Identity and Communalisation: A Study of the Beary Muslims of South Kanara

A thesis submitted to the University of Hyderabad
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

REGIONAL STUDIES

By

MOHAMMED SHAFI K

Registration No. 15SRPH03

CENTRE FOR REGIONAL STUDIES

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD

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Dr. SALAH P

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Centre for Regional Studies
School of Social Science
University of Hyderabad
Hyderabad-500046, India

DECLARATION

I, **Mohammed Shafi K (15SRPH03)**, hereby declare that this thesis entitled "**Identity and Communalisation: A Study of the Beary Muslims of South Kanara**" submitted by me under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Salah P of Centre for Regional Studies, University of Hyderabad, is a bonafide research work, which is also free from plagiarism. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in part or full to this University or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma. I hereby agree that my thesis can be deposited in Shodganga/INFLIBNET.

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Centre for Regional Studies
School of Social Science
University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad-500046 (India)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled "**Identity and Communalisation: A Study of the Beary Muslims of South Kanara**" submitted by **Mohammed Shafi K** bearing registration number **15SRPH03** in partial fulfilment of the requirements for award of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Social Sciences is a bonafide work carried out by him under my supervision and guidance. The thesis is free from plagiarism and has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this or any other University or Institution for award of any degree or diploma. The candidate has satisfied the UGC Regulations of publications and conference presentations before the submission of his thesis. Details are given below.

A. Publications:

1. Shafi, K. (2018). The Historical Transformations of the Bearys of South Karnataka. *Proceedings of the South Indian History Congress*, *38*, 122–125. https://journal.southindianhistorycongress.org/journals/articles/2018/SIHC_2018_032.pdf.

B. Presentations in conferences:

1. Presented a paper titled "Beyond Essentialisation; Trajectories of Muslim Identity" in the King's India Institute Graduate Conference 2022 on Change & Continuity in South Asia: Unpacking Identity, Security & Technology, organized by the King's India Institute, King's College London, on 21st - 23rd June 2022.
2. Presented a paper on "Making of the 'Other': Identity and Politics in South India' at the Graduate South Asia Conference, organized by the Canada India Research Centre for Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), University of Guelph on29 September to 01 October 2022.
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RS – 802	Advanced Theories on Region and Space: The Indian Context	4	Pass
RS - 803	Topic Related Course	4	Pass

07/11/23

Hyderabad
01/11/2023

Signature of the Supervisor
Dr. Salah P
Centre for Regional Studies
University of Hyderabad

P. Salah
Assistant Professor
क्षेत्रीय अध्ययन केन्द्र / Centre for Regional Studies
सामाजिक विज्ञान संकाय / School of Social Sciences
हैदराबाद विश्वविद्यालय
University of Hyderabad
हैदराबाद / Hyderabad - 500 046.

//Countersigned//

Srinivasa Rao 07/11/23

Head of the Centre
Centre for Regional Studies
University of Hyderabad
Prof. V. Srinivasa Rao

अध्यक्ष / HEAD
क्षेत्रीय अध्ययन केंद्र / Centre for Regional Studies
सामाजिक विज्ञान संकाय / School of Social Sciences
हैदराबाद विश्वविद्यालय / University of Hyderabad
हैदराबाद-500 046.

Jyotirmaya Sharma 7.11.23

Dean
School of Social Science
University of Hyderabad
Prof. Jyotirmaya Sharma

अध्यक्ष / DEAN
समाज विज्ञान संकाय
School of Social Sciences
हैदराबाद विश्वविद्यालय
University of Hyderabad
हैदराबाद-500 046., भारत
Hyderabad-500 046. INDIA.

Dedicated To,

My Parents,

My Lovable Wife, and Daughter

My Beloved Relatives and Friends

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Mohammed Shafi K

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Abbreviations

ABVP	Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BJS	Bharatiya Jana Sangh
CFI	Campus Front of India
HYS	Hindu Yuva Sene
INC	Indian National Congress
INL	Indian National League
ISS	Islamic Seva Sangh
IUML	Indian Union Muslim League
JDS -	Janata Dal (Secular)
KFD	Karnataka Forum For Dignity
MNP	Manitha Neethi Pasarai
MYF	Muslim Youth Federation
SKJU	Samastha Kerala Jamiyyathul Ulama
NDF	National Democratic Front
NMPFs	Neo-Muslim Political Formations
PDP	People's Democratic Party
PFI	Popular Front of India
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
SDPI	Social Democratic Party of India
SIMI	Students Islamic Movement of India
SKSM	South Kanara Salafi Movement
SKSSF	Samastha Kerala Sunni Students Federation
SSF	Sunni Students Federation
SYS	Sunni Yuvajana Sangam
VHP	Vishva Hindu Parishad

CHAPTER I
Introduction

There have been ever-growing scholarly works on Indian Muslims that shed light on the internal diversities conditioned by various factors embedded in everyday social life (Musa, 2022; Hashim, 2014; Jairath, 2013; Ahmad & Reifeld, 2004; Assayag, 2004; Dube, 1995,1980). Interrogating the notion of a homogenous religious community, these studies underscore that the Muslim community cannot be simply categorised as a monolithic entity. The Bearys of South Kanara can be observed as one such Muslim community with a distinct local history and cultural identity. Despite being considered as one of the earliest Muslim communities in India (Doddamane, 1993), the Bearys have not received sufficient scholarly attention when examining the history, culture, and sociopolitical engagements of Muslims in India. The present study explores identity transformation and sociopolitical engagements of the Beary Muslim community within the context of communal mobilisation and violence taking place in the South Kanara region of the Indian state of Karnataka.

South Kanara, a coastal region located in the Karnataka state of India, is known for persistent communal identity assertions and violent conflicts. This region is one of the exceptions to the relatively better social fabric generally attributed to South India. More specifically, South Kanara can be distinguished from other parts of south India by the deeply ingrained Hindutva politics and Muslim political assertion (Bhat, 2022; PUCL-K et al., 2021 Santhosh & Paleri, 2021, 2020; Kuthar, 2019; PUCL-K, 2009; Assadi, 2002). A prolonged history of communal polarisation and conflicts has been highly emphasised in communalism studies as the root cause for Hindu-Muslim conflicts in the post-independent nation (Chandra, 2008; Bayly, 1985). However, such instances

are not evident in the medieval and colonial history of the region. The political history of the region and the pluralism embedded in historical Tulu Nadu[1] did not provide ground for the consolidation of religious identity and communal identity assertion. It is also worth noting that there was no significant communal mobilisation in the region during or immediately after the partition of the country (Tolpady, 2003). Therefore, the question of why post-independence South Kanara became a fertile ground for intense communal identity assertion and conflicts is pertinent.

The concerns of why and how the South Kanara region evolved to be a sensitive communal space should be studied against the backdrop of larger social, economic, and political developments that took place in the region after the nation attained its independence. To be precise, changes in the economy and politics of South Kanara after 1970 have played a crucial role in creating communal polarisation, particularly between Hindus and Muslims. The implementation of the Land Reform Act, migration to West Asian countries, and globalisation can be seen as broader socio-economic developments during this period (Assadi, 2002,1999). They have contributed to changes in the livelihoods of various socio-religious communities, particularly for backward communities. Against this backdrop, this study examines how these changes are reflected in the political geography of the region.

By the 1970s, a fundamental shift in the political orientation of South Kanara could be observed. The Indian National Congress (henceforth INC), which previously held a strong base in the region, began to face setbacks. In contrast, the Hindutva ideology, which had previously been marginalised, started to gain acceptance among the larger Hindu community, transcending the

[1] Historically, the coastal region of southern Karnataka was known as Tulu Nadu, signifying the indigenous name for the region. The Portuguese used the name d (Kanara) to refer to coastal Karnataka, including Tulu Nadu. With the advent of British colonial rule, the name Kanara gained further popularity and continued to be used to denote the same geographical area.

boundaries of caste and ethnic identities. Furthermore, it gradually emerged as a major political force in the region (Shastri, 2020; Tolpady, 2003). Drawing on empirical evidence, this study elucidates how the Hindu right stigmatises the Muslim community and frames them as a severe threat to the majority community. Additionally, the study examines how the articulation of symbolic identity, as a result of pan-Islamic trends and internal contestations within the Muslim community, has been appropriated by the Hindutva narrative in constructing a significant 'Muslim other' in the new political atmosphere. Thus, this study explains how these developments constitute a complex process of reconfiguring the historical and local identities of the people, leading to communal identity assertion and conflicts.

Another significant theme that this study explores is how the Muslim community engages with these political changes. To be more specific, the study examines the different approaches and strategies of various Muslim groups in responding to the political crisis, particularly towards militant Hindutva politics. Scholarly attention in this regard has mostly focused on the counter-mobilisations and assertive language of the Neo-Muslim Political Formations (henceforth NMPFs)[2] from within the community (Ahmed, 2022; Siyech, 2021; Santhosh & Paleri, 2021;2020; Awasthi, 2020; Emmerich, 2019, 2019a; Behera, 2013; Rajamohan, 2005). While focusing on the assertive language of these groups, these studies have overlooked the divergences in approaches and contestations within the Muslim community regarding engagement with Hindutva politics.

[2]In this study, the Neo-Muslim political formations refer to emerging political groups and organisations that gained prominence in South Indian states, particularly Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka, during the 1990s. These formations emerged in response to communal riots and the perceived failure of secular institutions to protect Muslim interests. They emphasise the security and developmental concerns of the backward communities, particularly the Muslims, and actively engage in defensive mobilisation against the ascendance of Hindutva politics.

Against this backdrop, this study attempts to provide a nuanced understanding of how the Muslim community engages with Hindutva by examining the discourse between the traditionalist Sunni organisations[3] and the NMPFs, as well as their modes of operation within the community space and in the public sphere.

Locating the Concept of Identity

The concept of identity has been the subject of significant scholarly attention in social sciences for the past several decades. It is generally viewed as the people's understanding of themselves and how they are perceived by others. In other words, self-perception and external identification concerning certain criteria are key elements in the concept of identity (Peek, 2005). The current usage of identity has evolved from the concept of identity crisis coined by renowned psychoanalyst Erik Erikson. According to Erikson (1956), identity refers to "mutual relation in that it connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself (self-sameness) and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others" (p. 57). Erikson places significant emphasis on how identity varies across the stages of the lifespan as individuals shift from one stage of life to another (i.e., from childhood to adolescence).

Identity has been conceptualised in various ways by different scholars. According to Peek (2005), identity refers to "an individual's sense of self, group affiliations, structural positions, and ascribed and achieved statuses" (p. 217). He emphasises that internal perceptions, self-reflection, and external characteristics are central to the concept of identity. Deng (1995) posits that identity can be understood as "the way individuals and groups define themselves and are defined by others on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, language, and culture" (p.1). In this understanding, the

[3] The term "traditionalist Sunni organizations" in this work refers to those organizations led by *Ulam*a who adhere to the conventional narrations of Islamic texts and follow locally rooted religious practices.

inclusion and exclusion of certain characteristics play a pivotal role in the process of identity formation. Similarly, Katzenstein (1996) observes it is a mutually constructed and evolving image of self and others. Townsend-Bell (2007) emphasises the relational nature of identity. Identity can only exist in relation to and/or opposite to something. He remarks that "no one entity may be fully defined without reference to its other" (p.28). These definitions highlight that the identity of an individual or group has been formed with reference to self and others.

The works of CH Cooley, WI Thomas and GH Mead served as the foundation for identity studies in social science (Cerulo, 1997). These scholarly endeavours primarily delved into the intricate realm of an individual's sense of self, situated within a micro-sociological perspective. However, there has been a discernible shift in the trajectory of identity studies, moving away from the conventional concentration on the individual's self to encompass a broader spectrum of collective entities. Since the 1960s, the term identity has been extensively employed within the realm of social science to investigate a diverse array of inquiries encompassing religion, ethnicity, race, gender, and more (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). Cerulo (1997) elaborates that the scholarly attention on identity has shifted to group agencies and collectivities, which caused the relocation of identity studies in the arena of collectivities with gender, race, and class. Furthermore, with the advent of New Social Movement Theories, the term identity found significant traction within the realm of social sciences. These theories emphasise identity as a construct that manifests both on the individual and collective levels, marked by its inherent flexibility and multifaceted attributes (Townsend-Bell, 2007; Touraine, 1985).

Early understandings regarding the concept of identity espoused an essentialist perspective, positing that identity is inherent and consequently remains stable and immutable. However, a significant shift in the study of identity occurred with the advent of the constructivist approach.

This approach contends that identity is a socially constructed concept that evolves through social interactions, rendering it flexible and contingent upon contextual influences. Moreover, recent research on social identity has shed light on its complex and multifaceted nature, as evidenced by the works of Alam (2009), Gottschalk (2005), and Hasan (1998). These studies highlight the dynamic nature of collective identity, which undergoes transformation in response to internal and external factors, thereby refuting its characterisation as a rigid and static entity.

Identity Complexities in India: Reconfiguration of Religion

India is abundantly endowed with a multitude of geographical and social diversities. These diverse characteristics are evident within various religions in the country, where caste, sect, and factional groups exemplify the internal division that exists within each religious tradition. It is significant to note that, despite the individuals more or less adhering to the fundamental principles of their respective religions, the existence of pluralism and various social divisions and affiliations inherently impedes the formation of a homogeneous identity solely based on religious faith. Furthermore, the dynamic nature of identity in relation to spatiotemporal context unsettles the notion of a monolithic and essentialised religious entity. Therefore, portraying the identities of different communities exclusively through the lens of religion is inadequate.

Numerous internal and external factors play a crucial role in shaping the identity of individuals or communities, with religion being one of the most significant among them. However, in a country like India, inhabited by a heterogeneous society, the categorisation of people primarily based on reductionist perspectives of religious identity has been observed as a political agenda that originated during the colonial period and continues to persist after the country's independence (Pandey, 2006; Bhagat, 2001).

Additionally, the religious revival and reform movements and puritanical discourses have been observed to reinforce the homogenisation process (Saha, 1995 Jones, 1968). All of these developments can be observed as the larger backdrop of religious polarisation.

In a majoritarian democratic system, religious minorities, such as Muslims in India, undergo a process of otherisation by stigmatising their religious identity (Jaffrelot, 2003). This circumstance, in fact, questions the representation and existence of the Muslim communities within the country. The Sachar Committee Report highlights that one of the basic challenges encountered by the Muslim community in post-independence India is the questions concerning their religious identity. The report says, "one of the major issues around the question of identity for Indian Muslims is about being identified as 'a Muslim' in public spaces" (p.12).

The communal mobilisation during the late colonial period, the partition of the country and subsequent riots are frequently referred to as the broader backdrop for contextualising this issue (Chandra, 2008; Puri, 1993). However, it is significant to note why the religious identity of local Muslims becomes problematised even in regions historically characterised by religious plurality, devoid of a long-standing history of communal riots and bitter memories of partition. The case of the Bearys of South Kanara, who are confronted with such an identity crisis, exemplifies this phenomenon. Here, the significant question arises: Why has the religious identity of the Bearys become predominant in recent times, even though they have a locally rooted social identity with respect to the history and culture of Tulu Nadu? This must be understood in the context of the broader developments taking place in the socio-political milieu of the post-independent South Kanara.

Communalism

The concept of communalism in the South Asian context has been described as an ideology or a social phenomenon with a negative connotation. It is used to analyse the antagonism and contestations between people belonging to different religious communities (Pai & Kumar, 2018; Vanaik, 1997). In its common Indian usage, as Pandey (2006) remarks, “the word 'communalism' refers to a condition of suspicion, fear and hostility between members of different religious communities” (p. 6). It is generally viewed as the political manipulation of religion or conflict between religious communities to achieve secular goals (Upadhyay & Robinson 2012; Engineer, 1997; Dixit 1974), which goes back to the socio-political milieu of colonial India in the second half of the 19th century. Though there are contestations that exist among scholars in social science on why communalism persists in the post-independent nation, it is generally acknowledged that one of the most significant issues facing India today is the growing communal violence across the country.

The framework of communalism has traditionally centred on analysing contestations among religious communities that have been inherited from colonial or orientalist understandings of communities in India. However, among scholars, there has been ongoing debate regarding the extent to which other communitarian groupings, such as caste, sect, and linguistic communities, should be encompassed within the purview of communalism. Some scholars advocate for a narrower definition that confines communalism solely to religious communities, while others argue for a broader interpretation that includes various other types of communities as well (Upadhyay & Robinson, 2012). For instance, Vanaik (1997) supports a restricted definition of communalism, contending that incorporating other types of communitarian groupings would dilute the focus of the concept and render it excessively expansive.

For the convenience of the present study, the term communalism has been pinned down to analyse the animosity and tension between religious communities. The emergence of communal violence in India has been studied and interpreted through different theoretical perspectives such as colonialist, nationalist, Marxist, anti-modernist, constructivist, and instrumentalist. The colonialist perspective of communalism offers an essentialist view of religious communities, which argues that communal mobilisation is an inherent and pre-existing characteristic of the religious communities in India (Bayly, 1985; Dumont, 1970). Though a great deal of internal diversity exists within every religious tradition, the colonialist approach portrays them as a monolithic and mutually exclusive category. Ironically, this perspective ignores the centuries-long religious syncretism and composite culture during the pre-modern and modern eras, and it continues to exist even today to some extent.

By contrast, the nationalist, Marxist, anti-modernist and constructivist views of communal violence elucidate that communalism is a modern ideology that emerged as the byproduct of the colonial regime in India. While the Marxist perspective emphasises economic stagnation and exploitation of the ruling elite as key factors for rising communal conflicts (Chandra, 2008; Desai, 2005). The anti-modernists emphasise the incompatibility of the Western idea of secularism in the Indian context, suggesting that only the indigenous idea of religious tolerance is compatible with India's composite culture (Madan,1987; Nandy, 1988). Negating the views of communal violence as an inherent or natural characteristic, the constructivist approach suggests it as a modern construct resulting from intentional or unintentional colonial policies (Pandey, 2006; Kaviraj, 1997). Instrumentalism has been an influential theoretical perspective in examining the process of communalisation since the 1980s. The instrumentalists perceive communal divide and conflict as deliberate actions orchestrated by an elite section of society, wherein religion functions as a crucial

tool employed to achieve political and economic interests (Brass, 2011; Engineer1997). The psychoanalytical perspective examines the psychological experience of individuals affiliated with particular religious groups and analyses how the animosity between different religious communities is internalised and transmitted from one generation to another, contributing to the eruption of communal riots (Kakar, 1996).

The recent scholarship on communalism offers path-breaking insights into the process of communalisation and inter-community conflicts (Punathil, 2019; Pai & Kumar, 2018; Brass, 2011; Wilkinson, 2006; Varshney, 2003;). Theoretical models such as the 'Electoral Incentive Theory' by Wilkinson, the 'Institutionalised Riot System' proposed by Paul Brass, and the concept of 'Institutionalised Everyday Communalism' by Pai & Kumar significantly enhance our understanding of communal violence in contemporary India. By expanding on Brass's theory of the Institutionalised Riot System, Pai & Kumar (2018) employ a conceptual model of 'Institutionalised Everyday Communalism' to analyse how communalism has been institutionalised at the grassroots level in Uttar Pradesh since 2000. It suggests that rather than inciting major state-wide communal riots as happened in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Hindutva groups have attempted to cultivate and sustain persistent, low-key communal tension. According to them, this strategy "together with frequent, small, low-intensity incidents out of petty everyday issues that institutionalise communalism at the grassroots" (p. 3). The present study follows the constructivist and instrumentalist perspective to comprehend the process of communal mobilisation and adopt the theoretical model of 'Institutionalised Everyday Communalism' to analyse contemporary patterns of communal mobilisation and conflicts in the South Kanara region.

Within the scope of locating Muslims in the context of communalisation and communal violence in India, scholarly research can be broadly classified into two categories. The first category, which constitutes a substantial portion of the existing literature, primarily examines the impacts of communal violence on the Muslim community itself. Most of these studies are centred on the themes pertaining to Muslim victimhood, identity crisis, marginality, ghettoisation, and the manifold socio-economic challenges that arise in the aftermath of communal conflicts (Puniyani, 2018; Lokhande, 2016; Susewind, 2017; Jaffrelot & Gayer, 2012; Kumar,2010; Engineer, 2004,1997; Puri,1993). On the other hand, the second category comprises studies that specifically investigate the political response of Muslims, with a particular focus on their mobilisation. Scholars such as Ahmed (2022), Sahni (2022), Siyech (2021), Emmerich (2019), Arafath (2016), Behera (2013), Rajamohan (2005) and Hasan (1988) contribute to this growing body of research. Their work delves into the ways in which Muslims mobilise and react in response to the rise of Hindu nationalism and the process of communalisation.

There has been an emerging body of literature that attempts to locate the political engagements of the Muslim community in the context of the recent escalation of communal violence and its responses, especially in settings like coastal Karnataka (Siyech, 2021; Santhosh & Paleri, 2021; 2020; Dev, 2020; Emmerich, 2019a; Mondal, 2015). However, most of the above studies primarily revolve around the theme of radicalisation, counter mobilisation and assertive Muslim politics. Furthermore, these studies have overlooked the regional aspects and the heterogeneous features among Muslims as they look at the community on the basis of recent religious and political articulations. In other words, there has not been enough academic attention on contestations and divergent approaches and strategies between various Muslim organisations on engaging with militant Hindu nationalism. Departing from this trend, this study adopts a diachronic approach as

it examines how the transformation of Muslim identity in South Kanara over a long period of time is intertwined with multiple internal and external factors and how communalisation becomes a central concern in the contemporary Muslim articulation in the region. The study places a lot of emphasis on the local elements and internal contestations while dealing with the transformation of identity of the Beary Muslims in the post-independent South Kanara.

The Bearys of South Kanara and Shifting Community Identity

Karnataka has the second-largest share of the Muslim population (78.93 lakh) among the south Indian states (Census of India, 2011). However, diversity can be found among them in terms of origin, ethnicity, religious practices, and so on, which testify that the Muslims of Karnataka cannot be classified as a homogenous community. In coastal Karnataka, various local ethnic Muslim communities emerged during the early medieval period through maritime relations with the Persian Gulf. The Bearys are one such diverse ethnolinguistic Muslim community who emerged as the mixed descendant of the Arabs and the local people of Tulu Nadu, the present-day southern coastal districts of Karnataka - Dakshina Kannada and Udupi. Interestingly, this Muslim settlement had evolved and established as a merchant community in the region under the royal patronage of the various local Hindu and Jain rulers even long before the founding of Muslim dynasties in north India and different parts of Karnataka such as Bidar, Bijapur, Gulbarga, and Mysore.

In Tulu, the predominant regional dialect in South Kanara, the word Beary means trader (Ichlangod,2011). As the local Muslims were extensively involved in trade and commerce, they were called Bearys (Doddamane,1993).[4] It can be understood that the Bearys came by this

[4] The historical accounts on the Bearys indicate that they were a dominant merchant community up to the 19th century, and they had maintained a prestigious role under the reign of various local rulers of Tulu Nadu (Noori, 1960; Madhava, 1985).

nomenclature and were identified among different communities primarily based on their occupation, in which they were extensively engaged. Hence, during the pre-colonial period, occupation played a crucial role in determining their external identity rather than their religious faith. While adhering to Islam, many locally rooted social characteristics can be evident among the Bearys, facilitating their integration into the socio-cultural space of South Kanara (Ichlangod,2011). The Beary dialect and certain socio-cultural practices of the community have evolved from the close contact with the other socio-religious communities of the region. The resemblance with other communities can be found in their names, attire, ornaments, architecture of the mosques and so on until very recently when there have been certain changes.

It is worth noting that, regarding the Beary community, a combination of favourable factors in the region, including the political climate, syncretic tradition, ethno-linguistic diversity, and endogamous social divisions such as the caste system, enabled them to avoid alienation based on their religious identity. Furthermore, these elements, to an extent, had prevented communal consolidation until the early decades after the independence of the country. More importantly, the local identity and social role of the Bearys as a 'trading community' and their relatively robust social fabric in the region enabled them to gain recognition and establish their own social space in the public sphere. To a certain extent, this signified the community's identity in relation to their predominant occupation and did not confine them solely to the domain of religion.

Conversely, with regard to the Bearys, the new socioeconomic and political developments in post-independent South Kanara have been crucial as far as the identity of the community is concerned. The ascendance of militant Hindu nationalism and recurrent communal outbreaks, particularly after the early decades of independence, has been a serious challenge to the Bearys in terms of their existence in a Hindu-majority region. As a significant Muslim minority living in the

stronghold of Hindutva identity politics, the religious identity of the Bearys has become subjected to suspicion and hatred. In order to mobilise the fragmented majority community, the Hindutva groups have framed the local Muslim community (Bearys) as 'others', posing a perceived threat to the nation and Hindus. The historically known predominant local identity of the Beary Muslims as a trading community and the syncretic tradition of the region has been undermined by the new narratives of Hindutva.

Research Statement

Despite being categorised as the second-largest religious community in India, scholarly research has uncovered a significant degree of heterogeneity among the Muslim population across the country. The Beary Muslims of South Kanara serve as a notable example of this diversity, characterised by their own distinct local history and cultural identity. The Bearys, as an ethno-linguistic community, whose origin and sociocultural practices are vociferously embedded in the region, distinguishing them from other Muslim communities in the country. However, the Bearys have not been the subject of substantial scholarly attention, particularly in terms of mapping the history, culture, and socio-political engagements of the various Muslim communities in India.

It can be observed that Bearys of South Kanara have been erroneously classified as the Mappila community in colonial records (Stuart, 1895; Sturrock, 1894; Buchanan, 1807). Such misrepresentation, which fails to recognise ethnic and cultural differences, can also be found in postcolonial literature (Rao, 2005; Ramesh, 1970; D'souza, 1959, 1955) Furthermore, there has been an emerging body of literature that attempts to locate the political engagements of the Muslim community of the region in the context of recent socio-political developments (Sood, 2022; Santhosh & Paleri, 2021, 2020; Dev, 2020 Emmerich, 2019b; Mondal 2015). However, these studies have overlooked the regional aspects and heterogeneous features among Muslims as they

look at the community on the basis of recent religious and political articulations. Hence, recognising the local elements and internal contestations, the present study explores the Bearys in the context of communal contestations in the post-independent South Kanara. The study will evaluate how the region evolved into a stronghold of Hindutva politics and how the Muslim community responds to it. It also analyses how these sociopolitical developments constitute reconfiguring the local identity of the Bearys - from a trading community to more of a religious community.

Historically, the South Kanara region was known for its abundance of sociocultural diversity and relatively peaceful coexistence between different religious communities. Nevertheless, contrary to the historical legacy of religious pluralism, South Kanara has evolved into one of the notable hotspots of communal identity assertions and conflicts in South India in recent times. It has facilitated the reconfiguration of religious and caste identities, leading to a new form of mobilisation primarily based on religious beliefs and significantly impacting the social fabric between Hindu and Muslim communities. In order to understand why the region has evolved into a communally sensitive space and how this process of communalisation is taking place, it is required to analyse the new developments happening in South Kanara. The region has been undergoing tremendous changes in the realms of economy, politics, and religious practices, especially since the early 1970s, which have been observed as instrumental in communal consolidation between Hindus and Muslims. To be more specific, the drastic changes in the field of the economy and employment sector as a result of land reform, the Gulf boom, expansion of industrialisation, and globalisation brought about some improvement in the livelihood of the backward castes and groups such as the Billavas, the Mogavira, and the Bearys. On the other hand,

to some extent, the upward mobility of various backward communities was capable of altering the pre-existing social hierarchy.

The fundamental shift in land ownership patterns owing to the enactment of the Karnataka Land Reforms (Amendment) Act in 1974 has benefited the backward groups, especially the Billavas, a numerically significant lower caste community in the region. The Gulf boom in the 1970s caused significant changes in the livelihood of the Bearys, who were otherwise a relatively less mobile and economically disadvantaged Muslim community in South Karnataka. In the last three decades, the Gulf migration enabled them to emerge as a significant merchant class. Improvement in their means of subsistence and living standards enabled them to enter into the clear-cut space of dominant castes groups, such as the Goud Saraswat Brahmins (GSBs) and the Bunts, who are the dominant merchant and landlord groups in the region, respectively. The study examines how the upward mobility of a section of backward communities became a challenge to the hegemony of the upper castes in the socio-economic space of the region and how these changes became appropriative for the growth of Hindutva politics.

It can be understood that a political situation conducive to the expansion of the Hindutva ideology had been developed in the region during the same period. The gradual decline of INC since the late 1970s and the simultaneous growth of Hindutva politics can be marked as a fundamental shift in the political orientation of South Kanara during this period. Here, it is significant to note how INC lost its support base among various caste groups. The changes in national politics and the steady decline of the INC in coastal Karnataka since the late 1970s created an empty ideological space, which has been duly filled by Hindutva ideology. The acceptance of the Hindutva ideology between various castes can be seen in the electoral performance of the Jana Sangh and the BJP in the following elections. It can be seen that the BJP has been able to grow into a decisive political

force by overcoming hindrances such as the clear-cut caste and linguistic divide among Hindus and the presence of a sizeable minority population in the region.

In fact, it illustrates the depth of religious polarisation in South Kanara. The study examines how the Hindutva outfits have created a moral Hindu world despite deep fragmentations and internal contradictions that exist within the Hindu community.

In order to gain acceptance for militant Hindu nationalism, it was necessary for the Hindu right to construct a significant other. The otherisation was made possible by stigmatising religious minorities in the region, especially Muslims. Interestingly, the propaganda and discourses targeting the religious identity of the local Muslim community did not exert a significant influence on the majority community at the time of the country's partition and in the two decades that followed. Why the controversies targeting Muslims later gained acceptance among the Hindus of South Kanara points to the aforementioned socio-economic and political developments happening in the region since 1970. Notably, the re-emergence of Beary Muslims as a significant trading community, thanks to Gulf remittances, made it possible for the Sangh Parivar to translate the hitherto economic competition between the communities into a communal tone. It is worth noting how the Sangh Parivar[5] manages to otherise the Beary Muslim community despite the latter retaining many local characteristics and cultural affinities with other religious communities in the region, which distinguish them historically and culturally from their counterparts in North India. It can be seen that Hindutva discourse essentialises the identities of the Bearys by invoking transregional and transnational religious identities and framing them as an external other to the Hindu moral world. Ironically, the historical and social context of the origin and growth of Muslim

[5]The term 'Sangh Parivar' is used as an umbrella term to refer to the collection of Hindutva organizations

settlements in Tulu Nadu has been undermined in the new narratives. Furthermore, it causes a severe challenge to communal harmony and also to the existence and survival of the Bearys. The study endeavours to unpack the hegemonic Hindutva discourse, which attempts to essentialise the religious identity of Muslims and depict them as a significant threat to the majority community. While introducing the Muslims as a unified religious category, the Hindutva discourse intentionally overlooks ethnic, theological and sectarian differences and the existence of various contesting groups within the Muslim community, which is part of the everyday community life of the Muslims of the region. While examining how ethnic, sectarian, and factional divisions within the Muslim community constitute the formation of various exclusive groups, the study analyses how sectarian and factional identity assertion in the public space contributes to strengthening the making of a unified Muslim ‘other'.

Additionally, the study analyses the Muslim responses to the Hindutva surge, especially in the turbulent sociopolitical context of South Kanara since 1990. It is significant to note that scholarly efforts in this regard have mainly focused on the counter-mobilisation and assertive language of the Neo-Muslim Political Formations from within the community (Siyech, 2021; Santhosh & Paleri, 2021, 2020; Dev, 2020; Emmerich, 2019; Sharma & Behera, 2014; Behera, 2013; Rajamohan, 2005). Notably, they tend to overlook regional dimensions and the diversity within the Muslim population, focusing primarily on recent religious and political assertions. It can be observed that the Muslim community's engagement with militant Hindu nationalism does not follow a uniform pattern. In this regard, differences can be found in the approaches and strategies among various Muslim organisations. It is significant to note that the divergent ideological stand and operational strategies of the different Muslim groups in engaging with majoritarian politics did not acquire enough academic attention. How to respond to Hindutva is an ongoing debate

among the Muslim community, especially between the traditionalist Sunni organisations and the NMPFs.

By exploring the activities of the NMPFs, such as Karnataka Forum for Dignity (KFD) and its successor Popular Front of India (PFI)[6], and the traditionalist Sunni organisations, such as Samasta EK and AP factions, the study looks at different ways that the Muslims community engage with Hindutva politics.

There are contesting narratives and competing interventions in the Muslim public sphere, especially between the NMPFs and the traditionalist Sunni Organisations on the question of engaging with Hindutva politics. Interestingly, there are different perspectives of interpreting the Islamic texts, particularly between the traditionalist Sunni *Ulama*[7] and the NMPFs, to engage with Hindu majoritarian politics.

The idea of self-defence and Muslim unity proposed by the NMPFs, and the non-provocative and moderate policy of traditionalists are the two predominant approaches that shape the socio-political engagements of the Muslims of South Kanara. These ideological and operational differences often give rise to competition and conflict between the NMPFs and the traditionalist Sunni organisations. It is noteworthy that the victimhood politics and defensive mobilisation put forward by the NMPFs meet with ideological criticism from the *Ulama*-led traditionalist Sunni organisations. It can be seen that the traditionalist Sunni organisations have been an impediment to enlarging the ideological base of the NMPFs.

[6] The Popular Front of India was banned by the Union Government on September 28, 2022, designating it as an 'unlawful association'. This ban was imposed during the final stages of my study. As a result, recent updates and developments related to this matter are not incorporated within the scope of this study.

[7] The term 'ulama' refers to the body of Islamic scholars, who are recognized for their knowledge and expertise in Islamic theology and jurisprudence.

However, the present political environment prevailing in the region, coupled with the socio-welfare initiatives undertaken by the Popular Front of India (PFI), as well as their recent entry into electoral politics, have made them more significant in community spaces. It can be seen that the growing influence of the neo-Muslim political groups leads the community into a new kind of identity assertion and communal mobilisation, which hardens the boundaries between the Hindus and Muslims of South Kanara.

Research Questions

1. How can we locate the Beary Muslim community in the local context of the South Kanara region, and what distinguishes them from other Muslim communities in India?
2. Why and how has the post-independent South Kanara region evolved into a site conducive to communal mobilisation and persistent violent conflicts?
3. How and in what ways was the local identity of the Bearys reconfigured in the post-independent South Kanara?
4. How do we understand the regional dynamics in understanding Muslim identity formation, transformation and response to majoritarian communal politics?

Research Objectives

1. To explore the social history of the Bearys of South Kanara.
2. To understand the communal mobilisation in post-independent South Kanara.
3. To study the identity transformation of the Bearys in post-independent South Kanara.
4. To comprehend the Muslim response to Hindutva politics and its implications in the region.

Methodology

This research project employs a diachronic approach, integrating ethnographic and historical methods, to explore the larger socio-political developments taking place in South Kanara and the concomitant transformation of the local identity of the Bearys. It examines how the transformation of Muslim identity in South Kanara over a long period of time is intertwined with multiple internal and external factors and how communalisation becomes a central concern in the contemporary Muslim articulation in the region. To comprehend the emergence of the Beary community, their socio-economic and political engagement within the multicultural landscape of South Kanara, and the transformation of their local identity, changing patterns of intercommunity relations, and consolidation of religious identity, a detailed historical account becomes indispensable. Therefore, the study also employs historical methods that provide a comprehensive foundation for understanding and contextualising the Beary community's historical trajectory and its current socio-cultural dynamics within the broader South Kanara region. In order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the Beary community, encompassing their cultural distinctiveness, sectarian divisions, factious schisms, and political mobilisations, it is imperative for the researcher to undertake a rigorous examination and observation of the diverse operations within the community. This necessitates the utilisation of an ethnographic approach, wherein the researcher actively immerses himself within the community, closely observes their interactions and practices, and meticulously analyses the multifaceted dynamics within. Simultaneously, I have also undertaken interviews with leaders and sympathisers of Hindutva organisations.

To lay a foundation for this research, a pilot study was conducted from January 1, 2016, to January 24, 2016, in Mangalore city. This initial investigation served as an appropriate point of departure for subsequent inquiry. This initial investigation provided a suitable starting point for further

exploration. My community background played an advantageous role in reaching out to the Bearys. Utilising personal networks within various Muslim organisations in Kerala, I was able to facilitate access to the Bearys. It is significant to note that the Malabar-based *Ulama* and religious organisations hold significant influence in the religious affairs of the Bearys. Therefore, my contact with different Muslim organisations, particularly the two dominant traditionalist Sunni factional groups (AP Sunnis and EK Sunnis), was instrumental in gaining entry to Muslim localities. Additionally, it granted me access to a diverse array of religious and educational institutions dispersed throughout the region, as well as enabling engagement with local religious leaders, politicians, businessmen, and ordinary people.

