Methodology

Chapter – 3
Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Both science and religion search for truth. The search of each usually benefits both functionally. Religion, like science demand objective reality. If it does not represent objective reality, it cannot endure any more than science. - Ellwood.

Scientific methodology is the *sine qua non* of any investigation which gives it the status of science. This study being a scientific one utmost care has been given to stick on to scientific methodology. The details of the methodology are discussed in this chapter.

MAJOR OBJECTIVES:

The major objectives of the study are:

1) to analyse the attitude of contemporary society towards religion.

2) to assess the influence of the attitude towards religion on the perception of the community on the functions and dysfunctions of religion.

3) to assess the social functions and dysfunctions of religion in contemporary society.

4) to explain the reasons for the increasing popularity of cultic religions in terms of their functions and dysfunctions.

5) to suggest measures for arresting the problems created by religions in contemporary society.

Hypotheses:
Based on the objectives, this study formulated the following hypotheses for testing:

1. Religion as a social institution has both functions and dysfunctions in contemporary Kerala society and its functions outweigh the dysfunctions.

2. The positive functions of religion create favourable attitude of the people towards religion

3. Pious motives of religion promote mental hygiene of its followers and thus a healthy social psyche is created.

4. Material motives drive the contemporary society towards religion and they create inter-religious hostilities

5. Progressive strengthening of any one religious group in the public sphere necessitates other groups also to strengthen themselves which ultimately creates religious hostilities.

6. Religion prevents the widening of the gap between the poor and the rich.

7. Religious leadership can create insular or cosmopolitan outlook within their religious group and hence the hostility and harmony can be created between them by the leadership.

8. The overloading of metaphysics in conventional religion gives popularity to cultic religion, which is more people friendly.

9. Cultic religions’ rational approaches to modern life make them more attractive to the society.

10. The social background of the people influences their perceptions on the functions and dysfunctions of religion.

**Explanation of Major Concepts:**

The major concepts which require explanations are defined as given below:

**Function:**
“Functions are observable consequences that constructively contribute to adjustment, adaptation or integration of the society or institution under study” Merton distinguishes between Manifest functions, Latent functions and Dysfunctions, (Merton, 1957: 84).

The functions comprise the following salient elements:

(a) Manifest Functions: Manifest functions refer to functions that are obvious.

(b) Latent functions: Latent functions are functions that are unrecognised or unintended.

In this study the meaning of the Concept is as defined by Merton

Dysfunctions:

Dysfunction is negative function. That is, the damages suffered by the functions. Dysfunctions are the consequences that decrease adaptation, stimulate maladjustment or have disintegrative and destructive results. Some consequences, of course, are hypothetically non-functional, contributing neither to adjustment nor maladjustment; and many are mixed, having both positive and negative implications.

A perspective that is highly concerned about order is by definition concerned about what happens when social order breaks down. Merton uses the term dysfunction, which refers to a negative consequence that may disrupt the system. Dysfunction also conjures up the notion that a social phenomenon can be functional in one setting and dysfunctional in another.

Some functions and dysfunctions are *manifest* (intended, deliberately sought, and recognized by participants), while others are *latent* (unintended,
unanticipated, concealed or not recognised. In this study the concept is used in this meaning.

**Attitude towards Religion:**

Attitude is the personal view of something, better to say the opinion or general feeling about something. Attitude towards any phenomenon may be defined as the motor mental predisposition for acting in a particular way with regard to the phenomenon. [Young, 1954:152]. Here the attitude under investigation is the one towards religion.

**Variables and Their Measurement:**

Variables are inherent characteristics of the subject of research. The presumed cause is referred to as the independent variable. The presumed effect is referred to as dependent variable.

**The dependent variables that are to be analysed are:**

1. Functions of religion and
2. Dysfunctions of religion, (The meaning of the variables is discussed under concept definition).
3. Attitude towards Religion

Attitude towards religion in the study is analysed both as dependent and independent variables. When it is considered as dependent variable, the investigation is aimed at finding out how it varies with the sociological variables described under the independent variables.

For the measurement of attitude a Likert scale is constructed. After establishing its validity and reliability it is used in the study.
For the measurement of the dependent variables, namely functions and dysfunctions, indices are selected and the variations in them are assessed.

