in 17th and 18th centuries indicates that Karnataka came in close contact with Marathas on the one hand and with British on the other. During the British rule Karnataka was divided into several princely states like Kittur. In 1824 Kittur Rani Channamma protested against the British. This period in Karnataka was marked by political instability, frequent quarrels and battles. The views about battles are mirrored in the following two statements made by the saint of Nimbargi.

(i) Ordinarily people fight against the rulers. If they win such a battle, they rule over the kingdom. But during their reign, sufferance and enjoyment are in equal measure. There cannot be pleasure without pain. Such persons lack in progeny if they have wealth, and do not possess riches if they have offsprings. If they have one thing they lack in the other and thus they have happiness and misery in equal measure. If they die on battle field they would go to hell. If they win, they would reign for some time sinfully and later after their death, they go to hell. Both ways they cannot avoid hell.⁴

(ii) Therefore, you shouldn't get yourself engaged in an external fight that takes you to hell, but should fight a better battle of a different kind. Three qualities, six passions, ten senses come in the way and arrest your progress in spiritual life. You should, therefore, day and night fight against these internal enemies and kill them all, one by one. Thus you should fight against vices and keep up virtues; propitiate Atman, live happily and attain final absolution.

In external fight there is hell both ways. Here, there is freedom in both ways. There is no doubt about this.⁵

Almost till the end of 18th century the security in the matter of life and property was a remote possibility in Karnataka.⁶ This feeling of insecurity could be very well envisaged in the following incident, and a song related to that incident, and some admonishments of the saint of Nimbargi.

(i) The saint of Nimbargi used to give discourses on Dasbodha sitting in the small temple of Bilensiddha in the campus of the big temple of Bheemaraya of Devar Nimbargi. One old lady (the disciple of Shri Nimbargi maharaj) used to live in the room adjoining this place. Once her golden bangles were

lost. She called her brother Gundopant to Nimbargi to investigate. He was a sub - inspector of police in Bijapur. On being asked by him whether she suspected anybody, she replied that, she suspected none. But she added, "this old man lives near my room and gives discourses on Dasbodha. Perhaps he might have taken them". The sub-inspector very humbly conveyed the news to Sri Nimbargi Maharaj and called him to be present at the office of the chief of the village and wait there. Shri Nimbargi Maharaj understood the inner significance of the incidence and smiled to himself. After some time the sub-inspector, accompanied by Shri Nimbargi Maharaj visited the home for the search. Bhimanna, the son of Shri Nimbargi Maharaj, who used to manage the household affairs, was also in the house. While taking the search of bed room, he could not see the bangles of his sister. Instead, he saw a number of golden bangles, other valuable golden and silver ornaments and heaps of rupee, and other coins, lying on the ground. "One who owns such a large property cannot steal petty bangles" thought the sub-inspector. He repented for the mistake and offered sincere apologies to Shri Nimbargi Maharaj for the same. Shri Nimbargi Maharaj, on the contrary did not feel any remorse or insult. He thanked the sub-inspector, "I am really obliged to you for it was on account of you that I could see how rich my son is!" Since Shri Nimbargi Maharaj had thrown the entire responsibility of the household on his son, he really did not know anything about the wealth of his son.⁷

(ii) The summary of the song related to the above incident is: "How can I be poor and how can I be an orphan, when you are with me? You are immutable and I am fearless. Oh! God! you are only my form. When a master like you is there to protect me on all the four sides no wonder if I get everything I desire. What can these sensuous pleasures do to a man who has seen the sign of Sadguru" ?⁸

(iii) First you should protect your articles and should not loose them. Once they are lost, you should not brood over the loss. Some impending danger has been avoided due to this loss. A greater danger has been averted by this small loss. The earth is stretched between the horizons. The lost things are within these boundaries only, wherever they might be taken. God is powerful to grant anything. If a person is vigilant about his conduct nothing will be lost. The things lost will be regained. Thus he should console his mind.⁹

(iv) All the people are caught in the meshes of the three qualities. These are woman, wealth, and land. These three qualities are granted to everyone by God. One should be content with three till one's death. You should not treat your possessions with contempt and regard them as non-existent. You should not covet these three possessions of others day and night and long for them. The eyes that gaze will get scorched and burnt. And the mind that lusts for the possessions of others will be charred. These three alone are your enemies. You will perish if you follow their orders. They should not be allowed any liberty.

If the craving of the mind cannot be controlled, then you should pray to God for these. But never should you hanker after the belongings of others. The property, riches and lands of others should be regarded as the worst types of hell and you should be content with whatever has been granted by God.¹⁰

(v) Adultery should never be committed. It results in the destruction of health, wealth, life and reputation..... This sin will make your life on earth intolerable. Even the worst type of emancipation will be denied to this sin. You will be thrown into the most horrible hell.

Such people are a burden to the earth. They consume food underserverdly. The earth cannot bear their burden.

Good people should, therefore, treat others' women as their mother. Thereby they will be happy in this material life and if they surrender to Sadguru they will get emancipation also.¹¹

In his song 'Manasina murigeya tiddiso deva' - take away the twists of mind, Oh God, the saint of Nimbargi prays to God to disentangle and straighten the crookedness of his mind. We entertain holy ideas for a time, while we always pursue the unholy ones. Probably the saint of Nimbargi must have had some examples before his eyes. He says that when a person started on a journey to Kasi, he started no doubt with a good intention, but on his way he met a courtesan and he was caught up in her wiles and forgot God. What is the use of simply entertaining the holy ideas and doing unholy things?¹²

(vi) You should never hurt the feelings of others in any way. You should not make them sad by any action. You should

not harass others in any way nor should you fill their hearts with grief by any deed or words. You should never frustrate the hopes of others.

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Never should you do anything, that will incur anguish and curses of others. Even a promise in business should be broken if it leads to the loss of others, and thus make others happy. If labourers are employed for work in fields or at home, they should never be cheated by paying less.

One should not do any injustice to others while building a house; nor should one encroach upon the other's site. Materials like timber etc., should be bought with cordial relations and without hurting the feelings of anybody.

If displeasure of any sort is involved, your stay in that house will never be pleasant. If others are satisfied with the bargain, your stay there would be full of satisfaction.¹³

A common man was not much interested in politics in Karnataka during the life time of the saint of Nimbargi. However, a case of litigation over the chieftainship of Devar Nimbargi Village has been recorded in Nectar of illumination; (a translated version of Bodhasudhe (Kannada). That incidence further brings to light the harassment inflicted on the saint of Nimbargi.

Once Shri Nimbargi Maharaj as usual gave the discourse on spiritual problems, sitting in a room in the campus of the temple of Shri Bheemaraya. When the discourse was over, the disciples as usual placed a coconut before Maharaj and put a piece of camphor on it and lighted the camphor. The widow of the chief, happened to see this. She got wild and shouted at shri Nimbargi Maharaj, 'You old hag! Are not you ashamed to get lighted in front of you, when the great God Bheemaraya's idol itself is just in front!' With these words she kicked the coconut along with the lighted camphor on it. Shri Nimbargi Maharaj was very sorry, he said, "So far you have been 'insulting my body and I have been bearing it up. Now that you have insulted my God, you will rue for it. Young lady see what the old hag can do!'"

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There was a suit pending for a long time, filed by the nephew of the widow of the chief against her for the chieftainship. Within a few days after the incident, the court

gave the judgment against her and she was denied of all rights and powers as the head of village and the nephew became the chief. Later she suffered from abject poverty, as all people of Devar Nimbargi know it. In 1922 when some senior disciples of Shri Nimbargi Maharaj visited the holy place, the lady was still living and she complained to a few of them whom she met, "See, how that old man is harassing me even today".¹⁴

Jowar is the main food of the people in Bijapur district. The saint of Nimbargi was a strict vegetarian and teetotaler as per the tradition of veerasaivas and liked Jowar bread (Rotti) Onion, a kind of chatanee sour in taste, and he smoked the pipe.¹⁵ Besides the saint of Nimbargi has given number of (mostly Ayurvedic) prescriptions and proscriptions. In several of these proscriptions the stress is on Jowar.¹⁶

We can guess from the following preaching of the saint of Nimbargi that some people used to treat their guests out of vanity during the life time of the saint of Nimbargi.

"You should oblige others to the best of your ability. You should be charitable from whatever God has given to you. Anyone who comes at lunch time should be honored by sharing with him whatever little you have. You should not, however, out of vanity be charitable through borrowing from others or making someone homeless or by deceit. You should not, invite troubles for the sake of charity. You should offer in charity within your means. In this you should never fail. You should oblige others from whatever you have and then never talk about it".¹⁷

Begging was the profession of some people during the life time of the saint of Nimbargi and the attitude of the saint on the beggary of any kind is very well reflected in the following statement made by him.

"You should not hold your hands down for begging. If you do so and receive anything from others, it will never be sufficient for you. It will vanish in no time. Your hands will stand branded forever. You should always hold your hands up, in the position of giving. Priests (Vaidiks, Jangamas and others) who belong to begging profession wish for the things, that belong to others and hold their hands down in the position of receiving. Thus they get their hands branded forever. They

never succeed in any work they begin. Scarcity is always at their door step and they are never free from poverty.