While historical sources like inscriptions, colonial records, and travelogues were used to establish the context of the investigation, extensive fieldwork was conducted at regular intervals from May 25, 2016, to November 30, 2021, in Dakshina Kannada. Empirically, the study focuses on South Kanara, an administrative district formed during the British period, which consists of the historical region of Tulu Nadu, spreading across three modern districts, namely Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, and Kasargod. Among the three districts, the focus was on the Dakshina Kannada district due to its geographical and demographic significance.

The present Dakshina Kannada district encompasses a substantial portion of the historical region of Tulu Nadu, or modern South Kanara, relative to the other districts under consideration. Furthermore, a major share of the Beary Muslim population predominantly inhabits the district. Although I visited various parts of Dakshina Kannada district as part of the study, I chose Mangalore taluk for extensive fieldwork due to its historical, demographic, socio-economic, and political importance. Nearly one-half of the total population (9.95 lakhs), as well as the Muslim population (2.37 lakhs) in the district, reside in Mangalore taluk. Mangalore, the major port city in

the present Karnataka state, was one of the significant cities of medieval India known for its maritime trade. As the headquarters of the district, Mangalore city is the main centre for socio-economic and political activities. Additionally, the cityscape is historically and culturally significant for the Beary Muslim community, as they were established as a traditional merchant community centred on the port during the medieval period.

In order to understand the complex process of identity assertion, this study has focused on specific groups within the community, which are characterised by their significant numerical strength and political significance. The Muslim community in South Kanara, much like elsewhere in the country, has several sectarian and factious organisations. The overwhelming majority of the community belongs to the Sunni sect that follows the Shafi'i school of thought. Despite having a relatively lesser number of adherents, other sectarian groups, including the Salafis, Tabligh Jamaat, and Jamaat-e-Islami, have marked their presence in various fields. However, the Samasta EK faction and the AP faction are the two most prominent Muslim (Sunni) organisations in the region, holding the majority of the religious institutions such as mosques and madrassas in South Kanara. Against this backdrop, this research focused on these two Sunni factious organisations to highlight internal contestations within the community and to thoroughly comprehend the divergence of approaches and strategies adopted by the community in its engagements with Hindutva. Apart from these two religious organisations, the Popular Front of India (PFI) and their political party - the Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI), have been chosen to explore communal mobilisation and identity politics among the Muslim community. PFI is the only Muslim organisation in the region that works on the explicit agenda of fighting Hindutva and countering their attacks.

Interview and observation are the two important methods I have employed to collect the primary data during my fieldwork. Attending various cultural, religious, and political programmes, I have spent a considerable time on field visits as a participant observer. I have attended various religious and cultural programs such as midnight speeches (*va'z*), *iftar* meet, *urs*, conferences, Meelad ul Nabi celebrations, and other special events organised by various Muslim organisations and collectivities led by *Ulama* who hold a key role in shaping the religious life of the Muslim community. As part of analysing how various Muslim groups engage in the public sphere, I have attended and observed the public meetings, rallies, and protest gatherings conducted by various Muslim organisations such as the Muslim Central Committee and the factious Sunni groups such as Samastha AP faction, and EK faction, the neo-Muslim political groups such as PFI. Additionally, I have attended various public programs organised by different political parties such as BJP, INC and SDPI. I have visited the party offices and information centres run by Popular Front of India in order to understand the multifaceted activities of the organisation.

I have visited various mosques, dargahs, madrassas, and other religious-educational institutions controlled by various sectarian and factious organisations, which are significant centres in the community power structure. Information gathered from the administrative body of these institutions and interaction with the ordinary people who came to participate in religious rituals was also helpful for me to understand different viewpoints put forward by them and analyse the formation of multiple intra-religious identities among Muslims. As part of gathering information, I have carried out in-depth interviews with religious leaders, youth activists, political leaders, students, senior citizens, leading businesspersons, petty trades, gulf returnees, the victims of communal violence, and the ordinary people of different social groups.

To trace the history of NDF and KFD and how they mobilise the people at the grassroots level, I conducted long interview sessions with its earlier leaders and the cadets who left the organisation for various reasons. These interview sessions are very significant, as the narrative constitutes a major aspect of this work. The unstructured interview sessions with the respondents gave insights into various issues, practices, and viewpoints within the community.

Besides, in the course of my research, a comprehensive examination was undertaken on a range of primary materials, encompassing pamphlets, souvenirs, posters and brochures, which were disseminated by various organisations. Along with this, data was gathered from both the official and unofficial social media handles and groups created by different organisations or individuals under investigation. Subsequently, an in-depth analysis of multiple statements, discussions, and contested views is presented. Furthermore, moving beyond the official versions, interviews were conducted to comprehend how these opinions are disseminated and internalised by local activists and the general public.

These interviews involved local and unit-level leaders, sympathisers of religious organisations like SKSSF, SSF, and SKSM, as well as political parties such as INC, BJP, and SDPI, alongside common people. Issue-based newspaper reports have been used in this work to understand various communal incidents happening in different parts of the region in the day-to-day lives of people. The secondary data for this study was gathered from a variety of sources, including journals, articles, books, libraries, and websites.

Chapterisation

The first chapter critically explores the concept of identity and communalism. Additionally, this section delves into the research questions and objectives that guided the study, as well as the methodology and the chapterisation scheme for the thesis. The second chapter, titled ‘Communal Violence Studies: Issues and Perspectives’, aims to provide a comprehensive examination of the concept of "communalism" and its context in post-independent India. Through a critical analysis of various perspectives, the chapter seeks to understand the process of communalisation and the factors that contribute to communal violence in the country. The recent academic discourse on communal violence in India offers more nuanced insight into the complexities of this issue. Most of the new studies argue that communal riots are not spontaneous phenomena but purposefully created to serve political goals. It emphasises the role of the state, politicians, and elite sections of society in inciting communal violence. Nonetheless, most of the literature does not shed light adequately on how the Muslim community responds to the Hindutva surge.

The third chapter, entitled ‘Historicising the Bearys of Tulu Nadu’ endeavours to locate the history of the Beary Muslim community within the regional context of South Kanara. The Bearys constitute an ethno-linguistic community in coastal south Karnataka, representing one of India's earliest Islamic settlements with a unique history and culture. As the community was widely engaged in trade and commerce, they were locally known as Bearys. Even though the Bearys are adherents to Islamic tradition, they differ from other Muslims of Karnataka state and India regarding their ethnicity and culture. However, for a long time, the Bearys had been misrepresented as the Mappila community due to the shared religious traditions between the two. The chapter provides a detailed account of the origin and growth of Islam and Muslim settlements in Tulu Nadu and how they are distinct from the other Muslim communities in India.

The fourth chapter, titled '*Contextualising Hindutva Politics in South Kanara',* sheds light on how South Kanara has been transformed as one of the most communally sensitive regions and the fertile ground for Hindutva politics in south India. The region is often referred to as the Hindutva laboratory of South India. Coming to the history of the region, South Kanara was known for its composite culture, ethnic and linguistic diversities, and coexistence between different religious communities. However, the entire landscape has been changed dramatically owing to the post-colonial political and economic developments, especially after the first two decades of independence. Changes in the livelihood of the backward communities, the growing influence of the Hindu nationalists, religious revival movements, and the rise of NMPFs have facilitated new social identities and coalitions that make a crucial impact on the social fabric of South Kanara.

The fifth chapter, titled '*Beyond Essentialisation; Trajectories of Muslim Identity',* problematises an essentialised understanding of Muslim identity by elucidating the multiple intra-religious identities. The Muslims of India cannot be categorised as a unified community because of the regional, ethnic, sectarian, and other kinds of divisions. Deliberately ignoring such fragmentations, the Hindutva discourse of identity is located in the homogeneity of religious identity and construction of a unified 'Muslim other'. While framing the local Muslims as significant others, the Hindutva discourse intentionally overlooks ethnic and sectarian differences and various competing collectivities within the Muslim community, which is part of the everyday community life of the local Muslims. By mapping the everyday socio-religious engagements of the Muslim community of Mangalore, the chapter contests the Hindutva project of portraying the local Muslim community as an abstract threat.

The sixth chapter, *Muslim Response to Hindutva: Exploring Differences and Contestations,* deals with how the Muslim community engages with the escalating Hindutva politics in South Kanara. This chapter has been divided into two sections. The first section discusses Muslim identity politics by examining the formation and growth of the NMPFs, such as the Karnataka Forum for Dignity (KFD) and the Popular Front of India (PFI). The second section deals with the contesting claims and conflicting modes of engagement between the traditionalist Sunnis and the NMPFs on engaging with militant Hindutva in Karnataka. It explores the defensive mobilisation advocated by the NMPFs on one hand and the more moderate stances of traditionalist *Ulama* on the other. It is very significant to note that these are two forces that shape the complex socio-political engagements of the Muslims in South Kanara. The seventh and final chapter offers the significant findings and conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER II

Communal Violence Studies: Issues and Perspectives

Introduction

This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive examination of the concept of communalism with a specific emphasis on the process of communalising religious identities and their strategic employment for political mobilisation. By critically analysing various theoretical perspectives of communalism, this chapter endeavours to unravel the process of communalisation and the factors that contribute to communal violence in the country. The recent academic discourse on communal violence in India offers more nuanced insight into the complexities of this issue. A substantial body of recent research argues that communal riots are not a spontaneous phenomenon but purposefully created to serve political goals. This discourse underscores the significant roles played by the state, politicians, right-wing groups and elite sections of society in inciting communal violence. Additionally, this chapter examines how Muslim communities have been studied in the context of communal politics. It is notable that most of the prevailing literature does not shed light adequately on the ways in which the Muslim community responds to the Hindutva surge. In addressing these dimensions, the chapter not only aims to arrive at an appropriate conceptual framework to understand communal politics but also to demonstrate how this study moves beyond the existing frameworks and models to understand Muslim responses to communal politics.

The term "communalism" is frequently employed to analyse antagonism and contestations between different religious communities in the context of South Asian countries, such as India. Despite being used as a political ideology with a negative connotation, it has not been similarly

applied in the European context. As Vanaik (1992) remarks, “the colonial use of the term gave it a negative connotation of bigotry, divisiveness and parochialism, thus helping to justify the colonial civilising mission” (p.48). In its general use, the concept of communalism is understood as a modern ideology/phenomenon characterised by exclusive and antagonistic identity formation primarily based on religion or ethnicity (Van der Veer, 2015; Chandra, 2008).

Scholars have approached this concept in different ways; hence, there have been various interpretations of what it means and how it emerges and persists in society. Chandra (2008) defines “communalism is the belief that because a group of people follow a particular religion, they have, as a result, common social, political and economic interests (p.1)”. It has been viewed as a political philosophy of the elite sections of society directed towards attaining or retaining political power or other vested interests.

According to Engineer (1997), it is a "secular conflict between two religious communities" or "an attempt to achieve the secular goal through religious means” (p.703). Similarly, for Shakir (1979), communalism is referred to as a tendency which seeks to promote religious or sectarian grouping of a people for political purposes. Upadhyay (2012) notes communalism “as a process of the competitive aspirations of communities to dominate and/or resist the domination of others over perceived as well as real threats, grievances, insecurities and distrust” (p.36). Pandey (2006) pays attention to the particular meaning of communalism; that is, in its common Indian usage, the word communalism refers to “a condition of suspicion, fear, hostility between members of different communities” (p.6). According to Van der Veer (2015), “it refers to the articulation of religious communities into mutually antagonistic, social, political, and economic groups” (p.263).

Thus, it can be understood as an antagonistic, exclusive and goal-oriented identity assertion predominantly based on religion or ethnicity. In other words, communalism is a process of consolidating religious identity by perpetuating suspension, fear and hostility against the followers of other religious or ethnic communities.

Division of the communities along with the religious line, particularly in the majoritarian democratic framework, provides essential ground for communalism. While a community is defined as a group of individuals who share a common bond, it can encompass different types of social affiliations such as caste, language, and race and is not limited to religious templates. Upadhyay and Robinson (2012) examine the complex relationship between community and communalism and argue that the link between the two has not received sufficient attention in scholarly literature. They further contend that the narrow understanding of communalism as applying only to religious communities is an inherited knowledge taken from the colonial understanding of Indian society. As social antagonism is a key feature of communalism, it does not limit to religious communities. Then the question arises regarding the inclusion of other communitarian identities such as caste, race, and language in the discourse of communalism. Those in favour of including all communitarian grouping in the discourse of communalism argue that it would broaden the scope of the study of communalism. However, the scholars such as Vanaik (1997) disagree with the inclusion of other communitarian groupings by arguing that it would lead to losing the focus.

Colonial Regime and Consolidation of Religious Identity

While examining communal violence as a phenomenon that exists between different religious communities, it is imperative to comprehend the process through which religious identity is consolidated and how religion is strategically employed as a political instrument to mobilise the people. The religious consciousness and mobilisation among various communities in India have a complex history and cannot be solely attributed to its colonial origins (Giri, 2010; Bayly, 1985). Nevertheless, pre-colonial India, to a considerable extent, was observed to be devoid of pervasive religious consciousness and animosity, potentially due to the fuzziness and localised social identity of the people (Upadhyay & Robinson, 2012; Pandey, 2006). Religion turned out to be a predominant marker of identity during the British period, despite the fact that it constitutes one aspect of the multiple identities of an individual or a group. Therefore, the exclusive identity formation on the ground of religious faith was observed to be the byproduct of the colonial regime (Baber, 2000; Kaviraj, 1997). As Baber (2000) notes, despite a sense of belongingness based on respective religions remained in the pre-colonial period, the British administrative practices contributed to the crystallisation and institutionalisation of Hindu-Muslim religious identities, ultimately resulting in the division of Indian society into the domain of religious faith. The colonial governance, according to the nationalist discourse, had primarily been conditioned by the ‘divide and rule’ policy adopted by the British in the wake of the 'great revolt' of 1857. Therefore, historically, British policies are considered to have played a significant role in the broader transition of Indian society from diverse, fragmented and local communities into the clear-cut domain of transregional religious entity.

Several scholarly works have underlined that colonial enumeration of the population, primarily based on respective religious affiliations, subsequently led to the homogenisation of the obscure religious identity (Van der Veer, 2015; Bhagat, 2001; Kaviraj, 1997). In this respect, the introduction of the census in India in 1872 is observed to be an important political strategy of the British to divide people along religious lines. It has resulted in fostering a geographic and demographic consciousness regarding religious identity among various communities (Bhagat, 2001). The antagonistic assertion of religion, as noted by Van der Veer (2015), "emerges within the context of the colonial modernisation of Indian society, in which the Indian population was classified, counted, and measured in terms of community" (p.263). Similarly, Kaviraj (1997) contends that during the colonial period, the configuration of identity underwent a historic transition due to the dual processes of "statistical counting and spatial mapping" (p.327). As a result, identities that were previously "indeterminate, plural, and context-dependent" were enumerated (p.327). It paved the way for communal discourses and growing consciousness of the numerical status in terms of religious affiliation. Once the communities on the basis of distinctive religious faith had been codified and institutionalised, it gradually became the base of representation and electoral politics (Baber, 2000). Various other administrative practices of the British, such as the partition of Bengal in 1905, the new judicial system with a sharp distinction between Hindu and Muhammadan Law and electoral reforms including a separate electorate reserved for various religious communities, have also been observed as dividing the Indians society along religious lines (Chandra, 2008).

Scholars have argued that colonial historiography played a definite role in fostering communal perception (Thapar et al.,1970). To be more specific, the orientalist/colonialist perspective on the history and social structure of India has been observed to be rooted in demarcating communities

primarily based on religious faith. In this respect, painting Indian history in a communal colour by James Mill and others has created a more profound impact on the social identity of the people (Mukhia, 1983). The colonialist discourse regarding Indian history often unfolded in a tripartite fashion, characterising different epochs. It first depicted a glorious ancient period closely associated with Hinduism, followed by an era marked by warfare and destruction during the medieval period under Muslim rule. Lastly, the period of modernity and enlightenment was attributed to British colonial rule (Thapar, 1990). This classification effectively presented the British as patrons of the great Hindu tradition and culture. The colonialist endeavours of reconstructing Indian history have been observed as a political strategy to legitimise colonial rule in India (Engineer, 2004). Interestingly, this periodisation of an 'ancient India' and 'medieval India' further gained a ready acceptance (Pandey, 2006). The Hindu nationalists adopted those classifications in order to advance their political agenda.

In addition to the British policies and communalisation of history, other factors, such as the expansion of modern technologies and communication and modern politics, also played a vital role in the emergence of trans-regional religious consciousness (Upadhyay & Robinson, 2012). Kothari (1989) posits that the external influences during the colonial period, particularly from the modern West, had a significant impact on Indian tradition and social system, ultimately leading to the homogenisation of Indian society rather than enabling various diversity to prosper. The ideology of nation-state framework, centralisation, development with particular emphasis on economic development and technology, and the expansion of the communication system is the byproduct of Western influences on Indian social ethos, which undermined the tradition of great diversity and plurality in which India existed for centuries. He argues that these changes contributed to the reconfiguration of a plural society into an exclusive majority-minority calculus.

In their study, Upadhyay and Robinson (2012) examined that the advancement of the means of communication over a period of time contributed to an increase in the process of homogenisation of discrete and localised identities. For instance, they point out the significant role of print technology in facilitating the religious revivalist movements of the late 19th century in mobilising fragmented communities into a larger religious framework.

It has been observed that the socio-political developments during the late colonial period played a crucial role in fuelling communal mobilisation (Chandra, 2008; Pandey, 2006). Along with powerful national movements, the early decades of the 20th century witnessed the stubborn assertiveness of Hindu-Muslim politico-religious movements. The formation of the All-India Muslim League in 1906, the Hindu Mahasabha in 1916, and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in 1925 were predominantly rooted in the ideological premise that Hindus and Muslims are two distinct communities, which is why they cannot exist together (Chandra, 2008). It paved the way for strengthening militant Hindu nationalism and Muslim separatism. The political assertiveness of these organisations intensified the communal polarisation, which resulted in recurrent communal conflicts, particularly in the northern provinces of India. All these developments led to the partition of the country in 1947.

Post-independence Phase

The experience of Partition and its bitter memories continued to remain in the memories of Hindus and Muslims (Engineer, 2004). However, nearly the first decades of the partition of the country, except the immediate aftermath, were marked by the relative absence of major communal riots. During that period, the ideologies of major political parties were observed to be in favour of secularism and socialism. As Banerjee (1990) observes, the national politics under the leadership of Nehru was more or less committed to secular ideology, and it was helpful to

undermine communal polarisation for a decade soon after the independence. However, as time passed, things changed dramatically. The Indian Muslims began to face a severe identity crisis due to the recurrent war between India and Pakistan, on the one hand, and the expansion of militant Hindu nationalism, on the other hand. With the Jabalpur riot, the decade 1960's is marked as a new phase of communal riots in the post-independence history of India. A chain of communal riots broke out soon after the Jabalpur riot. Hindu-Muslim polarisation directed by different forces resulted in the first riot at Jabalpur in 1961, which had shaken the whole nation, especially the secular approach of Nehru. According to Banerjee (1990), communal ideology played a key role in those riots, along with economic and political issues. He observes that the unscrupulous political manipulations to win the electoral game made the situation worse.

The vote bank politics of the major political parties, whose occasional appeasement towards the majority and minority communities according to the political situation, have contributed to the growing communal consciousness (Puri, 1993). It can be observed in the policies of the Congress governments that came after the Nehruvian era. During the tenure of Indira Gandhi, particularly in the 1970s, the Congress Party shifted its political strategy towards religious mobilisation. When she felt uncertainty about the Muslim support soon after the national emergency, Indira Gandhi began to mobilise upper and middle-class Hindus, which resulted in the communalisation of entire national politics. To compensate for the loss of Muslim support, Indira Gandhi mobilised the Hindu vote by adopting Hindu postures, which was reflected in the subsequent election. The projection of Pakistan as a source of threat to India's security and the dismissal of the duly elected government in Kashmir in 1984 enabled Indira Gandhi to satisfy the militant nationalist sentiments (Puri, 1993).

During the 1980s, Indian politics saw a relatively higher degree of communalisation than ever before (Engineer, 2004). During this time, the discourse raised by Hindutva groups regarding the religious conversion to Islam, the growth of the Muslim population, and the infiltration of Bangladeshi Muslims served to further reinforce the religious and political consciousness of the Hindus (Engineer, 1997). By highlighting the controversial Meenakshipuram conversion in 1981, the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) started a nationwide campaign, which was effectively utilised by various Hindutva organisations to widen their roots.

The slogan ‘Hindu under siege’ was capable of consolidating both middle and lower-class Hindus under Hindutva organisations (Banerjee, 1990). Furthermore, the enactment of the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act in 1986 by the Congress government, following the controversial Shah Bano case, had been portrayed as minority appeasement. Additionally, special status for minorities was frequently subjected to anti-Muslim propaganda. As Puri (1993) pointed out, these issues gave rise to emerging conflict between the Muslim urge for identity and Hindu demand for uniformity.

However, the mobilisation of the lower caste and disintegration among the Hindus, particularly related to the controversial Mandal Commission report in 1980, and the discourse pertaining to its implementation in the following years were not favourable for Hindu nationalists in their pursuit for consolidating the Hindus (Flaten,2012). Therefore, L. K. Advani's 'rath yatra' in 1990 could be observed as a political strategy for unifying the Hindu community, transcending the discourse centred around caste divisions. By projecting the 'Muslim other', the Hindu nationalists initiated a large-scale nationwide agitation for the liberation of ‘Ram Janmabhoomi’ that influenced a larger section of the majority community, including the lower castes. The strong religious sentiments following the ‘Ram Janmabhoomi’ agitation again invoked the religious

consciousness, which diverted the caste mobilisation into communal polarisation between Hindus and Muslims. It paved the way for a consolidation of the majority. and minority communities and recurrent outbreak all over India (Banerjee, 1990). The demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992 resulted in widespread communal riots throughout India, including the southern states. This event served as a catalyst for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to gain significant political ground (Shastri, 2020). The post-Babri political climate, coupled with the propaganda of Hindutva organisations targeting the 'Muslim other', enabled the BJP to attain power both at the Centre and in various states.

Systematic efforts have been made across various realms to foster communal consciousness and consolidation among the people. For instance, the communal colouring of the Indian history somewhat has been incorporated into the educational curriculum (Engineer 2004; Hasan, 2002; Mukhia, 1983). Engineer (2004) maintains that the history textbooks contribute to invoking religious consciousness and animosity as they reconstruct the medieval history in a communal overtone through the colonial legacy. Projecting the Muslim rulers as invaders, ignoring the peaceful entry of Islam through the Arab traders in southern states and the role of Sufi saints in the expansion of Islam in India and incorporating the infuriating incidents such as the demolition of the Somanath temple, the revised textbooks attempt to sustain suspicion and animosity between Hindus and Muslims. He remarks that "these constructions and reconstructions of medieval history are done to cater to contemporary political needs" (p.72). As Assayag (2004) emphasises, the local history of plurality plays a vital role in the mutual coexistence of different communities. The fundamentalist's reconstruction of the local history according to their political needs led to a persistent hostility among the various religious communities. The saffronisation of Indian history by different means not only questions the identity of religious minorities but also threatens the

country’s centuries-long plurality and syncretic tradition. The Hindu nationalists employ a strategy of homogenisation to reconcile the diverse traditions within Hinduism, as well as those of other Indian religions, such as Jainism and Buddhism, by emphasising civilisational unity (Flaten, 2012). Through this process, they aim to transcend the differences among these traditions and unite them on a common platform against a perceived Muslim 'other'.

It is noteworthy that religious sentiments, particularly in the recent communally culminated political climate, tend to obscure other social cleavages such as caste and language, resulting in a trans-regional or transnational consolidation of identity under the umbrella of religious faith. For instance, as mentioned above, the demand for Hindu unity during the Ram Janmabhoomi agitation was capable of transcending the caste mobilisation over the implementation of the Mandal Commission report (Flaten, 2012). Assayag (2004) further elucidates how communal waves surpass the common regional identities among the people. Illustratively, the longstanding dispute between Karnataka and Maharashtra over the Belgaum district became a catalyst for the consolidation of regional identities, specifically, Marathas and Kannadigas. He goes on to explain that the local Muslims of Belgaum, who identify with the socio-cultural sphere of Karnataka, supported their Hindu Kannadiga in opposing the transfer of Belgaum to Maharashtra. However, communal rhetoric and ensuing violence instigated by Shiv Sena and Hindutva organisations transformed the regional dispute into a religious one. Consequently, people's concerns about their religious identity transcended their regional identities, resulting in a mobilisation along communal lines. As Engineer (1997) rightly pointed out, “since religion has a strong appeal, it is used as an instrument by the power elite for achieving their secular objectives” (p.703).

In short, while employing religious sentiments as a potential tool for mobilising the people, it most often capable of surpassing various kinds of social divisions and affiliations that have been played a crucial role in making predicaments for the process of homogenisation and consolidation of the internally fragmentated religious communities.

Perspectives on Communalism

When we trace back the origin of communalism in India, two critical questions revolve around its historical background - whether communalism is a byproduct of colonialism or is it an inherent character of Indian society. When it comes to the post-independent scenarios, the question of why communal conflict is recurring is constantly being investigated. These questions have been explained through a variety of perspectives - colonialist, nationalist, Marxist, constructivist, subaltern, anti-modernist and instrumentalist.

For colonialists, communalism is considered an inherent characteristic of South Asia. For nationalists, it is viewed as a consequence of colonial rule. According to Marxists, it is a product of underdevelopment and economic stagnation brought about by the colonial capitalist economic system. Constructivists argue that it is a product of the colonial regime and that it has been constructed and reconstructed according to the spatiotemporal context. Anti-modernists explain it as the result of the incompatibility of colonial modernity imposed upon the Indian social structure. Instrumentalists perceive it as elite mobilisation in pursuit of vested interests. Following is a detailed discussion of various perspectives on communalism.

1. The Colonial Perspective

Depicting communal conflicts as an inherent feature of India is found to be common in colonial writings. Overlooking the inter-religious and intra-religious social identities, it offers an essentialised and primordialist view of religious communities. It poses sturdier and exclusive identities on the basis of fundamental differences between the major religious communities in India (Jairath, 2005). The colonial discourse emphasises Muslim invasion of the pre-colonial period, primitivism and religiosity of the people that are constituted communal cleavage (Pathan, 2009). By tracing different incidents in the pre-colonial period, Bayly (1985) negates the argument that India became communalised during the colonial period. He asserts that the communal consciousness and conflict between different religious communities during the Mughal period can be referred to as evidence of the antagonistic relationship that existed in India before British rule.

In concert with Bayly, Dumont (1970) also asserts the linkage of communalism with the pre-colonial period. He opines that the antagonistic relationship is the inherent characteristic of the Hindus and Muslims in India. By constructing such a distorted and prolonged history of communalism, the colonialist discourse endeavours to delineate that communal antagonism is a primordial feature of India. In doing so, the colonial discourse offers an essentialist perspective rooted in the orientalist understanding of South Asia, which attempts to homogenise Indian society along the line of religious identity by ignoring a vast number of internal diversities within each religious community. Interestingly, as Pandey (2006) observes, no sense of context has been applied there while depicting the pre-colonial inter-community disputes.

In fact, there is no adequate historical evidence for delineating a persistent or recurrent massive communal mobilisation that had taken place during the pre-colonial period. It is argued that the emergence of communalism, especially in the northern parts of the country, is the byproduct of colonial state policies (Robinson, 1998; Kaviraj, 1997; Hasan, 1982; Vanaik, 1992).

2. The Nationalist Perspective

Within the discourse surrounding communal conflicts in India, the nationalist perspective emerges as a significant and early contender against the colonialist interpretation. However, the nationalist stance on communism lacks a precise and rigorously defined meaning, resulting in a degree of ambiguity and potential for divergent interpretations. Here, the INC's position on this question during the nationalist struggle against the British regime is most often explained as the nationalist viewpoint (Pathan, 2009). In broader terms, the nationalist exposition significantly contests the colonialist conceptualisation of communalism as inherently primordial, asserting instead that it is an outcome directly linked to British colonialism.

Central to the nationalist perspective is the assertion that the British policy of ‘divide and rule’ stands as the fundamental catalyst behind the emergence of communalism in India. By emphasising the manipulative nature of the ‘divide and rule’ policy, nationalists argue that the fragmentation of communities along religious lines was a tactical manoeuvre intended to weaken the indigenous population's collective resistance against colonial rule. This viewpoint is widely acknowledged and accepted as an explanation within the discourse surrounding the origins of communalism in India. It is within the context of India's nationalist movement against British colonial rule that this interpretation of communalism gained traction and prominence.

3. The Marxist view

Emphasising the socio-economic structure of society, the Marxist perspective puts forth an alternative lens to analyse the origins and growth of communal violence. This perspective seeks to uncover the underlying structural factors that fuel the recurrence of communal violence by examining the interplay between class conflict, material circumstances, and power dynamics (Singh, 1990). The economic stagnation and exploitation of the ruling elite under the colonial regime are central to the Marxist framework explaining the emergence of communalism. By adopting the nationalist standpoint that underscores the colonial origins of communal conflicts, Marxist-nationalist historians, like Bipan Chandra (2008), accentuate the class/caste dimension of communal violence. They highlight how the upper caste and ruling elite exploited subordinated communities to perpetuate their dominance over society.

Chandra (2008) perceives both communalism and nationalism as modern phenomena, arising from the same historical process - the transformation of India under the colonial regime. He contends that the communalism witnessed in the post-independence era results from the constraints of capitalism, which is inadequate in sufficiently expediting societal progress. He postulates that communalism develops from a false social consciousness due to particular factors such as lack of correspondence to social reality or the concrete social structure. It reflects reality in a wrong and distorted way. For him, secular nationalism is the true consciousness to annihilate communalism. Conversely, Singh (1990) mounts a critical discourse against the prevailing trend in communalism analysis, underscoring its exclusive preoccupation with nationalist perspectives. He asserts that conflicts based on religion, caste, language, region, culture, etc., are greatly influenced by how the economy is structured in India.

He argues that communalism is inherently 'economy or class-dependent', stemming from the underlying limitations of the capitalist structure. Nevertheless, the Marxist perspective has garnered criticism for its perceived tendency to oversimplify intricate social phenomena by excessively attributing them to economic determinants.

4. Constructivist Perspective

Constructivism stands as a pivotal theoretical framework within the realm of post-colonial literature. This perspective posits that communal conflicts do not emerge solely as a consequence of inherent conflict between communities but rather manifest as a complex interplay of various socio-political factors. This perspective fundamentally challenges the essentialised notions of religious identities, thereby countering the colonial discourse that attributes primordial and inherent characteristics to the conflict between religious communities (Pandey, 2006; Kaviraj, 1997). This constructivist approach posits that social identities, including religious and ethnic affiliations, are not static and natural but are products of social construction. These identity affiliations are shaped by historical narratives, collective memories, and ongoing social interactions (Gottschalk, 2005). It contends that the consolidation of religious identities and the eruption of communal violence are modern constructs influenced by either intended or unintended colonial policies (Brass, 2011; Jairath, 2005; Kaviraj, 1997). Van der Veer (2015) highlights the role of colonial modernisation in the emergence of communalism.

During the colonial period, Indian society was counted and classified in terms of community with respective religious identity. This process of classifying the communities according to religious affiliations was carried out through the decanal census during the British colonial period, a practice that has been argued to have significantly contributed to the cultivation of communal consciousness among the people (Bhagat, 2001; Kaviraj, 1997). Pandey (2006) expounds upon

the concept of communalism as a particular construction of the knowledge system about Indian society, which is reserved for the analysis of social and political conflicts in the underdeveloped regions of the colonial and postcolonial world. He draws attention to how the colonialist construction of Indian history has portrayed religious bigotry and conflict as defining attributes of Indian society. He observes that communal identities were neither inherent nor pre-existing in Indian society but rather were shaped and mobilised in the context of British colonialism and the policy of 'divide and rule'.

Many scholars, upon analysing the socio-political developments in post-independent India, argue that communal riots are not spontaneous but instead deliberately planned and orchestrated (Pai & Kumar, 2018; Brass, 2011; Wilkinson, 2006; Jaffrelot, 1996). In light of the sociopolitical developments of the 1980s, Van der Veer (1987) challenges the essentialist discourse that portrays Hindu-Muslim antagonism as static and culturally predetermined. He presents a brief historical account of the 'mandir-masjid controversy' and the Ram Janmabhoomi liberation movement in 1984, arguing that the sentiments aroused by this movement are not primordial and that the changing Hindu-Muslim relationship is contingent upon political developments. He illustrates how political changes can redirect religious sentiments, citing the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984, which swiftly transformed Hindu-Muslim communal strife around the Babri masjid into anti-Sikh sentiment. This underscores that religious sentiments and Hindu-Muslim antagonism are not static but are political creations.

Wilkinson (2006) provides a comprehensive overview of the occurrences of communal riots. He argues that the riots are not unintendedly happening but can be created or eliminated according to the political will of the state or authority. Similarly, by analysing the communal polarisation in UP since 2000, Pai and Kumar (2018) elucidate the 'new ways and means' adopted by the

Hindu right in creating ‘deep-seated polarisation’ on an everyday basis. They argue that rather than fomenting major riots, Hindutva groups focus on appropriating minor issues that frequently arise at the grassroots level, using them to generate a communal undercurrent and sustain animosity. Thus, the constructivist view on communal conflicts challenges the essentialist perspective of religious identities and emphasises the deliberate construction of communalism, illustrating the dynamic and politically influenced nature of such tensions, both in the colonial and postcolonial contexts.

5. Anti-modernist Perspective

The anti-modernist view of communalism is primarily centred on problematising the concepts of modernity and secularism. Scholars such as Ashis Nandy and T. N. Madan put forward this perspective while analysing communal mobilisation in India. They critically examine the concept of secularism, as grounded in Western cultural and rational paradigms, positing it as a source of contestation existing among religious communities in India.

Nandy (1998) observes that in post-colonial third-world settings, knowledge structures exhibit a “peculiar form of imperialism of categories", wherein indigenous conceptual domains are supplanted by Western ideas through effective hegemonisation, obscuring the pre-existing conceptual domains (p. 321). He argues that secularism is an imported ideology from the West that is alien to Indian tradition, and only the indigenous idea of religious tolerance is compatible with our composite culture. He views communal violence as a consequence of colonial modernity and the impracticality of secularism in the Indian context. Instead of the Western notion of privatising religion from the public sphere, the anti-modernists suggest Gandhian philosophy, emphasising equal respect for all religions. Madan (1987) argues that communities in South Asia conceive of religion as encompassing all aspects of life, spanning both public and private

domains. This comprehensive view of life conflicts with secularisation efforts promoted by the state and intellectuals. Therefore, this Western thought has inherent limitations in effectively addressing religious communities in the country, resulting in its failure to eliminate religion from politics and establish communal harmony. Madan asserts that the multi-religious nature of South Asian society and their firm adherence to religious faith do not tolerate the imported idea of privatisation of religion. In conclusion, the anti-modernist perspective offers a critical examination of the applicability concepts of modernity and secularism in the socio-cultural context of Indian society characterised by its deep-rooted religious traditions.

6. Instrumentalism

Instrumentalism has emerged as a pivotal theoretical perspective for explicating the communal violence witnessed in India since the 1980s (Salah, 2018). The instrumentalist view suggests that religious sentiments have been used as a key device in achieving the political and economic motives of politicians or elite sections of society. For instrumentalists, religion has been strategically deployed in multi-religious/ethnic societies for acquiring response from the state or gaining political power (Brass, 2011; Jairath, 2005). Khan (1989) notes "perversion of religion from a moral order to temporal arrangement of contemporary convenience, from a faith into a constituency, from a strategy of living into tactics of politics, from an end into a means" (as quoted in Upadhyay & Robinson 2012, p. 37). Similarly, Engineer (1997) underscores the deliberate manipulation of religious identity for secular goals. Paying attention to the recurrence of communal riots, Brass (2011) highlighted the instrumental use of riots by the elites, various organisations, and the state for achieving their vested interests. He opined that riots are not accidental but systematically planned and executed.

While examining the literature on communal violence, it can be observed that the question of why and how communal violence occurs in India has mainly been studied in the socio-political context of Northern states (Pai & Kumar, 2018; Gupta, 2013; Brass, 2011; Pandey, 2006; Chandra, 2008; Wilkinson, 2006; Jaffrelot, 1996). In contrast to the northern Indian states, it is evident that the majority of regions in South India experienced comparatively fewer instances of communal outbursts during the colonial era and the initial decades following independence (Rajamohan, 2005; Engineer, 2004). In the case of South Kanara, which serves as the empirical focus of the present study, a profound polarisation between Hindus and Muslims emerged as a post-colonial phenomenon, particularly after the first two decades of independence. It is crucial to acknowledge that this polarisation cannot be simplistically attributed to intrinsic or pre-existing characteristics of the region. Rather, a comprehensive examination of the sociopolitical history as well as recent developments, particularly in the realms of economy, politics, and religion within the region, is imperative to comprehend this multifaceted social issue. As instrumentalist discourse suggests, the communalisation process taking place in the region can be seen as a purposefully created issue by the politicians and the upper castes for meeting their political gains and retaining their hegemony over the subordinated groups.