The following indices are selected to study the functions of religion:

1) Unifying power of religion,
2) Promotion of charity,
3) Promotion of cleanness,
4) Promotion of human love,
5) Contentment with life,
6) Social Control,
7) Social Stability,
8) Spread of education,
9) Status of women.

The indices selected for studying the dysfunctions are:

1) Religion – politics nexus,
2) Accumulation of material wealth by religious formations,
3) Money transaction in the name of charity by religious groups,
4) Androcentricity of religion,
5) Religious fundamentalism.

These indices are used for analysing the functions and dysfunctions of modern Cultic religion also.
Independent variables:

Variations in the outlook on the functions and dysfunctions with reference to the usual sociological variables are analysed and hence those variables are defined as the independent variables. The explanation and measurement of them are given below:

1. Gender:

   If the sex of a person is biologically determined, the gender of a person is culturally and socially constructed. There are thus two sexes and two corresponding genders. In sociological study even when male/female is used the reference is to the masculine/feminine qualities. In this study male/female designate the gender difference.

2. Age:

   In this study ‘age’ means the number of years the respondent has completed at the time of interview. According to the age status the respondents were grouped into four categories namely, (1) up to 30 years, (2) between 30 – 45 years, (3) between 45 – 60 years and (4) between 60 – 75 years.

3. Religion:

   ‘Religious groups’ is used to denote to the respondents in terms of their religious affiliation (Siddh, 1974:21). In this study three religious groups namely, Hindu, Muslim and Christians were there in the sample.

4. Education:

   Educational status refers to the number of years of formal schooling the respondents have had. The respondents were divided in to the following three categories
according to their educational attainment namely, (1) up to SSLC, (2) Higher Secondary and (3) College.

5. Occupation:

   It refers to the main economic activity undertaken by the individual which provides regular income. During analysis the occupation was categorised as Manual Labourer, White collar employment and Professionals

6. Income:

   In this study income refers to the average monthly income of the household to which the respondent belongs, from all sources (Occupations, Agriculture, Trade, etc.) The respondents were grouped into the following four categories on the basis of their average monthly income. The categories are (1) up to monthly income of Rs.3000/- (2) between Rs. 3000 – 6000, (3) between Rs. 6000 – 9000 and (4) Rs. 9000 and above.

7. Marital Status:

   Marital Status means whether the respondent concerned was married or not. Here in this study the respondents were divided into the following two categories (1) Married (2) Unmarried (3) Widow/Widower.

8. Family Size:

   Family size means the number of members the respondent’s family comprises of. In this study the Family Size was grouped into the following three categories namely, (1) up to 4 members, (2) 4 – 6 members, (3) 6 and above members.

9. Place of Residence:
Place of residence means the type of geographical area in which the respondent lives. In this study the place of residence was categorised as (1) Rural and (2) Urban.

10. Attitude towards religion:

Attitude is the motor mental predisposition for action towards any phenomenon, concrete or abstract. In this study, the predisposition towards religion is considered as an independent variable. On the basis of the score obtained on a Likert scale constructed for measuring the attitude, it is classified as Highly Favourable (score 80 – 95), Favourable (score 65 – 80), Lukewarm (score 50 – 65) and Indifferent (score 35 – 50) attitudes.

Measurement of Attitude:

A Likert Scale was constructed for the purpose. Though there are standard versions of the Scale readily available the researcher felt that it is better to construct one which incorporates the special social and religious characteristics of the study area. Hinduism, Islam and Christianity are the religions practiced in Kerala. The religious life of the people of the area is to be considered as the same as the geographical area is very small and same religious texts and scriptures are followed by the people. So it is believed that Kozhikode district will sufficiently represent the whole of the state. On the basis of the intimate familiarity of the researcher with Kozhikode community, the area was selected for the purpose. The details of constructing the scale are given below:

An inventory comprising of 84 items (as shown in Appendix-I) was prepared for the purpose of assessing the attitude of the people towards religion. The
Corporation area was considered in terms of Wards. From the Wards one was selected at random. From the selected ward, 75 households were chosen. The House Tax Register was used as the Sampling Frame for the selection of the households. Similar procedures were adopted to select 75 households from the Panchayat area. Panchayat Wards of the area constituted the Sampling Frame for first stage selection. Ward – 6 from Kozhikode Corporation area and Ward–1 from Kooderanji Grama Panchayat of Kozhikode District were got when a random selection of the Wards was made. Thus the 150 heads/elders members of the households constituted the respondents for the item selection processes of the Likert Scale. The items of the inventory and their Validity Coefficients are given in Appendix-II. The first twenty items, when the items are arranged in the descending order of their Validity Coefficients, constituted the Likert Scale for measuring the attitude of the people towards religion. The selected Scale Items and their Validity Coefficients are given in Appendix-III.

The reliability of the scale was ensured by the Split Halves method. The reliability coefficient of the scale was found to be 0.60. The correlation is significant at a P<0.01 as the Calculated Value of “t” is 9.19.

Details of the calculation of the reliability coefficient are given in Appendix – IV.

**POPULATION OF THE STUDY:**

The population (universe) of the study is constituted by the households of the State of Kerala, represented by their heads/elders members.

**Sample of the Study:**
The sample of the study was constituted by 450 Households represented by the heads or eldest members. For the selection of the sample, the State was considered as three zones, the North, the Middle and the South. The Zones are represented respectively by the Districts of Kozhikode, Ernakulam and Thiruvananthapuram. One rural and one urban area were selected from each of these Districts using the following procedure:

One Ward each of the three Corporations was selected. Randomisation technique was used for selecting the Ward. For selecting the rural areas, multi-stage random sampling technique was used. In the first stage selection, Panchayats of each of the chosen districts were considered. In the second stage selection, wards of the selected Panchayats were considered as the units. The units in both the stages were selected at random. From the urban and rural areas selected, 75 households each were chosen at random. The House Tax Registers available in the Corporations or Panchayats as the case may be, served as the sampling frame. Those houses which were remaining unoccupied were removed from the sampling frame.

Thus the total sample size of the study was 450 households which were represented by their heads or eldest adult members.

**Data Collection:**

The primary source of data was Interviews of the heads or eldest member of the households. Interviews were carried out at three different zones, the North, the Middle and the South represented respectively by the Districts of Kozhikode, Ernakulam
and Thiruvananthapuram. One rural and one urban area are selected from each of these districts.

Thus the following wards of the Corporations and Rural Panchayats were chosen for study:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corporation Selected (one ward from each Corporation area)</th>
<th>Rural Panchayat of that selected Corporation’s District (one ward from each Panchayat area)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kozhikode Corporation (Ward -5)</td>
<td>Ward-2 of Chathamangalam Grama Panchayat, which is situated 25kms north – east of Kozhikode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cochin Corporation (Ward -4)</td>
<td>Ward-1 of Amballoor Grama Panchayat, which is situated 18kms south – east of Ernakulam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thiruvananthapuram Corporation (Ward -3)</td>
<td>Ward-1 of Anjuthengu Grama Panchayat, which is situated 40kms north of Thiruvananthapuram along the sea coast</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Researcher carried out the interviews of 75 heads of households from each ward of the above Corporation and Grama Panchayat areas, totalling to 450 heads of households. The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured Interview Schedule prepared for the purpose, enquiring into the functions and dysfunctions of religion (both conventional and modern cultic religion) as perceived by the respondents. The Interview Schedule used in the study is given in Appendix – V and “References” given as Appendix – VI.

The secondary data for the study was collected from published materials and other persons who were wealthy sources of knowledge relating to the study. Details collected through personal observations and informal discussions during the investigator’s field work supplemented the formal survey data.

**Data Processing and Analyses:**

The primary data collected through the interviews was scrutinised to confirm their completeness, reliability and validity. The scrutinised data was coded for Computer Data Base creation. They were then fed into a Computer System. Analyses were carried out to satisfy the objectives of the study.

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used in the study. Under inferential statistics the non-parametric tests, namely, Chi-square Test was used. Under descriptive statistics, measures of Central tendency and standard deviation were used.

Care has been taken to stick on to the scientific methodology through-out the study.