You should, therefore, never accept alms or any charity from others. You should always offer to others whatever you can.¹⁸

During the life time of the saint of Nimbargi agriculture was not only the main occupation of the people but also one of the most respected professions and people followed mostly their hereditary occupations (based on caste system) in Karnataka.¹⁹ Regarding occupation, the saint of Nimbargi expresses his views thus.

"The duty, God has allotted to you, should be performed conscientiously. Agricultural is the best, trade stands second and service last. God gives everybody one of these three occupations. If you desire for other's profession, treating your own with disgust and are careless in your work, Atman in your heart gets angry with you and crushes your pride. Hence you should follow your profession always sincerely. This will please God.²⁰"

We also understand as we have observed elsewhere that the dyeing the yarns was the hereditary profession of the saint of Nimbargi and he gave it up later and embraced the profession of a shepherd as that was more conducive to his spiritual life than hereditary profession of the dyeing the yarns. The saint of Nimbargi actually led the life of a shepherd for about fifty to sixty years.²¹

Men used to wear cotton dhoti, shirt, peta during the life time of the saint of Nimbargi in and around Nimbargi village and the saint of Nimbargi himself used to wear the above mentioned dress and used to cover his body with a kind of woolen rug (Kambali). Women used to wear blouse and saree.

Let us now consider the views of the saint of Nimbargi on the institution of adoption and acceptance of money from the childless parents.

The saint of Nimbargi does not seem to be happy about the practice of adoption with the greedy intention of securing estate, building, money. There is no guarantee that the adopted son would take care of the adopted parents in their old age.

To accept money from childless parents is also not good unless they offer it voluntarily and joyously.²²

The hold of joint family system over the individual members was strong during the life time of the saint of Nimbargi and disobedience to parents was not liked by saint of Nimbargi. This view is reflected in the following statements.

i) Parents look after and bring up their children with the expectation that their children would take care of them in their old age. They sacrifice their own morsel of food to feed their children and rear them up.

You should not disobey your parents. You should in no way displease them; should serve them and thus make them happy in every way.

Children will be happy if the parents are pleased and bless them. Those who always obey and serve their parents are blessed with progeny, wealth, longevity, power, fame etc.,²³

ii) As the result of his good conduct the youth gets married. The husband and wife were to stay together and enjoy marital life. So his love for his wife increases and he is infatuated by his wife. Therefore, he is at her will and command. Her words seem to him truer than those of parents. He dances to her tunes. He makes his parents miserable, instead of making them happy. This is very bad indeed! What a sinful fellow he is! Such a mean creature shall never be happy.²⁴

Turning to the status of women during the life time of the saint of Nimbargi it may be said that quite a few disciples of the saint like Bhagavantawwa, Laxmibai Akka, Bheemavva were women and hence enjoyed probably some freedom in the spiritual sphere. We are informed also that girls of upper castes were married before they could attain the age of maturity and women of low caste had to work hard.²⁵ Illiteracy was wide spread (especially among women).²⁶

During British rule Dharwad, Bijapur, Belgaum, and Karwar district belonged to Bombay province. In Bombay Karnataka (Dharwad, Bijapur, Belgaum, and Karwar districts) area Marathi schools were started before 1829 and kannada schools were started in 1835.²⁷ People of Bombay karnataka but for a few

exceptions knew both Marathi, Kannada and there was some influence of Urdu language on them. The saint of Nimbargi knew Marathi, Kannada and to a certain extent he was influenced by Muslim saints like Kabir and Murid. The saint of Nimbargi's profound knowledge of Marathi and Kannada are reflected in his discourses on Dasbodha (a Marathi work by Sri Ramdas Swami), his references to the utterances of Marathi saints like Tukaram and references to Purandardas (a Kannada saint) and in his (the saint of Nimbargi's) Kannada songs and sayings. However, we have no convincing evidence to show that the saint of Nimbargi had come in contact with and influenced by saints like Sri Vijayadas, Sri Gopaldas, Sri Prasanna Venkatdas, Sri Praneshdas and Sri Mohandas (of 17th and 18th centuries)²⁸ and the Mohammedan saint - Sherif of Shishunal, who was born on 7th March 1819 (the disciple of Govindas Bhat a Brahmin saint) and the contemporary saints of Sherif Saheb like Chidamber Dixit, Nagalinga Yati of Navalagund, Sheshachal Sadhu of Agadi, Madivalappa of Gadag, Siddharudha of Hubli.²⁹ On the whole it appears that the saint of Nimbargi was influenced by some medieval saints rather than the saints of his time. One of the reasons might have been for this was lack of development in the means of transport and communication. Horses and bullock carts were the modes of travelling.

In those days (i.e. During the life time of the saint of Nimbargi) some people of Devar Nimbargi and its surrounding places opposed the concept of Lingayat Guru by Brahmin disciples. The attainment of occult powers such as Vachasiddhi (a kind of occult power), exhibition of miracles and religious ostentations including the offering of food to people with a view to attain merit (Punya) were thought to be the inevitable parts of spiritual life. The following account would elucidate the fact that the saint of Nimbargi did not entertain any such ideas.

i) A so-called Sadhu named Kanak belonging to Bhilla tribe was very proud of his position as a Sadhu. The widow of the chief of the village of Nimbargi and a few worshippers of the temple of Bhimaraya hated Shri Nimbargi Maharaj for no reason. They instigated Kanak to harass Shri Nimbargi Maharaj. He went to Shri Nimbargi Maharaj and said "You call yourself a sadhu and get worshipped and honoured by Brahmins. Let us see who is a real sadhu you or I. Let us get ourselves locked up in a room in the temple and see who gets out of the room without opening the door. One who does so, is a real sadhu Shri

Nimbargi Maharaj pleaded that he was not a sadhu and that he could work no such miracles, and there was no need of such a test. Kanak insisted on the plan. Sri Nimbargi Maharaj told him repeatedly that he was not a sadhu and so there was no need of test. Kanak felt elated and persisted to follow the method suggested by him. Finally Shri Nimbargi Maharaj agreed and told Kanak, "O.K. As you wish it!" "Let us lock up ourselves in a room and see who comes out!" When Kanak saw that the situation has gone out of hand, he proposed to postpone the matter till next day. But Shri Nimbargi Maharaj replied "You cannot be sure of tomorrow. Let us do it just now. One who speaks of tomorrow is ruined". This made Kanak very angry and he abused and insulted in vile and ugly words and went to his residence. Shri Nimbargi Maharaj was very much annoyed. He stood in front of the idol of Bheemaraya and prayed, "Why should Kanak speak to me such piercing words and hurt my emotions when I did him no wrong? kindly do me justice" (this is expressed in one of his songs.*) Shri Nimbargi Maharaj prayed in standing position. He understood that God had listened to his prayer. Kanak who was to go to his village next day suffered from diarrhoea and by very midnight his health was in a critical condition. Kanak and his kith and kins were convinced that this punishment was received because Kanak had harassed and insulted Shri Nimbargi Maharaj. Kanak's disciples went to Shri Nimbargi Maharaj; begged to forgive Kanak. Shri Nimbargi Maharaj told that he would be saved if they take on a donkey, out of the southern limits of Nimbargi. They followed these directions and he was saved.³⁰

* The summary of the song :

Oh! powerful God Bhima, why did this person insult me by cutting words when I had done no wrong to him ? Oh! God ! it is your prestige and honour to protect your servants. Prove it to be true and relieve me from the pangs. Don't hide yourself behind the stone image! Break open the stone and come-out Oh! Narasimha! Oh! Allamprabhu! I have come to you. Oh pure Self-consciousness embodied in Gurulingajangam! I have completely surrendered my body, mind, wealth to you.

See Gajendragadakar S and Bhagwat S (translators) "Nectar of Illumination." (Published by Mrs. S Bhagwat 65, Patil Estates, Shivajinagar, Poona, 1975) pp. 100 - 01.

ii) The saint of Umadi was a Brahmin (Deshastha) disciple of the saint of Nimbargi. The saint of Umadi was harassed by some people including his kith and kin who used to say that his spiritual teacher was a Lingayat and his spiritual teacher had tricked him and all that was mere trickery.³¹

iii) Once a Bairagi from Andhra Pradesh came to Sonagi near Nimbargi, while he was on all India pilgrimage. This Bairagi who was naked but for Langoti and Bhagava kafani used to offer food to people with a view to accumulate merit-Punya. He was also in possession of Vacha Siddhi (a kind of occult power). Offering of food and possession of occult powers were thought to be sign of real spiritual life by him. He became famous in and around Sonagi. The disciples of the saint of Nimbargi like Bapu, Laxmibai Akka (a fostered daughter of the saint of Nimbargi), Atmaram Jain and his son Bhimanna pressed him to see the above mentioned Sadhu. Therefore Maharaj went to see him. The above mentioned Sadhu (Bairagi) did not show respect to the saint of Nimbargi as he could not understand the greatness of the saint of Nimbargi. "Why do you offer food and other things to people?" asked Maharaj to Sadhu (Sadhubua/Raghunathpriya Maharaj). Sadhubua/Bairagi replied, "This is punyamarga (the path of merit). "Then Maharaj asked" on what basis have you come to know that this is Punya marga? Can you see punya with you eyes? How much punya have you accumulated" ? "Sadhubua could not answer these questions but they touched his heart and he wanted to know Maharaja's life personally. One morning he went to a place where the saint of Nimbargi sat for mediation in an open space (or forest) and Sadhubua climbed the neem tree. Maharaj did not get up from the meditation till the evening. When Maharaj started leaving for home in the evening Sadhubua climbed down and prostrated at the feet of Maharaj "Where were you till now?" asked Maharaj "I was sitting on the tree" replied Sadhubua. "Did you remain without food?" asked Maharaj. "I ate leaves of Neem tree. I am accustomed to eating Neem leaves" replied Sadhubua. Nimbargi Maharaj laughed and said, "If by eating neem leaves God could be attained God would be attained first by camel". Then Sadhubua's heart further melted and requested Maharaj to initiate him into spiritual path and having come to know the importance of Sadhubua the saint of Nimbargi initiated him. Whenever Sadhubua happened to go to Devar Nimbargi he used to say loudly, "Rajadhirajj Sadgurunath Maharaj Ki Jai" in praise of his spiritual teacher. On hearing this loud tone the saint of Nimbargi advised Sadhubua to utter the same in a soft tone.³²

iv) When the disciples of the saint of Nimbargi went to him and waved lights of camphor in his house, the saint of Nimbargi said "What is the use of burning this quantity of camphor? If God could be attained by burning huge quantities of camphor, people would spend vast sums of money on the purchase of camphor. But God cannot be bought so cheaply.³³