Communalisation in the Post-independent Country: Recent Academic Discourses

The theoretical advancements in communalism studies provide path-breaking explanations for the process of communalisation and inter-community conflicts occurring in the post-independent country. The works of Punathil (2019), Pai and Kumar (2018), Brass (2011), Wilkinson (2006) and Varshney (2003) are notable studies in this area. 'Institutionalised riot system' propounded by Paul Brass, the 'institutionalised everyday communalism' of Pai and Kumar, the 'electoral incentive' theory of Wilkinson, and the 'civic engagement' theory of Varshney are the notable

explanations of communal or ethnic violence that unpack the most preconceived notions of the cause, existence and the process of communal violence in contemporary India. However, the efficacy of the conventional framework of communalism has been contested by Salah (2019) and Santhosh and Paleri (2020), who argue that it is not adequate for analysing conflicts between religious communities.

1. Institutionalised Riot System

Focusing on the question of how communal riots persist rather than why they happen, Brass (2011) put forward a fascinating explanation of persistent communal riots in contemporary India. Based on his decade-long ethnographic study about Aligarh city in Uttar Pradesh, Brass emphasises that communal riots are not spontaneous phenomena but systematically created incidents. Portraying the preplanned and organised nature of communal riots, Brass introduces a new theory in the discourse on communal riots – Institutionalised Riot System. He argues that riots are a strategically planned and well-coordinated collective action in which specific roles are assigned to various actors. He elaborates that the riots have been carried out through three phases – preparation, enactment and interpretations. In the preparation stage, a group of people whom Brass termed ‘fire tenders’ attempts to keep communal issues alive through provocative and inciting acts. It prepares the ground for communal violence. In the second stage, the next group called ‘conversion specialists’ would take charge and turn the trivial issues into massive communal riots by giving commands to the ‘mob of potential rioters’ to initiate violence. Here, he points out that it is generally politicians who act as 'conversion specialists'. People from poor socioeconomic backgrounds, particularly from the lower castes, will be recruited by offering rewards for committing violence. The third and final phase is termed interpretation or post-riot discourse, which appears with master narratives when the riot ends. The post-riot discourse is

dominated by a set of narration that serves the needs of a group that justifies those incidents as an unpredictable or a defensive action and thereby establishes legitimacy for the riots. Political leaders and vernacular media play a crucial role in this phase by interpreting that the riot happened spontaneously by the unpreventable acts of the infuriated mob. It helps to hide the real factors and culprits that caused for violence.

Brass (2011) observes that minor issues have never itself been transformed into a riot. However, the vested interests of politicians and the inefficiency of the administrative system have an inevitable role in transforming insignificant minor incidents into pogroms or large-scale communal violence. Riots could be directly beneficial in electoral politics, chiefly for communal parties and, to some extent, for secular parties. Secular parties use such situations to mobilise minorities by appearing and acting as the custodian of their life and property. Although he gives a detailed account of how communal riots are happening, his works do not give much insight into how the Muslim community responds to the Hindutva onslaught. In communally sensitive areas, especially in the South Indian states, cadre-based Muslim organisations reacting in similar ways to Hindutva violence can be observed. Though majoritarian politics and Hindutva assertion have a crucial role in fomenting communal violence, it does not limit the scope of exploring the counter-mobilisations of the Muslim community in tracing communal tension.

2. Electoral Incentive Theory

Disagreeing with the prevailing discourse on communal violence, Wilkinson (2006) put forward the ‘Electoral Incentive Theory’ to explain communal riots happening in the country. Like Brass, Wilkinson has found a correlation between electoral politics and communal violence. With the help of huge statistical evidence, he unpacks the critical role of 'electoral incentives' in fomenting or controlling communal riots. According to the theory, the occurrence and persistence of

communal violence depend upon the political will of the ruling governments. By showing examples of Bihar and Utter Pradesh during the period of Lalu Prasad Yadav and Mulayam Singh, respectively, he asserts that even the states with the weakest police and judicial resources were capable of controlling communal violence on their political will. The minority votes were crucial in holding on to power for both of them. On the contrary, communal tensions were relatively higher in some states with a better administrative system, such as Gujarat and Maharashtra, during the ruling period of BJP-led NDA governments. It questions the credibility of the concerned states in assuring and maintaining peace and order under its territorial boundary.

Wilkinson further elaborates that if the government depends on the minority vote, if the minority communities have a significant role in the governing coalition, or if there is a possibility for a future alliance with them, then the government would have greater efficacy in controlling communal riots. He argues that the nature of the party system and electoral competition is also important in controlling or fomenting communal violence. Minorities are relatively more secure when the electoral competition moves from a bi-party system to a multiparty system. A fractionated political party system would prevent politicians from fomenting communal violence. He observes that high-level electoral competition or political fragmentation makes major political parties dependent on the minority vote, which further ensures security in return for the minorities.

3. Civic Engagement Theory

Centring on a striking question - why some cities remain peacefully, and some remain violently- Varshney (2003) propounds 'civic engagement theory' to explain communal violence and harmony. By observing three pairs of cities, each pair from the violence-prone city and the other from the peaceful city, Varshney develops a fascinating explanation to unveil the reason for communal conflict. He finds an integral link between the structure of civic life in the presence

and absence of ethnic violence in a multi-ethnic society. He argues that the nature of civic engagement, i.e., 'inter-ethnic' or 'intra-ethnic' social network determines the scope of intercommunity relations. According to him, the interethnic civic tie-up is necessary for good inter-community relations as it develops a sturdier social interaction in the multi-ethnic society. When the community is organised only in an intra-ethnic line, the link with other communities will be fragile.

He further classifies civic engagement into two categories, namely associational or organised and every day or quotidian. Though both can promote peaceful and healthy inter-community relations, the associational form of network is sturdier than the quotidian because the former can easily transcend the ethnic boundaries. Inter-ethnic social networks with a strong associational civic interaction in the form of civil society organisations such as business organisations, NGOs and trade unions would contribute to preventing the spread of communal violence. Politicians or other actors cannot polarise the people as the local administration would be more effective in those areas where associational civic tie-ups exist. He emphasises the need for interethnic associational civic tie-up as it suitable in large settings where more formal or organised engagement is required. However, the 'civic engagement theory has been criticised by many scholars by arguing that it undermines the role of electoral politics/political elements and reduces the communal violence to the lack of inter-community civic engagement (Punathil, 2019; Jairath, 2005).

4. Spatiality of Violence

Punathil (2019) in his seminal work ‘Interrogating Communalism: Violence, Citizenship and Minorities in South India’ explores how space and resources are instrumental in erupting conflicts between two distinct religious communities. Exploring the conflict between two distinct fishing

communities of southern Kerala – the Marakkayar Muslims and Mukkuvar Christians, he contests the prevailing dominant perspectives of communalism as they all are preoccupied with the idea that the conflicts are solely related to the 'mobilisation of religious identity. Focusing on the centuries-long violent conflict between these two groups, he problematises the framing of the conflict between them as essentially religious and argues that conflict can be erupted between the religious communities without mobilising their religious identity. Here, he emphasises the spatial dynamics of violence that the violence is more or less centred on space and its resources than religious sentiments. Clubbing his ethnographic account with archival sources, judicial discourses, and government reports on communal violence, he elucidates the crucial role of the state in reifying religious identity. Critically examining the judicial discourse and government reports, he argues that the colonial genealogy prevails even today in reproducing stigma on the identity of the Muslim community that makes them as the most vulnerable subjects of violent conflict in the country.

5. Ethnicisation of Religion

Employing the conceptual framework of ethnicisation, Santhosh and Paleri (2020) attempt to analyse the intricate religious mobilisation within the political landscape of contemporary India. They examine the "competing processes of ethnicisation" between Hindus and Muslims within the context of the recent heightened inter-religious conflicts in coastal Karnataka. They primarily delve into the strategic manoeuverings employed by Hindutva groups in mobilisation alongside the responsive efforts of Muslim groups. This perspective challenges the conventional communalism framework, which presupposes that religious conflicts arise from either the inherent features of religions or the changing character of religion within the milieu of modernity. They say that ethnicisation is a "dynamic process of boundary making," which constitute

"construction and reification of powerful crystallisation of group feeling" (p.3). They elaborate that in contemporary political scenario, religious mobilisations has to be comprehended "as an integral process to produce and naturalize purported differences into antagonistic ethnic identities in an attempt to claim larger stakes in the emerging political processes" (p.2). They argue that the framework of ethnicisation offers a more nuanced approach to understanding how religious conflicts are negotiated within the context of a secular state.

Santhosh and Paleri (2020) contend that the conventional communalism framework falls short, inadequately capturing the multifaceted dynamics of current issues, particularly in light of the ascendance of Hindutva and the changing patterns of Muslim politics. They observe the resurgence of militant Hindu nationalism, characterised by its extension "beyond institutional and ideological boundaries of the Sangh Parivar and its near-complete encapsulation of state, civic, institutional and political spaces" (p.3). In parallel, recent developments in Muslim politics employ a mobilisation strategy grounded in 'radical Islamic identity' while being overtly expressed through 'secularist claims' (p.3). This blending of overtly secular claims with a foundation rooted in 'radical Islamic identity' underscores the complexity of contemporary Muslim identity politics. However, this framework overlooks the internal schisms and is inadequate to analyse the contestations within religious or ethnic communities, which often contribute to and reinforce inter-religious conflicts.

6. Institutionalised Everyday Communalism

Drawing upon the theoretical perspective of constructivism, Sudha Pai and Sajjan Kumar (2018) propose a conceptual model of 'institutionalised everyday communalism' to analyse shifting pattern of communalisation and the process through which communalism has been institutionalised at the local level in Uttar Pradesh. The defining feature of this model, as noted

by the authors, is the strategic efforts made by Hindutva groups ‘to create and sustain constant, low-key communal tension together with frequent, small, low-intensity incidents out of petty everyday issues that institutionalise communalism at the grassroots ‘keep the pot boiling’ (p. x). Based on an extensive fieldwork conducted in the western and eastern districts of Uttar Pradesh, the authors identify a transformative nature of communalism since the year 2000, which diverges from the large-scale communal riots that occurred during the Ram Temple movement in the 1980s and 1990s, predominantly in urban areas.

In order to comprehend this phenomenon, their focus is expanded beyond observing riots to the ‘new ways and means’ adopted by Hindutva groups in fostering animosity at the grassroots level. They found that these groups concentrate their efforts on appropriating trivial issues that regularly arise at the local level, leveraging them to generate a communal undercurrent and perpetuate animosity. The authors highlight that the deepening agrarian crisis and socioeconomic backwardness have rendered the communities highly susceptible to communal propaganda. Taking advantage of this vulnerability, RSS and BJP cadres have been recruited to manipulate the trivial issues between the members of the two communities, thereby sustaining animosity and normalising anti-Muslim sentiments. Additionally, in order to consolidate the broader Hindu community against the perceived Muslim 'other,' the Sangh Parivar employs a 'non-Brahminical Hindutva' strategy, incorporating lower caste groups. By doing so, their ultimate aim is to institutionalise communalism within the fabric of everyday life, thereby ensuring a persistent state of communal polarisation and facilitating political advantage for the BJP.

Thus, the recent scholarship on communal riots gives remarkable contributions to analysing the inter-community violence in contemporary India. Most of the studies highlight the crucial role of politicians and electoral politics in creating communal violence in a multi-ethnic/religious

society, particularly in the context of the majoritarian democratic settings. While examining the persistent communal tensions in South Kanara, such political elements are evident in developing animosity and conflict between communities. Although South Kanara had never witnessed recurrent communal outbreaks during the pre-independence period and its immediate aftermath, the region has been Notorious for communal violence for the past three decades. This can be read in conjunction with the steady growth of the BJP here in the 1990s. As Santhosh and Paleri (2020) rightly pointed out, the crucial role of Hindutva organisations can be clearly identified in creating communal violence. Furthermore, it can be understood that the efforts of upper castes to retain their historical dominance have been working along with the interest of Hindutva politics. The crucial role of upper castes and political elites in mobilising the people from lower casts to instigate violence against the minority communities can be seen in the region.

It is evident in the coastal belts of Karnataka that the Sangh Parivar is deliberately trying to sustain communal animosity by constantly creating issues and spreading rumours against Muslims and Christians. The trivial issues happening between the members of the majority and minority communities in everyday life have been translated into a communal tone with the view of deepening polarisation.

As Pai and Kumar (2018) say, this tendency can be read as the systematic effort of the Hindu right to institutionalise communalism in everyday life at the grassroots level. However, the emergence and spread of communal conflicts can often be seen to vary according to political circumstances. The communal violence can be observed to be aggravated throughout the region ahead of the public elections (Sastry, 2017).

The recent controversies such as the ban on Hijab, attack on Muslim vendors, and call for the boycott of halal meat have been observed as planned polarisation tactics ahead of the 2023 state assembly election. As Wilkinson's theory of electoral incentive suggests, the ruling BJP government of Karnataka (2019-2023) aims for a definite political dividend by not preventing such communal violence against minorities.

Communalism, Violence, and the Muslim Question

How the Muslim community has been studied in the context of communalisation in India is a significant question. It is apparent that the existing scholarship on this subject has primarily directed its attention towards a particular theme, leaving certain other dimensions largely unexplored. Within the ambit of locating Muslims in this context, the studies can be broadly classified into two categories. The first category of works primarily examines the impact of communal consciousness and riots on the Muslim community itself, constituting a substantial portion of the existing literature on this subject (Puniyani, 2018; Lokhande, 2016; Susewind, 2017; Jaffrelot & Gayer, 2012; Kumar, 2010; Engineer, 2003,1997, 1991; Puri, 1993). On the other hand, the second category comprises studies that specifically investigate the political response of Muslims, with a particular focus on their mobilisation (Ahmed, 2022; Siyech, 2021; Awasthi, 2020; Emmerich, 2019; Arafath, 2016; Behera, 2013; Rajamohan, 2005; Hasan, 1988).

Coming to the first category, these studies intricately delve into themes revolving around Muslim victimhood, insecurity, identity crisis, marginality, social exclusion and the manifold socio-economic challenges that arise in the aftermath of communal conflicts. For instance, Puniyani (2018) examines how communal riots instil insecurity among Muslims and how the communal politics caused to their social and political exclusion. Similarly, Lokhande's research delves into

the repercussions of communal politics, particularly evident in the Gujarat pogrom of 2002, which resulted in the displacement of Muslims. Puri's research (1993) concentrates on major political developments concerning the Muslim community since the partition of the country. It explores how these developments shape and reshape the identity and consciousness of Muslims in India. Pande (1999) investigates how Muslim identity is framed within the nationalist discourse. The nationalist discourse positions the Hindu majority as the core and mainstream community, conferring upon them the privilege of being "the essential, natural soul of the nation"(p.608). Simultaneously, the Muslim minority in India is often required to prove their loyalty to the nation, as they are framed as not "real," "natural" citizens. Rauf (2018) delves into the vulnerability of Muslims to communal violence and highlights how Muslims are portrayed as threats to Hindus, which attempts to legitimise violence against them. Another insightful study by Singh (2009) analyses how the discourse of Hindutva dehumanises the Muslim community, thereby legitimising violence against them It is significant to note that, in addition to these works, a new stream of literature has emerged, which explore the lives of Muslims in the various Indian cities in the context of communal divide (Sattar, 2018; Susewind 2017; Jaffrelot & Gayer, 2012). However, they are also centred on marginalisation, insecurity, spatial segregation, social exclusion and ghettoisation of the community.

Transitioning to the second category, these studies investigate how Muslims engage with majoritarian politics and communal violence (Ahmed, 2022; Siyech, 2021; Awasthi, 2020; Emmerich, 2019a; Arafath, 2016; Behera, 2013; Rajamohan, 2005; & Hasan, 1988). Scholars in this category examine the ways in which Muslims mobilise and respond to the majoritarian politics and the process of communalisation. Additionally, there is a growing body of literature that seeks to contextualise the political engagements of the Muslim community in light of the

recent surge in communal violence, particularly in regions such as coastal Karnataka (Sood, 2022; Santhosh & Paleri, 2021; 2020; Dev, 2020; Emmerich, 2019b; Mondal, 2015). However, it is important to note that the majority of these studies primarily centred around themes related to radicalisation, counter mobilisation, and assertive Muslim politics. In doing so, they have somewhat overlooked the regional dynamics and the inherent heterogeneity and sectarian contestations among Muslims, tending to analyse the community solely through the lens of recent religious and political articulations. As a result, there exists a gap in academic attention concerning the contestations and divergent approaches and strategies adopted by various Muslim organisations in their engagement with Hindutva politics. The local distinctiveness and sectarian differences are significant while tracing the Muslim response to majoritarian politics.

Conclusion

Thus, various theoretical perspectives and recent academic discourses in the field of communalism studies provide valuable insights into the intricate processes of communalisation and inter-community conflicts. Specifically, the constructivist and instrumentalist perspectives have made significant contributions to the analysis of communal conflicts in post-independent India, particularly concerning recent escalations in communal tensions. One major concern addressed in this chapter revolves around the manner in which the Muslim community has been examined within the context of communal violence in India. Scholarly research in this area has primarily concentrated on specific facets, with a predominant focus on investigating the impacts of communal violence on the Muslim community itself. However, there has been an emerging body of scholarship that attempts to locate the political engagements of the Muslim community. Such limited studies have focused on the political mobilisation from post-Babri communal violence to contemporary Hindutva politics. It is imperative to acknowledge that the majority of these studies

have overlooked the regional aspects and the heterogeneous features among Muslims as they look at the community on the basis of recent religious and political articulations. Hence, this work intervenes in this emerging literature by incorporating regional dimensions and internal diversities, thereby enhancing our understanding of the multifaceted nature of Muslim responses to communal politics in contemporary times.

CHAPTER III
Historicising the Bearys of South Kanara

Introduction

The Bearys are an ethno-linguistic community in Karnataka, representing one of the earliest Muslim settlements in India, with a unique history and culture (Doddamane, 1993). In the past, the Bearys held a prominent position as one of the dominant merchant communities in the region until the advent of European powers (Ichlangod, 2011). Due to their significant involvement in trade and commerce, they became locally known as "Beary," a term that signifies "trader" in the local Tulu language. As Muslim community emerged from the socio-cultural premise of Tulu Nadu, the regional characteristics found among the Bearys give them a distinct identity compared to other Muslim communities in the country. However, the Bearys had been misrepresented as the Mappilas community for a long time, as they were depicted in colonial writings (Buchanan, 1807; Stuart, 1895; Sturrock, 1894). Although both communities share some common historical and social characteristics regarding their origin and religious practices, the cultural and political diversities between the regions - Tulu Nadu and Malabar - set the Bearys apart from the Mappila community. Hence, this chapter attempts to locate the history of the Beary Muslim community in the regional context of Tulu Nadu.

The Bearys

The Muslim population in Karnataka represents a heterogeneous community, constituting 12.92 percent of the total population in the state (Census of India, 2011). Notably, the coastal region of Karnataka has witnessed the emergence of various local ethnic Muslim communities during the early medieval period, primarily due to extensive maritime connections with West Asia. Among

these communities, the Muslims inhabiting the historical region of Tulu Nadu or modern South Kanara are locally known as Bearys. The Bearys, considered to be one of the earliest Muslim communities in India, trace their lineage back to a mixed heritage comprising Arab ancestry and the indigenous communities of Tulu Nadu (Ichlangod, 2011; Doddamane, 1993). They constitute an ethno-linguistic community primarily concentrated in the coastal districts of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi in Karnataka, as well as the northern parts of Kasaragod in Kerala. The Bearys form about 80% of the total Muslim population in South Kanara.[8] The total population of the community has been estimated as 1.5 million.[9]

The term 'Beary' represents both the ethnic community itself and their unique dialect[10]. There are several interpretations related to the origin of the term Beary. It is generally acknowledged that Beary is derived from a Tulu word, 'Beara', which means trade or business. It is substantiated by the active engagement of the Beary community in commercial endeavours, leading to other communities calling them as Bearys. Ichlangode (2011) proposes an alternative perspective, suggesting a higher probability of the term's derivation from the Arabic word 'Bahari' meaning seafarer. On the other hand, Doddamne (1993) argues that the Tulu word 'Beara' is a more credible explanation regarding the etymology of the term Beary, dismissing the Arabic word "Bahri" or the Sanskrit word 'Yyapari'. Nevertheless, Doddamne does not entirely dismiss the accounts that narrate the conversion of a local 'Vyapari' community to Islam, gradually leading to their identification as Bearys. The precise timing of when this appellation came into common usage remains unclear. However, historical records indicate that the Muslims of Tulu Nadu were known

[8] Information gathered from Karnataka Beary Sahithya Academy, Mangalore, on July 21, 2016. It is an autonomous institution established by the Karnataka government to protect and promote the Beary language and culture.

[9] According to the website of the Karnataka Beary Sahithya Academy, the Beary population is estimated to be above 15 lakhs and is spread across the globe. (*Beary History*, 2013)

[10] The dialect spoken by the Beary community, commonly referred to as 'Beary' is exclusive to them, exemplifying the linguistic diversity prevalent in the region.

as Beary by the second half of the fourteenth century (Malayamma, 2017; Madhava, 1985). Historically, the Bearys gained prominence due to their active engagement in trading activities, playing a vital role in maritime trade with Arabia. They gradually evolved and established themselves as a merchant class within the region, enjoying the support and patronage of local Hindu and Jain rulers (Rao, 2005; Doddamane, 1993; Noori, 1960). Compared to other Muslim communities in the country, the Bearys differ in terms of their origins, language, traditions, and socio-religious practices. The blend of Arab and local ancestry, shared religious traditions with the Mappilas of Malabar, as well as their sociocultural practices embedded in the multicultural milieu of Tulu Nadu, has significantly contributed to shaping them as a distinct community.

Similar to the Mappila Muslims of Malabar, the Bearys adhere to the Shafi school of Islamic Jurisprudence, distinct from the prevalent Hanafi Jurisprudence observed by Muslims in the rest of Karnataka and northern India. This points to the interconnection of Islamic traditions between the regions of Malabar and Tulu Nadu. However, in terms of cultural practices, the Bearys maintain a close affinity with the local customs and traditions. Ichlangod (2011) asserts that despite embracing Islam, the Bearys have retained elements of their earlier local traditions and beliefs, which largely persisted until the resurgence of Islamic teachings in the 20th century. Additionally, the customs and ceremonies of the Bearys bear notable resemblances to those of other local communities. Previously, they followed a matrilineal family system, a practice also observed among various caste groups, such as Billavas and Bunts (Sturrock, 1894; Ichlangod, 2011) These aspects highlight the interconnectedness of the Bearys with the socio-cultural landscape of the region. The following sessions details the historical trajectories of the Bearys of South kanara and their sociocultural engagement with other communities.

Emergence of Muslim Settlements on the South West Coast

The emergence and expansion of Muslim communities in India has varied across time and space. It is worth noting that the spread of Islam along the Western coastline of India predates the invasion of Sindh by the Arab military commander Mohammed Bin Qasim in 712 AD[11] (Nizami, 1994). The origin and spread of Muslim communities in South India, especially in the coastal areas, are directly related to the centuries-long commercial contact/network with Arabia. (Metcalf, 2009; Ramesh, 1970; Chand, 1936: Arnold, 1913; Logan 1887; Sturrock 1894;). Such a linkage was a key factor for the origin of several ethnic communities throughout the West coast of India, namely, Mappilas in Malabar, Navayats in north Karnataka (predominantly in Bhatkal) and the Bearys in South Kanara. The geographical position of the West coast of India had been favourable for the development of Indo-Arab maritime relations since ancient times. The waning influence of the Roman Empire and the imposition of religious restrictions on Hindus navigating the seas provided an opportunity for Persian and Arab traders to dominate ocean trade (Miller, 1976). According to Nizami (1994), Arabs' navigational interest served a pivotal role in developing the commercial link between India and Arabia. As Metcalf (2009) pointed out, the West coast had long served as a nodal site for trans-oceanic trade of high-value goods between India and foreign countries, especially Arabia and Persia.

Although it is observed that Islam was initially introduced into southern parts of the country, the exact period of its arrival remains a contentious subject among scholars of maritime history. A number of scholars, including Koya (1976), D'Souza (1955), Nadvi (1934), and Sturrock (1894), have observed that Islam appeared on the West coast during the 7th century AD, citing the evidence

[11] The narratives regarding the growth of Islam in India have often placed significant emphasis on the invasion and conquests carried out by various Muslim dynasties, while largely overlooking the peaceful diffusion of Islam in regions such as the West coast and other parts of South India.

of trans-ocean trade relations with pre-Islamic Arabia. D'Souza (1955) highlights the long-established trade links between the West coast of India and Arabia, dating back to ancient times. By emphasising the significance of this historical commercial network, he argues, "the Muhammedan influence in southern India and Ceylon dates back almost to the very inception of Islam at the beginning of the 7th century A. D." (p. 2). Similarly, Chand's (1936) observation is noteworthy as it suggests that Muslim settlements in South India were established not long after the period of the Prophet. He arrived at this inference based on a combination of evidence, including ancient inscriptions, accounts from Muslim historians, and the enduring trade connections with Arabia.

However, the absence of substantial historical evidence pertaining to the early account of the spread Islam in India further complicates the exploration of the history of Muslim settlements dating back to the 7th century AD. Nonetheless, Miller (1976) has emphasised that despite the absence of written records documenting the early origin of Islam, it is not entirely possible to dismiss the likelihood that Islam had spread to the southwest coast during the 7th century. This is owing to the significant role played by Arabs as the principal traders in the region even before the Islamisation of Arabia. Many historians undoubtedly assert that Islam had indeed spread in South India by the eighth century onwards (Metcalf 2009; Arnold 1913).

South Kanara; Mapping the Region

The Karnataka state demonstrates significant internal diversities, characterised by differences in geography, culture, and language. One such region that stands out for its unique local traditions and rich multiculturalism is South Kanara. The South Kanara is an Anglicised term used to refer to its Kannada equivalent, "Dakshina Kannada". Geographically, it is situated along the coastal area of the South Western part of Karnataka, bordered by Malabar to the south, Uttara Kannada to

the north, Mysore and Coorg to the east, and the Arabian Ocean to the West. During the British period in 1862, South Kanara was formed as a new administrative district under the Madras Presidency. This administrative division was formed by splitting the pre-existing Kanara district. As a result, the erstwhile Tulu Nadu region came under the territorial limits of the South Kanara. The present South Kanara spans across three coastal districts, namely Dakshina Kannada and Udupi in Karnataka, as well as Kasaragod in Kerala. However, the districts of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi in Karnataka are commonly identified as South Kanara. The Kasaragod district, originally a constituent of this region, was transferred to the state of Kerala during the linguistic reorganisation of states in 1953.

During the pre-colonial period, the South Kanara was historically referred to as Tulu Nadu , signifying the indigenous name for the region. This nomenclature finds mention as Tulu Nadu in the *Agananuru*, an ancient work from the Sangam period (Ramesh, 1970; Bhatt, 1969) Additionally, the ancient Barkur inscription also referred to this region as Tulu Nadu. The inscriptions dating back to the Vijayanagara emperors' era further elucidate that the region was referred as Tulu Desa or Tulu-Rajya (Ramesh, 1970). Sturrock (1894) maintains that Tuluva is a more appropriate name for denoting the region, distinguished by its own local languages known as Tulu. In the 2nd century AD, the Greek geographer Ptolemy referred to this region as Olokhoira, which is observed to be the corruption of the term Aluvakheda, which means the kingdom of Alvas or Alupas (Ramesh, 1970.) The Alupas, who belonged to the Tuluva race, are the oldest known native dynasty of Tulu Nadu (Bhatt, 1969). However, the origin of this dynasty is obscure due to the lack of definite historical evidence. Sturrock (1894) says that there are no substantial historical records depicting the political history of Tulu Nadu before the eighth century. Though the Alupas initially ruled the region independently, in the course of time, they accepted the overlordship of

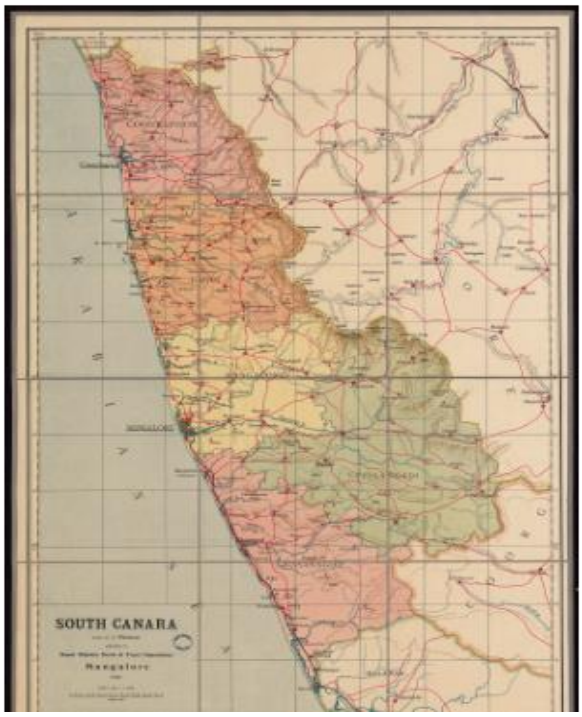
Chalukya dynasty, followed by Hoysalas and Vijay Negara emperors. The Alupa dynasty continued until the Vijayanagara emperors conquered Tulu Nadu in the 14th century AD. When the Vijayanagara dynasty weakened, the region came under the overlordship of Keladi Kings, followed by the Portuguese. Like other regions along the West Coast, the Portuguese were the initial European power that ventured into Tulu Nadu, establishing a monopoly on ocean trade in the early 16th century (Shetty, 2014).

The Portuguese called the name Canara (Kanara) to refer to coastal Karnataka including Tulu Nadu. This nomenclature gained popularity during the British colonial era. For a short period (1763-1799), South Kanara was ruled by Mysore sultans- Hyder Ali and his son Tipu Sultan. Following the downfall of Tipu Sultan, the broader Kanara region came under British dominion in 1799 and was subsequently incorporated into the Madras presidency. Since 1800 AD, the region was known as Kanara District. Initially, the north and south Kanara were a single district under the Madras presidency. By transferring North Kanara into the Bombay presidency, the South Kanara district came into existence in 1862. For the administrative purpose, during the British period, the South Kanara was divided into five taluks, viz., Kondapur, Udupi, Mangalore, Uppinangadi, and Kasaragod (Sturrock, 1894). When the states were reorganised after independence in 1956, the district incorporated Kondapur from North Kanara and shifted Kasaragod Taluk to Kerala. In the course of time, South Kanara district was officially renamed Dakshina Kannada. The present-day Dakshina Kannada district was reorganised in 1997 by separating its three northern taluks to form the new district- Udupi. Although South Kanara spans across three districts, the major portion of the region is covered by the physical boundaries of Dakshina Kannada district.

The survey conducted by Francis Buchanan (1807) and The South Kanara District Manuals I (1894) and II (1895), compiled by Sturrock and Stuart, respectively, are crucial colonial records that make significant contributions to the mapping of the region's history, socio-cultural practices, demographic characteristics, and geographical features. Sturrock (1894) identified that the people of South Kanara are part of the Dravidian race except the admixture of the Brahmin (Aryan) immigrants. Stuart (1895) gives a broader religious and caste-wise profile of the district on the basis of the decadal census conducted in 1881and1891. He identified that the vast majority of Hindus belong to the Siva sect, followed by Vaishnava (11%) and Madhava (4%). Among Hindus, the substantial castes include Billavas, Bunts, Brahmins, and Mogaviras. He observes that Mayuravarma, the founder of the Kadamba dynasty, introduced Tulu Brahmins to South Kanara from Akhi Kshethra around 750 AD. The Brahmins had acquired a high position in society, representing the priest class, landlords, and government officials. The Sivally, Kota or Koteswar, Havic and Kandavara Brahmins are the important Tulu Brahmins in South Kanara. Bunts, identified as the military class, correspond to the Nairs of Kerala and have transformed into the chief landowning and cultivating class in the society. Billavas, the largest caste among Hindus, constitute approximately one-fourth of the total population in the region and were traditionally associated with toddy tapping, akin to the Ezhavas of Kerala.

*Bhoota Aradhan*e (spirit worship) is a distinctive feature of South Kanara that holds a significant role in the religious beliefs and practices of the various Hindu communities (Padmanabha & Prabhu, 1971). In every village, temples dedicated to various spirits exist, with officiating priests overseeing the rituals. The worship of spirits (*Bhootas*) is also associated with deceased individuals who have garnered great local respect during their lifetimes.

Map of South Kanara, 1905



Source: BM Archives, *https://www.bmarchives.org/items/show/100202817#p=1*

It is widely believed that, after the passing of such revered figures, they metamorphose into *Bhootas* to protect the people from misfortune and sickness. Billavas and Bunts, the two major castes, firmly adhere to such beliefs and practices. Regarding the inheritance rules, the prevalent practice in the region was known as Aliya Santana, which implied that family property was vested in the female line. This property right system was deeply entrenched in Tuluva communities such as Billava, Bunts and Mogaveeras. According to Sturrock (1894) the advent of Brahmanism and religions such as Islam also caused the decline of this system.

The religious composition of South Kanara, as per the 1891 census, reveals that the majority of the population adheres to Hinduism (81.68%), followed by Islam (10.60%) and Christianity (6.75%). Based on this census, Stuart (1894) elaborates that the proportion of religious minorities has been observed to be higher in urban areas compared to rural areas. Furthermore, an analysis of population growth rates demonstrates that Christians and Muslims experienced notably higher

growth rates, specifically 22.41% and 19.75%, respectively, in contrast to the Hindu population growth rate of 8.17%. Stuart attributes this discrepancy to the impact of conversion during the colonial period, which bolstered the strength of the Christian and Muslim communities. He observed that the Christians are one of the highly educated and more institutionalised communities in the region; the majority of them, over 90%, identify as Roman Catholics. Notably, Stuart also mentions that a significant proportion of the Jain population in the Madras presidency can be found in South Kanara, amounting to more than one-third of the total Jain population.

Table No: 1

Religious Wise Population in Dakshina Kannada District		
Religion	**Population**	**Population (Percentage)**
Hindu	1403854	67.18
Muslim	501896	24.02
Christian	171398	8.2
Sikh	525	0.03
Buddhist	445	0.02
Jain	10397	0.5
Other Religion	138	0.01
No Religion Specified	996	0.05

Source: Census of India, 2011

The 2011 census reveals significant demographic changes in South Kanara. The total population stands at 3.2 million, with Hindus accounting for approximately 74%, Muslims comprising around 19%, and Christians constituting 7.6%. Notably, minority groups, namely Muslims and Christians, hold a significant proportion of the overall population, particularly in the Dakshina Kannada district, where more than one-third of the total population belongs to these communities (Census of India, 2011).

Table No: 2

Religion Wise Population in Udupi District		
Religion	**Population**	**Population (Percentage)**
Hindu	1009179	85.72
Muslim	96740	8.22
Christian	65838	5.59
Sikh	232	0.02
Buddhist	161	0.01
Jain	4534	0.39
Other Religion	155	0.01
No Religion Specified	522	0.04

Source: Census of India, 2011

The present Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts are the fastest growing districts in Karnataka with better socio-economic status and quality of life. These districts consistently occupy a prominent position, surpassing other districts in the state of Karnataka, primarily due to their commendable achievements in literacy rates, healthcare provisions, educational institutions, and the banking sector (Shetty, 2014). Of particular historical significance, Mangalore, the largest city in coastal Karnataka, holds the distinction of being the chief port city for the entire state. Furthermore, it serves as the administrative headquarters for Dakshina Kannada district, assuming a pivotal role as the central hub for commercial and industrial activities in the region.

South Kanara is linguistically known for its multilingualism, demonstrating the diverse nature of its people. Tulu stands as the predominant language in this region, coexisting alongside several other prominent languages such as Kannada, Konkani, Beary, Urdu, and Malayalam. Tulu prevails as the earliest and most widely spoken language across the entire region, despite lacking a written script. According to the 2011 census report, Tulu serves as the mother tongue for approximately 1.8 million people, constituting around 30% of the regional populace. Notably, Tulu finds substantial usage among the residents of the Dakshina Kannada district, with nearly half of the local population conversing in this language. The Tulu-speaking community is predominantly represented by various caste groups, including Billavas, Bunts, and Mogvira, who identify Tulu as their mother tongue. Kannada is the official language, which is the mother tongue of 30% of the total population in the region. As the official language of the region, Kannada holds significant prominence and is considered the mother tongue of 30% of the total population. Additionally, another linguistic variant, known as Beary, predominantly spoken by the Beary Muslim community, constitutes approximately 15% of the total population.

