
CHAPTER - III

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INTRODUCTION :

Religion as an institution is an intimate aspect of every society and it plays a vital role in bringing about communal harmony both at the local and regional/National level. The Sociologists have perceived religion with different perspectives. Broadly speaking we may identify them into two, namely religion as an integrative force or as a tool in the hands of the ruling classes in justifying the existing social order and exploitation. The former perspective is developed by Durkheimian school of thought and the latter is developed by Marxian school of thought.

India has been witnessing communal tensions especially Hindus and Muslims in cities of Muslim, Hindu concentration. Many a time political leaders exploit the situations by playing with the sentiments and feelings of the people. Rumours spread like wild fire and create disturbances. However, this is not so much a problem in rural areas,

because many religious temples, mosques and Gods are worshiped both by Muslims as well as Hindus.

Schermerhorn R.A. (1970 : 11) has given a schematic frame work for studying ethnic relations between the dominant groups like Hindus and minorities like Muslims. According to him Muslim Minority in India has emerged on account of colonization by the Turks, Afghans and Moghals. Today Muslims are one of the conspicuous religious minorities in India. Hence, Schermerhorn emphasizes that the sociological studies of communal conflict as well as communal harmony need to be carried out.

Veerashaivism is considered as an indigenous religion of India brought about by orthogenetic changes in Hindu religion. Its elements can be traced to Mohenjo Daro and Harappan civilization. However, as a religion Veerashaivism emerged during the 11th and 12th century as an anti-Brahminical religion. It has exhibited radical aspects of religion namely secularism. It has questioned and negated purity-pollution principles of Hinduism.

Review of Studies :

Some of the relevant studies in this field are Engineer (1984) Study on Developing Theory of communal Riots, Kazi B.T. (1984) Study on Muslim Satyashodhak Movement, Schermerhorn's (1970) work on Comparative Ethnic Relations, Schermerhorn R.A. (1978) on Ethnic Plurality In India, Smith M.G. (1957) Social and Cultural Purity, Hiremath (1989) Hindu Muslim Religious Synthesis In Rajabag Sawar, Vidyarthi (1960) Study of Sacred Complex, Shirahatti, B.G. (1994) work on Pakhreshwar Matha Study etc.

Studies related to sacred centres or holy centres are not new in the field of Sociology of religion. In fact such kind of studies as a part of the Anthropology of civilization have been conducted by Indian sociologists, and by foreign anthropologists. Some of these are on Kashi (Banaras) - Sinha and Saraswati (1967), Study of Dwarka by Updhyaya (1974), Vidyarthi L.P. (1960), Milton Singer 'Structure and Changes of Indian Civilization, Bernard Cohn, etc. The present study is a micro case study in the field of Sociology/Anthropology of religion.

The Research Problem :

The Gokak Savalagi Math in Belgaum district of Karnataka state has become a place of worship for Veershaivas, Hindus, Jains, Scheduled castes and Muslims for the last three centuries. The Gokak Savalagi Matha of the Veershaiva tradition was established in the name of Jagadguru Shri Shivalingeswar Swamiji and Khaza Bande Nawaz. But the heads of the Matha have been the Veershaiva followers. There are tomb of Hindu and Muslims in the Math. These are worshipped by both. Hindu and Muslim religious practices are being followed commonly by the devotees. This area has not witnessed any communal conflict. It is of interest to understand the philosophy, principles, beliefs and practices relating to Veershaivism as well as Muslims in order to understand the various dimensions of communal harmony and as antithesis of communal conflicts and riots.

It is in this context that the researcher has selected Gokak Savalagi Matha as a unique Veershaiva-Muslim composite tradition in Belgaum district, Karnataka, to understand the nature of religious communication for promoting communal harmony.

Theoretical Perspective :

The present study adopts a combination of the philosophical - functional perspective to study the secular Veerashaiva-Muslim Matha as an Institution promoting philosophical religious, social and economic communication. The philosophy, beliefs and mythology of the Matha have been used as a base providing the philosophy of the Matha.

Research Design :

The present study followed an exploratory research design. These questions were regarding religious ideologies, participation, division of labour and religious communication.

General Objectives :

The General objective of the present study is to study the role of the religious communication in communal harmony, more specifically the role of Gekak Savalagi Math in bringing about communal harmony in the Northern parts of Karnataka.

Religion can bring tensions as well as harmony. But in India there are many places where religious institutions are built both by Hindus and Muslims. In such places we find binding force, social cohesion and

relatively better inter-ethnic relations. The Gokak Savlagi Matha is a case in point.

Specific Objectives :

- 1) To probe in to the emergence of Savalagi Matha as a platform for Muslim and Hindu Harmony (Historical Background)
- 2) To understand means and modes of religious communication of Savalagi Matha in disseminating the ideas, values and religious symbols.
- 3) To examine the process of the inter-relationship between Hindu and Muslim in terms of commensuality, participation, faith, purity-pollution and other ritual practices.
- 4) To understand the perception levels of the followers of Matha to the issues pertaining to religious harmony.

Universe of Study :

The Matha and its region in the Belgaum district is taken as the Universe of study

Units of Study :

The Gokak Savalagi Math and Avaragol one of the representative villages in the Mathas vicinity are the main units of study.

Sampling :

Table No. 3.1 indicates the distribution of 24 respondents selected for knowing about their participation in the Matha. Random sampling technique was used to select these respondents.

Table No. 3.1 : Showing Distribution of respondents selected for interviews regarding participation in the Matha.

Sr. No.	Name of Village	Veershaiva	Muslim	Harijan (Hindu)	Total
1.	Avargol	2	2	2	6
2.	Khanapur	2	2	2	6
3.	Mutnal	2	2	2	6
4.	Nardagon	2	2	2	6
4.	Total	8	8	8	24

Method of Study :

The social-anthropological field - work method was adopted.

Techniques :

Informal interviews, participant - observation (since the researcher is also a member who is a follower of the philosophical faith of this Matha and native of the present study) and use of secondary literature relating to the Matha and its history, village records, were the main techniques of data collection. Gazetters, Reports have also been consulted. Library work or review of literature at Shivaji University, Kolhapur and Karnatak University, Dharwad has been used as secondary data in the study. A lot of Avaragol village information about size and distribution of population regarding caste, income, education, Land etc., was made available by the Anganawadi staff.

Data Analysis and Conclusion :

Since a lot of descriptive data had been gathered by me, I faced the difficult task of classifying data into sub-themes, themes, sections and finally chapters. The researcher had hardly any research experience

before the study. My research guide helped me to classify things and thus my problem was solved.

Limitations of the Study :

Being mainly involved in heavy teaching work in a college, I had to struggle a lot for the M.Phil. research work. Interpreting the meaning of data was a difficult task. In spite of this, I have tried to overcome these difficulties with the help of my guide and other faculty members, and friends.