SECTION III

THE SALIENT FEATURES OF NIMBARGI SAMPRADAYA

Some of the salient features of Nimbargi Sampradaya are as follows :

1. One important characteristic feature of Nimbargi Sampradaya is that its spiritual leaders and followers come from different social backgrounds and belong to different social strata (caste and class). The following account substantiates this view.

The saint of Nimbargi, as we have observed elsewhere, was born in a Neelawani sub-caste of Lingayat community and he had several Lingayat disciples belonging to Ghaniga, Banijaga, Shepherd/Kuruba, Malgar and other such sub-castes of a Lingayat community. Some of the Brahmin disciples of the saint of Nimbargi were the saint of Umadi (Deshastha), Sri Ramchandrarao Yargattikar (Deshastha), Adya Raghunatha- charya (Vaishnava), Non-Lingayat and non-Brahmin disciples of the saint of Nimbargi were Madar Peeru (Musician caste), Mohadin Saheb (Muslim), Atmaram Jain (Jain) and others. Women disciples of the saint of Nimbargi were Bhagavantavva, Laxmibai Akka (Maratha), the mother of Bhaurao of Nadagowd of Nimbargi and some others.

Sadhubua was a Brahmachari (unmarried) while most of the other disciples of the saint of Nimbargi were householders. Most of the disciples of the saint of Nimbargi came from the rural background.

The saint of Umadi had Lingayat disciples like Sri Sadguru Siddhalingayya Swami (Jangam), Sri Girimalleswar Maharaj (Merchant) and Sri Shivalingavva - who was initiated when she was 6-7 years old (a poetess saint of Jat), Kabir and Allappa (Muslims), Sri Siddharameshwar Maharaj (Kunabi) and a few Harijans were the disciples of the saint of Umadi. Sri Venkantrao Maharaj of Anjutgi (Vaishnava), Sri Amburao Maharaj

(Deshatha), Sri Radhabai Limaye (Chitpawan), Sri Bagewadi Narasappa Maharaj (The spiritual teacher of Sri B. D. Jatti Lingayat and the former chief minister of Karnataka, Vice president and acting president of India), Padmasri Kaka Saheb Karkhanis - a freedom fighter and a Harijan sevak, Prof R. D. Ranade- the former Vice Chancellor of Allahabad University and some others were the Brahmin disciples of the saint of Umadi.

An American Professor of Philosophy George B. Burch paid a visit to Nimbali Ashram of 'Prof R.D. Ranade to discuss with him philosophy. Prof Burch writes, in his article on 'Prof R. D. Ranade -a Loving personality'..... The (Nimbali) Ashram was a group of five small stone buildings. The only neighbours were a "Criminal caste" group living in eight mud huts..... Living in the Ashram were Ranade, his second wife, his daughter, his two small grand children and about fifteen disciples. They came from different social background; a young raja, a retired Postmaster General, college professors, doctors lawyers, businessman, clerks, the local station master, a Harijan (who, coming to Ranade in distress when his children were starving on his forty rupee school teacher's salary, was assisted by him to get a hundred rupee social worker's position). They had been drawn to religion by various influences - one, a Madras doctor, through the frustrations of bureaucratic regulations another, a lawyer with an international practice, through the company of saintly men he met during three years in jail."¹ Prof R.D. Ranade had quite a few Muslim, Jain, and Christian disciples (Dr. Christian of Aurangabad, and Dr. De Marquette and his wife from France), and a few Lambani (Banjara Tribe) disciples.

Financial position of Sri Nimbargi maharaj, Sri Bhausaheb Maharaj (the saint of Umadi), Sri Gurudev (Prof R.D. Ranade) was fairly well, while Sri Amburao Maharaj and Sri Shivalingavva had at times to face the penury of the worst type².

Finally, it should be noted that the saints of this (Nimbargi) Sampradaya like the Varikari saints are not interested in abolishing the caste system but to grant freedom to one and all irrespective of their caste, sub-caste, socio-economic background in spiritual matters. What Sri S. V. Dandekar has written about Varikari saints in this connection is also applicable more or less to the saints of Nimbargi Sampradaya.

"They (the varakari saints) wrote against caste, this means they clearly pointed out that caste had no value on the way of release and devotion. We never shall hear an utterance of even one saint that caste has to be discarded on the way of works, in daily life."³

2. In this Nimbargi Sampradaya difference between upasana of Siva and upasana of Vishnu or any other upasana has no place.

The saint of Nimbargi had heard and visualised supersensuous Divine Namas and hence he was supposed to have brought the Namas from Heaven.⁴ One can refer to the summary of one of the songs composed by the saint of Nimbargi.

I regarded upto now four vedas, all sciences, gods and goddesses, rites and rituals and other things as separate from each other. But on account of the grace of the omnipotent Sadguru now I can see unity everywhere. I myself have become all the religious rites and become Shri Gurulingjangam.⁵

One of the Vaishnava (Madhva) Brahmin lady disciples of the saint of Umadi had begun to have the spiritual experience of Shivalinga (phallic). She asked the saint of Umadi, "I belong to Vaishnava Sampradaya. Why should I have the experience of Shivalinga in my meditation?" The saint of Umadi replied: "Your nature is not straight. The difference between Siva and Vishnu has not yet disappeared from your mind. God is neither Siva nor Vishnu. He is everything."⁶

Late Dr. N.S. Christian of Aurangabad in his article, "How I found my Gurudev" writes:

"He (Gurudev R. D. Ranade) graciously initiated me in the supreme Yoga of meditation of God's name. He gave me Christa-Nama without distracting me from Ista Devata and added me to his large family of devoted disciples."⁷ On number of occasions the Muslim servant and disciple of Sri Gurudev R.D. Ranade told me at Nimbargi Ashram that he was blessed with Islam-Nama (given by Sri Gurudev R.D. Ranade).

3. The characteristic feature of Nimbargi Sampradaya is 'seed mantra' which is given by the spiritual teacher/Sadguru for spiritual progress.

The saint of Nimbargi says :

"Sadguru is one who has become one with the unrevealed Reality. After arriving here, having passed through all species, it is very difficult to come across such Sadguru and receive initiation by him. The present generation knows nothing about real spiritual life. They dance to the tune of the whims of their minds, and after death, they go incessantly round the cycles of births again. You should not act as all others do but should follow the instructions of your Sadguru, should meditate and see the light of God. This would be the best fulfillment of life's purpose.⁸

The main spiritual discipline (sadhana) is meditation on Divine name (seed mantra) granted by a realized Sadguru. This name is Divinity Itself - God - inposse as it reveals itself to the intuitive vision or audition of a saint at the height of meditation. Thus, this Name carries with it the Divine power. Hence meditation on it becomes a process of identification with Divinity. Naturally it leads to the Blissful vision of the Atman.⁹

This seed - mantra was often, it seems the name of a special deity. The remembrance, then, of this name in meditation was regarded as the principal means of spiritual progress. Meditation understood in the broad meaning of the lgnation 'spiritual exercises', was to be performed internally with recollection and reverence with persistency and continuity.¹⁰

4. The saints of Nimbargi Sampradaya recognize only two aspects (Saguna and Nirguna) of one spiritual entity and bring harmony between Saguna (with attributes) and Nirguna (without attributes) aspects of one spiritual entity. According to the saints of Nimbargi Sampradaya the spiritual energy that underlies the entire universe is one. They call it like Upanishadic seers, "Atman", or "Nirguna Brahman" or God, which is Sat, Chit, Anand" - Existence. Consciousness and Bliss and which is also Creator, Preserver and Destroyer. And the second is the saint, who has realised the Atman. They call him Sadguru or Saguna Brahman i.e., Brahman with attributes. They regarded Brahman i.e., Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesha as personified powers of the Atman regarding creation, preservation and destruction of the world respectively. They also regarded Rama, Krishna, Narayana and the like as

incarnations of the Atman in the sense of realised souls and all other minor deities, that are merely the personified forces of Nature, as subordinate to them.¹¹ Amburao Maharaj expresses his views in the following manner on Saguna and Nirguna.