The Konkani language also holds a notable presence in the region, mainly spoken by Gouda Saraswat Brahmins and Roman Catholics. It is noteworthy that a substantial portion of the population in South Kanara demonstrates bilingual capability, reflecting their ability to communicate effectively in multiple languages.

The Advent of Islam in Tulu Nadu

Malabar and Tulu Nadu are the two regions in India where Islam is observed to have arrived earlier (Malayamma, 2017; Doddamane, 1993). The propagation of Islam in Tulu Nadu occurred simultaneously with its introduction in Malabar through the Arabs. Both regions share a common historical trajectory concerning the advent of Islam; thus, the discourses surrounding its arrival are also closely intertwined in the context of Tulu Nadu. Local Muslims in Tulu Nadu enthusiastically attribute their historical roots to the conversion of Hindu King Cheraman Perumal, followed by the subsequent arrival of Malik bin Dinar and his companions who engaged in religious propagation along the region's seacoast (Ichlangod, 2011). Notably, Tulu Nadu played a pivotal role as the site where the Dinar missionary established the early two mosques, which hold significance as part of the initial ten mosques built in India.

The popular narrative about the origin of Islam in India is Qissat Shakarwati Farmaḍ (Story of the King Perumal), an Arabic manuscript concerning the conversion of a Hindu king from Kerala called Cheraman Perumal. More specifically, this narrative is particularly prevalent among the Muslims of Malabar and Tulu Nadu, who believe that Cheraman Perumal embraced Islam, triggering the arrival of Islamic missionaries. According to the tale, the final Chera king personally bore witness to a miraculous event associated with the Prophet, which in turn engendered his attraction to the Islamic faith. Accompanied by a small contingent of Arabs, he embarked on a pilgrimage to Mecca where he embraced Islam, but tragically perished during the return journey

to his kingdom. Prior to his demise, the king appointed a missionary team with the task of disseminating the teachings of Islam throughout his Kingdom. Subsequently, this missionary group arrived in India and commenced the propagation of Islam among the local people (Prange, 2018; Kugle & Margariti, 2017).

In relation to this event, historians largely rely on the account provided by Shaykh Zaynuddin Makhdum II, a prominent Islamic jurist and historian of the 16th century. According to his narrative, a group of Muslim pilgrims made a stop at Kodungallur while en route to visit the footprints of Adam (the first human being and messenger of the god in Islam) in Sri Lanka. The king warmly received the pilgrims and became acquainted with the miraculous incident of Prophet Muhammed, specifically the splitting of the moon into two pieces. Deeply impressed by the pilgrims and their experiences, the king expressed his intention to visit Arabia. Prior to his departure, he divided his kingdom and appointed governors for each province, after which he embarked on a clandestine voyage to Mecca, accompanied by the Muslim pilgrims who were returning to their homeland after completing their pilgrimage to Sri Lanka. Upon arrival in Arabia, the king fell seriously ill during their stay in Shuhr. Sensing the severity of his condition, the king instructed Sharaf bin Malik and Malik bin Dinar, along with their companion, to return to India and propagate Islam in his kingdom. He entrusted them with a letter written in the local language, Malayalam, to be delivered to his representatives. He also gave them his letter in the local language- Malayalam, to hand over his representatives. The Muslim pilgrims embarked on their journey to Malabar and eventually arrived at Kodungallur, where they obtained permission to propagate Islam. They proceeded to establish the first mosque in Kodungallur, and subsequently erected mosques in various locations along the southwestern coast, appointing *Qadis* for each mosque (Makhdum, 1583/1942).

However, the reliability and chronology of this account remain topics of controversy. Makhdum (1583/1942) highlights that the most popular narrative among the local Muslims suggests that the king converted to Islam during the Prophet's era. Yet, the absence of definitive evidence regarding the exact year in which this event transpired poses a challenge. Makhdum further notes that the majority opinion leans toward the notion that the conversion occurred two centuries after the Prophet's period. It is noteworthy that the disappearance of the Chera dynasty, has often been linked with the pilgrimage undertaken by the King Cheraman Perumal.

Consequently, historians speculate that the Arabian expedition of the last Chera king could potentially account for this disappearance (Miller, 1976). It is important to acknowledge that there are historians who dispute this claim. However, of great significance to the Islamic history of India were the arrival of the Dinar Missionary in Malabar and Tulu Nadu and the subsequent propagation of Islam by constructing mosques in the various parts of the regions, authorised by the local kings. Additionally, continual contact with the Arabs, royal patronage, and missionary activities led to the rapid growth of Islam in the South West coasts of India.

Sturrock (1894) provides a historical account of the Muslim presence in Tulu Nadu, tracing it back to the 7th century AD. Doddamane (1993) observes that Islam reached Tulu Nadu during or shortly after the time of Prophet Muhammad, thanks to the long-established trade relations between the Tuluva people and Arab merchants. According to him, the first mosque in South Karnataka was built in Barkur in 644 AD by Dinar missionaries. Makhdum's (1583/1942) account sheds light on the early mosques constructed by Dinar missionaries in both Malabar and Tulu Nadu.

It is mentioned that Malik bin Dinar, after building the first mosque in Kodungallur, tasked his nephew, Malik bin Habeeb, with the construction of mosques in other parts of Malabar. Subsequently, Malik bin Habeeb ventured northwards and arrived in Tulu Nadu, where he erected the first mosque in Barkur, followed by another one in Mangalore. Notably, Barkur and Mangalore held significant importance as commercial centres in Tulu Nadu during that period.

Spread of Islam in Tulu Nadu

A multitude of social and geographical factors played a crucial role in the growth of Islam in Tulu Nadu. One of the foremost factors was the longstanding trade relations with West Asia, which, much like other regions along the South Indian coast, significantly contributed to the expansion of Islam in Tulu Nadu.

As Metcalf (2009) remarks, "Muslim populations grew through intermarriage, conversion, and the continued influx of traders" (p.1). The profitable commercial relationship with the Arabs contributed to the progress of the local economy, which later enabled the Muslim community to access royal patronage in their social and religious affairs (Doddamane, 1993; Kulkarni, 1977; Miller, 1976). It has been observed that the rulers of Tulu Nadu and Malabar were favourable towards religious conversion, recognizing its potential to fortify the economy (Miller, 1976).

The conduct of commercial transactions between India and Arabia was contingent upon climatic conditions, thereby necessitating a naturally protracted voyage. Consequently, it became imperative for traders to establish temporary settlements in order to facilitate their trading activities. D'Souza (1955) asserted that Arab traders settled along the coast for approximately four months, while the voyage itself typically spanned a duration of thirty to forty days. Given their considerable distance from their country of origin and the protracted nature of trade, these traders engaged in marital unions with local women, either on a temporary or permanent basis.

Furthermore, the matrilocal family systems existed on the West coast, provided favourable conditions for such unions between Arab men and local women. As the Arabs enjoyed the royal patronage, they could easily find brides from the local people. With the advent of Islam as a religion, such marital unions also contributed to the steady expansion of Islam along the coast. Ichlangod (2011) points out that the propagation of Malik Bin Dinar and his companions followed by various Sufi saints such as Baba Fakrudhin and Sayyid Madani, played a significant role in the expansion of the Islam in Tulu Nadu. He argues that the conversion of peoples from lower castes, driven by the pursuit of attaining a more favourable social status and entrepreneurial opportunities, played a pivotal role in fostering the continuous growth of the Muslim population in the region. He further adds that, the migration of Jains from the Deccan region to coastal Karnataka during the 2nd century AD resulted in the establishment of a feudal social order. The economic aspirations of Jain chiefs, who eventually became local rulers, contributed to enhancing the position of the local Muslims in the region, as they acted as intermediaries between the Jains and Arab traders. The close relationship with Arab traders and the patronage received from various local rulers significantly contributed to the numerical expansion and economic prosperity of Muslims in the region (Ichlangod (2011).

Muslim Settlements in Travellers' Account

The historical records of Arab and European travellers offer significant insights into the widespread presence of Muslims and their pivotal role in trade along the west coast of India. Among the earliest Arabic travel accounts pertaining to the Malabar Coast, Suleiman's *Silsilat al-tavarikh,* acknowledges the amicable relationship between local rulers and Arab traders, but it lacks explicit references to the existence of the local Muslim community in India (Miller, 1976). However, during the medieval era, West Asian travellers like Mas'udi, Ibn Hauqal, and Al

Baladhuri provide detailed descriptions of Muslim settlements along the West coast. These accounts not only shed light on the geographical distribution of Muslim communities but also highlight the favourable treatment they received from the local rulers. Masu'di writes:

> In no other kingdom in Sind or in India are the Arabs and Muslims treated with so much respect as in the Kingdom of Bilahara Rajas. Islam is safe, immune and secure in this kingdom. There are mosques and Friday mosques in which the Faithful congregate in large numbers to offer prayers (As quoted in Nizami,1994, p.59).

Masu'di's account reveals the presence of ten thousand Muslims in Symur, located between Mangalore and Kannur, indicating the growth of the Muslim community on the south coast before the 10th century (Miller, 1976; Nizami, 1994). Ibn Battuta (1355/1929) encountered a significant Muslim presence in Tulu Nadu during his journey from Goa to Kollam.

During his visit to Barsur, Barkur, and Mangalore in 1342, he noted, “The chief of the Muslim community at Fakanur (Barkur) is called Basadaw. He possesses about thirty warships, commanded by a Muslim called Lula" (1355/1929). Ibn Battuta observed that Mangalore was one of the largest cities in Malabar, known for the production and export of large quantities of ginger and pepper. He noted the presence of approximately 4000 Muslim merchants from Yemen and Persia who had settled in Mangalore. Additionally, the Portuguese traveller Duarte Barbosa provided a detailed account of Mangalore and the Muslim settlements.

He (1866/2011) notes:

> There is a very large town, peopled by Moors and Gentiles, of the kingdom of Narsinga, called Mangalore. There are many ships always load brown rice, which is much better and more healthy than the white, for Malabar, for the common people, and it is very cheap. They also ship there much rice in Moorish ships for Aden, also pepper, which henceforward the earth begins to produce, but little of it, and better than all the other which the Malabars bring to this place in small vessels. The banks of this river are very pretty, and very full of woods and palm trees, and are very thickly inhabited by Moors and Gentiles and studded with fine buildings and houses of prayer of the Gentiles, which are very large, and enriched with large revenues. There are also many mosques, where they greatly honour Mahomed (p. 83).

These travel accounts ostensibly shed light on the growth of the Muslim community in Malabar Coast and South Kanara in the medieval period. Despite their potential limitations, these travelogues provide valuable insights into the social dynamics of the era, often corroborating with historical evidence from the medieval period.

Nagara Hanjamana

By the 11th century AD, the Muslim community transformed as an influential merchant class on the entire west coast (Bhatt, 1969). Due to their economic prosperity, the Muslim traders were capable of lending money even to the local chiefs (Malayamma, 2008). Muslims were flourished religiously and economically during the medieval period, which contributed to the formation of

their trading guilds called Hanjamanas (Anjuman)[12] in the eleventh century. The epigraphic evidence on hanjamanas acknowledges the prominence of the Muslims in trade (Doddamane, 1993) D'Souza (1955) observes the likelihood of Muslims or Arab merchants organising themselves into an association known as Anjuman, which eventually evolved into the Kannada term Hanjamana. Madhava (1985) further supports the notion that the Muslim trade guilds, referred to as 'Hajamanas,' served as pivotal financial centres during the pre-colonial era. Similarly, Ramesh (1970) examines Hajmana as the trading guild primarily associated with Arab and Persian merchants, while the Settikkara Sanghas were linked to local merchants. Furthermore, Ichlangod (2011) underscores the importance of trading guilds like the Settikkara Sanghas and the Hanjamana in local politics, effectively controlling towns in the region until the arrival of the Portuguese. Ramesh (1970) says that commercial relationships established between Persian and Arabian traders with the Alupa kingdom and later with the Vijayanagara emperors facilitated the establishment of trading guilds in cities called nagara Hanjamanas. He remarks that "it is significant that during the Vijayanagara period, when the empire had to import, of necessity, war horses from Arabia and such other lands, the inscriptions of South Kanara make frequent references to the hanjamana and nagara hanjamana guilds" (p.253). The epigraphic evidence also supports the existence of the Hajmanas during the medieval period. For example, the Kaikini inscription mentions Hajmana and its chief, Ummer Marakkala (Umer Marakkar), during the reign of Devaraya I (D'Souza, 1955; Ramesh, 1970). In essence, these trading guilds played a vital role in ocean trade until the advent of the Portuguese.

[12] It is observed that 'Hanjamana' is a deformed Persian term, 'Anjuman', which means association or club (D'Souza, 1955).

The Advent of the Portuguese

The advent of the Portuguese in the early 16th century marks a crucial stage in the maritime relation between India and West Asia. During this time, the principal traders dominating the Malabar and Kanara Coast were the Arabs, who wielded significant influence over the trade routes (Rao, 2005; Kulkarni, 1977). The Portuguese expedition was driven by two main motives: the propagation of Catholic ideas and the pursuit of trade control, seeking to replace the Arab monopoly. Since the Portuguese began to control the ocean trade, the dominance of the Arabs and local Muslims alike were questioned for the first time in history. The historically rooted enmity between Arabs and Portuguese were reflected in the coastal line, and the local Muslims became the real victims of the enmity (Miller, 1976). The Portuguese's economic and religious interests, combined with their anti-Muslim sentiments, led to a direct challenge to the monopoly previously enjoyed by Muslim merchants in coastal Karnataka. This contention ultimately escalated into armed clashes between the Portuguese and the local Muslim population, further exacerbating tensions and altering the dynamics of trade and power along the coastal regions. Saki (1998) writes, "The Portuguese wanted to oust the Muslims, subdue the traders of Karnataka and realise their unparalleled suzerainty over the sea trade. This was explicit in the treaties and conditionalities which the Portuguese enforced soon after they concluded these military expeditions" (Quoted in Rai,2003; p.2). Mangalore was the first port in South Kanara to be attacked by the Portuguese. Subsequently, they repeatedly targeted various ports in South Kanara with the specific aim of disrupting the alliance between Muslim merchants and the Zamorin of Calicut. Throughout their military expeditions, the Portuguese consistently engaged in the seizure of ships and the looting of ports, illustrating the aggressive nature of their actions (Rai, 2003; Doddamane, 1993; Madhava, 1985).

Historians have documented that the Portuguese conduct towards the local Muslim traders, revealing a pattern of severe brutality. The Portuguese employed a range of strategies to assert their dominance over trade along the Western coastline, including launching assaults on ports, confiscating and destroying ships, and forging treaties or alliances with local rulers (Rao, 2005; Rai, 2003; Makhoom, 1583/1942). Through various means such as attacking the ports, seizing and firing ships, and making treaties with local rulers, the Portuguese could capture the control of trade on the west coast (Rao, 2005; Miller, 1976). The ascendancy of the Portuguese grew considerably subsequent to their conquest of Goa. Makhdum's (1583/1942) account offers a comprehensive depiction of the treatment inflicted upon the Muslims by the Portuguese. He remarks:

> The Portuguese scoffed at the Muslims and held them up to scorn. They harassed them for no reason; insulted them; humiliated them; forced them to carry them on their back to cross filthy, muddy tracts as they toured around the countryside; spit at them and on their faces; obstructed their journeys especially hajj journeys; plundered their wealth; seized their vehicles; set fire to their houses and mosques; trampled under feet and burned the Holy Qur'an and other religious books; reviled publicly the Prophet (s); defiled and polluted the places of worship; made them speak ill of and 'against the religion of Islam (p.56).

The Portuguese insisted to the local chief not to admit the Muslim merchants in the port without the consent of their admirals. They sought diplomatic resolutions by making peace agreements with those who were willing to accept their terms. Accordingly, they signed treaties with certain local rulers in Malabar and South Kanara (Rao, 2005). Right from the outset, the Portuguese established friendly relations with the kings of Kochi and Kannur (Makhdum, 1583/1942).

Additionally, treaties were formed with the Vijayanagara ruler and the queen of Bhatkal in 1548, wherein the local rulers were compelled to abstain from conducting trade with Muslim merchants. Similar stipulations were included in the treaty with the Keladi Nayakas, the local chief of Keladi (Madhava, 1985). Consequently, trade operations were restricted to those individuals who possessed the Portuguese-issued cartazes, serving as official permits. Despite these measures the Bearys and Mappilas, supported by local rulers such as Queen Abbaka Devi in Ullal and the Zamorin of Calicut, resisted the Portuguese attacks. It was in Malabar where the Portuguese faced a strong battle as Zamurin's admirals called Kunhali Marakkar declared war against the Portuguese (Rao, 2005; Miller 1976,). Abbaka Devi, the Queen of Chouta, emerged as a prominent local ruler who challenged Portuguese authority in South Kanara. She adamantly refused to pay tributes and led a determined armed resistance against Portuguese domination.

It has been observed that Queen Abbakka Devi's army consisted of six thousand local Muslims. (Mishra, 2002; Madhava, 1985). The Bearys rallied behind Queen Abbaka in their determined resistance against Portuguese control, although they eventually succumbed to the superior naval power of the Portuguese forces. Nevertheless, even in the face of adversity, the Bearys managed to maintain a significant presence in trade, showcasing their enduring economic influence throughout an extended period (Madhava, 1985).

It is worth noting that despite the restrictions imposed by the Portuguese, few local rulers extended much-needed assistance to the Bearys in carrying on their trade (Ichlangod, 2011). Additionally, Muslim merchants were able to engage in trade in various locations through passes issued by the Portuguese. The Portuguese themselves often found it necessary to engage in trade relations with the local Muslim community, recognizing their centuries-long expertise in commerce. Rao (2005) writes "the Portuguese, however, were not always successful in their attempt to exclude the

Muslims from coastal and overseas trade. This was due to the fact that the Portuguese could not find an alternative to native Muslim merchants who had established a well-connected trade network both in the ports as well as in the hinterland" (p. 231). Although the Goud Saraswat Brahmins (GSBs) and Jains were the other trading communities in South Kanara, the network of the Bearys with the Arabs enabled them to retain their hold and prominence in commercial activities. However, during the Portuguese period, this dominance declined and the Bearys faced competition from other communities. Rao (2005) further adds that the Portuguese encouraged the Gouda Saraswats to compete with the local Muslims, thereby they intended to find an alternative to the Muslim traders of South Kanara. The Portuguese promoted them as their mediators in Kanara for negotiating with the local dealers (Rai, 2003). The repressive method of the Portuguese and the competition from the other trading communities became a powerful blow to the commanding position of the Bearys on trade. A large-scale migration of the coastal Muslims took place to the rural Tulu Nadu subsequent to the advent of the Portuguese. Miller (1976) has observed that the Portuguese attack compelled the local Muslims to migrate from the seacoast to the inland area. That contributed to the growth of the Muslim population in the rural area where they opted agriculture as their means of subsistence. Sturrock (1894) testifies that the rural Muslims of the region were mainly agriculturists and boatmen.

The rise of the Nayakas of Keladi, also referred to as Ikkeri Nayakas, as an independent ruler of the region following the defeat of the Vijayanagara Empire in the Battle of Talikota in 1565 had often threatened the Portuguese. This compelled them to make a treaty with the Nayakas (Rai, 2003). The patronage and favourable policies of the Nayakas helped the local trading communities, particularly the Bearys, gain strength again (Rao, 2005).

By the second half of the 17th century, other European powers such as the Dutch and the French began trading in the Kanara coast. The rivalry with the new competitors resulted in the shattering of the dominance of the Portuguese on the trans-ocean trade of the West coast. By the mid of the 17th century, the Portuguese power became weak and by the end of the 17th century, their power almost declined.

Kanara under Mysore Sultanate

The Bearys found a glimmer of hope during the reign of the Mysore sultans, as this period marked a significant relief from the repressive measures enforced by the Portuguese. It was also the period of hope for the local Jain chiefs who were expelled from the throne by the rulers of Ikkery. Somasekhar, son of former Bednur ruler, invited Hyderali to conquer Beidnur as the former was not on good terms with the then ruler Queen Virammajai owing to the dispute over succession (Dddamaane, 1993). By defeating the Keladi Nayakas, Hyderali conquered Bednur in 1763 and renamed it as Hyder Nagar. Somsashekar was installed as the new king under the Mysore sultanate. By crossing the Hossangadi pass Hyderali reached Karakkal where he met the local chiefs who recognised the authority of Mysore Kingdom. Further, he captured Honnavar, Barkur and Mangalore which were the important commercial centres and administrative units of South Kanara. Hyderaly already learned the economic and political significance of the ports of South Kanara like Mangalore and Barkur. As an important naval station, he made a dockyard and arsenal in Mangalore and appointed Damaji Pant as his governor. (Doddamane, 1993; Bhatt, 1975).

The collaboration with Aliraja of Kannur and the Arab merchants and local Bearys were helpful for Headrail to sustain power in the region. With the help of Bearys and Jains, the Mysore sultans expanded their kingdom over the entire Tulu Nadu. He made forts in different parts of the South Kanara, such as Malpe, Kondapurand Belthangady. Hyderali introduced many administrative

reforms favouring trade, and he maintained good relationships with local chiefs. (Ichlangod, 2011; Doddamane, 1993;) In order to encourage trade, he brought traders from distant places and assured all the needed facilities for them. During this period, many Hanafi Muslims from Deccan had settled in Mangalore and other cities of South Kanara (Ichlangod, 2011).

The political interest of the British over Mangalore port resulted in the recurrent rivalry between Mysore Sultans and the British. In 1768, the British forces under Admiral Watson launched an attack on the Sultan's army and captured Mangalore. However, Tipu's swift and valiant response led to the British being expelled from the city in a short span of time. Consequently, the British were compelled to sign a treaty in 1770. Tipu Sultan succeeded Hyder Ali, as the latter died in 1782 during the Second Anglo-Mysore War (Bhatt, 1975). He strengthened the naval base of Mangalore and guaranteed protection to the Muslim merchants from the British attack. The Bearys and Konkanis were the principal traders during Tipu's period. Tipu lost Mangalore several times during the struggle for power. The siege of Srirangapatna by the British ended in the martyrdom of Tipu. Following the fall of Tipu in 1799, the Mysore Sultanate collapsed, leading to a gradual British conquest of the entire South Kanara region. (Ichlangod, 2011).

South Kanara Under the British Rule

In the early phase of the British period, the British and the Bearys regarded each other with suspicion, reflecting a strained relationship. The British had cause to believe that local Muslims in the region were lending their support to the Mysore sultans. Additionally, according to the British's understanding, the majority of Muslims in South Kanara were considered as the counterparts of the Mappilas in the Malabar region. However, unlike their repressive approach towards the Mappilas in Malabar, the British did not adopt a similar stance towards the Bearys in South Kanara. This divergence in treatment can be attributed to the fact that the British did not perceive the Bearys

as a rival faction in Kanara, as opposed to their perception of the Mappilas in South Malabar. The South Kanara district manual further supports this notion, stating that "in Malabar, the Mappilas have at a time caused anxiety of political kind, but this has never been the case in Canara, and, on the whole, they are hardworking, steady and generally well behaved class of people." (Sturrock, 1894, p.180). Notwithstanding this, the Bearys, in general, maintained an anti-colonial attitude dating back to the Portuguese invasion.

The influence of the Indian National Movement, the Malabar rebellion, and the stance taken by a segment of the ulema against the British, coupled with suspicions surrounding Christian missionary activities supported by the colonial state, further reinforced this anti-colonial sentiment among ordinary Muslims.[13] As a result, these factors discouraged them from accessing various services, including modern education provided by the colonial administration.

It has been observed that under colonial rule, the upper caste Hindu and Christian communities were able to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by modern education, while the Muslims experienced a significant lag (Puniyani, 2018; Jayaram 1990).Jayaram (1990) highlights that the exogenous process of growth, influenced by the policies of the British Government, resulted in an unequal impact on various religious communities, strategically positioning them at different levels. Consequently, while a significant segment of Hindus attained the advantage of modern education, the Muslim community significantly fell behind.

[13] However, few wealthy Muslim families in Mangalore kept good relations with the British (Ichlangod, 2011). It was necessary for the British to maintain a good relationship with the privileged sections of the Muslim community as they were a principal merchant community when they captured South Kanara.

This consequential discrepancy led to the isolation and considerable lag of the Muslim community compared to other religious communities. The earliest census conducted under colonial rule shed light to this discrepancy, revealing the educational backwardness of Muslims and their limited participation in government service sectors (Stuart, 1895; Sturrock 1894).

It is observed that under British rule, the Muslim community's dominance in the trading sector suffered considerable setbacks. (Ichlangod, 2011; Doddamane, 1993). Ichlangod (2011) observes that the historical prominence of the Bearys in the trading sector was gradually eroded due to the influx of other communities. The rise of the Gouda Saraswath Brahmin community, also known as Konkanis, as a powerful merchant group posed a considerable challenge to the Bearys in various areas of trade. Furthermore, the Bearys' apathy towards Western education resulted in their social backwardness, impeding their ability to keep pace with technological advancements and obtain adequate representation in government administrative services. During the British period, for instance, the majority of boatmen belonged to the Beary community. However, with the advent of a developed road transportation system, the demand for boat services waned, leaving the Bearys unable to adapt immediately to the new technologies and causing their decline. In the second quarter of the 20th century, the beedi industry emerged as a prevalent source of livelihood for the Bearys. This home-based industry provided opportunities for women to participate in beedi rolling as well. Due to its relatively low skill requirements, the uneducated segment of the community gravitated towards this sector. Additionally, during the mid-20th century, a significant number of young Bearys migrated to neighbouring cities such as Nagpur and Mumbai, seeking employment as manual labourers. The economic and educational backwardness experienced by the Bearys posed significant challenges for them during the post-independence period, gradually causing them to fall behind the mainstream and subjecting them to social disadvantage.

However, it is noteworthy that substantial improvement in the livelihood of the Beary Muslims occurred with the opening of wider opportunities in Gulf countries. By the late 1980s, a large-scale migration from both rural and urban areas of Dakshina Kannada to Gulf countries took place, significantly enhancing the living standards of the Bearys (Sayeed, 2016; Mustafi, 2013). Examining the contemporary living conditions of the Bearys, it becomes evident that they have expanded their presence across various fields, including service sectors, where they had previously lagged behind in comparison to other communities.

The Bearys and their Distinct Identity.

Scholarly investigations has uncovered a significant degree of heterogeneity among the Muslim population across the country (Jairath, 2013; Metcalf, 2009; Dube, 1995; More,1991; D'souza, 1959). A striking manifestation of this diversity is observed among the Beary Muslims of South Kanara, characterised by their own distinct local history and cultural identity. Persistent engagement with the multi-cultural settings of the region, an important factor for this regional variation. Despite being followers of Islam, the Bearys possess a distinctive socio-cultural identity that sets them apart from other Muslim communities in India. While considered as the earliest Muslim community in Karnataka, the Bearys remain ethnically and linguistically different from other Muslim groups in the state. Nevertheless, scholarly attention on the regional and cultural diversities among Muslims in India has paid relatively little attention to the Beary community.

Historically, the Beary Muslims have been erroneously identified as the Mappilas. This misrepresentation, which fails to recognise ethnic and cultural and linguistic differences, can be traced in both colonial records (Stuart, 1895; Sturrock, 1894; Buchanan, 1807) and in the postcolonial literature (Rao, 2005; Ramesh, 1970; D'souza, 1959, 1955).

Some sorts of resemblances between the Bearys and the Mappilas might have resulted in classifying them as a single group. Specifically, the Bearys share a common history of origin and religious tradition with the Mappilas of Malabar. Not only both communities are descendants of the Arabs, but also Islam reaches them through the same channel.

Further, the Bearys had maintained good contact with Makhdums of Ponnani in Malabar with regards to religious education. Makhdoom I and II were renowned Islamic jurists in South Asia and in the Shafi School of Jurisprudence. During the 16th century, the tenure of the Makhdums witnessed Ponnani's transformation into a prominent centre for Islamic scholarship. The Bearys, like the Mappilas, relied upon Ponnani for acquiring knowledge about religion and also adhered to the religious rulings put forth by the Makhdums (Abdullah, 2012). Such a historical connection continues to this day. The Mappila Ulamas could obtain great recognition in Tulu Nadu, as Malabar advanced in the Islamic education system called *dars.* The vast majority of madrassas in South Kanara are still operating under the affiliation of Islamic education boards based in Malabar, which are associated with various sectarian and factional groups.

That is why the religious texts and medium of instructions in most of the madrassas are chiefly in 'Arabi Malayalam' script[14]. Even now, many mosques follow the Malayalam language for delivering speeches at special events.[15] Until recently, Mappila religious scholars were assigned to work in almost all mosques and madrassas in South Kanara. Additionally, Islamic scholars from Malabar are still appointed as the Qazi of many Mosques. These similar features and religious interconnections probably led to grouping them as the Mappilas. It is worth noting that the religious interconnection between the Bearys and Mappilas shows how religion, as a set of beliefs and

[14]Arabi Malayalam is a writing system that utilizes the Arabic script to write the Malayalam language.

[15] A number of Arabic colleges offering religious education have been established in South Kanara in recent times. Therefore, Malayalam has been replaced by the Beary language in many Mosques.

practices, transcends geographical boundaries. However, the Bearys retains their local cultural identity while maintaining this religious network. Despite sharing certain similarities with Mappila Muslims, the Bearys also exhibit notable distinctions in various aspects. Scholars like Ichlangod (2011) underscore this differentiation, asserting that the Bearys possess a distinct identity separate from the Mappila tradition and culture.

One significant characteristic that sets the Bearys apart from other communities, particularly the Mappilas, is their distinctive language known as ‘Beary’. It is an important linguistic variant in the multilingual landscape of the region, exclusively spoken by the Beary community. Originating as an indigenous vernacular, the Beary language has evolved through the contact of Tulu, Malayalam, Kannada, and Konkani languages, thereby showcasing their mutual linguistic influences. Furthermore, this language exhibits discernible traces of Arabic and Persian languages, attesting to the impact of these linguistic traditions on its development. Upadhyaya (2011) observes that the Beary language is a distinct linguistic entity that has evolved from the Dravidian language family. Highlighting its affiliation with the Tulu language, she remarks that, “the phonological system of this language is similar to that of Tulu" (p.vii). The Beary is also known as Nakknik and displays slight dialectical variations depending upon the locality. Morethan 1.5 million people are assumed to be speaking the Beary language (Malli, 2020).

It is also categorised as the offshoot of Malayalam, often referred to as "Mappila Malayalam" due to the aforementioned relations between the Bearys and Mappilas. However, Ichalngod (2011) argues that considering it a direct offshoot of Malayalam would be inadequate due to its pronounced affiliation with Tulu. He argues that the origin of the Beary language can be traced back to Tulu, as evidenced by the significant presence of Tulu-derived vocabulary, comprising more than half of its lexical repertoire. Additionally, the grammatical and phonological structures

of the Beary language predominantly mirror those of Tulu (Upadhyaya, 2011; Malli, 2019). Thus, it can be understood that Malayalam and Tulu have had a significant influence on the origin of the Beary dialect, but it cannot be reduced to just an offshoot of Malayalam. However, it is worth noting that despite its linguistic significance, the Beary language has yet to receive official recognition as a distinct language in the census, instead being classified under the broader category of "other languages".

Numerous social and cultural practices observed within the Beary community exhibit striking similarities to those of other religious communities residing in South Kanara. The Bearys' ornaments and attire bear resemblance to those worn by the Jains, thereby suggesting an interplay of cultural influences. Additionally, social hierarchies such as the *Aga* systems that prevailed among them are observed as local influences on the Bearys. Within Mangalore, the Bearys were stratified into three broader groups: Thalakkar, Thalaillathore, and Agakkar. The Talakkar, which means people with social status, encompassing diverse families who held prominent positions in society, primarily determined by their economic standing. Remarkably, they followed a matrilineal system, which bears similarities to the bali system practised by the Bunts. In contrast, the Thalaillathore, denoting individuals of low social status, comprised Beary families hailing from economically underprivileged segments. This group includes those belonging to the barbers, butchers, new converts, and other servant classes. The Agakkar, composed of people belonging to Aga families, held esteemed positions within the social hierarchy of Mangalore. The Agas were a nexus of sixteen affluent families in the city, characterised by an endogamous family structure. It is significant to note that the Thalaillathore did not have permission to enter these settlements. Ichlangod (2011) suggests a potential connection between the Agakkar and Jainism, as evidenced by the structural similarities between their houses and those of Jain families. Notably, the jewellery

worn by Agakkar women exhibited resemblances to the adornments of Jain families. Social discrimination faced by the Thalaillathore from both the Agakkar and Thalakkar, and the endogamous family structure of the Agakkar have been observed as the hierarchical divisions and caste-like practices within the Beary community. Thus, the diverse array of local influences on the Bearys set them apart from other Muslim communities in the country.

Intercommunity Relation; a Historical Overview

South Kanara was renowned for its cultural diversity and religious pluralism, which contributed to the unique sociocultural dynamics of the region. Historically, the South Kanara did not experience a frequent mode of communal conflicts, as religious identity did not consolidate along communal lines until the early decades of independence. Despite the recent trend of escalating communal conflicts in the region, a closer examination of its sociocultural history illustrates relatively peaceful coexistence among various religious communities. The coexistence of various socio-religious and ethnic communities, including the Janis, Mogaviras, Billavas, Bunts, GSBs, Protestants, Catholic Christians, Beary, and Dakhni Muslims, has substantially contributed to the development of multiculturalism within the region.

Hence, South Kanara was not marked by major communal riots during that period.[16] In his study on communal riots, Wilkinson (2006) places a significant emphasis on the political determination of the governments in dealing with communal riots in the post-independent country.

[16] Nonetheless, the absence of major communal riots does not imply a complete absence of religious divisions during the pre-colonial and colonial era.

This perspective is further supported by historical records on South Kanara, which demonstrate the crucial role of local rulers in preventing communal tensions through timely interventions in addressing potential issues between communities. Ibn Battuta (1355/1929) has documented the conflict between the Muslim traders and local communities in Mangalore city. He writes that:

> The Sultan of Manjrur (Mangalore) is one of the principal rulers in the land and his name is Ram Daw. There is a colony of about four thousand Muslims there, living in a suburb alongside the town. Conflict frequently breaks out between them and the townspeople, but the sultan makes peace between them on account of his need of merchants (p. 233, 234).

It was imperative for the local rulers to mitigate conflicts among different groups in order to facilitate uninterrupted trade and uphold the economic stability of the nation. Notably, as a prominent trading group, the Bearys were granted various kinds of privileges including their security by the rulers. Doddamane (1993) cites an example from the 15th century to demonstrate how the king assured protection to the Muslims in carrying out their religious activities. He notes:

> There is an interesting inscription of 1419 AD about some friction between Muslim Hanjamana and Thimmanna Odeya who was the then Governor of Mangalore Rajya under Vijayanagara King, Veera Prataba Devaraya and as a result of it four or five Nakaidu Pallis (Mosques) were destroyed due to misunderstanding. Hearing this sad incident, the King of Vijayanagar along with his governor, tributaries, Banga, Chowta, Alija, and the entire elite together deeply repented for the incidents offered compensation to Jamath Palli by donating oil and granting lands and it was also ordained that if anyone tried to grab the said land from the Hanjmana they would be committing sin equivalent to killing one thousand cows and one thousand Brahmins of Kashi (p 29).

It can be observed that the local kings were vigilant to prevent minor tensions between communities from escalating into large-scale communal riots. Ichlangod (2011) notes instances of the disputes between Muslim trade guilds (Hanjmanas) Jain trade guilds (Settikara Sanga). He highlights the favourable approach of the local rulers towards the Hajmanas during the disputes between the two trading guilds. The royal patronage entertained by the Muslim merchants under the Hindu and Jain Kings and the representation of the Muslims in administration and military services of the local rulers[17] played a significant role in enhancing the status and prestige of the local Muslim community. Miller (1976) emphasises that the mutual economic interests of local kings and Muslim traders contributed to the peaceful cohabitation between Hindus and Muslims on the South West coast.

Makhdum (1583/1942) gives a detailed account of the social recognition given to the local Muslims under the local Hindu rulers. He states that the local kings paid special attention to the religious practices of the Muslims. In addition, Doddamane (1993) states that many Muslim religious institutions frequently received financial support in the form of grants from these rulers. Ichlangod (2011) observes that many Hindu and Jain landholders, as well as temples, have leased their land to Bearys due to their diligent work ethic and honesty. Additionally, it is interesting to note that, despite the Portuguese authorities strictly prohibiting trade with Muslim merchants, the local chiefs exhibited a favourable stance towards them (Doddamane, 1993). These historical accounts collectively signify the amicable relationship between the local Muslim community and the Hindu ruling class during the pre-colonial era.

[17] A significant number of Muslims were employed as commanders and foot soldiers in the armies led by the Banga and Chauta chiefs. During the period of Vijayanagara emperors, a Muslim named Ekdhshala Khan (Iqbal Khan) was appointed as the Governor of Barkur, an important administrative division in the historical Tulunadu. (Madhava, 1985).

It is significant to note that various jobs and petty trading associated with temples constitute the primary source of income for a segment of the economically disadvantaged Bearys.[18] During Hindu festivals, a considerable number of petty shops are operated by Bearys, offering sweets, puja items, toys, and ornaments. These shops are situated within the temple premises and adjacent areas. Assadi (2002) highlights that historically, the Bearys were assigned the responsibility of drum beating or playing the 'Nadaswara' instrument in various temples, emphasising their significant role in religious ceremonies. Furthermore, the Bearys have been actively involved in adorning temple chariots and have garnered recognition even during traditional Hindus festivals (Doddamane, 1993). It shows the good terms and economic interdependence that existed between religious communities in past decades.

The syncretic tradition of the region indicates that there was no static communal cleavage among the people until recent decades. We can see such cross-cultural engagements even in religious beliefs and practices. Tulu paddanas[19] gives a detailed account of interreligious engagements. The legend Bobbareya *bhoota*, the most revered maritime *bhoota* by the seafaring Mogvira community, is an example of the beauty of the syncretic culture that exists in the Tulu folk. According to Bobbareya paddana, Bobbareya was born as a son of a Muslim merchant named Murave Beary and Pathumma, a local Jain woman who converted to Islam after getting married (Rao, 2015; Padmanabha & Prabhu, 1971). The Mogvira community seeks the blessings of Bobbreya before they set out to sea for fishing. The sociocultural context of past centuries provided an amenable environment for the Mogvira community to embrace the belief in a spirit that was born as a

[18] Recent constraints arising from threats by Hindutva groups and puritanical trends within the religion have limited the Bearys' participation in this field.

[19] The oral epic in the Tulu language is also known as Paddana which was being recited mostly in the ritualistic context.

Muslim. Another noteworthy instance of harmonious inter-community relations involves the legend associated with the Durga Parameshwari temple. It is believed that the temple was renovated by a Muslim merchant named Bappa Beary in the 14th century and later the area named after him – Bappanadu. The temple situated at Mulki, roughly 29 Km away from Mangalore city, is known as the epitome of centuries-long religious harmony in South Kanara (Kumar, 2022). The legend recounts that:

> When Bappa beary was sailing through the Shambhavi River, the boat hit a 'Pancha Linga' underneath the water, turning the water blood-red. The Goddess appeared in Beary's dream and ordered him to construct a temple for her in Bappanadu. Thus, the wishes of the Goddess was fulfilled accordingly (Naina, 2023, para.6).

Honouring Bappa Beary, the temple procession, as a part of the yearly festival (Maha Rathotsava), commences from the house of the descendants of Bappa Beary, who still reside in the ancestral house. Additionally, the descendants of Bappa Beary are granted the privilege of receiving the first ritual meal (Prasada) during the festivities. Notably, people of all religious backgrounds partake in the mass feeding ceremony offered at the temple (Kumar, 2022; Manav Ekta Mission, n.d.). The celebrations of different religious communities, especially the festivals held in temples and *Urs* in dargahs, have significantly contributed to the strengthening of the social fabric within the region. The commencement of the annual festival of Arasu Manjishnar temple in Udyavara, Manjeshwar, involves a significant event known as the 'Sekammas' visit, which entails visiting the local mosque, Ayiram Juma Masjid. Signifying an embodiment of interfaith harmony, the temple's priest formally extends an invitation to the representatives of the mosque immediately after the Juma prayer on Friday, thus exemplifying mutual respect and acknowledgement of religious traditions.

On the day of the festival, the mosque's representatives are accorded a grand reception within the temple compound, fostering a sense of camaraderie and shared festivit ("Centuries of Temple-mosque Bond Continues to Uphold Harmony in Udyavar", 2014). It is believed that the festival has been celebrated for the past eight centuries ("An Example of Communal Harmony," 2017).

It can be observed that people respected each other's worship and religious practices and participated in cultural and religious festivals irrespective of religious differences. Dargahs of south Kanara are the key symbols for the centuries-long intercommunity relation between Muslims and other religious communities. Sufis and their tombs in south Kanara have been honoured by people from all religious communities (Doddamane, 1993). The Sufi saints maintained close connections with the common people transcending religious differences and garnering attention and respect from both Hindus and Muslims alike. One notable example is the Sayyid Madani Dargah, located in Ullal, often referred to as the 'Ajmer of South India'. It stands as a significant syncretic site and pilgrimage destination in South Kanara, where people from different religious backgrounds seek blessings and pay homage to the Sufi saint. It is believed that the saint came from Madina and settled in Ullal in 1569 (Madhava, 1985). Another noteworthy example is the Hazrath Saidani Bibi Dargah, located adjacent to the police headquarters in Mangalore city, which has been a symbol of communal harmony for over a century. Despite instances of communal unrest in the city, the dargah continues to be revered by people of all faiths.[20] Women frequently visit the dargah with the hope of getting married and procreating children.

[20] The management of Hazrath Saidani Bibi Dargah asserts that it stands out as a unique place where non-Muslim devotees outnumber their Muslim counterparts, both in terms of prayer visits and charitable contributions. Rather than being solely viewed as a place of religious worship, many believe that making a vow at this shrine bestows good fortune upon them and has the potential to alter their fate (Gatty, 2021).

The bus operators in the city usually start their round trips by offering coins to the dargah. The Govt. employees, especially the police officers and the fisherman communities regularly pay their offerings to the Dargah (Gatty, 2021). Numerous other Dargahs scattered throughout South Kanara exemplify the enduring legacy of communal harmony in the region.

Thus, the role of Sufi saints has been well documented in the expansion of Islam in Karnataka. According to Sikand (2004), Sufi's charisma influenced a large number of Hindu populations, particularly the lower-caste Hindus, which led to the emergence of a new popular shared tradition, although the communities are conscious of their differences. The cult of Sufis and their anti-feudal nature increased their popularity among lower caste groups. In local narratives, these Sufis appear the liberators of lower castes from Brahmanical hegemony. In his study about the syncretic culture of Karnataka, Assyag (2004) argues that the adaptation of Islam with Hindu tradition in the form of Sufi mysticism caused the spread of Islam in the state where Hindus didn't feel any unfamiliarity. Both communities coexisted peacefully with mutual respect. Hindus and Muslims are conscious of their religious identity even though they exchange some rituals and share a common worship space. He describes this coexistence as an adaptive approach, for mutual coexistence.

Over the past several decades, there have been significant impacts on inter-community relations in South Kanara. Scholars have observed that the South Kanara region was renowned for its religious diversity and the relatively harmonious coexistence between Hindus and Muslims until the early decades following independence (Kuthar, 2019; Tolpady, 2003; Assadi, 2002, 1999). The political history of the region, its syncretic tradition, as well as the presence of various ethnic and linguistic groups within the major religious communities, have played a pivotal role in fostering a rich multicultural setting in South Kanara. However, the broader changes happening in the political

landscape of the region by the late 1960s contributed to disintegration of the social fabric of the region. The ascendance of Hindutva politics and the subsequent mobilising efforts by the Muslim community have posed formidable challenges to the enduring legacy of religious and cultural pluralism, which will be expounded upon in the forthcoming chapters.

Conclusion

The Bearys serve as a noteworthy illustration of the regional socio-cultural diversity that exists among Indian Muslims. Their history of origin, linguistic peculiarities, and cultural affinities with other socio-religious communities in South Kanara set them apart from other Muslim communities in India. The very term "Beary" itself provides insights into their origins, linguistic distinctiveness, local identity, and the social role they played in the multi-cultural landscape of historical Tulu Nadu. as mentioned earlier, the patronage of the local rulers was remarkable in the emergence of the Beary Muslim community as both a religious and a trading community. However, the religious identity of the Bearys became a political issue due to the communalisation process in the post-independent period. Subsequent chapters delve into how the local identity of the Bearys undergoes transformation due to the new socio-economic and political developments in South Kanara.

CHAPTER IV
Contextualising Hindutva Politics in South Kanara

Introduction

South Kanara is often referred to as the 'Hindutva laboratory' of South India or the 'gateway of Hindutva politics' into Karnataka state (Bhat, 2022; PUCL-K et al., 2021 Santhosh & Paleri, 2021; 2020 Kuthar, 2019; PUCL-K, 2009). Historically, the region was distinguished by its rich multiculturalism, characterised by diverse ethnic and linguistic communities, as well as a relatively peaceful coexistence among different religious groups, although there were a few instances of conflict between various communities during both the colonial and precolonial periods[21]. The distinct regional culture specific to historical Tulu Nadu, alongside ethnic and linguistic diversities and social stratification such as the caste system, prevented the formation of a homogenous identity under the major religious traditions. As a result, trivial issues did not escalate into major conflicts between the various religious groups. Nonetheless, the landscape underwent significant socio-economic and political transformations in the post-colonial period, particularly after the first two decades following India's independence. The broader developments, such as changes in the economy, advancements in the livelihood of backward communities, the decline of the INC, the consolidation of Hindutva politics, and the rise of neo-Muslim political formations, have facilitated the emergence of new social identities and coalitions. These developments have had a crucial impact on the social fabric of South Kanara (Kuthar, 2019; Tholpady, 2003).

[21] Historical records, such as the travel account of Ibn Battuta, shed light on isolated instances of clashes between foreign merchants and native peoples during the mid-level period. However, these minor tussles did not escalate into static polarisation, thanks to the timely intervention of local kings and the absence of a unified religious identity.

Consequently, South Kanara has transformed into a notable hotspot for communal conflicts in South India. This chapter discusses how South Kanara has transformed into one of the most communally sensitive regions and a fertile ground for Hindutva politics in South India.

In comparison to North India, South India has generally been observed as a relatively unfavourable terrain for Hindutva politics. However, it is noteworthy that the South Indian state of Karnataka, specifically the South Kanara region stands out as a potential anomaly to this trend (Shastri, 2020). It has been attributed to its deeply entrenched Hindutva politics and Muslim counter-mobilisation under the neo-Muslim political formations.

It is observed that the waning ground of INC, the ascendance of Hindutva politics, the consolidation of religious identity that transcends caste and ethnic boundaries, and the recurrent communal conflicts have altered the political climate of the region after 1970. The following sections delve into the historical roots of Hindutva during the colonial era and its consolidation in the post-independence period.

Hindutva in the Early Phase

While South Kanara's emergence as a stronghold for Hindutva politics is a recent phenomenon, the Hindutva movement boasts a longstanding historical presence in the region. Kuthar (2019), in her comprehensive field study focusing on the ascendance of Hindu nationalism in South Kanara, meticulously elucidates the protracted evolution of the Hindutva movement, tracing its roots back to the colonial era. Kuthar (2019), in her field study on the rise of Hindu nationalism in South Kanara, has depicted the long history of Hindutva movement since the pre-independence period.

She observes that religious consciousness was apparent among the upper-caste Hindus in the 19th century. She (2019a) remarks that:

> The story opens in the 1800s when the future vanguards of Hindutva in the region — the Saraswat Brahmins — organised themselves as a group that for the first time in the history of the coast carried the word Hindu as its label (para,3).

During the British period in South Kanara, Christian missionaries were perceived as a socio-religious threat by the Muslims and the upper-caste Hindus. Resistance directed at the conversion activities of the Basel mission can be considered one of the earliest instances of religious mobilisation by the upper-caste Hindu groups during that period. The upper castes, particularly the Saraswat Brahmins, were conscious of the proselytising activities and the potential consequences of such religious conversion. This led to the eruption of minor conflicts in various parts of Mangalore, including Balmatta in 1870 and Kadri in 1875 (Rai, 2003).

According to Shashikantha (2007), the Basel Mission could convert people from all castes within the first two decades of its operation. The caste discrimination experienced by the lower castes facilitated an easy path for the Basel Mission's activities. They could provide plenty of educational and employment opportunities for new converts, which contributed to improving the profile of the converted people, particularly the Billava community. He writes, “there was a sudden outburst of response from the Billavas towards Christianity. In the 1860s and 1870s, thousands of Billavas from Mangalore and Udupi region were taken into the fold of Christianity” (p.173). Nevertheless, an educated segment of the Billava community forged connections with the Saraswat Brahmins, joining forces to counter the missionary activities. This collaboration gave rise to various Hindu reform movements in the 1870s. Notably, in 1870, under the leadership of Arasappa, a prominent figure within the Billava caste, a branch of the Brahmo Samaj was established at Mangalore.

Arasppaa fostered strong alliances with influential leaders of the Saraswat Brahmin community, including Ullala Raghunathayya. However, due to his lower-caste background, the upper-caste Hindus evinced reluctance to congregate under Arasppaa's leadership. Consequently, in the same year, Ullala Raghunathayya and Baradwaj Shiva founded the Upasana Sabha. Despite the collaborative efforts of both organisations, their influence remained relatively limited among the Hind**us** (Rai, 2003) Brahmo Samaj, in practice, encountered challenges in extending its network beyond the Saraswat Brahmin communities, largely due to the reluctance of upper castes to engage with those from lower-caste backgrounds. In 1918, a branch of Arya Samaj was established in Mangalore by KR Corinth, in collaboration with eminent figures of South Kanara at the time, K. Shyama Rao and Rama Rao. During this period, following the First World War, the British government-imposed restrictions on the activities of the Basel mission due to its connections with Germany.

Consequently, the Arya Samaj's focus gradually shifted from its main mission of opposing the Basel Mission's activities. Instead, they initiated the Sudhi (purification) movement, targeting people who had converted to other faiths. Furthermore, in 1920, the organisation founded a public school and orphanage in Balmatta. Notably, these institutions extended their services to the lower castes, thereby allowing them access to education (Prabha, 2011). In contrast to the Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj managed to build a relatively strong network with various Brahmin communities, including Shivali and Havyak Brahmins. Simultaneously, they made efforts to expand this coalition by maintaining contact with leaders of lower castes, such as the Mogaveera fishing community.

Following this, Mohanappa Thingalaya, a prominent leader of the Mogaveeras, established the Jnanodaya Samaj in 1919, intending to empower the community through education, spirituality, and nationalism. This initiative is also seen as an attempt to align the Mogaveera community with the broader pan-Hindu ideology (Kuthar, 2019).

By the early 1930s, the Hindu Maha Sabha became active in South Kanara (Pinto, 2019). Evoking militant nationalism and targeting the Muslim community, it organised different programs in various parts of the region. By then, the Hindutva discourse shifted from focusing on the missionary activities to the presence of the Muslims. In a massive rally organised at Mundaje in Belthangady taluk in 1933, RG Bhide, the then General Secretary of Hindu Maha Sabha, delivered an inflammatory speech targeting the very existence of the Muslim community in the Hindu Rashtra (Pinto, 2019; Kuthar, 2019). In the following years too, the National leaders of Sangh Parivar addressed the public meetings held at various parts of the region organised by Hindu Maha Sabha. The first RSS 'sagha' (unit) in South Kanara was established in Mangalore in 1940. Subsequently, it initiated various programs to mobilise the Hindu community (Pinto, 2019).

It is worth noting that, during that period, the narratives targeting the Muslim community did not garner significant acceptance in south Kanara owing to the relatively strong socio-cultural bond between the local Muslims and the Hindu community. Kuthar (2019) remarks that “when the narrative completely shifted from conversions by Christian missionaries to the alleged anti-Hindu activities of the Muslim community, it didn’t immediately set the region on fire. These provocations didn’t lead to clashes between the communities” (para,5). The Hindutva movement during this period was unable to generate animosity towards the religious identity of the local Muslim communities or effectively foster an anti-Muslim mobilisation.

This can be primarily attributed to the prevailing political climate within the region and a long-standing history of socio-cultural interconnections between the Beary's and the various Hindu caste groups. Additionally, the caste-based social hierarchy and segregation within Hindu society prevented the unification of Hindus along religious lines.

It is significant to note that the independence movement in South Kanara discredited the Hindutva narratives of alienating the Muslims. With the visit of Mahatma Gandhi in 1920 at Mangalore, the national movements in South Kanara got fresh energy and strengthened the base of INC. Gandhi made three separate visits to South Kanara, the primary purpose of his initial visit being to lend support to the Khilafat movement. Moulana Shoukkath Ali accompanied Gandhi during this visit, and their presence drew an enormous crowd, demonstrating the tremendous reception they received. In each public gathering, Gandhi emphasised the imperative of Hindu-Muslim unity as a means to confront British rule. This emphasis on uniting people against the British served to contain the growth of Hindutva politics (Mahatma Gandhi Memorial College, Udupi. 2011). Although Hindutva organisations commenced organising their activities in various parts of South Kanara, the considerable influence of the National Movement constrained their reach to a limited segment of people, failing to exert influence over the public sphere of the region.

Hindutva Politics in the Post-Independence Period

The political climate in India during the partition era was characterised by a significant degree of communal polarisation, which provided a conducive setting for targeting the Muslim minorities, particularly in North India. (Engineer, 2004; Puri,1993). Following India’s independence, Hindu nationalists in South Kanara redirected their efforts toward mobilising the deeply fragmented Hindu community by stigmatising Muslim communities. However, it can be understood that Hindutva ideology did not firmly establish itself in the region during the independence struggle

and the subsequent years. The majority voice during the struggle for independence and in the early phase of post-independence favoured communal harmony (Tolpady, 2003). The INC maintained a strong influence among the backward castes, such as Billavas and Mogaveeras, who collectively constituted more than one-third of the total population of the region. (Kuthar, 2019; Tolpady, 2003) Although the Sangh Parivar began its operations in South Kanara during the late colonial period, the region remained relatively free from communal riots until the first two decades following independence. However, in the subsequent years, changes in national politics were also reflected in South Kanara. Tolpadi (2003) contends that owing to the dominant presence of the INC, the South Kanara region reflected the secular and democratic aspirations of its people. He argues that the decline of the Congress party in subsequent decades created an ideological vacuum, which was subsequently filled by Hindutva ideology, facilitating the emergence of aggressive communal identity politics.

During the early years of the post-independence period, the RSS primarily operated in limited pockets within Mangalore and Udupi, specifically among upper-caste groups such as Saraswat Brahmins. Although the Hindutva ideology initially found traction primarily among various upper-caste groups in this region, the Sangh Parivar persisted in their efforts to broaden their support base. As part of expanding its organisational strength, the RSS formed various units in Coastal Karnataka by the 1950s. Its organisational network and tactical intervention were instrumental in fostering the growth of militant Hindu nationalism in South Karnataka in subsequent years. Tolpadi (2016) says that “by the 1950s, certain communal pockets like Kalladka, Ullal, and Kodibengre had already built up in the region” (as quoted in Sayeed, 2016, para.9).

During an interview with Suresh Bhat, the president of Karnataka Communal Harmony Forum, he recollected that "though the RSS could not attract the entire Hindu community into their fold, cow protection movements were active in Mangalore during the 1950s" (personal communication, May 28, 2017). It can be marked as the initial stage of propagating Hindutva ideology in the post-independent period, albeit without achieving broad-based appeal.

The formation of VHP in 1964 was a milestone in the organisational history of Sangh Parivar. Led by Swami Vishwesha Theertha, the head of the Pejavara Adokshaja Mutt, the VHP began to actively operate in the late 1960s, thereby contributing to the deepening of Hindutva ideology in South Kanara. The socio-welfare initiatives undertaken by the Pejavar mutt of Udupi, in conjunction with the VHP, played a pivotal role in laying the groundwork for the dissemination of Hindutva ideology among lower castes and tribal communities (Mondal, 2015; Bhattacharjee, 2019). In the ensuing years, the VHP evolved into a common platform that united various Hindu castes and sects (Mondal, 2015). Compared to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the VHP enjoyed relatively greater acceptability among many Hindus, including Congress leaders. This acceptability stemmed from its status as a relatively new organisation and the absence of negative remarks that the RSS faced. Prominent political figures, including Congress and Janata Dal ministers, actively participated in VHP programs, further enhancing its popularity.

By the late 1960s, the Sangh Parivar could prepare the ground for communal outbreaks. Mondal (2015) observes that police records from the 1960s reveal a period marked by a series of attacks against Muslim cattle traders. The first major riot broke out in South Kanara, in the port area of Mangalore city, in 1968 as a continuation of communal conflicts in the northern parts of the coastal belt. The pretext for this communal riot was a rumour regarding a love affair between a Beary man and a Mogaveera woman.

Reflecting on the incident, Muhammed Bije, now 74, recalled:

> There was nothing unusual about the love affairs between Beary men and Mogaveera women. Both communities are involved in selling fish. Among the Mogaveera, women are primarily engaged in selling fish in public places while their men are away fishing in the sea. Beary men are also involved in selling fish. This situation naturally lead to interactions between Beary men and Mogaveera women. Some people might have fallen in love, but such occurrences happen in between other communities and fields as well. The RSS, however, turned it into a religious issue, alleging that Bearys were abusing Hindu women (personal communication, May 27, 2019).

Recurrent communal conflicts have a pivotal role in the growth of Hindutva politics in the region. Sayeed (2016) remarks that "in 1968, Mangaluru saw its first major communal riot close to Bunder. Coincidentally, just a year before, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh won a seat for the first time in the State Legislative Assembly from the region" (para. 12). Bharatiya Jan Sangh, the then political arm of Sangh Parivar, won the majority in Udupi Municipal Corporation in 1968. This victory provided more confidence to Hindu nationalists in coastal Karnataka.

Various outfits of Sangh Parivar had started their groundwork decades before to take root in Udupi. The significant presence of upper castes and their religious establishments, such as the eight monasteries of Udupi, benefited the RSS in getting footage in the region.

The New Economic and Political Developments

South Kanara has been undergoing tremendous changes in the realm of economy and politics since the 1970s. The broader socio-economic changes, which occurred subsequent to the implementation of Land reforms, the Gulf boom, expansion of industrialisation, and globalisation, facilitated a new socio-political environment within the region. Notably, these developments have had a profound impact on inter-community relations, contributing to the crystallisation of religious identities and fostering communal mobilisation among the people (Sayeed, 2016; Tolpadi, 2003; Assadi, 2002). In other words, the broader socio-economic transformation of South Kanara since 1970 has facilitated the surge of Hindutva politics on the one hand and has been capable of undermining the long-standing tradition of communal tolerance that had endured for centuries on the other hand.

Scholarly investigations have explored how economic changes and competition between different communities can lead to communal tensions (Arafath, 2016; Bharadwaj, 1990; Ahmed, 1984; Dutta, 1972). In the context of South Kanara, the broader developments within the economy and employment sector have brought about significant shifts in the livelihoods of historically subordinated backward castes and communities. These changes have challenged the pre-existing social hierarchy to some extent. Assadi (1999, 2002) draws attention to the new economic developments and subsequent growth of communal conflicts taking place in South Kanara. He (2002) argues that the enactment of Land Reform, large-scale industrialisation, and Gulf remittances have been instrumental in driving changes in political climate and inter-community relations along the coastal belt of Karnataka. These factors have facilitated upward economic mobility for the backward castes/communities and have provided them access to the previously restricted domains of land and the economy dominated by the upper castes.

The dismantling of the feudal system due to the implementation of land reforms and the opening up of the economy of coastal Karnataka into the larger market through neoliberal transformations paved the way for certain segments of backward communities to enter the business sectors. Over time, some backward communities, such as the Bearys and the Billavas, transformed into a 'merchant capitalist class', challenging the hegemony of the upper castes within society (Assadi, 1999; 2002). Ahmed Sayeed (2016) observes that the Karnataka Land Reforms (Amendment) Act of 1974 played a significant role by providing land titles to agricultural tenants. In undivided Dakshina Kannada, the distribution of land titles was relatively successful, with 136,881 agricultural tenants out of 176,237 applications receiving titles. This shift in land ownership patterns favoured backward communities like the Billavas, the Mogaveeras, and the Bearys Consequently, the dominant communities, including the Bunts, and Jains, lost their institutionalised privilege in land entitlements, compelling them to explore alternative avenues. These changes also led to growing resentment among the dominant landholding communities, such as the Bunts, who were a major support base for the INC.

The disgust of the Bunts regarding their socio-economic future gradually led them to align themselves with Hindutva politics. (Emmerich, 2019; Sayeed, 2016). Despite belonging to a religious minority, the Jain community, comprising less than one per cent of South Kanara's population, had previously held a high social status, particularly in terms of land acquisition and economic prosperity. However, the changing socioeconomic landscape posed a challenge to the Jains' hegemony (Pinto, 2015). Similarly, the new socioeconomic changes posed a significant challenge to the Goud Saraswat Brahmins' dominance in the business sector, as they had played a pivotal role in controlling South Kanara's economy (Dhingra, 2022). The entry of disadvantaged groups, particularly the Beary Muslims, into the business sector furthered the competition.

The Ascendance of the Beary Muslims

The rise of the Beary Muslim community as a significant trading community engendered new discourses and contestation. Despite being observed as a prominent merchant community during the medieval and early colonial periods, a substantial segment of the Bearys had fallen into social and economic backwardness by the end of the colonial period (Ichlangod, 2011). However, analogous to other backward communities, the recent socioeconomic developments were also favourable to the Bearys. The influx of Gulf remittances following the 'oil boom' in West Asian countries enabled the Bearys to emerge as a competitive force within the trading sector (Dhingra, 2022; Sayeed, 2016;). In the initial stages of migration, the Bearys slowly entered into various fields of trade by setting up small-scale business ventures (PUCL-K,2009). A significant wave of migration occurred in West Asian countries during the late 1980s and 1990s, facilitating upward social mobility of the community and contributing to the formation of a new middle class (Sood, 2022). For the Bearys, the legacy of trade and historical connections with Arabian countries proved beneficial during the oil boom era, enabling them to assume an influential role in the economy of South Kanara. The influx of petrodollars facilitated their involvement in large-scale industries. The new middle class also ventured into various sectors such as textiles, fishing industries, hotels, restaurants, and smaller enterprises like electronic shops etc. Additionally, beyond their traditional trading activities such as timber and grocery, the Bearys began to enter in several other domains, including the service sector. By entering the real estate business and the service sector, especially in fields like education and healthcare, transportation, etc., the Bearys have now transformed into a significant community within the socio-economic landscape of the region (Dhingra, 2022; Sayeed, 2016).

It is significant to note that Muslims from neighbouring districts, namely Kasaragod, Kannur (North Malabar), and Uttara Kannada, converged upon the urban centres of South Kanara, particularly the city of Mangalore, to leverage the opportunities presented by the largest port city in Karnataka. The Mappila Muslims from North Malabar and the Navayat Muslims from Bhatkal, who have also benefited from their West Asian networks, entered various fields like real estate, textile industry, restaurants, etc., of the South Kanara. Additionally, the historical connection between these districts, particularly the Kasaragod and Mangalore, can be observed as a significant factor for the people choosing Mangalore as a business location. During an interview with Faruq, a businessman hailing from Manjeshwar, Kasaragod, who operates a restaurant in Mangalore, he asserted, "Our contact with Mangalore is not a recent one. Our forefathers had kept in touch with the city. Muslims from Kasaragod and Kannur already had carried on their business in Mangalore even before many years" (personal communication, November 18, 2020). Najeeb, another businessman from Kasaragod, articulated, "people choose Mangalore for setting up their business due to the better infrastructure facilities and the availability of most services. Our neighbouring cities like Kanhangad and Kannur have not grown as much as Mangalore" (personal communication, November 18, 2020). It is significant to note that this mobility to Mangalore further enhanced the visibility and numerical strength of the Muslim community.

It is significant to note that the picture of competition has been changed when the Bearys emerged as a competing group in the economic sector. This transformation has been underpinned by notable improvements in their means of subsistence and living standards, which enabled them to navigate into the established socio-economic domains traditionally occupied by dominant castes such as Goud Saraswat Brahmins (GSBs) and the Bunts and other communities like Christians and Jains. Furthermore, the economic mobility of the backward castes enabled them to gain access to the

economy, thereby intensifying competition within the socio-economic space of South Kanara and posing a challenge to the hegemony of the upper castes. The Hindutva forces, who were waiting for each favourable opportunity, appropriated the community-based competition to translate it into a communal line. The Hindutva organisations sought to attract various caste groups, who faced economic competition from the Bearys to their political platform by highlighting the religious identity of the Bearys. It has been observed that various castes are attracted eventually to the economic discourse raised by the Hindu nationalists. Assadi (2002) has noted that the shift of Beary Muslims into the merchant capitalist class backed by the Gulf boom and the new economic developments has been effectively appropriated by Hindutva organisations to align different Hindu castes to advance their political platform. Hindutva has been successful in peeling back some caste groups, such as the Billavas, who were traditionally aligned with Congress politics, and bringing them into Hindutva's camp.

As a dominant trading community, the upward mobility of the Bearys in the various fields of trade poses a serious challenge to the socio-economic interests of the GSBs (Dhingra, 2022). The drastic changes taking place in the region compelled the GSB community to diversify their occupational pursuits, leading them into the service sectors such as banking, education, and hospitality.[22] In this new environment, the GSBs, who already had certain affiliations with Hindu nationalism, became more aligned with Hindutva politics. It is significant to note that upwardly mobile lower-caste Hindus also face economic competition from the Bearys. The Hindutva group is tactical in lining up the lower castes, such as the Billavas and Mogaveeras, to their camp by appropriating the

[22] In response to the new situation, the GSB community embarked on a new initiative, establishing a chain of hotels under the brand 'Udupi Hotels' and setting up health and educational institutions (Emmerich,2019; Assadi, 2002)

situation. It has been observed that the Mogaveeras are the first lower caste in the region who moved into the Hindutva camp. (Kuthar, 2019). With the advancement of technology, the fishing industry has grown as an important field of business, which draws the attention of other communities into the field. The increasing presence of the Muslims and the GSBs made challenges in the traditional livelihood of the Mogaveera community. The Hindutva groups could appropriate the anxiety of the Mogaveeras regarding their means of subsistence. Although the influential caste-like GSBs began to invest in Mogaveera in the fishing industry in those times, the religious identity of GSBs was not problematic in the communal upheaval. By highlighting the religious identity of the Beary Muslims, the Hindutva outfits could mobilise the Mogaveeras to their ideological fold (Sayeed, 2016; Assadi, 2002).

The communal upheaval that has transpired since the 1980s, coupled with the growing discontent among the Billava community due to the perceived inadequacy of opportunities available to them, has facilitated Hindutva groups in making inroads into this community. It is important to emphasise that the backing for Hindutva saw a substantial boost when it successfully swayed the Billava community. The Billava community is an important lower caste with a sizable population, falling under the category of Other Backward Communities (OBC) who have enjoyed the benefits of the Land reform implemented by the former Congress Government. As a result, the community remained relatively impervious to the influence of Hindutva politics during the 1970s and 1980s. Notably, the presence of experienced Congress leaders like Janardan Pujari, a member of the Billava community from coastal Karnataka, represented the community in state politics. Additionally, the presence of veteran congress leaders like Janardan Pujari from coastal Karnataka, who belongs to the Billava community was also representing the Billava community in state politics. This not only fortified the community's connection with the Congress but also ensured

unwavering support from the Billavas (Kuthar, 2019). However, the successive governments failed to address the new socio-economic issues encountered by the new generation of OBCs, who enjoy the benefits of Land reform. As Assadi (2023) pointed out, despite the land reform providing them with an economic identity, they encountered persistent resistance when it came to assimilating into the established socio-political domains. It was at this juncture that Hindutva entered the picture, offering these backward communities a pledge of liberation and inclusion. In an interview conducted with Professor P. Bilimale from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, he underscored this perspective by stating:

> The Billava community saw an improvement in their economic status, and their new generation gained access to better education when the community acquired land titles. However, the ruling Congress government failed to provide better employment opportunities to the youth of the new generation, who were benefiting from the land reform. The resulting anxieties among the young Billavas regarding their career prospects fostered a sense of resentment towards the INC (personal communication, August 29, 2019).

It was the time when the Sangh Parivar strived to expand its support base in South Kanara. As Mustafa (2015) pointed out, the inequalities between communities are strategically used by the Hindutva to transplant their agenda. In the competitive economic space, the economic discourse of Hindutva attracted the backward castes to its political fold. They found the Bearys as the significant competitors in the local economy. In short, the new socioeconomic developments are effectively used by Hindutva organisations to secure their political interest on the one side and for the upper castes who could retain their traditional hegemony over people on the other side.

Transcending the Boundaries of Caste

Although significant disparities and differences exist between various castes, particularly between the upper castes and lower castes, Hindutva has successfully constructed a broader political coalition within the Hindu community. As pointed out by Santhosh and Paleri (2020), while lower castes have historically experienced exclusion from the socio-cultural and religious domains dominated by the upper castes, they found a degree of recognition and inclusion within the 'political rituals of Hindutva.' This phenomenon has been elucidated as a component of emerging ethno-Hinduism, wherein Hindutva provides a new form of patronage aimed at consolidating Hindus, including the lower castes, without fundamentally altering the prevailing social hierarchies (Shani, 2007).

Santhosh and Paleri (2020) observes that the transcending of caste differences for Hindutva mobilisation is made possible by two critical processes: the 'culturalization of caste' and the displacement of caste conflict into communal conflict. Through the process of 'culturalisation of caste', the Hindutva discourse frames the caste system as a cultural distinction within Hindu society, as opposed to recognising it as an axis of inequality and hierarchy. Consequently, this portrayal leaves the structural underpinnings of the caste system unchallenged. It tactically legitimises the caste system by presenting it as a result of cultural differences and, in doing so, facilitates the formation of a 'unified political identity of Hindutva'. This tactical framing serves to legitimise the caste system by presenting it as a product of cultural differences, thereby facilitating the formation of a 'unified political identity of Hindutva.'

It is essential to note that, for the purpose of fostering a sense of belonging and recognition within the framework of Hindutva politics led by the upper castes, the lower castes have been incorporated into the 'political rituals of Hindutva. As part of it, large-scale events such as Hindu Samajolsava

(Hindu festival) and Hindu Samavesha (Hindu congress) are frequently organised in various parts of South Kanara to demonstrate the collective strength of Hindus and to foster a pan-Hindu identity (Pinto, 2019; Menon, 2004). These events feature massive processions, known as Shobha Yatras, and public gatherings. During such gatherings, Hindu nationalist slogans are vociferously voiced, and inflammatory speeches are delivered, often targeted at minority communities (Santhosh, 2020). Notably, leaders representing various castes, including lower castes, are invited to participate in these programs (Assadi, 2002). Through such inclusive events, Hindutva strategically incorporates lower castes and Dalits into its political platform, thereby broadening its base of support.

Another important process for Hindutva mobilisation is the 'displacement of caste conflict' into a religious conflict. For this, the tensions and animosities between castes, resulting from sweeping socio-economic changes, are redirected toward Muslims by depicting them as 'social and economic exploiters'. This process serves to reframe caste-based grievances and conflicts into religious antagonism, thereby fostering a mass consolidation of the Hindus, uniting them against the perceived external 'other' (Santhosh, 2020). As Assadi (2002) pointed out, elevating the economic discourse and projecting the Muslims as a serious threat to Hindu interests, the Hindutva groups have forged a broader coalition of the various Hindu castes. He (2002) characterises this unification process as the alliance of the '4Bs,' comprising Brahmins, Bunts, Billava, and other Backward castes. However, over time, it is worth noting that lower castes such as Kulala, Devadigas, and others have also embraced this platform.

Assadi (2023) further elucidates the functioning of this coalition within a discernible political hierarchy. At the apex of this hierarchy stand the upper-caste Brahmins, who assume the crucial role of providing the intellectual underpinning for the Hindutva narratives. In the second tier are

the Bunts, a socially and economically influential caste, who offer substantial economic support to the Hindutva movement with the objective of reclaiming their erstwhile dominance. The third layer is comprised of the OBCs and Dalits, who serve as the foot soldiers of the Hindutva cause. Notably, the upper castes do not directly participate in communal conflicts; the visible tasks, such as physical confrontations and property destruction, are often delegated to the lower-caste Hindus, who are enticed by promises of political inclusion and the prospect of upward social mobility (Assadi, 2023, 2002).

As expounded in the preceding chapters, South Kanara was not marked by a history of political turmoil characterised by communal riots and discord. Intercommunity relations remained relatively peaceful in the region during the country's partition and the subsequent years (Tolpady, 2003). The religious syncretic space that thrived in the area served as a vital bridge, fostering harmony between Hindus and Muslims. The Bearys, as the descendants of local converts, have retained several distinctive local traits that had effectively integrated them into the socio-cultural fabric of the region, mitigating their isolation solely on religious grounds.

However, a concerted effort to disrupt the social fabric of the region and socio-cultural interdependence between the lower castes and the local Muslim community has manifested through a series of discourses, allegations, rumours, and recurrent attacks targeting the local Muslim community. Notably, the religious identity of the Bearys has been projected, casting them as external ‘others’ and a perceived threat to the moral world of Hindu society and the nation at large.

Moreover, to foster a sense of belongingness and to cultivate a Pan Hindu religious identity, local Hindutva movements have appropriated indigenous rituals and traditions (Kuthar,2019). By producing the rituals in accordance with the tenets of Hindutva and introducing new celebratory practices akin to those observed in Northern India, the Hindutva movement has effectively expanded its ideological influence within the diverse caste groups of the region.