Nema or Meditation is of two types in this (Nimbargi) Sampradaya i) Kattacha Nema (Rigorous mediation). ii) Sadha Nema (Ordinary meditation). Rigorous mediation consists in sitting in a quiet place, in a steady erect posture with the gaze fixed either on the tip or top of the nose mentally repeating the Nama along with incoming and outgoing breath, with perfect devotion and concentration. Such a Nema should be regularly carried on, thrice a day, at least for one hour each time. ii) Ordinary meditation consists in simple remembrance of Nama at all other times, even while walking and talking, eating and drinking etc., Sri Baba (Amburao Maharaj the saint of Jigjeewani) called this meditation Nirguna Bhakti, devotion without attributes as he regarded the Nama as Nirguna.

Along with meditation Sri Baba (Amburao Maharaj) advised his disciples to read regularly a fixed portion of Pothi or sacred Books like Dasbodha and Manobodha of Sri Ramdas, thrice everyday perform Bhajan and Arati - sing the glory of the lord and wave light before the photograph of Sri Maharaj with perfect devotion. Baba used to call this discipline Saguna Bhakti or devotion with all attribute.* (Sagunaceni adhare nirguna pavije nirdhare). With the help and support of Saguna Bhakti, Baba used to say you should carry on Nirguna Bhakti, and realize the Lord who is also Nirguna.¹²

The following statements made by the saint of Umadi¹³ shed further light upon the harmony between Saguna and Nirguna bhakti (devotion) (i) "We should ever try to live in the company of the good (Sadhakas). At the time of the Saptahas, we will have the pleasure of meeting great devotees. Meditation in their holy company and discussions on spiritual topics carried on by them would enable all to enjoy the delight. (ii) The listening of the spiritual discourses would tranquillise the mind. The time spent in listening to them need not be considered wasted. Hence we should repeatedly read the same books and listen to the same discourses. We should

* Distribution of Prasad, Angar (holy ash) are some other aspects of Saguna Bhakti in Nimbargi Sampradaya.

constantly carry on this practice. Sri Nimbargi Maharaj used to state that this practice also is in a way as good as mediation for a seeker. Hence we should be regularly engaged in listening to spiritual discourses.

5. Another special feature of Nimbargi Sampradaya is that the saints of this Sampradaya have brought about harmonious synthesis between their worldly life (Prapancha), and spiritual life (Paramartha). They do not regard total renunciation of worldly life as absolutely necessary for spiritual life. On the other hand, they treat worldly life as complimentary to spiritual life and the worldly life should be led in such a way as to facilitate spiritual life.¹⁴

The saint of Nimbargi has made a few statements in this connection.

i) You should carry on your spiritual practices in the midst of your mundane life. You should not be confined to material life only, without any touch of spiritual life. You should follow day and night, the sattvaguna in mundane life. You should thus pass through this worldly existence without a blemish.

It is everybody's primary duty to lead a spiritual life. You should perform all other duties so far as they are subservient to spiritual life. You should not be anxious about anything and live with a firm conviction that every thing happens according to the will of Atman and you should continuously and unceasingly meditate upon Atman.¹⁵

ii) Nothing should be done in thought, work or deed without remembering Atman. Everything should be done while seeing Him and remembering Him. Nothing should be done for the sake of fame or name. Everything should be done for the sake of Atman. This is the highest good - Summum Bonum.¹⁶

According to Prof R.D. Ranade any work cannot be worship. It is only the work that is meant for the realization of God, that is inspired by God or done under the canopy of His illumination that would deserve to be called worship.¹⁷

He (the saint of Jigjeewani) was once asked by a disciple as to why a saint who has renounced all desires, wishes to spread devotion among the people. Sri Baba replied. "All saints

entertain an intense feeling of compassion in their hearts, for afflicted humanity. They melt with pity at the sight of the misery of the people born out of their ignorant attainment for bodily pleasure. Hence they are naturally impelled to rescue them from misery by advising them to follow the path of God - devotion and realize His vision and Bliss".¹⁸

Prof R. D. Ranade has once stated "Bhakti (devotion) is real service to society. We believe in the physical transmission of spiritual power..... We should meditate upon God, that would benefit some one or the other in the world; this is the law of Divine"¹⁹. "A saint who is not of supreme service to society", declares Sri Gurudev Dr. Ranade "is not a saint at all".²⁰

6. Nimbargi Sampradaya denies categorically that one can lead a spiritual life without being moral. In other words spiritual life should be based also on moral life. The Blissful vision of the Atman should be the goal of human life. But in order to achieve this supreme ideal, it is absolutely necessary for a seeker to strictly practise the moral discipline which consists in elimination of vices and cultivation of virtue especially the central virtue of God devotion. It is only then that he would be able to attain his cherished ideal of God-realization. A person whose mind is not purified by moral preparation cannot concentrate on God.

Mysticism and eroticism have as much in common; according to Prof R. D. Ranade, as the south pole with the north pole. He examines the supposed sexual relationship between the Gopis and Krishna and points out absurdity of such a view. He utterly denies that eroticism has got anything to do with spiritualism. The relationship might be understood allegorically. He gives his own mystical explanation of the way in which Gopis may be supposed to have enjoyed Krishna "May it not be possible, that in these mystical realization, each of the Gopis had the vision of the God head before her." This similarity of their experience only supports that it was a spiritual vision of God disproving any carnal relationship between them.²²

The saint of Nimbargi gives a sound note of warning that one should not be proud of one's achievements in spiritual life also. If so, then the spiritual experiences will be limited.

Those, willing to lose the experiences are welcome to be proud.²³

The minimum two vows that the disciple in Nimbargi Sampradaya is asked to take are the giving up of Paradhana and Parastri (i) avarice (ii) and lust²⁴ (of course, the woman disciple must give up Parapurusha).

7. Nimbargi Sampradaya is 'Swarupa Sampradaya'. About this Sampradaya Sri Gurudev Ranade had once observed "This may be called 'Swarupa Sampradaya'- a Tradition of "Self Vision", which has been adopted since ancient times by seers like Narada, Yajnavalkya and others upto the modern times by saints like Jnaneshwar, Tukaram and Sri Nimbargi Maharaj²⁵. The Supreme ideal that they advocate is God-realization or Self-realization or Self-Vision. It consists in the intuitive apprehension and silent enjoyment of the Bliss of the Atman. What is the nature of this Self-Vision.....? About Self-Vision, the Maitri Upanishad says "That Luminous Reality which comes out of us is the ecstatic state of consciousness and appears to our vision in our own form, is what we might call the Atman- The Immortal, Fearless Brahman (Maitri up 11 (2)). And Self-bliss, according to Chhandogya Upanishad consists in the enjoyment of the supreme happiness by the seeker when he has the vision of the Self (Atman) everywhere.²⁶

8. Nimbargi Sampradaya is said to be rational. The spiritual rationality of this Sampradaya has various facets. I consider here only a few of them.

The saints of this sampradaya do not believe in the philosophical speculations that are not based on their spiritual experiences. Sri Baba has told a disciple, "Look here. We are mainly concerned with two types of persons. (i) Those who believe in God, and want to realize Him, and are prepared to perform the required experiment on it and; (ii) Those who do not believe in God but are eager to know whether He exists or not and are ready to perform the requisite experiment for it. We have nothing to do with others.²⁷

This sampradaya regards some of the practices and beliefs as superstitious. The following examples illustrate the point:

i) While going on an important work the saint of Umadi happened to see a widow carrying fire in her hand. Having

considered this inauspicious, the elder brother of the saint of Umadhi stopped him from going. But the saint of Umadi did not agree and said "Ganga Bhagirathi is coming in front of me with Jnangni (the fire of knowledge), my work would be accomplished" The saint of Umadi did complete his work.²⁸

ii) Prof R.D. Ranade writes, "..... Badarayana and Ramadas agree and we also agree with them that liberation is a thing which is sui generis and is not dependent either on the Suklamarga or the Krisnamarga."²⁹

iii) Prof Lal had been to Nimbai Ashram during life time of Sri Gurudev Ranade. "My wife has an..... apprehension, Sir," Prof Lal went on "Other pujas are forbidden during certain parts of the month in case of ladies. How would then she go on practising during this period what do you prescribe?"

"Do you think God ceases to exist during certain periods"? was the simple but penetrating reply (of Gurudev Ranade).³⁰

iv) Some senior disciples of Sri Gurudev Ranade have informed me that one need not fast even during the period of eclipse if it comes in the way of God - realization and meditation.

v) This Sampradaya does not give importance to dreams. But if vastu (a kind of spiritual experience) or the saint appears in the dream it has got some significance. Prof R. D. Ranade writes, "The mantra which a Guru may give to his disciple in a dream, may become real and fructuous during his life, as it did in the case of Tukaram."³¹

Any dream in which a God-realiser 'appears' to the dreamer must come out true. You may very well test the validity and reality of such a dream-experience; if he appears in your dream and your aspiration is not fulfilled; he is not a God - realiser at all. The saint is Reality itself, as he is one with God. So the saint being one with God his appearance in a dream is the same as God's appearance. This furnishes a good and reliable test.³²

Another important facet of Spiritual rationality of Nimbargi Sampradaya is that the saints of this Sampradaya never indulged in performing miracles. However, God at times performed miracles to spread His devotion through them but the

saints were not even aware of them. The saint of Umadi maintained that events that violate the Laws of Nature, such as 'the speech of a buffalo and the movement of a wall' cannot take place. However, these miracles attributed to saint Jnaneshwar, might be regarded as products of imagination.³³ The saint of Umadi also observes that miracle mongers easily delude the common folk by the exhibition of their miracles. By offering material gifts which though quite ephemeral, are regarded by them to be very valuable, these miracle mongers command respect from them like real saints. But those who love the eternal Atman; would never revere such fellows as they would revere realised saints. Some others try to imitate the external conduct of saints. How can such hypocrites realize the Self and become genuine saints.