In the early independence period, the Sangh Parivar raised the usual stereotypic discourses, such as the role of the Muslims in the partition of the country, religious conversion, cow slaughter, numerical growth of the Muslim population, etc., for demonising the religious identity of the local Muslim community. By the 1990s, it was centred around mandir–majid controversy. The demolition of the Babri mosque and subsequent violence served as the fuel for Sangh Parivar to communalise the entire region. It also affected the harmony that existed in the rural areas. Sidheeq[23], a Madrassa teacher from Nattakkal village, says that "the communal atmosphere during the demolition of Babri mosque changed the picture of Dakshina Kannada. Mutual suspicion and animosity began to grow among Hindus and Muslims" (personal communication, May 27, 2018). he elaborated that "we approached the nearest household irrespective of religious differences for anything needed at home. There have been significant changes in all of that." The new economic order and post-Babri situations transformed the entire region into communal intolerance. Gradually, caste identities were reconstituted into religious identities on a communal line, and people were compelled to redefine their religion and culture in the new communal storm.

[23] In adherence to ethical research standards, the identities and locations of most of the respondents, other than those who holds Key office positions, involved and discussed here have been altered to secure the protection of their personal information.

In addition to the typical stereotypical discourse on Muslims, the Hindutva groups have used new narratives in respect of local situations to demonise the Muslim community. For instance, rumours such as Muslims purportedly orchestrating the spread of diseases such as AIDS and Anthrax by surreptitiously injecting Hindus during their festivals have significantly contributed to the stigmatisation of Muslims in the early 2000s. (Rajashekhar & Phaniraj, 2006). Most often, such kinds of rumours played a major role in transforming trivial issues into major conflicts (Assadi, 2002). Hindutva, by fostering cow vigilantism, moral policing, mob lynching, and the boycott of Muslim-owned businesses, employs fresh discourses and new narratives to perpetuate a persistent communal atmosphere at the grassroots level. As noted by Pai and Kumar (2018), these tactics can be construed as the 'new ways and means' adopted by Hindutva post-2000, with the specific objective of institutionalising communalism at the grassroots level. This is accomplished by appropriating minor issues between communities and maintaining their continuity, thereby fostering sustained animosity. It can be observed that the continual infusion of communal controversies and conflicts has made possible the unification of deeply fragmented Hindu communities under the umbrella of Hindutva.

The Holy Cow and the Muslim Butchers

The cow is considered to be the most sacred animal in Hindu mythology**.** Even in the colonial period, the concept of the cow as a divine entity was capable of invoking religious sentiments among Hindus.[24] That is why the cow has been one of the key political tools in the hands of Hindutva outfits to mobilise the majority religious community. (Rao, 2011). The cow slaughter has been one of the main allegations raised by the BJP to invoke anti-Muslim sentiment in coastal

[24] The immediate reason for the first war of Indian independence in 1857 was the rumour regarding the newly introduced cartridge of enfield rifle being greased with the fat of cow and pig.

Karnataka since the early decades of independence. As part of its national campaign, RSS organised a national cow weekly at Udupi in 1952 in association with the religious establishments like Pejavar Mutt. Such a campaign in the presence of national leaders strongly opposed cow slaughter and condemned the indifference of the ruling INC (Kuthar, 2010). Although beef is the traditional diet of many other communities, the vast majority of butchers and livestock tradesmen belong to the Muslim community, which enables the Sangh Parivar to target Muslims very easily.

By the late 1960s, VHP took over the campaign for the prevention of cow slaughter (Bhattacharjee, 2019). By the 1970s, Hindu Yuva Sene became active in the region and led the campaign for cow protection more aggressively. (Mondal,2015; Santhosh& Paleri, 2020). In 1990s, Hindu Jagarana Vedike[25] and Bajrang Dal,[26] the two outfits of Hindutva with a more militant outlook, took the rein of the cattle protection movement, which led to unleashing widespread attacks against the cattle traders across the coastal belt. By the early years of the 2000s, cow vigilante groups were formed at the local level, which spread rumours against the Muslims and played a key role in intensifying the communal atmosphere (Kathur, 2019) Hindutva outfits strategically invoked suspicion and anger among Hindus towards the entire Muslim community by disseminating narratives that stigmatise Muslims as cow slaughterers, thieves, and those who despise the Hindu god (Gomata). The vigilant groups who intercept the transportation of cattle and beat the tradesmen in public is now becoming a frequent incident.

[25] Hindu Jagaaraan Vedike was formed in the early 1990s, which was directly affiliated to RSS.

[26] Bajrang Dal, the youth wing of VHP was formed in 1984.They were at the forefront of the cow protection movement since its branch was formed in Mangalore in 1994.

The brutal assault of cow vigilantes against a father and son in Adi near Udupi town in 2005 garnered national attention. As per the incident, Hajabba (60) and his son Hasanabba (29) were paraded naked and subjected to brutal assaults by activists of the Hindu Yuva Sene in front of a crowd, with allegations of illegal calf transportation and offences against the Hindu way of life (Sayeed, 2016).During an interview, in response to my question about Hindu-Muslim tensions in the region, Mohan Rai, who was then registrar of an educational institutionunder Karnataka Government, remarked, "everything is politics. You know, there were many cows here and there in the city. Nowadays, its numbers are reduced. People who steal cows are really making issues" (personal communication, May 29, 2018). He indirectly implied that Muslims were responsible for the issues related to cow theft. In other words, the discourses over cow slaughter could give legitimacy to the physical attack against the cattle traders.

South Kanara under the Influence of Vigilante Groups

As for the Hindutva outfits, there exists a pressing need to develop novel discourses and narratives in order to sustain coastal Karnataka in communal turmoil. Apart from keeping the discourse centred on the sanctity of cows alive and attacking the cattle traders, vigilant groups have redirected their attention towards a range of issues under the pretext of safeguarding Hindu cultural values. The series of violent attacks against Christian churches and Christian institutions in 2008 in Dakshina Kannada was one of its kind.[27] this marked the first instance where Hindutva groups orchestrated extensive and targeted acts of violence against the Christian community in South Kanara (Deshpande, 2008). These events transpired as a reaction, as per the claims made by

[27] According to news reports, on 14th September 2008, Bajrangdal activists with stones and heavy sticks rushed into the chapel of Adoration Monastery of the sisters of St-Clare at Hampankatta, Mangalore, and desecration of the Holy Cross and sacred Sacrament in the adoration monastery on Milagres Church. In a premeditated attack, 15 more churches were vandalised within a few hours (Bureau, 2008).

Hindutva groups, to what they perceived as forced conversions to Christianity and the alleged defamation of Hindu deities. During a press conference held in Mangalore on the same day, Mahendra Kumar, State convener of the Bajrang Dal, along with VHP leader MB Puranik, claimed responsibility for the attack (Kukkaje, 2008). To legitimise this act of vandalism, Bajrang Dal accused that approximately 15,000 Hindus had been forcibly converted to Christianity during 2007-2008 (Nanjappa, 2008).

Various Christian Churches Attacked by Bajrang Dal Activists In 2008.
Source: mangalorean.com.

In the following years, various Hindutva outfits unleashed extensive violence, including moral policing on the pretext of polluting the Hindu way of life and violating the great Indian tradition, (Santhosh & Paleri 2020). Activists from Bajrang Dal, Hindu Jagran Vedike, and Sriram Sene

scrutinised the attire of young women and resorted to assaulting youngsters and college students in the name of gender mixing. The infamous pub attack conducted by Sri Ram Sene in 2009, which garnered national media attention and became viral on YouTube, stands out as a striking example of this (*Mangalore: Attack on Pub - Daijiworld Exclusive Video,n.d*). According to news reports, on January 24, 2009, Sri Ram Sene activists forcibly entered the pub and physically assaulted young men and women for allegedly violating traditional values by dancing and drinking ("Mangalore Pub Attack: 17 Held, Ram Sena Unapologetic", 2009). Despite a visit by the National Women's Commission for an on-site assessment, after a decade-long trial, the court acquitted 26 out of 30 accused due to a lack of evidence ("Mangalore Pub Attack Case Verdict" 2018). The inaction of the police was observed to be evident at every stage of such cases.

Hindutva vigilantes in Mangalore published in the Scroll.in.

Source: *https://scroll.in/article/751469/stories-of-moral-policing-in-mangalore-that-you-didnt-hear-about*

The pub attacks catapulted Sri Ram Sene and its chief, Pramod Muthalik, to sudden fame. The Wire reports a statement by Pramod Muthalik, saying, "Our activists will go around with a priest, a turmeric stub and a 'mangalsutra'. If we come across couples being together in public and expressing their love, we will take them to the nearest temple and conduct their marriage" (Staff, 2018). Public places such as parks, beaches, theatres, shopping malls, etc., became venues for vandalism by vigilant groups when young people mingled regardless of gender. The moral policing took on a more aggressive communal tone when Hindu girls were seen roaming around with Muslim boys. In such instances, the fringe groups successfully managed to win the support of the larger Hindu community by fostering a discourse on 'love jihad'. Stories of Hindu women being seduced by Muslim youths were employed to invoke communal consciousness among Hindus and to establish legitimacy within the community for such moral policing.

Love Jihad

Love jihad is an important allegation raised by Hindutva against the Muslim community with the potential of fostering suspicion against the Muslims, even among the ordinary people whose everyday life is more intimately interconnected with the neighbouring Muslims. Love jihad, as per the allegation of Hindutva groups, is an organised effort to convert Hindu women through deceptive displays of affection. Hindutva groups allege that Muslim youths purportedly receive financial support from foreign countries, enabling them to offer gifts such as perfumes, cell phones, electronic devices, cosmetics, and other valuable items as enticements to Hindu women (Gupta, 2009). This strategy is said to be employed at strategic locations like campuses, shopping malls, and mobile phone shops to lure Hindu women. In this context, various rumours have proliferated.

For instance, there have been widespread alarming messages disseminated by Hindutva camps through social media, suggesting that Muslim boys tactically collect the contact numbers of Hindu girls with the intention of trapping them when the latter visit the mobile shops to recharge their phones. These messages alert that every Hindu should be cautious and avoid visiting mobile shops owned by Muslims.

It is significant to note that not only have local leaders within the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) endorsed and disseminated rumours and allegations pertaining to Love Jihad, but prominent state-level leaders have also lent their support to these claims. During a public event, B.S. Yediyurappa, the then Chief Minister of Karnataka and a veteran BJP leader, stated that "in the name of love jihad, conversions are happening. Young women are being lured by money and love and converted. We are going to end this in Karnataka" (Service, 2020). Basavaraj Bommai, Home Minister, said that love jihad is a "social evil" and "we would like to have some protection" (Sayeed, 2020). Kuthar (2019) remarks that "starting from 2005, the stories around how Muslims were indulging in to lure Hindu girls became a topic of conversation at almost every meeting of the Sangh Parivar in Dakshina Kannada" (para,1). The Sangh Parivar utilised this allegation as a potent tool to consolidate the majority community and to make a vigilant community space, anticipating the threat from the Muslims and others.

In 2009, following a habeas corpus plea, the Karnataka High Court issued an order instructing the police to investigate allegations of 'love jihad' in the context of the interreligious marriage between Silja Raj and Asghar Nazar. In response to this directive, an interim police report was submitted to the High Court on November 13, 2009. The report indicated that there was no substantial evidence supporting the claim of 'love jihad' in this particular case (Johnson, 2017). Subsequently, the High Court issued a verdict granting Silja Raj and Asghar Nazar permission to live together.

In response, Silja made a statement to the media asserting, “There is no love jihad. I went with him of my own” (Johnson, 2017). Further investigations were conducted into hundreds of interreligious marriages, and the CID Director General of Police of the Karnataka state at the time, submitted a comprehensive report to the High Court on December 31, 2009. The report concluded that “there is no organised attempt by any group of individuals to entice girls/women belonging to Hindu or Christian religions to marry Muslim boys with the aim of converting them to Islam” (As quoted in Menon, 2022). To substantiate these findings, the report presented additional evidence, revealing that among the 229 interreligious marriages that occurred in Karnataka between 2005 and 2009, 20 Christian girls and 38 Muslim girls had married Hindu boys.

Despite the court’s verdict and the CID report, Hindutva outfits persisted in propagating the ‘Love Jihad’ allegation. They continued to create new narratives surrounding missing Hindu women and resorted to assaulting Muslim youths engaged in conversations with Hindu women to keep the discourse alive. Social media platforms were strategically utilised to circulate these new narratives. Consequently, the discourse on ‘Love Jihad’ led Hindu and Christian communities to become more vigilant in their interactions with Muslims in everyday life, including friendships between Hindu girls and Muslim boys in colleges, which were also framed within the ‘Love Jihad’ label. Furthermore, the Sangh Parivar succeeded in fostering a consensus within the Hindu community that Hindu girls needed protection from perceived threats posed by the Muslim ‘other’.

It has been observed that the failure of police to curb the activities of fringe groups and initiate legal proceedings against offenders, even in cases where substantial evidence exists to substantiate unlawful actions (Shantha, 2021). Consequently, there has been a discernible surge in incidents of cow vigilantism, moral policing, and other manifestations of communalism in South Kanara since the year 2010. A comprehensive analysis of data assembled by Suresh Bhat, a social activist

affiliated with the Karnataka Communal Harmony Forum and the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), a prominent human rights organisation, reveals a significant escalation in reported communal incidents, escalating from 91 cases in 2010 to 173 in 2014 (Sheth, 2015).Despite a change in political leadership with the Congress returning to power in 2014, there has been little discernible improvement in mitigating communal tensions. Bhat's documentation indicates that within the initial three years of the newly elected Congress government, a staggering 457 communal incidents were reported. This data concerning communal tensions strongly suggests that such issues tend to exacerbate in the lead-up to elections (Sheth, 2015).

Hinduisation of the Syncretic Sites and the Local Traditions

Local characteristics are discernible in the various socio-religious practices of the Hindu communities, particularly among the lower castes in South Kanara. Spirit worship, popularly known as *Bhootaradhane,* holds a prominent role in the religious beliefs and practices of the local Tuluva people. This form of worship is associated with deceased individuals who have garnered great local respect during their lifetimes. It is widely believed that these revered figures, after their demise, metamorphose into protective Bhootas, safeguarding the people from misfortune and sickness In each village, a dedicated *Bhoota* temple is erected to pay homage to these divine ancestors. It is worth mentioning that even Muslim figures, such as Ali *Bhoota* and Bobberaya, have received veneration from the local Hindu community, thus further illustrating the fluidity of these beliefs (Assadi,2002). These customs, once characterised by their fuzziness and inclusiveness, have undergone transformation when Hindutva endeavoured to Hinduise these practices. Hindutva groups attempt to construct a pan-Hindu ideology by delineating clear boundaries through the reproduction of rituals and the replacement of myths.

It has been observed that the local deities and rituals are devoid of connections to "Brahmanical Hinduism (Sikand, 2004). Suresh Bhat, a social activist affiliated with the Karnataka Communal Harmony Forum and the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), asserts that practices like Bhoota Aradhane are unique to this region and essentially involve the worship of ancestral figures (personal communication, May 28, 2018). He further contends that "proponents of Hindutva have strategically subverted these traditional beliefs and rituals, supplanting Brahmanical deities and appointing Brahmin priests to assume leadership in these practices.". Similarly, Pattabhirama Somayaji, Professor of English at University College, Mangalore, observes that "even the myriad `little traditions' of Hinduism, like the Bhootakulas,[28] have been permeated by the colour, sound, speech and symbolism of Hindutva" (as quoted in Menon, 2004). By using their different offshoots, Sangh Parivar began to appropriate the ritualistic folk arts and festivals which made a wider impact, especially in the backward and lower-caste Hindus who form one half of the total population of the region (Kuthar, 2019). The rituals and ceremonies of the upper castes have been introduced as the part of the religious rituals of the entire Hindu community. The Paryaya, for instance, the ceremony performed by the pontiffs of the eight Madhwa mutts of Udupi regarding passing on the authority of worship in Krishna Temple, has now been transformed into a state-level event conducting for the entire Hindu community. (Menon, 2004). It is significant to note that in the past, entry to the monasteries and temples of the upper castes was restricted to the lower castes.

[28] Bhootakulas is a popular form of spirit worship practised in the villages of South Kanara by members of the lower castes.

By appropriating ritualistic folk arts like Yakshagana, Sangh Parivar began to address the entire Hindu community irrespective of their caste differences. Devanand, an advocate from Mangalore, says, “the influence of Sangh Parivar has been decisive upon Hindu religious sites. By using their different offshoots, Sangh Parivar would conduct small meetings after Yakshagan performed, in which they inject their Hindutva ideology” (personal communication, December 21, 2018). By re-articulating rituals and appropriating sensitive issues, the Sangh Parivar has been made the broader coalition of different Hindu groups including backward and lower caste people with the view of expanding their ideological base to secure their agenda.

Religious Monasteries in Karnataka Politics

Religious Monasteries, known as mathas, in Karnataka have evolved into influential political entities within the Hindu community over time (Ataulla, 2020). While these monastries are categorised along caste or sectarian lines, they have emerged as significant political forces in shaping electoral outcomes across Karnataka (“For Elections, Karnataka Mutts Are Power Centres” 2018). The renowned Ashta Mutt (the Eight Monasteries) in Udupi, which jointly oversee the Krishna temple, are well known for their close association with the Sangh Parivar. Menon (2004) asserts that these mutts have played a substantial role in elevating the BJP as a potent electoral force in the coastal region. Notably, the Pejavar and the Adamar Mutts have been consistent supporters of the Hindutva ideology. These religious institutions frequently organise large-scale gatherings known as ‘Hindu Samavesha,’ aimed at uniting the Hindu community, transcending caste and ethnic differences.

Menon (2004) elaborates that:

> The Pejavar mutt, in particular, has given active patronage to the samavesha, which has, in recent months, become the most popular method of Hindu mass mobilisation in the coastal belt. Following the Gujarat riots, the samavesha has become a frequent event, spreading now from the cities to small towns and villages of Udupi and Dakshina Kannada districts.

These programs, particularly in the presence of pontiffs and leaders of various caste groups, wield significant influence over the people. The interconnectedness of the Sangh Parivar with these religious monasteries and their pontiffs has played a pivotal role in the expansion of Hindutva politics. For instance, Swami Vishwesha Theertha, the head of the Pejavara Adokshaja Mutt and a founding member of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), played a substantial role in advancing Hindutva in Karnataka, particularly in the coastal region (Mondal, 2015). It is noteworthy that despite being the spiritual leader of the upper castes, he diligently worked to establish connections with Dalits and backward castes. His visits to Dalit communities garnered significant media attention and contributed to the idea of 'Hindu unity'. During the period of national emergency in 1975, he came into prominence due to his strong anti-emergency stance (Devaiah, 2019). Furthermore, Swami Vishwesha Theertha took a prominent role in the Ramjanmboomi liberation movement in the 1990s, which significantly bolstered the acceptance of Hindutva ideology in the coastal regions. Under the auspices of the religious endowments and charismatic pontiffs, the Hindutva movement succeeded in consolidating the majority community.

Rise and Consolidation of the BJP

During the 1980s, Karnataka's political landscape witnessed a significant upheaval as the long-standing supremacy of the Congress began to wane. Karnataka had been a bastion of the Indian National Congress during the initial three decades of the post-independence period. In 1983, with the backing of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Janata Party made history by forming Karnataka's first non-Congress government (Shastri, 2020). This transformative political shift drew considerable attention to the BJP's growing presence in state politics. It is significant to note that, before this pivotal political shift took place in the state, it was evident that the coastal districts of Karnataka had already started leaning towards a pro-Hindutva political orientation. By the late 1960s, Bharatiya Jan Sangh (BJS), the erstwhile political arm of Sangh Parivar, secured representation in the state legislative assembly constituency and various local self-government bodies in south Kanara. In 1967, B. R. Shetty, the BJS candidate, secured a resounding victory in the Karkal constituency of the then Dakshina Kannada District, capturing 57.04% of the vote share. Additionally, BJS garnered substantial vote share in neighbouring constituencies such as Puttur (31.66%), Mangalore I (17.58%), and Belthangady (15.65%), although they were unable to clinch victory in those seats (*Election Commission of India - General Election, 1967 to the Legislative Assembly of Mysore*, 1967).

By winning 18 seats out of 23, Bharatiya Jan Sangh seized power in the election held at Udupi Municipal Corporation in 1968. That was when the BJP came to power for the first time in any elected body in Karnataka. These successive victories gave fresh energy to Hindutva politics in South Kanara. Anti-incumbency wave due to the imposition of the National Emergency in 1975 and the propaganda initiated by the coalition of the opposition parties named Janata Party also benefited Hindutva politics at the national and regional level (Pinto, 2019).The Janata party

secured 37.95% vote share in the election to the Karnataka assembly held in 1978 and became the second-largest party after INC. The BJS left the Janata Party due to internal issues, which led to the formation of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1983. With the help of the BJP, The Janata Party came to power in Karnataka in 1983, which was the first non-congress government in Karnataka. BJP secured 18 assembly seats and 7.93% of the vote share in that election. Since then, the BJP has come to be seen as a third alternative to the Congress and the Janata Dal in Karnataka politics. It is very important to note that, of the 18 seats won by the BJP, 9 were from coastal Karnataka. By winning six seats BJP put up a spectacular show in the undivided Dakshina Kannada district (Service, 2018).

The BJP did not make much impact in the subsequent elections held to the state assembly and Indian parliament (Service, 2018). The 1990s marked the good performance of the BJP at the national and state level. The Ram Janma Bhoomi agitation during this period has given the BJP strident progress in the ensuing elections (Shastri, 2020). In the parliament election held in 1991, BJP obtained 4 seats from Karnataka. This time too, South Kanara sided with the BJP. Janardhana Poojary, the prominent Congressman, was defeated by the BJP candidate V Dhananjaya Kumar in the Mangalore Lok Sabha constituency (Manor, 1992). Since then, BJP represented the Mangalore constituency until its area was reorganised in 2008. BJP won 40 seats in the state assembly election held in 1994. The party could hold the position of the leader of the opposition, albeit for a short period. By then BJP became an unavoidable political force in the entire Karnataka state. As for South Kanara, the party once again won 6 seats from the undivided Dakshina Kannada district. In addition, they reached the second position in the five contested seats. In South Kanara, the BJP could rather put up the same trend in the ensuing elections (except in 2013). After all, by 1994, the BJP became the single largest party representing the south Kanara region. The ensuing elections

witnessed a remarkable increase in the vote share of the party not only in South Kanara but the entire state since 1994. It is observed that instances with national importance such as Rath Yatra led by LK Advani, the demolition of Babri Masjid, Mumbai riots caused a spectacular saffron surge in Karnataka in the first half of 1990s etc (Vinayak, 2018).

The BJP increased their seats to forty-four in the next state assembly election held in 1999 and became the second-largest party after INC. The party bagged seven seats in Lok Sabha in the election, which was conducted simultaneously with the state assembly election. By winning seventy-nine seats, BJP became the single largest party in the next state assembly election held in 2004. The party put up a spectacular performance by obtaining ten seats from the South Kanara region. In the 2008 election, the BJP secured a remarkable victory, leading to the formation of the government with B. S. Yediyurappa, a prominent BJP leader, becoming the chief minister. Karnataka became the first South Indian state where the BJP came to power. However, the party could not put up the same performance in the very next assembly election in 2013, in which BJP was reduced to forty seats. The internal strife and split in the party caused the poor performance of the BJP in the election ("BJP Sweeps Coastal Karnataka; Wins 18 out of 21 Seats," 2018).

However, the BJP regained its political domination in the parliament election held in the very next year -2014. The Modi wave and the nationalistic discourses contributed to the good performance of the BJP. The party could regain its influence over the three parliamentary constituencies of coastal Karnataka, and they could also improve their vote share in the region. The BJP labelled the then Chief Minister Siddaramaiah as anti-Hindu and started the election campaign ahead of the next assembly election by alleging that the ruling Congress government was appeasing the Muslim fundamentalists. The BJP National leaders such as Amit Shah emphasised such allegations during the election campaign. The BJP leaders accused that 23 BJP-RSS activists were killed by the

Islamists in Karnataka and Siddaramaiah protecting the 'Jihadi groups' (Mahaprashasta, 2018). The police and media later found that those who were alive and those who committed suicide were included in the controversial list published by the BJP. However, the Hindutva outfits used such narratives extensively across coastal Karnataka as an important topical theme for election campaigns. The party again put up a spectacular performance in the next assembly election held in 2018. By winning 104 seats, BJP became the single largest party in the state assembly ("Karnataka Election Results: BJP Emerges as Single Largest Party" 2018). Coastal Karnataka, including the south Kanara region, served as the backbone of the BJP's victory. The party bagged eighteen seats out of twenty-two from coastal Karnataka. They swept all the seats in Udupi district and seven out of eight in Dakshina Kannada District. This is the best performance of the BJP has had in South Kanara. However, the BJP could not form a government due to the post-election alliance between INC and Janata Dal. The coalition government formed by the Congress and Janata Dal collapsed within a year, resulting from a loss of majority support triggered by the resignation of 16 MLAs from the ruling government. Following the political turmoil, the BJP, under the leadership of B. S. Yeddyurappa, once again came to power in Karnataka in 2019. In the by-election held in December 2019, BJP bagged twelve seats out of fifteen and gained a full majority of 117 seats in the Karnataka state assembly (Shekhar, 2019).

The Sangh Parivar and the government manage to maintain new discourses one after another on communally sensitive issues. Soon after Yediyurappa came back to power, his government took the decision to cancel the celebration of Tipu Jayanti, calling it 'Controversial and Communal' (Akshatha, 2019). Introducing a new ordinance to ban cow slaughter and making an anti-Love Jihad bill in the assembly session, the new BJP Government tactically playing divisive politics remains in power. The decision to ban the hijab in public educational institutions was a strategic

move by the BJP government as part of its extreme polarisation efforts ahead of the 2023 state legislative assembly elections. Despite experiencing significant setbacks in the 2023 elections, the BJP managed to retain its dominance in coastal Karnataka. Of the nineteen seats in the coastal Karnataka, the BJP secured victory in twelve seats (Anshuman, 2023). Whether or not the BJP secures power in the elections, it is evident that the BJP has generally maintained its political dominance in coastal Karnataka, including the South Kanara region, by securing the majority of seats. This underscores the enduring political influence of the BJP in the region.

Conclusion

Thus, the new socio-political developments taking place in South Kanara since the 1970s have been crucial in the history of inter-community relations in the region. The neoliberal economic changes and their impact on various socio-religious communities have been appropriative for the rise of Hindutva politics. The competitive economic space of the region and the emergence of the Bearys as a significant trading community has been tactically leveraged by Hindutva to consolidate the deeply fragmented majority community. Additionally, the turbulent political atmosphere, especially in the post-Babri phase, has reinforced the transformation of the shared socio-cultural space into more clearly demarcated boundaries along religious lines. Recurrent communal outbreaks and the failure of the administrative system to maintain law and order for the past decades have left the space for aggressive and exclusivist communal identity assertion. It can be observed that the Hindutva has succeeded in constructing a broader coalition within the Hindu community by uniting various castes against the Muslim 'other.' The subsequent chapter delves into how Hindutva Politics essentialises the religious identity of the Beary Muslims and constructs a unified Muslim 'other' within the public sphere. It also undertakes an empirical examination to ascertain whether Muslims, in reality, constitute a unified community.

CHAPTER V
Beyond Essentialisation: Trajectories of Muslim Identity

Introduction

This chapter problematises the essentialised projection of the religious identity of the local Muslim community by elucidating the formation of the competing multiple intra-religious identities. Despite being categorised as the second-largest religious community in India, it can be observed that a wide range of diversities and social divisions exist among Muslims (Jairath, 2013; Ahmad& Reifeld, 2004). These distinctions are discernible along multiple dimensions, including regional, linguistic, ethnic, and sectarian divides that often contribute to forming several layers of contesting boundaries within the community. Therefore, the Muslim community cannot be simply categorised as a unified community in terms of their religious identity. Deliberately ignoring such fragmentations, the Hindutva's discourse on identity locates in the homogenisation of religious identity and construction of a unified 'Muslim other'.

It is the political strategy of rightwing Hindutva to essentialise the religious identity of the local Muslim community and portray them as a serious threat to the Hindu interest. While introducing the Muslims as a significant other, the Hindutva discourse intentionally overlooks ethnic and theological differences and various competing collectivities within the Muslim community, which is part and parcel of the everyday life of Muslims in India. By mapping the everyday socio-religious engagements of the Beary Muslims, this chapter shows how ethnic, sectarian and factious differences among the Muslims constitute the formation of various exclusive groups in interpreting and performing religious rituals.

It also examines how sectarian and factional identity assertion of the various Muslim groups in the public space contributes to strengthening the construction of a unified 'Muslim other'. In doing so, this chapter contests the Hindutva project of portraying the local Muslim community as a serious threat to the majority community.

Identity is a complex and multifaceted concept that has been formed and articulated according to the spatiotemporal context, thereby contesting its essentialised interpretation. It can be formed and subjected to change in response to internal and external factors and cannot be termed as a fixed and frozen entity (Townsend-Bell, 2007; Cerulo, 1997). As Jayaram (2012) remarks, “rather than being primordial, identity is constructed, and its construction is strongly influenced by politico-historical and socio-cultural conditions” (p. 56). Besides, recent scholarship on social identity emphasises the formation of multiple identities and their dynamic nature, providing insights into the processes through which they are constructed and the extent to which they are susceptible to change across varying contextual circumstances (Alam, 2009; Gottschalk, 2005; Hasan, 1998; Cerulo, 1997). It can be observed that the various social affiliations of individuals or groups within a society contribute to the formation of multiple identities. As Upadhyay and Robinson (2012) write, "communities form along a variety of affiliations and social ascriptions such as caste, class, region, language and religion. Often an individual affiliates himself or herself to many groups” (p.37). Nonetheless, these identities may either coexist or one may dominate over the others, depending on the contextual factors. More importantly, the dynamic nature of identity contests the very idea of constructing a monolithic religious community.

It is significant to note that religion constitutes only one of the several aspects that shape the social identity of an individual or a group. Furthermore, even within each religious tradition, various layers of collective identities have been evolved and operated with respect to sect, caste, language,

and others (Alam, 2009; Gottschalk, 2005). Therefore, the major religions in India, such as Hinduism and Islam, do not form homogenous religious communities. By examining the local narratives of the Arampur nexus, West Bihar, Gottschalk (2005) contests the orientalist framework of the bifurcation of Indian society in terms of the major religious traditions. For him, the interrelated world of human beings is not merely confined to any singular identity, but it encompasses multiple identities. He interrogates various approaches which overemphasise religion in defining identity. The singular identity approach looks at the communities primarily based on the larger religious traditions- Hinduism, Islam etc. It ignores the shared identity between them that emerges from living in a common neighbourhood, such as religious syncretism. The conflict approach to identity portrays the Hindus and Muslims as monolithic and rival groups. On the contrary, this approach has also been contested due to the internal fragmentations of those religions. Mapping the group memories and local narratives, he further proposed multiple group identity models to demonstrate the social reality in which individuals do not belong to just one group but are part of the larger interrelated world and share multiple group affiliations.

While being the adherents of Islam, varied dimensions of diversities prevail among the Muslims of India (Jairath, 2013; Alam, 2009; Ahmad & Reifeld, 2004). This often leads to the articulation of different layers of identities in the everyday socio-religious life of the Muslim community (Alam, 2009). This can be observed among the Muslims of South Kanara as well. The ethnic, theological, and factional variations between the Muslims of South Kanara naturally prevent them from becoming a monolithic religious entity. Interestingly, these differences often brought about internal contestations and evolving of exclusive boundaries among the Muslims.

Conversely, the Hindutva discourse on identity endeavours to essentialise the religious identity of Muslim communities and frame them as a significant 'other' in order to consolidate the majority (Hindu) community, deliberately ignoring the local traditions, religious plurality, and intra-religious fragmentations.

It can be observed that this Hindutva project has played a pivotal role in transforming many regions that had a strong legacy of religious pluralism into communally sensitive areas (Assyag, 2004; Sikand, 2004). While introducing the presence of the local Muslims of South Kanara and symbolic manifestations of their religious identity as a serious threat to the majority community, the Hindutva discourse leaves the following questions untouched - What was the historical and social premise for the emergence and expansion of the Muslim settlements in South Kanara? Do the Muslims of the region constitute a homogenous and unified community? Does the increasing number of Muslim religious institutions and the symbolic expression of Islamic identity only mean the unity and strength of the Muslim community? The following sections analyse how the Hindutva rhetoric constructs a Muslim other in South Kanara.

Making of the 'Muslim Other'

It can be observed that the consolidation of militant Hindu nationalism heavily relies on a dual process: the homogenisation of diverse communities into a hegemonic religious identity and the creation of a threatening external other by stigmatising minorities, particularly the Muslim (Omar, 2021; Jaffrelot, 2003, 1996). In this regard, Hindutva politics tactically attempts to establish a 'unified Hindu' community by concealing the caste and other internal contradictions and essentialising the Islamic identity of local Muslims as a potential threat to Hindu interests. At the national level, the partition of the country and the subsequent discourse revolving around the religious identity of Indian Muslims created an opportunity for Hindutva organisations to target

Muslims in post-independent India. However, in the case of South Kanara, which remained relatively peaceful in the early decades after independence, it has become conducive to the Hindutva project of othering Muslims since the late 1960s (Kuthar, 2019; Assadi, 2002). Consequently, the traditional identities of various communities, which were deeply rooted in socio-cultural history of the region, began to destabilise, and religious affiliation turned to be the predominant marker of identity.

As a substantial Muslim minority engaging with the new political climate of the region, the religious identity of the Bearys has been subjected to suspicion and hatred despite retaining many local characteristics that distinguish them historically and culturally from their counterparts within and outside the state. Notably, the Bearys were established as a merchant community during the medieval period under the royal patronage of various Hindu dynasties, as explicated in previous chapters. However, the new narratives of Hindutva have ironically undermined the historical and social context of the origin and growth of Muslim settlements in Tulu Nadu.

As descendants of local converts, the Bearys have been observed to retain various socio-cultural practices of the Jains and various Hindu castes, such as the Bunts, Billavas, and Mogaveeras (Ichlangod, 2011). The intercultural engagements between the Bearys and other religious communities had been evident even in the religious practices. Notably, some distinguished members of the Bearys had been elevated to the position of *bhoota* (spirit) and have been venerated by lower-caste Hindus through the practice of *Bhootaradhane* (Spirit worship) (Rao, 2015; Padmanabha & Prabhu, 1971). Such practices reveal the depth of the syncretic tradition of the region.

On the contrary, by placing the Muslims as an external other, the Hindutva narratives sought to undermine the historical plurality and syncretic religious tradition of the region, which impeded the penetration of Hindutva ideology (Kuthar, 2019; Assadi, 2002) Furthermore, the Hindutva project of the essentialisation of religious faith and stigmatisation of the Muslims by framing them as a threat to the Hindu moral world can be seen as a political tactic to unify the deeply fragmented Hindu community along caste and ethnic lines. Against this backdrop, Hindutva is frequently observed to be coming up with dehumanising narratives about the local Muslims. In addition to the stereotypes regarding the Muslim community, such as their loyalty to the nation, religious conversions, the growth rate of their population, and personal Muslim law, right-wing Hindutva rhetoric incorporates Islamophobic discourse similar to that in the West after the September 11, 2001 attacks (Rauf, 2018; Assadi, 2002). This stigmatisation essentially denies the existence of the Beary Muslims as a local community. It is worth noting that the historical identity of the Beary Muslims as a trading community has been undermined by the new narratives of Hindutva, which reduces them to an exclusive Islamic identity.

In South Kanara, there have been frequent reports of Hindutva organisations engaging in public denigration of the Muslim community through various means. For instance, the speeches and statements of the leaders of various Hindutva organisations are evident in how they disseminate anti-Muslim sentiments in the public sphere. Kathur (2019) provides a detailed account of how the Muslim community is targeted by the various Hindutva outfits during their public gatherings. For example, India Today reported dehumanising remarks made by Prabhakar Bhat, a veteran RSS leader in Karnataka, against the local Muslims during the Hindu Samajotsava held at Dakshina Kannada. Bhat alleged that "all the local Muslims are cent per cent demons. Muslims say they follow the Sharia, but they are thieves, robbers, cheats" (Sudhir, 2012, para.2). The report

highlights that "minority bashing is a tried-and-tested formula" in Karnataka to consolidate the Hindu majority under the Hindutva fold (Sudhir, 2012, para.2). During a press meet held at Sirsi, Uttara Kannada district, in February 2016, Anant Kumar Hedge, a BJP leader and MP from the Uttara Kannada constituency, made controversial remarks against Islam, which is another example of how Sangh Parivar leaders disseminate Islamophobia. He said:

> You must telecast what I say verbatim. I will not retract one word of what I say now. As long as there is Islam in this world there will be terrorism. Until we eradicate Islam from the world, we will not be able to eliminate terrorism from the world. If you can do it telecast my words as I have stated it. Islam is a bomb placed to disrupt world peace. As long as there is Islam there will be no peace in the world (Johnson & Mathew, 2016).

Such defamatory remarks are frequently occurring in the region (Shreyas, 2022). Suresh Bhat, on behalf of the Communal Harmony Forum in Karnataka, has compiled data on communal incidents reported in South Kanara in 2022, which shows that fifty-eight hate speeches were reported in various parts of Dakshina Kannada (2022).

Furthermore, it can be understood that the Hindutva outfits are rather successful in infiltrating the anti-Muslim propaganda to their sympathisers and, to some extent, the general public. Interviews with local level activists and sympathisers of the Sangh Parivar reveal that they are deployed to disseminate animosity and fear of others constantly in the everyday lives of ordinary people. The symbolic icons of Islam, Gulf remittance and economic mobility of the Muslims are projected as a threat to the majority.

For instance, during a personal interview on the Hindu Muslim relation in Mangalore, Sarat, a BJP activist, explains how he sees the Muslims in Mangalore city. He says:

> We don't have any issues with the Muslims. As you can see, Muslims are everywhere in the city now, which wasn't the case a long time ago. It's known that they are allowed to marry up to four women at a time. They are financially well-off and can afford to do what they wish. If this goes on, the Dakshina Kannada would have become a Muslim-majority district in about 50 years (personal communication, January 22, 2018).

In order to demonstrate the economic dominance of the Muslims in South Kanara, the proliferation of the specific symbolic icons associated with the community has been highlighted. By pointing to a newly constructed mosque in Mangalore city, Prasanth, another BJP activist, added:

> They are building new mosques in every corner of the city. There is now a large mosque at Pumpwell Circle and another one near the railway junction. They have prayer halls in every big shopping mall. Most of the land in the city is owned by Muslims and Christians. It seems that things are moving towards a situation where we Hindus are gradually becoming irrelevant in the city (personal communication, December 9, 2018).

It can be observed that the growth rate of the Muslim population and the visibility of their symbolic representations have been emphasised in order to instil communal consciousness among Hindus. The census data have often been used to substantiate this claim, pointing to a decline in the proportion of Hindus and other religious groups, alongside an increase in the Muslim population. In addition, proponents of Hindutva ideology disseminate the notion that these phenomena threaten the nation and the existence of the Hindus. Jaffrelot (2003) says that the strategy of depicting

Muslims as a threat, through their assumed strength, stands as an enduring hallmark of Hindutva politics since its inception. Referring to the alleged religious projects of the Muslims, Mahesh, an RSS volunteer from Mangalore, said:

> You know, they (Muslims) have no compromise when it comes to their religion. Almost all Muslim children study in madrassas, which makes them narrow-minded. Unfortunately, this can also make it difficult for them to fully embrace Indian culture. I wonder if there is anything taught in the madrassas that would benefit the nation as a whole. Moreover, some Muslims are being trained in madrassas to convert Hindus. Some Muslim boys even receive financial support from Arab countries to do so, which has been referred to as 'love Jihad (personal communication, December 9, 2018).

As elaborated in the previous chapter, Love jihad is the most significant topical theme that the Sangh Parivar has been raising extensively in recent years for disseminating anti-Muslim sentiments (Emmerich, 2019). It can be observed that Hindutva organisations are deliberately stigmatising Muslims by raising a number of sensitive allegations such as love jihad, land jihad and cattle theft. By doing so, the Sangh Parivar can portray the Muslims as a threatening enemy that the whole Hindus must oppose the former together. The Hindu reports that the platform of hate speech and rumours recently moved to social media (Correspondent, 2020). As per the report, the instances of hate speech in South Kanara are increasing each year, and social media has turned out to be the new platform for such inflammatory words. It can be observed that rumours have been deliberately spreading about the inflow of Gulf money, the dominance of Muslims in some areas of business, and proselytising Hindu women by pretending to be in love.

Additionally, the growth rate of the Muslim population and the increasing number of Muslim socio-religious institutions and their visible symbolic representations in South Kanara have been highlighted as the Muslim fundamentalist project for the Islamisation of the entire region and a serious threat to the existence of the majority community. The symbolic assertions of Islamic identity, which most often occur as the part of sectarian and factional contestations also misinterpreted as the growing strength of the Muslims in the region. Thereby, the Hindutva discourse constructs a unified Muslim community threatening to the Hindu moral world. By contrast, while introducing the Muslims as a significant other, the Hindutva discourse intentionally overlooks various competing collectivities and disputes between the Muslims which are part of the everyday life of the local Muslims.

Navigating Multiple Identities; Exploring the Complexities of Muslim Identity Formation

The new scholarships on Islam and Muslim communities unveil diverse socio-cultural practices and various exclusive boundaries that prevail between Muslims across the globe. (Musa, 2022; Hashim, 2014; Jeffrey & Sen, 2014; Alam, 2011; Metcalf, 2009; Ahmad& Reifeld, 2004; Hasan, 1990; Geertz, 1971). As Santosh (2013) writes, "Islam represents a religion that is fraught with internal contestations and fragmented identities that many a times belie its monolithic image. A host of theological, political and other socio-cultural factors are responsible for the competing multiple identities within Islam" (p.25). Similarly, Jairath (2013) emphasises that the Muslims of South Asia, specifically the Muslims of India, could not be categorised as a homogenous community because of the regional, ethnic, sectarian, and other kinds of divisions functioning within the intra-religious realm of the community. The ethnic composition of the Muslims of South Kanara itself shows how diverse they are. Though they follow the same religion and texts, the ethnic precincts, theological variation, and sectarian schism do not make them a unitary essence.

Although the very basic Islamic practices such as *Namaz*, fasting, *Zakat* and *Hajj* provide a sense of community belongingness, the disagreements between sectarian groups in interpreting religious texts and performing rituals have segmented Muslims into different exclusive blocks. The following sub-sections delineate heterogeneity among the Muslims in South Kanara.

1. Community Identity in Multi-ethnic Settings

The Muslim population of South Kanara consists of multiple ethnic communities that exhibit varying linguistic and cultural characteristics. Of these communities, the Bearys are the earliest and most populous, constituting over 80% of the Muslim populace in the region. The remaining Muslim inhabitants, commonly referred to as Sahebs or Hanafis, are further subdivided into several ethnic groups. Substantial groups among them are the Deccanis, Memons and Navayats. The Deccani Muslims in South Kanara form an ethnolinguistic community predominantly speaking Urdu, and they trace their ancestral origins to the Deccan region of Southern and Central India. They adhere to the Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence.

Locally, they are commonly referred to as 'Turkas.' Historical records indicate their initial migration to Tulu Nadu during the reign of the Adil Shahi in north Karnataka (Ichlangod, 2011). The population of Deccani Muslims in Tulu Nadu saw a significant increase during the rule of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan, during which they were actively appointed to various military and civil positions. The Deccani Muslim community is predominantly concentrated in taluks such as Kundapura, Karkala, and Udupi within the South Kanara region (Doddamane, 1993). Another significant Muslim community that has settled in the South Kanara region is the Kutchi Memons.

They are an ethnic Muslim community originally hailing from Gujarat. Their principal settlement area lies in the Kutch region of Gujarat. This community is distinguished as one of the prominent Muslim business communities in India, and its presence extends to several urban centres across the country, including Mangalore, where they are recognised as a significant merchant class.

Additionally, the Nawayaths constitute another Muslim community in the region. They are an ethno-linguistic Muslim community primarily situated in Bhatkal, North Karnataka. They are distinguished by their unique language, Navayati, and adhere to the Shafi school of Islamic jurisprudence. Furthermore, they hold a prominent position as one of the dominant trading communities in India. It is worth noting that cultural and sectarian differences play a significant role in shaping boundaries, both among and within these communities. Although there are no religious restrictions exist in establishing social relations such as marriage between the Bearys and other Muslim communities, it happens rarely, predominantly because of cultural and linguistic diversities.

Because of the jurisprudential differences, some variations exist in the religious practices between Beary Muslims and non-Beary Muslims of the region. This difference, i.e., the Shafi School of Law practised by the Bearys and the Hanafi School of Law by the non-Bearys, make some invisible boundaries in the community space. As the Shafi and Hanafi jurisprudences are the two among the four schools of law that come under the Sunni tradition, it does not make its followers into competing groups. However, the variations in performing religious rituals have been caused to the creation of separate mosques and madrasas and other socio-religious institutions in those areas where the non-Beary Muslims have a significant population. On the other hand, such an institutionalisation process gives more visibility to the symbolic icons of Muslim identity.

2. Sectarian Identity Articulation

Muslims demonstrate a wide range of sectarian and factional divisions across different regions worldwide, indicating heterogeneous characteristics of the community. These divisions can be attributed to a multitude of historical, theological, political, and cultural factors that have contributed to the formation of distinct Islamic traditions and variations in interpretations of religious doctrines. Interestingly, these variations have resulted in significant differences in practices, beliefs, and rituals among Muslims, leading to the emergence of distinct sects and sub-sects within the broader Islamic community. The sectarian formations between Muslims are broadly classified as the Sunnis and Shias[29]. Despite being typically classified as Sunni and Shia, sectarian tendencies among Muslims have evolved beyond this framework. In India, although the majority of Muslims are broadly categorised as following Sunni tradition, they have evolved into several sectarian and factious groups in the late 19th century, the most prominent of which are the Barelvis and the Deobandis (Geaves, 2021; Gugle, 2015). With regards to the Shias, despite being a minority within the Muslim population in India, they too have fragmented into diverse sectarian groups. In South Kanara, the sectarianism bounded by the theologies of Sunnis and Shias is insignificant, as the latter has a minimal presence in the region. Nonetheless, several sects and factions have emerged within the broader Sunni tradition, leading to the formation of clear-cut divisions and exclusive boundaries within the community.

[29] The primary distinction between Sunni and Shia Muslims pertains to their divergent views on the appropriate leadership of the Muslim community following the passing of the Prophet Muhammad. Sunnis maintain that the first four caliphs were the rightful successors, while Shias contend that Ali ibn Abi Talib, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, should have been the first caliph. This historical disagreement has led to differences in religious practices and beliefs, including in areas such as prayer, pilgrimage, and religious law.

The predominant sectarian groups within the Muslim community of South Kanara can be broadly classified as the Sunnis and Salafis. Significant differences subsist between these two groups concerning their theological beliefs and ritual practices. The roots of this sectarian bifurcation can be traced back to the puritanical discourse that emerged in the early 20th century among the Muslims of Kerala and South Kanara. Based on the aforementioned factors, the people who continued to follow the ‘mediatory and custom-laden’ religious practices closely associated with the prophet and noblemen remained to be known as Sunnis.

Those who advocated for the puritanical version of Islam are called Salafis. The main discourse between these groups is centred on the concept of *Istighasa* (seeking help from the noblemen other than God) and *Taqlid* (the practice of rigidly adhering to the religious rulings and interpretations of the Islamic scholars) The Salafis vehemently opposed the belief that deceased great men (such as the Prophet and the Sufi saints) could help people and ask them for help. They declared that the mediatory religious practices such as *Urs, Moulid* and *Ratib* fall under the category of polytheism (*Shirk*) and, therefore, they are considered to be un-Islamic. Conversely, the traditionalist Sunnis argue that seeking help from great men has been established in Islamic tradition and, therefore, permissible. Another dispute between them is about the criteria for following Islamic jurisprudence. In terms of religious Jurisprudents, while the Sunnis follow any of the four schools of thought (madhabs) founded by the renowned Islamic jurists, the Salafis claim that they follow only the religious texts (the Qur'an and the Hadith) and can use 'independent reasoning' (*ijtihad*) to interpret Islamic law.

The everyday religious life of the local Muslims of South Kanara has been bounded by various types of sectarian and factious orientations. The majority of the Muslims of the region adhere to traditionalist Sunni theology. However, in the last three decades, the Salafi Movement has

managed to grow in this region. Although it appeared in South Kanara by contesting the localised practices of religion, the Salafi movement came forward with a progressive outlook by advocating for modern education and women's education. The emergence of the Salafi movement in a reformist outlook caused the upper middle class to be attracted to Salafism. The Sunnis and the Salafis are further divided into different factious groups.

The Samastha Kerala Jem-iyyathul *Ulama* and the All India Sunni Jamiyyathul *Ulama* are the most influential Sunni organisations in South Kanara. The South Kanara Salafi Movement is the largest Salafi organisation in the region. The conventional rituals practised in Dargahs, celebrating the birthday of the Prophet, language of Friday sermon, Women's entry into mosques, and so on are the most contentious issues between the Sunnis and the Salafis. The disputes over these issues often lead to erupting clashes between the Sunnis and Salafis[30]. Furthermore, the disputes between factious groups within Sunnis and Salafis further complicate such contests. Although numerically very small groups, the organisations such as Jamaat-e-Islami and Tablighi Jamaat are active in urban areas.

3. Factionalism among the traditionalist Sunnis

Although the majority of the Beary belongs to traditional Sunni Islam, they have been fragmented into several factions**.** The Samantha Kerala Jem-iyyathul Ulama is the largest organisation representing the Sunnis of Kerala and South Kanara. The Samastha was formed in 1926 in Calicut as a response to the interventions of Wahabi/Salafi groups in the Muslim public sphere (Osella & Osella, 2008). The formation of Samastha was initiated by a group of traditionalist Sunni scholars

[30] The clash between Sunnis and Salafis at Konaj in Dakshina Kannada is an example of such incidents. About 14 persons belonging to both sects were injured in a conflict that erupted following the speech titled 'faith in the lone Almighty, by salafi scholar K E Suhail Abdulla (Kuthar, 2016).

who sought to preserve the traditional principles and beliefs within the Islamic faith. In 1989, a split occurred within Samastha, resulting in the Sunni community being divided into two predominant factions, each led by prominent scholars, namely EK Aboobacker Musliyar and AP Aboobacker Musliyar. Subsequently, these two groups came to be known as EK Samastha and AP Samastha, or respectively as the EK Sunnis and AP Sunnis (Visakh, et al., 2021). At present, EK Samastha, which is popularly known by the acronym 'Samastha,' is the largest Muslim organisation in South Kanara. The majority of the mosques and madrassas are running in association with the EK Samastha. Of the 471 madrassas in Dakshina Kannada, Majority of madrassas have been registered in the educational board of Samastha EK group. AP Samastha is the second-largest Muslim organisation in the region. They are a relatively more organised group among the Sunnis. It is worth noting that there is no significant difference between them in terms of religious faith and practices. The contests between these groups are more or less concerned with their political engagements.

The sectarian or factional activities of the religious organisations often pave the way for power wrangling over controlling the material resources of the community. Disputes over the proprietorship of mosques and madrassas are frequent between these groups, which often lead to physical assaults and murders between its activists ("Sunni factions bury their differences," 2022). Additionally, the contestations between them over the proprietorship often lead to conducting the election for selecting the governing body of Mosques and other religious institutions. For instance, a longstanding dispute has persisted between the AP Sunnis and the Ek Sunnis concerning the administration of the Ullal Dargah.

In 2016, the EK Panel secured a majority in the elections for the governing board of the Ullal Dargah, which had been under the control of AP Sunnis for the preceding three decades (TNN, 2019). However, in the subsequent 2023 election, the AP panel managed to regain control. These power struggles significantly accentuate the contentions and assertions of identity between the AP and EK factions.

It is important to note that the differing perspectives on religious or political matters often make Muslims many hostile groups. As Alam (2009) describes, the deep schism enables the community sometimes to treat fellow Muslims who belong to another *maslaki* (sectarian) affiliation as 'others' rather than non-Muslim communities. The internal contestations between them have often been brought about the formation of solid exclusive boundaries between the Muslims rather than what inter-religious, ethnic and linguistic diversities have done. It can be seen that the discourses between these groups lead to various kinds of identity assertions in the Muslim public sphere. Setting up religious institutions, educational and welfare initiatives, launching public campaigns and conducting massive rallies can be seen as part of competing identity assertions between these groups. The proliferation of religious institutions, particularly mosques and madrassas in a specific locality, indicates the depth of sectarian disputes.

Most influential groups have their own mosques and other religious institutions in the Muslim densely populated areas. Further, within South Kanara, each sectarian organization operates its distinct educational boards. These boards oversee the affiliation of madrassas and the development of curriculum tailored to specific grade levels. Additionally, numerous colleges attached to these groups offer a wide spectrum of courses, spanning both religious and non-religious subjects. The curriculum of these colleges has been designed according to their respective sectarian affiliation. By analysing the curricular and extracurricular activities of two dominant sectarian religious

educational institutions located in Mubarakpur, Uttar Pradesh, Alam (2008) argues that these institutions are primarily concerned with producing and reproducing specific *maslaki* (sectarian) identity. The young scholars who complete graduation from these religious institutions will be placed in the mosques and madrassas in the posts of imams, religious teachers, etc., who will lead the religious ceremonies under the territorial boundary of concerned mosques. Hence, these young religious scholars have played a significant role in shaping the religious views, sectarian affiliations, and everyday socio-religious practices of the Muslims.

Coming to the socio-religious life of the Beary Muslim community, the mutually competing sectarian and factious groups often contrast with projecting them as a unitary essence. My interviews with the community members provide insight into when and how a sense of community consciousness is formed and when various kinds of sectarian borders appear within the Muslim community. The first time I met my respondent, Saleem Kandak, a Kannada writer, was on a Friday afternoon at the Mumbai Luckey restaurant, located in Bunder, Mangalore. When I met him, he was standing distraught after hearing the news that a PFI activist had been brutally tortured by police officers. He alleged that "most of the police officers here are like the agents of Sangh Parivar. Most of the police officers keep a kind of anti-Muslim mentality. The Congress party is ruling now, but they can do nothing in such a situation'' (personal communication, November 10, 2018). As Saleem is not a sympathiser of PFI, he expressed his emotion as a member of the Muslim community who is not being treated with equity and justice.

Being a region-specific ethnolinguistic Muslim community, the Bearys manage multiple identity affiliations within the community and the multi-religious space of South Karnataka. Like other social identities, the religious identity of the Beary Muslim community is often being consolidated and subdivided with regard to the social context. The discourse on the identity of the Muslims in

post-independent India and the perceived threat from the Hindu Right, has fostered a relatively strong community consciousness among the Muslims, particularly in areas marked by communal tensions. Smith & Emerson (1998) explain that identity consciousness and group solidarity are relatively stronger in those groups who are facing threats from the dominant groups. Similarly, Jayaram (2012) denotes that "conflict between communities reinforces their identities and hardens community boundaries" (p.56). Peek (2005) pays attention to how the trauma of the September 2001 attack solidifies the religious identity of the American Muslim community. He finds religion has become more central to the personal and social identity of the third-generation Muslims of the USA since the Islamophobic narratives spread after the terrorist attack. Likewise, it can be observed that the anticipatory threat from the Hindutva groups also strengthens the community consciousness of the Muslims of South Kanara.

On the other hand, it can be observed that the sectarian and factious schism between different groups results in weakening such a community consciousness. For instance, Alam (2009) elucidates how the multi-layered experience of being a Muslim operates in the intra-religious space of the community. He says that Muslims pride themselves on the universal symbols of Islam at the macro level, whereas at the micro level, they uphold the caste and maslaki (sectarian) identity as their prime concern. As my discussion with Saleem Kandak goes on, he proudly shared the increased number of college-going Muslim girls and the growth of Muslim educational and religious institutions in Mangalore. However, it did not stop him from expressing his sectarian concerns. While talking about the new mosques in the city, he expressed his disappointment that he had to offer Juma prayer (Friday prayer) in a nearby Salafi Mosque. "I had never offered my Juma prayer in any mosque except in the Sunni mosques. As I was too late, I had no other option than going to Salafi masjid" (personal communication, November 10, 2018). Since the Sunnis and

the Salafis, as two significant sects among the Muslims, the people who belong to one sect usually do not prefer to participate in congregational prayers to be held in other's mosques. The mosques, as the foremost centre of worship, have been a symbol that simultaneously marks the boundaries of consensus and disagreement between the community members. It indicates to the complex process of unanimity and negotiations among the Muslims that there is no objection to the devotee offering prayers in any mosque, which provides a sense of belongingness as a member of the larger Muslim community (ummah). Khaleel, a juice maker in a bakery shop at the State Bank junction of Mangalore city, who belongs to Sunnis, says:

> I usually pray at the Salafi Mosque, which is more convenient for me as it is closer to my shop. However, I do not participate in the Jamaat (congregational prayer) led by Salafis. Every Friday, I go to Valiyapally (Zeenath Baksh Mosque), where we have an Arabic sermon and a long dua (prayer) after the namaz (personal communication, November 13,2018).

It can be observed that, despite being open-access spaces for all Muslims, mosques often function along sectarian lines. Therefore, in terms of special events such as Eid and Friday sermons, as Khaleel reflected, the Muslims choose the mosque according to their respective sectarian affiliations, which indicates a complex edge of disagreements within the community. Presently, the Dakshina Kannada district boasts a total of 489 registered mosques and 471 madrassas[31]. The Mangalore city alone features over two dozen mosques, almost half of which have been constructed within the last few decades. Many of the city's oldest mosques have been reconstructed in Arabian architecture and equipped with modern amenities.

[31] Data gathered from the district headquarters of Karnataka Wakf Board, Mangalore

Despite appearing to be generic symbols of Islamic tradition, the proliferation of mosques and madrasas in Muslim pockets demonstrates the depth of sectarian disputes. A remarkable growth in the number of Salafi mosques over the course of the last two decades stands as a telling exemplar of this trend.

It can be found that various sects and factious groups have established their own mosques and other religious institutions in many areas where Muslims are densely populated. Basheer Ullal, a shop owner in Bunder, says, "we can offer *namaz* at any mosque, but it is quite difficult to find a common mosque in Mangalore city without having some links with any groups" (personal communication, November 11,2018). He elaborated that "people know very well which masjid belongs to the Salafis and which belongs to the Sunnis. If you just look at the notice board of each mosque, you can easily understand the exact organisational links". Even when the universal symbols of Islam are projected, it can be seen that each religious institution also places some distinctive symbols, such as flags and notice boards, to show its sectarian affiliations. Conversely, when it comes to the larger public sphere, beyond the sectarian connotations, these symbolic representations are often perceived as an assertion of Muslim identity.

Miladul Nabi Celebration; Unveiling Multi-Layered Identity Assertions

It is noteworthy that many practices commonly regarded as customs of the Muslim community are subjected to both favourable and opposing religious rulings within the community. Consequently, they become a source of contention. One such practice is the celebration of the birthday of the Prophet, known as Miladul Nabi (Milad-e-Shareef). This practice holds particular significance among traditionalist Sunnis and used to be celebrated from the first to the thirtieth day of the Arabic month, Rabi ul Awal. The celebration is one of the most contentious issues between Sunnis and Salafis. The Sunnis of South Kanara celebrate Miladul-nabi extensively with multiple programs,

such as reciting moulid (praising hymns about the Prophet) in mosques and homes, preparing ritual sweets, decorating mosques and Muslim localities with colourful lights and hoisting flags, offering food items, conducting Milad processions, rallies, and conferences at the village and district levels. However, the Miladul-nabi celebration shows the complex theological differences and identity assertions between sectarian groups.

When Sunni organisations celebrate the Prophet's birthday, Salafi organisations counter with an anti-Milad Ul-nabi campaign. The Salafis argue that the celebration is a new innovation (bid'ah) and against the fundamentals of Islam, while the Sunnis counter that there are no limits in Islam to praising the Prophet. Hence, the discourse on the Miladul-nabi celebration paves the way for multiple forms of identity articulations within the community. Additionally, the factious schism between the two influential Sunni groups further strengthens identity articulation in many ways. Separate Milad conferences, rallies, and other cultural events are organised by the AP Sunnis and EK Sunnis in the main centres of South Kanara. These events are in addition to the Milad programs carried out under local madrassas and mosques.

After the morning procession, the youth would gather to conduct vehicle rallies in their localities and neighbouring areas. It has been observed as a recent development related to the Miladul-nabi celebration. This rally, accompanied by chanting *takbeer* and playing Islamic songs through the loudspeakers, would pass through the neighbouring localities, including Hindu residential areas.

Miladul-Nabi procession organised by Pumpwel masjid committee, Mangalore.

Source: *wwwcoastaldigest.com*

It is also noteworthy that the articulation of community identity is apparent rather than sectarian identity when it passes through Hindutva strongholds. While it remains as a contentious issue within the Muslim community, the extensive celebrations in the form of massive rallies and processions are viewed as the identity assertion of the community in the age of Hindutva. Parvez (2014) argues that shifting this celebration from the private space to the public sphere points to the claim of the Muslim community for the equal right to represent the material, political and symbolic goods of the nation-state. He remarks that “the use of green flags by Muslim celebrants may be interpreted as a way of marking territory, claiming public space in a context in which the minority community feels excluded from public goods" (p.233).

These kinds of identity assertions also lead to developing competition between Hindus and Muslims. Asfaq Faisy, the chief imam of the Adyar Kannur Mosque, says:

> This year we have minimised the number of our flags as it has been turned into an unfavourable competition. Sangh Parivar hoisted more saffron flags than we do at their festivals to compete with us. In response, Muslims will raise more green flags on Milad (personal communication, November 18,2018).

Thus, it is evident that the celebrations and programs related to the Miladul Nabi are increasing year by year in the public sphere. While promoting sectarian identity, it can be observed that the Muslim leadership does not want such celebrations to grow into a Hindu-Muslim competition.

The Grand Milad Rally of Mangalore

On the day of Miladul-nabi, Mangalore, the district headquarters, hosts the largest Milad rally in South Karnataka, which draws a significant number of participants. The Sunnis from the different villages of the region converge in front of the renowned Bandur masjid by 4 p.m. The Qazi leads the prayer before the rally begins, which passes through several significant locations within the city, including State Bank Junction, the bus stand, the civil station, and the Hambankatta circle. The rally is attended by a massive number of people, led by the Mangalore Social Service Centre (MSSC), a Muslim voluntary organisation based in the city. The rally is primarily spearheaded by various Muslim youth clubs from the city, mainly from Bunder, Bengara, and Kudroli, who carry big green flags and sound systems, while people from different parts of the district follow them. The youths participating in the rally don attire resembling army uniforms, Arabian garments, and other dress codes, which adds to the visual appeal of the event. By holding lengthy flags with the image and symbols of Tipu Sultan and chanting *takbeer* - "Allahuakbar," the Muslim youth assert

their religious identity throughout the program. The Miladul-nabi rally concludes with prayers in the vicinity of the Idgah Masjid, marking the end of the celebratory event.

Miladul-Nabi rally of Mangalore. Source: *wwwcoastaldigest.com*

Though the celebration of the birthday of the Prophet is solely related to Sunni tradition it is very noteworthy that the Muslim clergy and other Sunni organisations will not take the leadership of the grand rally. Sadakathullah Faisy, the chief Imam of ZeenathBaksh Masjid, Bunder, says "initially the rally was conducted under the auspices of Bundur masjid. Unfortunately, somebody raised provocative slogans in such a big rally ten years back. Then we decided to stop the procession. It is very difficult to control the people" (personal communication, November 22,2018). Highlighting the dressing pattern and blaring of the music from the sound system during the Milad rally, Faisy further added "They are not careful in keeping the Islamic values in the procession. Therefore, we cannot be involved in it beyond a certain limit. For the past few years, the procession has been started again by Mangalore Social Service Centre".

Notwithstanding the direct endorsement from the *Ulama* on account of its perceived deviations from Islamic values, the Muslim youth have independently assumed responsibility for organising the grand Milad procession in Mangalore city in recent years. The youth, primarily from the Sunni sect, participate in the massive rally to demonstrate their strength, might, and identity irrespective of their particular Sunni factional affiliations. Nonetheless, there exist divergent perspectives among Sunnis regarding this event. While some see this with great pride due to its massive gathering, others disagree with the aggressive and abusive manifestations of Islamic symbols. Shajeer, an activist of SSF, said, "I do not think that this large crowd was gathered for the procession to praise the Prophet. They disrupt public transportation and make unwanted noise" (personal communication, November 22,2018). He added that "we should express our affection for the Prophet by doing good to the people."

Muneer, working as a mobile technician in Mangalore, who has been participating in the procession since his childhood, reflects, "I am not satisfied with this system as they do not follow the Islamic principles in the rally. However, I would join them because this is a big rally, with a large number of Muslims from across Dakshina Kannada gathering here."(personal communication, November 20,2018) For the Salafis, whether the rally is organised according to the Islamic code of appearance or not, they strongly oppose all types of celebrations regarding the birthday of the Prophet. Nisar Amjed, a Salafi leader, says that "there are only two celebrations in Islam, such as Eid Ul Fitr and Eidul Adha. Still, they are celebrating the birthday of the Prophet (personal communication, November 22,2018). He further elaborated that "the Prophet never celebrated his birthday even once during his lifetime. It is obviously a *bid'ah*.

Those who bring new inventions to Islam are no true Muslims" In effect, as per the Salafi interpretation, the majority of Muslims in South Kanara who adhere to traditional Sunni practices are deemed to deviate from the true form of Islam. From the Sunni perspective, the Salafis are regarded as a misguided faction that lacks proper reverence for the Prophet and Sufis.

In short, theological differences and factional disputes are part of the everyday socio-religious life of the Muslim community. Muslim organisations, in fact, do not hold a uniform perspective even on the issues affecting the Muslim community in general, irrespective of their sectarian identity. On the other hand, while remaining as different groups with clear-cut exclusive boundaries, sectarian groups mostly project the generic universal symbols of Islam in order to articulate their identity. It can be observed that such manifestations, by upholding generic symbols, often contribute to the unintended process of communalisation. Strictly speaking, the uniformity in some kinds of religious symbols, such as the construction of the mosques in Arabian architecture, *Adhan* (call for prayer) through loudspeaker, green flag, and dressing styles, contributes to getting easy identification of the community. In other words, such symbols provide relatively more visibility to the Muslim community in the public sphere. As previously mentioned, this uniformity of symbols is often referred to as superficial manifestations that do not always mean internal cohesion among the community members. Apart from constructing mosques and madrassas, educational institutions like international English medium schools, Arabic colleges and Islamic women's colleges are the new focal areas of Muslim organisations. Such an articulation of identity, especially in the new political atmosphere of South Kanara, is highly appropriated by the Hindutva outfits as the growing influence of the Islamists and the part of a larger process of islamisation of the region.

Conclusion

Demographically, Muslims are a significant religious community in South Kanara, especially in the present Dakshina Kannada district. However, the varied dimensions of differences between the Muslims unsettle portraying them as a unitary essence and a notion of threatening 'other.' These differences often contribute to the formation of exclusive collectivities within the community. The sectarian and factious contestations among the Muslims very often lead to various kinds of identity assertion that provides more visibility to the Islamic symbols in the public sphere. Such an articulation of identity, especially in the new political atmosphere of South Kanara, has been highly appropriated by the Hindu right-wing as a growing influence of the Islamists in the region. The Hindutva narratives pay much attention to the visibility of the Muslim community without referring to the complex process of theological differences and sectarian disputes taking place in the everyday socio-religious life of the people. Furthermore, these new narratives of the Hindutva groups are often instrumental in constructing a significant Muslim 'other' in the perception of the majority community. The next chapter delves into the response of the Muslim community to the rise of Hindutva politics in South Kanara. It elucidates the diverse approaches and strategies employed by various Muslim groups in addressing the political crisis, particularly in relation to Hindutva majoritarianism.

CHAPTER VI

Muslim Response to Hindutva: Exploring Differences and Contestations

Introduction

This chapter examines the ways in which the Muslim community engages with the ascendance of Hindutva politics in South Kanara. Evidently, the Muslim response to militant Hindutva does not exhibit a uniform perspective or strategy. However, scholarly accounts concerning this subject primarily concentrate on the counter-mobilisation and assertive language of the neo-Muslim political formation (NMPFs) (Santhosh & Paleri, 2021,2020; Awasthi, 2020; Emmerich, 2019a, 2019b; Sharma & Behera, 2014; Behera, 2013).

Interestingly, these studies have overlooked the diversity and contestations within the Muslim community regarding their political engagement with majoritarian politics. Against this backdrop, this study aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of the Muslim community's engagement with Hindutva politics by analysing the responses between neo-Muslim political formations (NMPFs) and traditionalist Sunni organisations, as well as their modes of operation within the community and in the public sphere.

The chapter has been divided into two sections. The first section undertakes an examination of Muslim identity politics, specifically delving into the inception and expansion of the Neo-Muslim Political Formations (NMPFs) such as Karnataka Forum for Dignity (KFD) and the Popular Front of India (PFI). South Kanara has been a fertile ground for the cadre-based Muslim political formations since the late 1990s. The emergence of KFD and its subsequent evolution into PFI, especially in South Kanara, can be seen as a significant moment in Muslim politics. By addressing

the minority issues, especially the Muslim question(s), KFD has prominently positioned itself at the forefront of Muslim politics from the beginning of the 2000s. It is significant to note that most of the literature on the Popular Front of India (PFI) predominantly revolves around endeavours either to legitimise its actions or to establish connections with extremist groups, or often drawing parallels with militant Hindutva organisations (Siyech 2021, Santhosh & Paleri 2021, 2020; Awasthi, 2020; Emmerich, 2019a, 2019b). However, instead of dealing with these binaries, this chapter aims to provide a comprehensive examination of why the KFD and PFI have emerged as significant political actors in South Kanara. Additionally, mapping the multi-faceted activities of the PFI, the chapter further aims to elucidate how they function within the Muslim community and how they intervene in the public sphere of the region. The second section of this chapter deals with the contested claims and conflicting modes of engagement between traditionalist Sunnis and NMPFs in engaging with Hindutva politics. Thereafter, the chapter unravels the self-defence and counter-mobilisation proposed by the NMPFs on the one hand and the moderate approaches of traditionalist *ulama* on the other hand. It is very significant to note that these two forces shape the complex socio-political engagements of the Muslims in South Kanara.

The Neo-Muslim Political Formations in South India

The emergence and growth of the various NMPFs in the political geography of South India has recently gained scholarly attention in the literature on identity politics and communalism. The South Indian states, particularly Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, have served as a breeding ground for assertive Muslim politics, which recently took shape into a pan-Indian organisational structure. This development can be attributed to the relatively organised Muslim politics and strong community consciousness of Muslims in the South, as well as established community resources backed by Gulf remittances. Historically, it can be observed that these new political formations

took root among the Muslims of South India in the complex political context of intense communal polarisation that took place in the 1990s (Rajamohan, 2005; Krishnakumar, 1998). Factors such as growing anxiety and resentment among the Muslim community as a result of large-scale communal riots across the country, the failure of secular institutions to ensure security for Muslims, and the apathy of mainstream secular parties in securing Muslim interests brought about a fundamental shift in the traditional pattern of Muslim politics, which paved the way for the mushrooming of neo-Muslim political formations in South India. During this period, organisations such as the Islamic Seva Sangh (ISS) and the National Development Front (NDF) in Kerala, Al Ummah and Manitha Neethi Pasarai (MNF) in Tamil Nadu, and the Karnataka Forum for Dignity in Karnataka were formed by capitalising on the anxiety and sense of insecurity experienced by Muslims (Alam, 2015; Ansari, & Subramanian, 2007). Later, organisations such as NDF, KFD, and MNP merged and established a pan-India network known as the Popular Front of India. The transition of these groups into a unified and cadre-based pan-Indian structure can be seen as a watershed in the post-Babri Muslim politics of South India.

It has been observed that the organisational network of the Students Islamic Movement of India (henceforth SIMI) had strategically been used to form these new political formations in South Indian states (Behera, 2013; Nanjappa, 2011). According to the SIMI's constitution, the upper age limit for working in the organisation was fixed at 30 years. The young cadres who left the organisation due to constitutional reasons needed an alternate platform. Furthermore, the allegations levelled against SIMI and the government's strict monitoring of its activities have necessitated new avenues to advance its mission. It led them to set up new organisations in the respective states. NDF in Kerala and Manitha Neethi Pasarai in Tamil Nadu were set up by the former leaders of SIMI, which enabled them to engage extensively with various local issues

according to the sociopolitical context of the respective state (Ansari & Subramanian, 2007). Furthermore, it can be observed that the ex-activists of SIMI wanted to gain Muslim popular support by engaging with common Muslims at the ground level instead of being an 'exclusive' student intellectual movement (Emmerich, 2019a). It later contributed to the formation of various groups in different states. It is important to note that names referring to religion or a particular community had been completely removed from the names of these organisations. The significance of such regional-level formations increased following the ban of SIMI. The formation of the NDF by a group of SIMI's early leaders in Kerala and its network and activism in North Malabar contributed to the strengthening of KFD in neighbouring South Kanara. The similarity in ideology and activities of NDF and KFD indicates the interconnection between them.