Like miracle mongering and hypocrisy mere intellectual learning cannot be sure sign of a genuine saint. Self-realisation should not be contaminated by the ego, born of learning, just as it should not be spoiled by miracles.³⁴

Sri Nimbargi Maharaj with great compassion has emphatically declared: "Even though a person has brought the very Sun before you, has revealed the past and future to you, don't regard him as a realised saint. Don't consider such fraudulent knowledge to be Self-knowledge."³⁵

Sri Gurudev Ranade told Padmasri Kakasahab Karkhanis about his experience as follows "When I was progressing in my Sadhana a stage arrived, when I was able to see the past and future of the person sitting in front of me. I grew restless thereby and requested Maharaj (The saint of Umadi) that I did not want any of such Riddhis (prosperities) and Siddhis (occult powers). I told him that I wanted nothing but Bhakti and prayed to him to stop all that. After this prayer of mine these visions came to an end." All such events happened in the life of Sri Gurudev R.D. Ranade prior to 1915.³⁶

Once there was a discussion about the miracles performed by the saints. Sri Baba replied; "As a Sadhaka advances in his spiritual Sadhana the so-called Siddhis or occult powers rush to him. They pursue him and try to allure him. If he falls to their temptation and tries to use them, they would prove a great obstacle in his spiritual advancement by flattering his egoism. Hence, a Sadhaka is strictly forbidden to perform miracles..." He should, therefore, always keep them at an

arm's length. In the case of saints, it is God, who at times performs miracles for them. They never try to perform them. Neither are they conscious of them when they are performed by God for spreading His devotion among the people through them.³⁷

SECTION IV

PHILOSOPHY OF NIMBARGI SAMPRADAYA

The prime exponent of philosophy of Nimbargi Sampradaya is Prof R.D. Ranade - the disciple of the saint of Umadi and a world renowned mystic philosopher. Prof R. D. Ranade has not put forth his philosophy in any single work. Instead of putting forward his viewpoint directly, he speaks through the mouths of saints and philosophers, thus keeping his own personality almost in the background. Though he criticizes many a philosophical doctrine, his criticism is constructive and not destructive, because reconciliation is the main thread of his philosophy. Prof R. D. Ranade does not reject any doctrine in toto, but seeks out an element of truth and gives its proper place in the perspective of a more wide doctrine. The method that he adopts may be said to be a method of construction through a systematic exposition of all the problems concerning of a doctrine. Some other important methods that are employed by him are comparative, analytical, synthetic, historical, genetic. He would always follow the original text and could give natural interpretation.

Dr. R.D. Ranade's Philosophy is known as philosophy of Beatificism or Rational mysticism or philosophy of God realization. According to Dr. R.D. Ranade God-realization is not an event but a process. It is a progressive realization and a doctrine of approximation.

Let us have a glance at Prof R.D. Ranade's contributions to 1) Mysticism; 2) Metaphysics; 3) Epistemology; 4) Ethics; and 5) Aesthetics.

As far as possible the philosophy of Nimbargi Sampradaya is stated succinctly in Prof Ranade's own words without going critically into the matter. In some places repetitions and overlappings are inevitable.

MYSTICISM

Prof R.D. Ranade states, "Mysticism denotes that attitude of mind which involves a direct, immediate, first hand and intuitive apprehension of God. When mysticism is understood in this sense, there is no reason why it should be taken to signify any occult or mysterious phenomena as is occasionally done. It is an irony of fate that a word which deserves to signify the highest attitude of which man is capable, namely, a restful and loving contemplation of God, should be taken to signify things which are incomparably low in the scale of being. Mysticism implies a silent enjoyment of God. It is in this sense that mystical experience has been regarded as ineffable.¹ Mystical life involves a full exercise of intellect, feeling and will and that in addition, it brings into operation that faculty called intuition by which one gets directly to the apprehension of Reality.²

Further Prof R. D. Ranade adds, "We may say that that kind of Mystical experience must be invalid which does not tend to an intellectual clarification of thought. A man whose brain is confused, a man who is labouring under delusions, a man who is likely to suffer from hallucinations, a man who is nuerally pathological, can never hope to attain to real mystical experience. The imagination of the mystic must be powerful. He must have a penetrating, accurate, unfaltering intellect.³

Prof R. D. Ranade says, "It would be a problem for the Philosophy of the Immediate Future to place Mysticism on a truly philosophical basis. Rational Mysticism which has been hitherto regarded as a contradiction in terms, must now be a truism."⁴

Rational mysticism enquires as to what is the faculty of God -realization, what is its nature, whether it receives material from outside (i.e. Peripheral initiation) or whether it spins from itself (Central initiation). Is self-knowledge possible and if so, how? What are the criteria of spiritual experiences?⁵

Rational mysticism implies a harmonious development of Both reason and intuition.⁶ Intuition is that super-sensous faculty which goes beyond reason and which puts us in possession of things unknown to reason. The faculty by means of which we can enter into spiritual life is intuition.⁷ It has

got a physiological support, according to Gurudev Ranade in what purports to be 'Central initiation'. The intuitive experience is generated inside us in our intuitional process and not outside us as in the process of ordinary knowledge of external objects. It is in this way that philosophy of God-realization gives to reason what is due to reason and to intuition what is due to intuition.⁸

Ultimate Truth is supra-rational and is not accessible to conceptual understanding. Yet, reason can point a way beyond itself. Rational mysticism is an attempt as far as possible to understand this supra-rational element, this overplus of meaning in the mystical experience. It is the rational analysis, though it is bound to be inadequate to express the 'extra' in religious experience. Mystical experience may not admit of definition but still it admits of being discussed. The blind who is not endowed with faculty of vision still reads with the help of Braille and tries to grasp the meaning. So reason which does not have the intuitive power tries to comprehend mystical experience, though only in the fashion of blind. Prof Ranade has said many times that experience is one thing and expression quite another. Expression is an attempt to approach the inexpressible. It is the march of the undaunted reason to take at least a peep into Truth.⁹ By undertaking a rational analysis of mystical experience, reason tries to isolate the unnamed something in it, something which does not respond to the call of reason. But this isolation itself is very important; it makes us aware that beyond the sphere of reason there is a vast arena, by no means untrodden but where reason is forbidden to enter and where intuition is the only guide.¹⁰ Rational mysticism is a brief for intuition. But if reason had not done any preliminary work, mysticism, as Otto remarks would be only unbroken silence.¹¹ Reason in turn receives illumination from intuition in the form of saving experiences. Intuition has thus come to fulfill and not to destroy reason.¹²

Another way of understanding rational mysticism is taking Jnana as illumination. By the word Jnana Prof Ranade does not mean ordinary discursive knowledge but intuitive knowledge. Real knowledge is thus very much compatible with devotion.¹³ It may be remembered that the Bhagavadgita does not find any contradiction between Jnani and Bhakta. On the other hand it regards a real Jnani as Bhakta of the highest type.¹⁴

Now let us discuss criterion or criteria for recognizing the validity of mystical experiences. All philosophers generally agree that there must be a criterion for recognising the validity of variety of spiritual experiences - morphic, photic, audic, colouric, tactual etc., and amalgamation of various spiritual experiences.

Prof R.D. Ranade takes a survey of the criticisms levelled against every one of Pramanas (Pratyaksha, Anuman, Upamana, Shabda etc.,) or criteria, by the different schools of Indian philosophy and agrees with the view that Pratyaksha, not in its ordinary sense, but Pratyakshya, in the sense of "Aparoksha nubhut" or "Anubhava" i.e., intuitive experience attained in the state of the worshipful contemplation of God is the only true criterion of the valid knowledge of Reality. As in this state there is a direct approach to Reality, there is, therefore, no necessity of an intermediate criterion at all. Thus "Anubhava" is the only true criterion.¹⁵

Amongst modern philosophers in the west, there are three schools of thought, each suggesting a different criterion of its own. The Realists experience 'correspondence', the pragmatists desire 'satisfaction', and the Idealists require 'coherence'. Now it is to be noted that a valid criterion must be such that, without it truth would not be known and with it truth would not be missed. In view of this, all the three criteria are found deficient in one way or the other. Yet, every one of these criteria suggests an element which a true criterion must necessarily possess. According to Gurudev Ranade, in mystical experience there is also an element of 'correspondence' between the internal perception and the external perception.... As regards 'satisfaction' it is specifically pointed out that the mystical experience confers upon the mystic beatification which carries complete satisfaction in him, as a result of the beatific vision of God. Thus, the Pragmatist's criterion also has got a place in mystical experience. As regards 'coherence' it is pointed out that 'epistemologically' absolute coherence is not knowable, as the knower will remain outside the coherent system. But if coherence rises to the level of transparent coherence, where the knower, knowledge and the known become one, then it is nothing else than 'Anubhava'. Thus 'Anubhava' remains the only criterion, which combines in itself the elements of correspondence, utility or satisfaction and coherence all in their purified form.¹⁶

Again the universality of mystical experience found among the mystics of the East and the West confers upon such experience objectivity and necessity according to Gurudev Ranade.¹⁷

Prof R.D. Ranade's philosophical thoughts are not of the nature of intellectual speculation. Direct experience is his sole dependable guide. All his philosophical theories naturally converge towards the realization of the supreme goal of human life, namely God - realization. "A mystic may be philosopher but is not necessarily so. His mystical experience is sufficient for his own elevation into Divinity, but if he philosophises he can raise the thinking humanity into Divine kingdom of Ends."¹⁸

Finally, we must remember that Prof R. D. Ranade has added the current of theoretical study to the already existing powerful flow of rational mysticism of Nimbargi Sampradaya.

METAPHYSICS

"The veracity and the virility of any metaphysical theory" observes Prof R. D. Ranade, "is to be gauged by its power of making life more divine, and therefore more worth while living."¹⁹ The ultimate Reality according to him is spiritual in nature; and Atman or God is the only ultimate substance beyond time, space and causality.²⁰ The question of the size of the soul is off the point as the soul is to be regarded as having no spatial quality at all. If the soul is both greater than the great and subtler than the subtle, how can it be side to have any spatial quality? Further, to talk of the soul's passing to movable and immovable existence is only a mode of speech. Transmigration from the ultimate standpoint is a mere illusion.²¹ With regards to the seat of the soul Prof R. D. Ranade says, "The soul resides in the pituitary gland".²² Let us see how Prof R.D. Ranade puts forth his argument with respect to the ultimate substance.

Prof R.D. Ranade reduces all categories like Dravya, Guna, Karma, and Abhava to one category namely Dravya. The term Abhava is negative. But mere negation without a positive basis is logically untenable. Hence Abhava as a negative category is unacceptable. The critics of vaishesika doctrine have criticized bitterly vis'esa (particularity) and samanya (universality). If vis'esa distinguishes between different things, there must

be additional vis'esas to distinguish between vis'esas themselves and so on adinfinitum. Thus the category of vis'esa suffers from infinite regress. As to the category of Samanya, the critics say that the relation between samanya and things covered by it presents difficulties. If the samanya is wholly present in the things, it means that there is plurality of Samanyas. If, on other hand, it is partly present in them, then it must be divisible. Neither the plurality nor the divisibility of Samanya is acceptable to the Vaisesika philosopher. Hence vis'esa and samanya as independent categories are ruled out. The next category is Samvaya. Whether external or internal, the very concept of relation leads to infinite regress. The rose and red colour are supposed to be related by samvaya. How is this Samvaya related to the rose on the one hand and the red colour on the other. In a word, to relate the relata and the relation between-them, new relations must be found out and so on adinfinitum. So this category also shares the fate of the other categories. The next two categories namely 'Guna' (quality), Karma (action) can be peremptory. They are adjectival and not substantival, because they depend on the substance. It is substance which has a quality or is engaged in some activity. As such it is the substance which is primary.

'Guna' and 'Karma' thus gone Dravya (substance) remains the only category. But there cannot be many substances if by substance we mean a Self-existing entity. By substance Prof Ranade understands the spiritual reality.²³

Again the ultimate Reality is identified with Self-consciousness. Thus, Self-consciousness itself constitutes the ultimate category of existence. But it is the Divine Self consciousness and not human Self-consciousness that constitutes the foundation and peak of all thought and existence. Further, it is pointed out "the mystical view of Reality alone will enable us to reconcile all intellectual dogmas that have infested the philosophies of the world." In the same way, it is only in mystical experience that each doctrine - dualism, quasi-dualism and monism can have its own appointed place and level in the ladder of spiritual experience.²⁴

Prof. R.D. Ranade analyses five antinomies (contradictions between two or more apparently equally valid principles) of metaphysics which he finds in the Bhagavadgita as outlined below :²⁵

1. The first antinomy concerns the personal or impersonal characterisation of reality, i.e., whether reality is personal or impersonal. The solution is given in the doctrine of transpersonalism/ Super-personalism, i.e., God is neither personal nor impersonal but transcends both.

2. The second antinomy is of the actor and the spectator. Is reality to be regarded as active or passive? We have a reconciliation of the actor and spectator in the doctrine of emanationism in the sense that Prakriti gives birth to all animate and inanimate existences, but it does so on account of the fact that God is its Supervisor or Adhyaksha and is responsible for its Sphurana or stimulation.

3. Dealing with the third antinomy of the transcendence or the immanence nature of God, the solution is sought in the doctrine of transcendo-immanence/all-pervasiveness according to which God stands outside the world, but descends into it as an Avatara or incarnation.

4. The fourth antinomy concerns itself with the reality and the unreality of the world. The reconciliation is achieved through the doctrine of evanescence (ephemeralism) or the doctrine of Vyaktamadhya. Things come into existence and depart in a short while. We cannot say that they do not exist. They exist, but only for a short span of time. They are only Vyaktamadhya i.e., only the middle portion is manifested to us; behind them, there is infinity; before them, there is infinity.

5. The last antinomy, namely of liberation through a series of births (Kramamukti) and liberation at death (Antemukti) is reconciled in the doctrine of liberation here and now (Jivanmukti). The question of liberation need not necessarily be linked with the time of death. Even while living and though living one may be liberated, if one has realised God.

I shall consider now, some other metaphysical views of saints of Nimbargi Sampradaya.

About the nature of the world Sri Amburao Maharaj has suggestively stated "If we experience a Spiritual world exactly similar to this material world, that experience is called Anubhava. But this material world is a faint replica of the spiritual world. That is the original, this is a copy;

that is the substance, this is a shadow, that is eternal, this is evanescent."²⁶

To Sri Amburao Maharaj the word Maya conveyed two conceptions : 1) Maya is the ignorant attraction and attachment of the soul for the body as well as its attachment, love and desire for worldly objects and the pleasure derived from them. ii) Maya also is the Supreme Mysterious Power of the Lord of creation, preservation and destruction of the world. While Maya controls and rules the souls, the Lord controls and rules Maya. The first Jiva-maya is the outcome of the original ignorance and delusion while the second Hari-Maya is that of the original awareness and power.²⁷

Prof. R.D. Ranade says, "The ways of God in creating the world are mysterious. The world is mysterious mode of God".²⁸ This doctrine, which he terms vicitravada constitutes the Uttarpaksha.

I shall now consider the views expressed by Prof. R. D. Ranade and other saints of Nimbargi Sampradaya about liberation.

Prof Ranade asserts that when you have seen the form of God, you are liberated. There is no difference between realization and liberation. The same can be put in another way, namely, a soul whose true nature has manifested itself may be called liberated.²⁹ However, the attainment of mukti (liberation) is a gradual process. It may come immediately if there is no impediment. Otherwise, as the Bhagavadgita says, it may even be a matter of lives.³⁰ The Saint of Nimbargi has stated in this connection, "The best man should be without any vikaras (passions) because any desire at the moment of death would entail another Birth".³¹

Prof. Ranade would not agree with the conception of Sarvamukti (liberation of all): It breaks the law of sufficient reason. It is too much to believe that when one saint is born the whole world is saved. In contrast with the conception of Sarvamukti stands the conception of Ekamukti or liberation of one. Prof. Ranade strikes a new note in his doctrine of what he calls Pariwara-Mukti. The Ekmukti and Sarva-Mukti are the thesis and the antithesis of which the Pariwar Mukti is the synthesis. The spiritual teacher liberates not merely himself but also his associates, Pariwara.³²

Finally, let us have a glance at 'Prarabdha Karma' as understood in Nimbargi Sampradaya.

A distinction is made between Sanchita, Kriyamana and Prarabdha Karmas. Sanchita is like a granary where all our Karmas are deposited. Out of this some Karmas begin to yield fruit; they are called Prarabdha. The Kriyamana are those which are being performed now. In the case of a released soul, Kriyamana becomes ineffective; sanchita is destroyed as a result of God-vision; and on this there is general agreement. But philosophers differ as regards Prarabdha. Some hold that the fruits thereof will have to be enjoyed even after realization;... others hold that Prarabdha also is destroyed as an effect of realization. Saint Eknath as well as the Saint of Umadi assured that the grace of God destroys even Prarabdha. Both views can be reconciled, holds Prof. Ranade, by saying that Prarabdha is not destroyed along with Sanchita but follows its natural course of yielding fruit; but it can be annihilated by God's grace if it pleases Him.³³

EPISTEMOLOGY

The doctrine of approximation runs through the whole philosophy of Prof. Ranade. In epistemology, there is approximation to divine Self-consciousness as Truth itself, in metaphysics to divine self-consciousness again as Reality itself. In both the sciences it is the divine Self-consciousness which is the goal, it being an epistemologico-metaphysical concept. If it is true that by knowledge of Brahman one becomes Brahman, it is equally true that one has to become Brahman to know Brahman. None of these is purely a cause and the other purely an effect. There is a reciprocal causality between them. The more one knows Brahman, the more one becomes it; similarly the more one becomes Brahman, the more one knows it.³⁴ It is impossible to understand fully the architectonic skill of the Creator. What is granted to man is only partial knowledge; it is only God who can be non-agnostic; for He alone can be said to possess all-comprehensive knowledge, his own knowledge included.³⁵

Prof. Ranade refers to the two theories of classical Vedantic scholarship viz., Jnana-Karm-Samuchaya, which means both knowledge and action are necessary for liberation and Jnanottar-Karma, i.e., whether any duty remains even after the realisation of the Self. He points out that both these

controversies can be resolved by pointing out that Jnana is not an event but a process. The proper meaning of Jnana is illumination and not merely knowledge. Now illumination never comes finally and fully. We always keep making an asymptotic approach to illumination, but never actually reach it. The question what action is ordained after attaining to illumination does not arise at all. Similarly as the process of illumination never comes to an end, how can there be a combination of Jnana and Karma? While we are on the way to illumination, we are free to do actions suited to our temperaments.³⁶

Some more epistemological ideas of Nimbargi Sampradaya are as below :

From the epistemological viewpoint Atman or Self is the epistemological nucleus of all existence. Introspection is a psychological process, corresponding to Self-consciousness as a metaphysical reality. Self-consciousness is possible through the process of introspection. Here, a question arises as to how it is possible for the Self, who is the eternal knower, to know Himself. The answer will be that the empirical conditions of knowledge are inapplicable to the Self. The Self is endowed with the Supreme power of dichotomising itself into the knower and the known.³⁷

In knowing God reason, revelation (scriptures must be taken resort to for the knowledge of God) and intuition form a ladder in ascending order of value. Ultimately one's own experience is the only criterion for the reality of God.³⁸

Prof. Ranade points out that the recent discoveries in modern physics, biology or neurology all tend to prove that spirit is the only reality. He agrees with James Jeans that nature is nothing more than waves of our knowledge. This is idealism taken in the epistemological sense. There is one continuous stream of life or spirit which runs through the whole of nature. This is spiritualism taken in the metaphysical sense. His interpretation of philosophy is thus in terms of spiritualistic idealism.³⁹

Prof. Ranade has discussed the doctrine of Sabdha (the name of God) in his writings extensively. Sabdha stands for God and leads you to God. Shabda is not merely a symbol of

inward. Fine arts are a double edged sword. They might help the moral and spiritual path as they might excite sensual passions. The seeker must refuse to admit within his mind any idea except that of God.⁴³ There is a reciprocal causality between sinlessness and vision of God. As one becomes more and more sinless one gets more and more the vision of God, and when one has more and more of the vision of God, one becomes more and more sinless.⁴⁴

Supermoralism means going beyond duality of good and evil which occupies a central place in ethics. Supermoralism is the result of devotion and God-realisation. It cannot be achieved only by ethical and intellectual efforts. Prof Ranade has considered supermoralism from the point of view of Naishkarmyasiddhi and Nistraigunya. Naishkarmyasiddhi means rising superior to Karmas and Dharmas. It also means doing action with a spirit of detachment. The literal meaning of Nistraigunya is rising beyond the triplets of gunas. To achieve this there are two ways : 1) Continuing to stay in the pure Sattva state (Nitya-Sattvastha) and then destroying Sattva by Sattva itself. 2) Another way to reach Nistraigunya is Avyabhicarini Bhakti i.e., pursuing the path of one-pointed and unswerving devotion to God.

The highest moral ideal attainable by man is that of Sthitaprajna (equanimous man). In the Gita doctrine of Sthitaprajna we have a peculiar compound of all the three shades of the ethical theory of moralism, supermoralism, and beatificism. Still beatificism is the main characteristic of a sthitaprajna. It is because of beatificism that sthitaprajna loses his attachment to body and goes beyond duality.⁴⁵

Prof Ranade's doctrine of beatificism is a distinctive contribution to metaphysico-ethical thought. Beatificism involves 1) Touching God, coming into contact or communication with Him is the first element of Beatificism. 2) Secondly, we get an account where there is identification of saint with Brahman. The saint enjoys the highest bliss and becomes Brahman, he attains to Nirvana. 3) Finally this blissful state itself is said to be Brahman. The axiological conception of bliss and the metaphysical conception of Brahman are the same. The identification of happiness with reality is beatificism. Instead of self-consciousness being the centre of reality, bliss becomes the centre. Instead of idealism we have beatificism.⁴⁶

Ultimate reality; it is the highest reality both epistemologically and metaphysically. It is Truth and Reality
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ETHICS

Four moral ideals i.e. the Categorical imperative, moralism, supermoralism and Beatificism are analysed by Prof H. D. Ranade from the realisational standpoint. The general formulation of the categorical imperative in the Bhagavadgita is : You ought to do a thing because it is your duty to do so. There are three specifications of it :

a) This duty is to be performed leaving away all attachment and desire for the fruit. This rule is applicable both to ordinary and holy actions.

b) We ought to do our duty skillfully and in a spirit of equanimity;

c) Sacrifice or Yajna is the final specification and it has both social and spiritual values. Whenever we are doing our actions in the spirit of sacrifice we are freed from their contamination.⁴¹

A discussion of different virtues and their classification as well as the determination of the cardinal virtue comes under moralism. In every one of his writings Prof Ranade has stressed the utter necessity of moral preparation for spiritual life. Man has to attain virtue and leave away vice and carry on the work continuously and step by step till his character is confirmed in virtue. The way of egoism is not the way of God. As long as there is egoism God remains far away. So the dictum; Egoism or God, we have to choose.⁴²

Ungodliness is the root of all vice. God is the source of all virtues. God-devotion is the highest virtue man is capable of. The whole catalogue of virtues like self-control, discrimination, patience, sympathy, benevolence, purity, fearlessness or service are merely aspects of the Supreme virtue of God-devotion and vices are the dereliction from this central virtue. All virtues to deserve the name must merely be the expressions of this central virtue. Everything except the pursuit of God is a vanity. Our senses are extratropic and it requires a great moral and spiritual effort to turn them

Prof Ranade's reconciling tendency is again seen in his social ethics. The truest advice, he says, should be a combination of secular and spiritual work. The saint of Nimbargi also lays great stress on the combination of material and spiritual welfare. Do not follow only spiritual welfare, nor only material welfare, we have to combine both material and spiritual welfare. We need not deny material welfare even if we pursue spiritual welfare and a true moral philosopher would be he who could reconcile in a proper perspective Pravriti, (worldly prosperity), and Nivritti, (spiritual good). A saint who has realised God cannot remain to himself. He has to come back to the succour of the suffering humanity.⁴⁷

Love to Humanity must be based on love to God; if it is not, it is bound to have a shaky foundation. It is love that we bear to God that inspires us to love man; and those who love man otherwise love him accidentally and not essentially.⁴⁸

It is only when all humanity comes to recognise the One Spiritual Principle which underlies all things, that we can bring about harmony between different creeds, nations and races.⁴⁹

A real welfare state is a society of saints. A saint belongs to the city of the spiritual world. He would not be satisfied with a mere cosmopolis but he must be a member of the theopolis. Here God is supreme ruler and all beings, bound together by the spiritual ties, become equal aspiring denizens, whose only vocation is to fill the world with the praise and glory of God.⁵⁰ One God, One World, One Humanity should be his maxim. Theopolity, is his doctrine.⁵¹

AESTHETICS

In order to understand contributions of Prof. Ranade to Aesthetics, it is essential here to refer to his analysis of the concept of Sublime from the point of view of three disciplines: A) Metaphysics; B) Psychology of Religion - C) Ethics.

(A) As regards metaphysical analysis of the concept of sublime Prof. Ranade presents the following three points.

a) The first point refers to the distinction between the beautiful and sublime. The distinction between the beautiful

and the sublime is the distinction between assimilation and conquest. While in the experience of the beautiful the mind of man becomes assimilated to the object perceived, in the case of the sublime it is conquered by outside experience.

b) A second point in the metaphysical analysis would be the distinction between magnitude and force, what Kant calls the mathematical and the dynamical aspects of the sublime. "We might for our purpose", says Prof Ranade, "call these respectively extensity and intensity of sublime experience."

c) The last and the most important point, is the nature of infinitude that is portrayed in manifestations of the sublime. The experience of the sublime seems to be almost transcendental and baffling even for the imagination to reach. Prof Ranade has stressed the element of Divinity in all cases of infinitude as in the Behad of Kabir and Nirbail of Kannada Saints.⁵²

(B) Prof Ranade observes that devotion is anabolic, beauty metabolic and sublimity catabolic emotional ecstasy. Anabolism (ana-up, ballein-to throw) physiologically speaking is building up activity. In devotion there is a surcharge of emotions or building up of an attitude of longing for God. It exalts or lifts us up to the divine region. Now catabolism (cata-down) is a process of breaking down. Sublimity is catabolic as it humbles down or conquers the mind of the beholding aspirant before that majestic power. He experiences creaturely feeling before the overwhelming. Metabolism (meta-beyond) is a chemical and physical process comprising of anabolism and catabolism. It is a sort of balancing principle. Beauty is metabolic because the beautiful object and the mind visualising it are on a par. There is joy in the experience of beauty but at the same time there is restful contemplation. There is a feeling of harmony and equanimity. In brief, devotion elevates us, sublimity humbles us down and beauty maintains equanimity.⁵³

While analysing the concept of the sublime from the point of view of psychology of religion, Prof Ranade says that though in the metaphysical aspect of the sublime nature dominates the human mind in the psychological aspect it plays a subservient role. In an auto biographical strain, prof Ranade informs us that the total compound of emotions which a mystic enjoys while he experiences the sublime is a compound of reverence, fear, joy, wonder and love.⁵⁴

Finally, we pass through the three-fold process of purification, clarification, and sanctification from the moral, intellectual, and spiritual points of view respectively. In the first place, our mind must become pure before we could have any experience of the sublime. Secondly, this purity must lead to the clarification of intellect and finally this clarification must culminate in a state of sanctification.⁵⁵

Prof Ranade is emphatic that that kind of mystical experience must be invalid which does not tend to an intellectual clarification of thought. As a result of God-realisation all doubts are resolved. As to the moral effects of God-realisation it may be said that lust, anger, arrogance, and avarice cease and all fears come to an end. The saint experiences illimitable joy. The seeker chained down to the world is now set free. Real freedom consists in the enjoyment of the imperishable bliss of Atman, as the saint of Nimbargi used to say ("Swarajyavendare Atmanalliya Avinash Sukhavu")⁵⁶ Swarajya means the unending bliss of the Realisation of Atman. No want is ever felt, while ruling over this Kingdom. In this Kingdom there is ever increasing joy, without the slightest tinge of sorrow. So all people should achieve this 'Swa-rajya' and be liberated.⁵⁷

C) As regard the analysis of the sublime from the moral viewpoint, no better proposition can be put forth than the one suggested by Kant. On the whole, we see Kant rising through his Critiques and Opus Postumum, from a mere agnosticism to moral purism, from moral purism to theism; from theism to theologism and from theologism to a mystical Identitate philosophy. What difference would there be now between Kant's perfected Philosophy and the philosophy of Bhagavadgita which synthesizes the moral, the sublime and the divine in a crowning Philosophy of Spirit. One need now no longer ask, "What is the relation between the moral and the sublime? Is the moral more divine than the sublime or the sublime more divine than the moral?" It is enough for us to know that the Moral, the Sublime and the Divine all merge in one consummate Philosophy of Spiritual like that of the Bhagavadgita.⁵⁸

SUMMARY

Probably Nimbargi Sampradaya is an offshoot either of Nath Sampradaya of Navanathas or of Siddha Sampradaya of some Lingayat saints (Siddhas). Nimbargi Sampradaya is about two

centuries old. The founding father of Nimbargi Sampradaya is the saint of Nimbargi (1790-1885), who lived at Devar Nimbargi - a village in Bombay Karnataka. It has been observed, how, some of the adverse economic, social, natural, and other conditions prevailing in and around Bombay Karnataka during the life time of the saint of Nimbargi are reflected in the events of his own life, poems and teachings. The origin and growth of Nimbargi Sampradaya would mainly be attributed to all these and some other subsequent developments.

Nimbargi Sampradaya is characterized by certain salient features. As anybody can embrace Nimbargi Sampradaya, it is said to be egalitarian. No discrimination is being made among upasanas of various deities in Nimbargi Sampradaya. According to Nimbargi Sampradaya remembrance of a 'seed mantra' imparted by a spiritual teacher is essential for spiritual progress. Spiritual progress becomes possible only when one performs 'Nirguna Bhakti' (meditation) with the support of 'Saguna Bhakti' (Bhajan, Arati, Recitation of Dasbodh etc.,). Further, Nimbargi Sampradaya synthesizes 'Prapancha and Paramartha'. In other words, worldly life should be conducive to spiritual life. Nimbargi Sampradaya categorically states that spirituality without morality is impossible. Minimum two vows (not to touch other person's spouse and wealth lustfully) ought to be followed by the spiritual seekers. Nimbargi Sampradaya claims that it is 'Swarupa Sampradaya'. It consists in the enjoyment of bliss by the seeker when he has the vision of Atman (Self) everywhere. Finally, this Sampradaya is said to be rational as superstitious ideas (such as inauspiciousness of widow etc;), performance of miracles, philosophical speculations have no place in spiritual life.

Various facets of the Philosophy of Nimbargi Sampradaya viz; Mysticism, Metaphysics, Ethics, Aesthetics are expounded by Prof. R.D. Ranade. The treatment of all the aforementioned branches of philosophy of Nimbargi Sampradaya is based on the doctrine of God-realization and not on philosophical speculations. God-realization is a process and not an event.

Thus, it is obvious from the above discussion that Nimbargi Sampradaya has developed its own abstract and complex philosophy. In the next chapter, we shall see, whether Nimbargi Sampradaya has developed a complex network of its organizations (centres) or not.

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31. Jankhandi V.G., "Cultivation of Virtues" in Sangoram K.D., Deshpande M.S. (eds.). "Silver Jubilee Souvenir Vol.I," (Academy of Comparative Philosophy & Religion, Belgaum, First Edition, 1978) p. 28.

32. **Kulkarni B.R.**, "Critical & Constructive Aspects of Prof. R.D.Ranade's Philosophy". (Academy of Comparative Philosophy & Religion, Belgaum, First Edition, 1974) pp. 95-96.

cf. Ranade R. D. "Pathway to God in Hindi Literature" (Adhyatma Vidya Mandir, Sangli, 1954) pp. 264-65.

33. **Kulkarni B. R.**, "Critical & Constructive Aspects of Prof. R. D. Ranade's Philosophy". (Academy of Comparative Philosophy & Religion, Belgaum, First Edition, 1974) p. 96.

For details see **Ranade R. D.** "Vedanta A Culmination of Indian thought", (Bharatya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, First edition, 1970) pp. 129 -30.

34. **Kulkarni B. R.**, "Prof. R.D. Ranade: A Confluence of Philosophy & Religion" an article in "Pathway to God - A quarterly Journal of Spiritual life, Vol I. XXIV July 1990" (Academy of Comparative Philosophy & Religion, Belgaum) pp. 17.

35. Op. Cit: p. 8.

cf. Prof. R. D. Ranade observes, "Even the gods and demons could not fathom the depth of Divinty. What of man-a puny creature? Why should he vainly boast of his knowledge? Who is there that can say that he has realised God completely".

(Silver Jubilee Souvenir I, Academy of Comparative Philosophy & Religion, Vol I Belgaum, First ediion, 1978) p. 238.

36. **Kulkarni B. R.**, "Critical & Constructive Aspects of Prof. R.D.Ranade's Philosophy". (Academy of Comparative Philosophy & Religion, Belgaum, First Edition, 1974) p. 124.

37. **Sangoram K. D.**, "Preface" in Sangoram K. D., Deshpande M.S. (eds.) "Silver Jubilee Souvenir (Vol.II)," (Academy of Comparative Philosophy & Religion, Belgaum, First Edition, 1980) p. VII.

38. For details see **Kulkarni B. R.**, "Critical and Constructive Aspects of Prof. R.D.Ranade's Philosophy". (Academy of Comparative Philosophy & Religion, Belgaum, First Edition, 1974) p. 81.
39. Op. Cit. 80.
40. For details Vide Op. Cit. pp. 84 - 85.
41. For details see **Prof. Ranade R.D.**, "The Bhagavadgita as a philosophy of God realization". (Nagapur University, Nagapur, 1959) pp. 198 - 201.
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42. **Kulkarni B. R.**, "Prof. R. D. Ranade: A Confluence of Philosophy & Religion" an article in "Pathway to God - A quarterly Journal of Spiritual life, Vol I. XXIV July 1990" (Academy of Comparative Philosophy and Religion, Belgaum) pp. 18.
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44. Vide Ranade R. D., "Pathway to God in Kannada Literature", (Published in Collaboration with the Karnataka University Dharwad by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay-1960) pp.229-30
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- cf. **Kulkarni B. R.** "Prof. R.D. Ranade: A Confluence of Philosophy & Religion" an article in "Pathway to God - A quarterly Journal of Spiritual life, Vol I. XXIV July 1990" (Academy of Comparative Philosophy & Religion, Belgaum) p. 20.

47. **Kulkarni B. R.**, "Prof. R. D. Ranade: A Confluence of Philosophy & Religion" an article in "Pathway to God - A quarterly Journal of Spiritual life, Vol I. XXIV July 1990" (Academy of Comparative Philosophy & Religion, Belgaum) p. 20.
- cf. **Kulkarni B.R.**, "Critical and Constructive Aspects of Prof. R.D. Ranade's Philosophy". (Academy of Comparative Philosophy & Religion, Belgaum, First Edition, 1974) p. 127 - 28.
48. **Deshpande M. S.**, "Rambhau Maharaj". in Sangoram K.D. Deshpande M. S. (eds.) "Silver Jubilee Souvenir (Vol.II)," (Academy of Comparative Philosophy & Religion, Belgaum, First Edition, 1978) pp. 281 - 82.
49. Ibid: (p. 282).
50. **Kulkarni B.R.**, "Prof. R. D. Ranade: A Confluence of Philosophy and Religion" an article in "Pathway to God - A quarterly Journal of Spiritual life, Vol I. XXIV July 1990" (Academy of Comparative Philosophy & Religion, Belgaum) pp. 21.
51. **Deshpande M.S.**, "Rambhau Maharaj" Sangaram K.D. and Deshpande M.S. (eds.) in "Silver Jubilee Souvenir (Vol.I)," (Academy of Comparative Philosophy & Religion, Belgaum, 1978) p. 282
52. Vide **Prof. Ranade R.D.**, "The Bhagavadgita as a Philosophy of God-realization". (Nagapur University, Nagapur, 1959) pp. 291 - 92.
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54. Ibid:
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