Although the surge of militant Hindutva outfits in the national and local politics remains a crucial external factor for the growth of NMPFs, the internal factors in the realm of religion, such as the impact of puritanism, pan-Islamic trends and sectarian and factious schism, also enable these groups to make inroads into the Muslim politics (Ayoob, 2019). Therefore, the growth of the NMPFs must be understood in the larger framework instead of depicting it as a mere reaction to militant Hindu nationalism. By tracing the history and growth of KFD and PFI, the following sections detail the broader background for the emergence of NMPFs in South Kanara.

Early Muslim Response to the Saffron Surge

In the late 1960s, militant Hindu nationalism was on the rise in some pockets of South Kanara, eventually reaching a level where it was perceived as a threat to the Muslims of the region (Sayeed, 2016; Assadi, 1999, 2001). Historically, the first recorded Hindu-Muslim communal riot in the region's history broke out in Mangalore city in 1968, which caused a rift in the inter-community relation between the Hindus and Muslims. Soon after, an organisation named Muslim Central

Committee was formed at Mangalore with the view of resolving the communal tensions in undivided Dakshina Kannada and representing the community in all-party meetings and other Government and civil society bodies. Founded by Adv. M C Ahmed, in 1968, the Muslim Central Committee functioned as a common platform of the Muslim community of South Kanara (Katipalla, 2018). By maintaining associations with local politicians and the *ulama*, this committee acts as an intermediary to address the issues faced by victims of communal riots with the government agencies. Additionally, it attempts to establish a harmonious relationship with other religious communities, particularly with the Hindus. (Mangaluru: Muslim Central Committee to Hold Golden Jubilee, 2018). It was the first initiative of the community mediated by the Muslim leaders and the *Ulama* to address the communal tension.

The study conducted by Kuthur (2019) has elucidated the early phase of communal conflicts in Dakshina Kannada during the late 1960s. While she underscores the crucial role of Hindutva outfits like RSS and Jan Sangh in exacerbating communal divisions and inciting riots, she also refers to the aggressive reactions of the Muslims during these turbulent times. As she pointed out, the Sangh Parivar was unable to easily target the Muslims during this period because the Hindutva movement did not secure significant political dominance over the region until 1980. Additionally, she argues that although successive Congress governments failed to permanently eliminate communal tensions, the police and other government institutions were not entirely partial to any community during the 1960s and 1970s. Hence, the Hindutva outfits were not entirely successful in garnering institutional support for such communal riots during those periods.

Drawing insights from the interviews with the senior citizens of Mangalore city, it can be understood that there were counter-attacks from the Muslim community as well. The early Muslim responses to the Hindutva onslaught could rather be seen as an issue-based action/reaction of the

community according to various localities and contexts. Recollecting the brutal scenes during the riot of 1968, Salam Haji, an older Muslim trader in Bundur, said, “they had killed one of us and fired a Masjid (Sha Meer Syed Ali Mosque) at Car Street. Upon hearing this news, our people started to fire the warehouse of the Goudas in Bunder” (personal communication, May 28, 2019). Further discussions with interviewees have unearthed analogous instances of such reactions during periods marked by communal unrest. The instances of communal conflicts increased steadily when the militant Hindutva gained strength in the coastal belt in the 1980s. As a response to the new developments, the Muslims began to organise themselves in communally sensitive pockets. Hakeem Kudroli, a fish merchant from Mangalore city, recollects, “we had set up a team in our village to defend RSS people when they come to attack our masjid” (personal communication, May 25, 2019). The communal conflicts intensified in the region after the demolition of Babri masjid (Assadi, 2023; Sood, 2022). Hussain Kattipalla, a Beary singer and a victim of a communal riot in 1992, recalls the brutal incidents that happened in his hometown, Katipalla. He elaborates that:

> A group of violent Hindus rushed into the mosque at Angarakuni and killed a person sleeping inside. The news spread very soon, and as a reaction, the Muslims gathered in Katipalla and chopped off the hand of a Hindu named Keshav, an innocent person and my childhood friend. The Hindu rioters started to fire shops and throw stones at Muslim houses. When stones hit our home, my brother and I came outside, and they began to beat us brutally. When I got a blow on the head, I fainted. After that, I underwent treatment for a month at Unity Hospital in Mangalore. Only twelve days later, my consciousness was returned. That is when I realised that my younger brother was dead in that incident (personal communication, January 1, 2019).

It can be understood that during instances of communal tension, the Muslim community in the region organised themselves locally and sometimes responded in a similar manner to aggression from Hindutva groups ("Hindu Muslim Riots gives Karnataka State,"1999) However, the reactions of the Muslim community in the 1970s and 1980s cannot be viewed as part of a larger political project. Despite the local efforts of the Muslim community to defend against the Sangh Parivar, these actions lacked official backing or patronage from prominent Muslim religious and political organisations. Additionally, while the Muslim political parties, such as the Indian Union Muslim League (henceforth IUML) and Indian National League, are very active in the bordering districts of northern Kerala, they have not been able to influence the Muslim politics of South Kanara. Muslims rather supported INC or Janta Dal as their primary political choice.

The Rampant Communal Conflicts and the Growth of NMPFs in 1990s

The dispute over the Babri Masjid, coupled with recurrent communal conflicts in the 1990s, has provided a conducive environment for the consolidation of Hindutva politics and Muslim counter-mobilization in South Kanara (Kathur, 2019; Sayeed,2016). During this period, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) emerged as a predominant political force in South Kanara, primarily since the early 1990s. Hindutva rhetoric and the growing influence of its various organisations in local politics have rendered the Muslim community susceptible to becoming a soft target for their political agenda (Kathur, 2019). On the other hand, it is important to note that the Hindutva forces were able to utilise the institutional support as a result of the political dominance achieved by the BJP. The hate campaign spearheaded by Sangh Parivar, as well as recurrent communal outbreaks following the demolition of Babri masjid, had furthered the Muslim community's anxiety regarding their existence and security. The complex political scenario of this period, characterised by factors such as the widespread communal violence in South Kanara, the ascendancy of the BJP,

the incapability of secular political parties such as the INC and Janata Dal to address Muslim concerns, and the shortcomings of the legal system in dealing with communal issues, all facilitated the rise of the NMPFs in the region (Mondal, 2015).

During the 1990s, various oppositions were formed within the Muslim community to address the concerns of its members over these developments. While some aimed to address the broader issues of the Muslims, such as socio-economic and educational backwardness, the others focused on organising the Muslim youths against Sangh Parivar. One such group, the Muslim Youth Federation (MYF), was formed in Mangalore to address the social backwardness of the Muslim community. According to Sadakathulla Faisy, the Chief Imam of Zeenat Baksh Mosque in Mangalore, "from the beginning of the 1990s, various defensive groups appeared in different pockets of Dakshina Kannada. *Badar Dala* in Goodinabali was one of its kind" (personal communication, December 12, 2018). Majeed, a grocery merchant who hails from Bantwal and is now sixty-three, added, "Badar Dala was formed when Bajrang Dal became active in Dakshina Kannada. Their posters often appeared in the public places of Bantwal and Goodinabali" (personal communication, December 16, 2018).

From the early 1990s, the role of Abul Nasar Madani, an Islamic speaker turned political activist from South Kerala, was instrumental in mobilising Muslim youth against Hindutva. Madani's speeches, which focused on Islamic and political themes, gained widespread popularity among the Muslim public sphere of Kerala and South Kanara during those periods (Siddique, 2005). His powerful oratory skills, as well as his inflammatory speeches condemning the politics of the Sangh Parivar and highlighting the vulnerability of Muslims in post-independent India, attracted thousands of Muslim youths to his camp. Madani formed Islamic Seva Sangh (ISS), a nonpolitical social organisation, in 1991 with the prime objective of countering Hindutva when the Muslim

community was concerned about pervasive communal tensions following L.K Adhwani's *rath yatra* (Shahina, 2013). This was in contrast to the moderate and pro-Congress stance of IUML and community leaders, thus triggering a new discourse in the Muslim politics of the 1990s.

Madani disbanded the ISS and formed a new political party named the People's Democratic Party (PDP) when the Union Government banned ISS in 1992 due to the communal unrest subsequent to the demolition of Babri Masjid (Menon, n.d.). The PDP became a decisive presence in some constituencies and posed severe challenges to the dominant political parties, especially the INC and IUML (Chekutty et al., 1999). As Madani is a Sunni religious scholar, his speeches and political activism could attract the Muslim masses across the Kerala state and the bordering districts of Karnataka and Tamilnadu. Jabir, a postgraduate from the University of Delhi hailing from Sullia, Dakshina Kannada, recollects that "Similar to Kerala, Madani's audio cassettes had got an amazing circulation in Dakshina Kannada and Kodagu" (personal communication, January 10, 2017). When Madani formed ISS, its influence also extended to South Kanara. Nevertheless, neither ISS nor PDP managed to exert a substantial impact in South Kanara, primarily due to a lack of competent leadership. It can be observed that although Madani gained popularity in South Kanara, his efforts did not transform into an organisational set-up in the region due to a lack of networking and coordination. Additionally, Madani's arrest in 1998 and his subsequent long period of imprisonment left his party leaderless, which eventually caused the decline of the PDP.[32] However, all such developments, particularly in the post-Babri political context, made the Muslims socially more conscious.

[32] Following the alleged involvement in the Coimbatore bomb blast in 1998, Madani was arrested by Kerala police and later on transferred to the custody of Tamil Nadu police.

Furthermore, the discourse raised by Madani and his sudden absence owing to imprisonment caused to infiltrate the cadre based Muslim organisations such as NDF and KFD into the Muslim youth (Ansari & Subramanian, 2007; Chekutty et al., 1999; Menon, 1998).

The Emergence and Growth of KFD.

The formation of KFD can be understood as a landmark in the history of Muslim Politics in South Kanara. In a short span of time after its formation, the KFD transformed into a vital organisation that could have a greater influence on Muslims of the region. During its inception, the KFD was introduced as a non-party social base for the Muslim community, emphasising the need for self-defence and *da'wah* (Propagation of Islam). KFD was officially formed in Mangalore in 2001 with the primary objective of enabling the Muslim community to resist the Hindutva onslaughts (Kathur, 2019; Raghuram, 2011). The idea of self-defence asserted by KFD could gain popular support from the Muslim community, especially in communally sensitive areas of the Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts. The broader changes in the realm of politics and religion in South Kanara had been crucial in the growth of KFD. Alongside the post-Babri political milieu, the broader religious developments, such as the impact of puritanism, pan-Islamic trends, and sectarian and factional schisms within the Muslim community, had created a conducive environment for KFD. The KFD had succeeded in expanding its social base by using these developments effectively. They were able to make greater influence and gain ground support in South Kanara than that of NDF, the counterpart of KFD in Kerala. Compared with North Malabar, intense communal polarisation has taken place in South Kanara since the early 1990s (Sayeed 2016; Kathur 2019; Bhardwaj, 2017). The failure of the Congress-led Union and state governments to prevent communal carnage made Muslims lose hope in Congress politics. It was the time when Sangh Parivar unleashed extensive attacks against the Muslim community across South Karnataka.

The traditional secular parties and Muslim political leadership were unable to settle the communal situation. Recurrent communal outbreaks, the alarming growth of the BJP in Karnataka, particularly in South Kanara, and the incapability of Congress and Janata Dal governments to ensure security for the Muslims were the important political crises faced by the community in the state in the 1990s. Moreover, as a trading community, their survival and livelihood came under threat. Highlighting the political threats faced by Muslims, the KFD entered the scene at the right time. Along with the rampant communalisation, the lack of adequate political alternatives to secure Muslim interests granted a favourable political ground for KFD.

From the interviews with the Muslims from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, it could be observed that there is a pervasive perception among Muslims that the legal system, particularly the police, is not treating Muslims fairly and appears to be working in favour of the Sangh Parivar. For instance, during a discussion at his shop in Bunder, Mangalore, on communal violence, Ashraf Kinara, a grocery merchant in Bunder, Mangalore, asserted, "here we have three enemies to be encountered. The first one is definitely RSS itself, the next is the police officers, and the third is Congress politicians who sided with Sangha Parivar" (personal communication, December 2, 2022). The NMPFs has been able to exploit such resentments and insecurities that have existed among Muslims for many years.

The KFD propagated that neither the Government nor the judiciary had been able to ensure the security of Muslims, and therefore, the community must be prepared to defend themselves. It had been alleged that the Congress and Janata Dal governments utterly failed to prevent the violence unleashed by militant Hindutva groups in Karnataka and that the community would be in danger if it continued to support the traditional secular parties. It is important to note that the INC has been blamed both by the Hindutva groups as well as the PFI, accusing it of playing vote bank

politics and appeasing the respective religious communities to hold power (Kathur,2019). The idea of self-defence to resist the Hindutva onslaught and the campaign emphasising the unity of the Muslim community irrespective of the ideological differences, particularly the post-Babri political scenario of the region, could attract a significant section of the Muslim community to the ideological fold of KFD. The pervasive communal circumstances of South Kanara and the failure of secular institutions was sufficient for KFD to convince the Muslim mass.

NDF and KFD; Birds of a Feather Flock Together

The formation of the NDF can be attributed to the tumultuous communal situation of the later quarter of the twentieth century. Although it was officially formed at Calicut in 1993, it started functioning with different names years before its official appearance in the public domain (Kunhammed Faisy, 2018). Tracing back the history of NDF, it was initially formed as Nadapuram Defence Force in a coastal village named Nadapuram, located in the Calicut district of Kerala, in the backdrop of the recurrent communal tension between the Ezhava[33] community and the Muslim community. The political backup enjoyed by the Ezhava community, chiefly from CPIM and the then state government, pushed a section of Muslim youth in the region to organise themselves as a defensive force. However, they could not acquire the support of prominent Muslim religious organisations or dominant Muslim political parties such as IUML.

Taking advantage of this situation, SIMI's early leaders took over this local organisation and expanded its operations throughout North Malabar, renaming it the National Defence Force. Concealing its main icon of 'defence,' the National Defence Force was further renamed National Development Front at a conference held at Calicut in 1993. Collaborating with human rights

[33] The Ezhava community in Kerala, a Hindu group classified as one of the Other Backward Communities (OBCs)

organisations and progressive social activists, the NDF began to appear in the public sphere of Kerala. By organising a massive rally on Human Rights Day on 10th December 1994 at Calicut, NDF assertively posed the discourse on social justice and development (Kunhammed Faisy, 2018). Through such events, notable progressive thinkers were connected with the organisation that tactically used to make a conspicuous secular tag in the public sphere. NDF was able to take root in South Kerala as well due to the vacuum in Muslim politics when Madani was arrested and jailed for a long period (Chekutty et al., 1999; Krishnakumar,1998). On the other hand, within a few years of its formation, it was allegedly committed in many criminal cases, including political murders and inciting communal tension (Khader,2018).

KFD was officially formed seven years after the formation of the NDF. However, many similarities can be found in the formation, ideology and functioning system of the two organisations. During their formation, both organisations were introduced as a non-party and non-sectarian movement for the propagation of Islam *(da'wa)* and to tackle the contemporary socio-political crisis faced by the community. Therefore, the Muslim youth, irrespective of sectarian deference, was attracted to this fold. It is important to note that these organisations appeared in the public sphere only years after their formation (Kunhammed Faisy, 2018; Khader, 2018). During those periods, they were able to find physical, legal, and financial backup and also build up an organisational structure. Recruiting for their cadre network was conducted in a confidential manner. Through a series of study classes and physical training, these NMPFs had been able to build a larger cadre system dedicated to them. Thus, as soon as they appeared in the public domain, they were capable of presenting their well-organised structure and trained volunteers.

Both organisations brought out a secular and progressive outlook in their posturing in socio-political spaces. They extensively organised conferences and public gatherings on human rights violations and atrocities against the minorities, particularly the Muslim community. However, for grassroots mobilisation, both organisations had invoked militant elements and victimhood politics, highlighting the police atrocities and other communally sensitive issues happening in the country and abroad (Krishnan, 2014).

The interviews carried out with the present and former cadres of KFD, NDF, PFI, and the Muslim leaders and the youth with different political and sectarian backgrounds shed light on how these groups penetrated the youth and how they managed to build up a relatively strong cadre system. The cadres are made up through a series of confidential workshops with clear-cut modules combining religious texts and accounts of atrocities and persecutions against the Muslim community.

After completing these sessions, physical and martial arts training would be given to the selected cadres. Projecting communally sensitive issues and victimisation of the community, offering rewards from God, NDF caught up youngsters to its ideological fold and brought up full-time vigilant and dedicated activists in order to carry out its everyday activities.

Musaf, a higher secondary teacher from Kasargod district who was active in NDF during its inception, highlights these factors. He attended its training sessions for joining NDF along with his friend named Ijaz-Ul-Haq. However, both left the organisation later as there was strong criticism against its activities, chiefly from the mainstream Islamic organisations and political parties.

Recollecting his time in NDF during the early 1990s, Musaf reflected:

> They gave five orientation classes for those who intend to join the organisation. Its trained cadres present emotionally influencing subjects throughout these sessions. There is no doubt that anyone who listens to these classes would be brainwashed. After the fourth-day sessions, they instructed the new batch to perform religion perfectly, including offering Subh namaz at the right time in the early morning at the nearby masjid for at least ten days. After these tasks, they organised the fifth-day sessions in which the freshers could decide whether to continue in NDF or not. People who took *bay'ah* (pledge of allegiance) in the final session, would be added to the cadres of NDF (personal communication, December 5, 2018).

He further added that in the fifth-day session, they attempted to convince the new batch that "you may face many troubles when you become NDF volunteers. Suppose you may be martyred. The reward for all this is that you will get heaven in the hereafter" (Musaf, personal communication, December 5, 2018). The NDF interpreted the Islamic texts according to their organisational concerns. In contrast with the moderate approach of *ulama*, they propagated aggressive interpretations of the concept of jihad in Islam to legitimise its activism. Its cadres are made to believe that they will be rewarded a high position of Shaheed(martyr) in heaven if they die for the organisation (Prashanth,2018). Ijas-Ul-Haq, Musaf's' friend, added that:

> They did not compel anyone to take the *bayʿah* to join NDF in the final session of its study class. They only recruited people who dared to join them. Though all its trainees were not promoted to NDF's cadre list, they were sure that people who attended all its study classes would not leave its ideology (personal communication, December 5, 2018).

Interpreting its ideologies through the framework of religion and constantly pressing the thoughts of the people through victimisation, these NMPFs tactically attempted to create a network of a vigilante group at the grassroots level.

During an interview, a former secretary of SKSSF shared his memory of when he worked for NDF during his pre-degree period. He shared an interesting story on how NDF used the instances to make a vigilant network at the local level. He reflected that:

> I remember a meeting that took place in my village just a few days before the first anniversary of the demolition of Babri Masjid. We were instructed to take some precautionary measures on its anniversary. The name NDF did not officially exist at that time. Its volunteers told us not to leave our hometown on that day, and if anyone intended to travel outside of their native place, they had to report to the team leader. In between the session, the volunteer took out a bundle of pocket knives, which were distributed to us and told us to keep it on the waist on the anniversary (personal communication, July 25, 2021).

Along the lines of NDF, the KFD, as an organisation, initially did not appear in the public domain until it was officially launched in 2001. The Surathkal riot of 1998 is said to be the immediate reason for the formation of KFD. Mondale (2015) observes that this riot provided an entry point for KFD to appear in the public sphere. However, it had been working in Dakshina Kannada since the beginning of the 1990s without being known by any specific name. By the end of the 1990s, various such groups functioning at the local level had been coordinated and appeared with a new name- Karnataka Forum for Dignity (KFD).

During an interview at Adyar, Dakshina Kannad, in 2020, a former volunteer of KFD reflected upon his time in the organisation until he left in 2002:

> I was working with Muslim Youth Federation (MYF)[34] those days. Before the official formation of KFD, I was invited to participate in the first meeting in Mangalore with my colleagues. We were informed that the main agenda of that meeting was about the formation of an organisation for Muslim youths to respond to the backwardness of the community and social evil practices. However, we were asked to reply that it was a meeting to organise a football tournament if someone else would inquire about this meeting. NDF leaders from Kasargod took our study class that day. After the series of study classes held at Mangalore and Kasargod, the leader asked everyone to hold his hand and take the *bayʿah* (pledge of allegiance). Then we were told that the hand you hold is not mine but the hand of Allah. It felt like we were all so inspired after class (personal communication, August 25, 2021).

Before it appeared in the public sphere of Karnataka, KFD had organised several closed meetings in Dakshina Kannada and bordering districts of Kerala. By the time KFD was formed, the NDF had grown into a strong cadre system with a broader network across Kerala. The organisational network and other resources of the NDF in north Malabar helped the KFD to carry out its activities properly in South Kanara. As mentioned earlier, during its formation, the KFD was introduced to the Muslim community as an independent organisation, not affiliated with any political party or sectarian group. Therefore, its cadres could strategically work in various political parties and Muslim organisations. Using this opportunity, the KFD was able to recruit a plenty of youngsters

[34] Muslim Youth Federation was formed in Mangalore in early 1990's to address the social backwardness of the Muslim community.

from various political and sectarian backgrounds to its organisational platform. Hamza Musliyar, a madrassa teacher in Mangalore, said, "first, they (KFD) found the people with leadership qualities, working in various organisations. Then they approached them by talking about an independent organisation working for the upliftment of the Muslim community"(personal communication, January 3, 2019).

Sadakathullah Faisy, the chief imam of Bander mosque, said, "there was a team working within KFD to entice people from different Muslim organisations who have impressive leadership qualities (personal communication, December 8, 2018). Nisam Bantwal, the former resource person of KFD, said, "I was offered a job, family apartment, and car in Bangalore if I were willing to coordinate their activities" (personal interview, June 10, 2021). Nishad, a local leader of Jamaat E Islami, said, "they could find people from all Muslim organisations as they did not publically involve any kind of controversial theological debate among the Muslim organisations" (personal communication, May 25, 2019). After its formation, KFD was soon able to catch the direct victims of the communal violence unleashed by Militant Hindutva outfits. Sadakathullah Faisy said that "KFD was soon able to build a network between the Muslim cattle traders as they were widely attacked" (personal communication, December 12, 2018). The insecurity of butchers and cattle traders quickly brought them closer to the KFD.

KFD's trained resource persons imparted its ideology to the youngsters through a series of study classes. Areas with little access to the public were generally preferred for such classes. Aboobacker, a Gram Panchayat counsellor representing the INC in Sajipa Nadu, said, "before it was officially formed, many of its (KFD's) activities had taken place in this locality. Its meetings were usually organised in uninhabited hilly areas.

At that time, they were nicknamed *Gupta Sangatane* (Hidden organisation)" (personal communication, September 21, 2021). In an interview at his residence in Kalladka, a former KFD leader reflected upon how they had organised the study classes confidentially. He said that:

> The resource person who takes the class would come at the right time. We would not have any idea what his name is or where he came from. He would say Assalam Alaikum and then start the session by reciting Surah Al-Fatiha. Their names and other personal information were not disclosed to us, and they never asked anything about our details (personal communication, December10, 2019).

By recalling the formation of KFD, Hyder Darimi, the editor of Sunni Sandesha, a Kannada monthly magazine, said, "it was all about mysterious things regarding its formation, leaders and finance. It was too late for me to realise that many of my friends were cadres of this group." It can be understood that the KFD also embraced a similar modus operandi to the NDF in conducting its organisational activities, maintaining strict confidentiality regarding information about its members and resources (Kunhammed Faisy, 2018; Krishnan 2014) It is significant to note that, in addition to the political situation fraught with communal tensions, the new developments in the religious affairs of the Muslim community also facilitated KFD's access to the Muslim Mahal Jamaats. Puritan ideology and the split among Sunnis and sectarian schism have played a crucial role in getting acceptance to the entry of KFD.

Puritanism and Radicalisation of Religion

It has been observed that puritan discourses on cultural and religious practices, to a certain extent, have contributed to the radicalisation of Islam (Sharma, 2017; Madhan, 2016; Horstmann, 2011). The Salafi movements in India played a decisive role in establishing a puritanical approach to the

everyday socio-religious practice of the Muslim community (Sahni, 2022; Ayoob, 2019). In South Kanara, the organisations such as South Karnataka Salafi Movement (SKSM) and Tablighi Jamaat have been instrumental in bringing up puritanical thought. They argued that many of the conventional/traditional practices of the Muslims are un-Islamic and need to be abandoned. The puritan ideologies also compelled common Muslims to redefine their rituals and sharpen their religious boundaries. Furthermore, it was capable of weakening the syncretic culture of the South Kanara.

With the increase in Gulf Migration, the Salafi movement began to gain popularity in South Kanara. Many expatriates returned to their homeland with Salafi ideas picked from the Gulf countries. The Salafis, backed by their West Asian networks, launched a vigorous campaign against the locally routed Islamic practices of the majority Sunni Muslims. Raising the discourse on *Bid'ah* (innovation in religion) and *Shirk* (associating partners with God), the Salafists argued that the conventional practices of the Sunnis, such as *Urs*, veneration of Dargah, *Mouleed,* celebrating the birthday of the Prophet, etc. are innovations in religion, that they are the mere imitation of the non-Muslim practices which harmful to the true faith in god (Hashim, 2014; Osella & Osella,2008).

For ordinary Muslims, the vast majority of them adhere to traditional Sunni Islam, this propaganda made a great sense of confusion in their religious belief and practices. The Sunnis were compelled to redefine their religious limits and boundaries, which eventually reduced the scope of syncretic culture. Gradually, beliefs and practices are bound with rigidity, especially upon those practices in which Muslims maintain proximity with other communities.

During an interview, Amjed Ali, a Salafi ideology, said that:

> We insist that people avoid all other books except the Quran and Hadith. Here, most of the rituals followed by the Sunnis are similar to Hindus. They all are mimicking other religions. The *Muliyars* (Sunni *ulama*) are misleading the people. It is our responsibility to propagate true faith (personal communication, June 12, 2017).

While discussing the debates on *Shirk* and *Bida'th,* Sayeed Ashadi, a Sunni religious scholar, said that "Bearys were the main petty traders and street vendors during the festivals taking place in the temples. There was a belief among the Hindus that the puja item must be purchased from the shop of the Bearys" (personal communication, June 10, 2017). He elaborated that "in some temples, the firing works associated with the festivals were also assigned to the Bearys. We cannot say that these practices are part of pure Islamic tradition, but the *ulama* did not announce any *fatwa* against such systems. It was the necessity of the region for mutual existence" (personal communication, June 10, 2017).

Referring to the impact of puritanism, Sadakathulla Faisy said that "now we are compelled to change some of our earlier systems as part of responding to the Salafis' allegations" (personal communication, December 12, 2018). BA Moideen, the former education minister of Karnataka, made a similar observation. He said, "in earlier days, there was no problem when we went to Hindus' festivals and watched Yakshagana. However, now, people think that it is harmful to Islam. It is impossible to apply Arabian Islam in this place" (personal communication, June 12, 2017). During a long discussion with Umer UH, a Beary writer, who reflected on the recent shift in the syncretic culture of the region.

He said, "*bhoota* worship was a part of local Hindu tradition. As for them, even respectable Muslims would be venerated as *bhoota* after their death. Aalibootha and Bobbaraaya were the famous Muslim *bhoota*. Now, a Muslim *bhoota* cannot appear here. If that happens anyway, Muslims would not recognise such beliefs" (personal communication, June 13, 2017).

This transformation induced the Muslim community to limit their cultural engagement with other communities. In other words, these changes endorsed by the Muslims owing to the pan-Islamic trends and puritanism have been led to the waning of regional characteristics of Islam and the Muslim community, on which the Bearys had retained cultural proximity to other religious communities in some ways of belief, practices, and way of life. This self-absorption of the Muslim community has led to the alienation of the Muslims in the public sphere, especially when the Hindutva rhetoric strives to foment communalism. The radicalisation of religion owing to the puritan discourse naturally benefited the growth of NMPFs.

Split in Samastha Kerala Jamiyyathul Ulama

Apart from the political circumstances, the intense factional conflicts, especially within the Sunnis, have granted a favourable environment for the KFD to penetrate the Muslim community. KFD had been taken advantage of the split of 1989 that took place in Samastha Kerala Jamiyyathul Ulama, the largest Muslim organisation in Kerala and South Kanara led by the Sunni *ulama*. Historically, the Bearys keep a close relationship with the Kerala *ulama* in terms of their religious affairs. In this regard, even the minor undercurrents pertaining to the religious affairs of the Muslims of Kerala would have a relational reflection in South Kanara. The split in Samastha divided Sunnis into two groups: AP Sunnis and EK Sunnis. By leading the majority of the Mosque and madrassas, the EK Sunnis remain the largest Sunni organisation in Kerala and South Kanara. However, over time, the AP faction evolved into a well-organised group with a semi-cadre system and emerged

as a pressure group in local politics, even though most Sunnis belong to EK Samastha. Using their organisational structure and political connections to assert control over religious institutions, such as mosques, madrassas, and dargahs, in South Kanara, which led to an open confrontation between them.

For KFD, it was a good opportunity to penetrate to the grassroots level as the two dominant factions extensively engaged in the power wrangles. In Kerala, both AP and EK factions have taken a stern stance against the NDF from the very beginning. However, due to the recurrent communal outbreaks and sectarian disputes, both Sunni factions were negligent of the growth of KFD. As a Sunni organisation with a moderate approach and a non-cadre organisational structure, it was easy for KFD to engage with the local leaders and adherents of the Samastha EK faction. Some religious teachers and youth wing leaders of Samastha had worked in both organisations at a time (Prashanth, 2018). Numerous adherents of the Samasta EK faction were identified as simultaneously maintaining dual affiliations within both the KFD and Samastha, signifying a complex phenomenon that was particularly conspicuous in regions characterised by heightened tensions and disputes among the AP-EK factions.

The KFD and the Samastha EK faction had no formal relations, but an informal collaboration was evident in certain localities at the grassroots level. The EK Sunnis leveraged the KFD's support in order to counter the AP faction's endeavours to assume control over religious institutions. On the other side, the KFD strategically capitalised on the factional dispute in two ways. They effectively utilised the opportunity to collaborate with the EK Sunnis, thereby expanding their organisational endeavours at the grassroots level. Simultaneously, they vehemently condemned the sectarian and factious disputes, arguing that the religious leadership was primarily engaged in ‘insignificant’ debate while the community faced a serious threat in the country. The KFD advocated for Muslim

unity to counter Hindutva onslaughts, asserting that the Muslim religious leadership did not adequately address the threat posed by Hindutva groups. However, the KFD refrained from overtly waging a public campaign against the Muslim religious leadership. By applying this dual strategy, they were able to attract both the common and educated Muslim youth into the fold of the KFD.

The internal tie-up between EK Sunnis and PFI at the grassroots level broke down after the resolution was made by Samastha during their 90th-anniversary conference held on December 13, 2015, in Mangalore. During the concluding session of the event, Abdul Hameed Faisy, a leader of Samastha's youth wing, vehemently criticised the activities of the KFD and PFI and urged Samastha's adherents not to engage in any joint endeavours with them (Capman Media, n.d.) Reflecting on Samastha's standpoint regarding the KFD and PFI as articulated during the 90th-anniversary conference, Nseeb, a local leader of SKSSF said, "The people who belong to both organisations were actually a little bit confused. We lost many of our members in some areas. People from more communally sensitive areas stood with PFI" (personal communication, January 21, 2020). Sadakathulla Faisy, added "it was too late when Samasta officially announced not to support PFI. By the time this circular we received, PFI could influence a sizable number of Muslim youths" (personal communication, January 20, 2020). These developments later led to the open contestation between Samastha and PFI.

From KFD to Popular Front of India.

The formation of the Popular Front of India can be seen as a turning point in Muslim identity politics in South India, particularly in Karnataka. When the PFI and its political affiliates began representing the Muslim community on controversial issues and in electoral politics, Muslim politics and community identity underwent significant changes. As a successor of the KFD, it has emerged as a significant socio-political actor in the coastal districts of Karnataka since its

formation. Popular Front of India was formed in 2006 at Calicut by merging three state-level organisations: NDF of Kerala, KFD of Karnataka, and MNP of Tamil Nadu. Later on, in 2009, five more organisations merged with PFI, namely Citizen's Forum (Goa), Community Social and Educational Society (Rajasthan), Nagarik Adhikar Suraksha Samiti (West Bengal), Lilong Social Forum (Manipur), and Association of Social Justice (Andhra Pradesh) (Dev, 2020).

This move made the PFI more powerful structurally and functionally, and it has been elevated to a national level organisation. After broadening its base, PFI shifted its headquarters from Calicut to Delhi, and it claims to have its presence in 22 states and more than five lakh nationwide membership (Purkayastha, 2022; Babu, 2020; Dev, 2020; Ameerudheen, 2017).

PFI itself introduces a cadre-based mass movement committed to social justice and socio-cultural and political empowerment of the backward communities, Dalits, and minorities.[35] In contrast to other Muslim political parties such as All India Majlis-E-Ittehadul Muslimeen and IUML, the PFI and its political offshoot do not use the terms indicating its religious affiliation in its name and constitution, instead, it project secular and democratic terms in its official records.

According to its constitution, drafted on January 26, 2010, PFI's membership is open to all citizens who agree with the objectives and structure of the organisation. The PFI put forward eighteen stated objectives, including its commitment to national integration, secular order, and the rule of law.

[35] According to the pamphlets provided by the PFI from its district headquarters, Mangalore.

As per the seventh and eighth objectives of its constitution, the PFI would work:

- To adopt suitable means to protect the dignity, lives and properties of the marginalised sections and to work for their empowerment.
- To endeavour for the protection of the cultural, social and religious identity of the tribals, the Dalits and the minorities (*Popular Front of India Constitution*, 2014, p.5).

Highlighting its secular posturing and constitutional approach, the PFI itself claims that it is a secular organisation that raises the discourses on social justice, equality and security, marginalisation. However, its cadres have been accused of involvement in rioting, political murders, fomenting communal polarisation and moral policing (Ameerudheen, 2017). Furthermore, PFI has been facing the allegation that it has collaborated with antinational terrorist organisations such as ISIS. Nevertheless, the PFI has constantly denied all such allegations and accuses the BJP-led government of misusing investigative agencies to witch hunt PFI.

Echoing the state narratives, most of the literature on PFI introduces it as a radical/extremist Islamic outfit which poses a severe threat to national security (Awasthi, 2020; Sharma & Behera, 2014; Behera, 2013). However, recent scholarship on Muslim Politics provides a nuanced understanding of PFI and its multifaceted activities, and it presents PFI as a major turning point in the post-Babri Muslim politics in the country (Siyech, 2021; Santhosh & Paleri, 2021;2020; Emmerich, 2019, 2019a). Nonetheless, some of these works are characterised by enthusiasm in giving legitimacy to PFI's cause. For instance, emphasising its legal pragmatism, grievance-based citizen politics, welfare initiatives and secular posturing, Emmerich and Siyech introduce the PFI as a neo-Islamic movement that assertively addresses the social backwardness and challenges faced by the Muslim community under the Hindutva regime. On the contrary, it can be seen that they ignore the involvement of PFI in deepening communal polarisation at the grassroots level.

In his ethnographic study on PFI, Emmerich (2019a) observes that the emergence of PFI indicates a fundamental shift in Muslim politics that the legal and political education imparted to its cadres caused to raise their confidence and reduce their insecurity under the Hindutva regime. For him (2019), PFI promotes a constitutional approach using the assertive language of institutional justice and human rights. He remarks that:

> The PFI's language of legal empowerment, self-respect, and professionalism resonated more strongly with young Muslims than the obedient and inward-looking approach to politics of their parent's generation and the *ulama*. Hence, through its legal pragmatism and political education, combined with various welfare initiatives, the PFI facilitates meaningful life experiences that are highly responsive to part of its predominantly young-adult cadre base (p.471).

Similar to the view of Emmerich, Siyech (2021) argues that PFI proposes a new model of Muslim politics by addressing concerns of the Muslim community in the context of the trauma caused by the destruction of Babri Masjid and the subsequent riots. For him, it is a frequently misunderstood organisation by the allegations of the state agencies and mainstream media, which discredit the political engagement of the Muslim community by looking through only the prism of terrorism and extremism. He says that PFI cannot be framed as an extremist group, as it widely carries out charitable works and engages in politics by establishing alliances with various local parties and upholding the constitutional system. Additionally, he normalises the violence committed by its activists by asserting they are the local elements within PFI and the organisation itself, and its leaders did not come forward to justify such acts.

On the other hand, Emmerich and Siyech do not take into account the way PFI approaches communally sensitive issues and the repercussions it creates in a multi-religious society. The provocative actions of the PFI have often been criticised not only by secularists but also by various other Muslim organisations, as they argue that these actions intensify communal polarisation. There is also widespread criticism that many of the PFI's activities only serve to reinforce the stereotypical image toward the Muslim community. The infamous hand-chopping case, subsequent to the allegation of insulting the Prophet by a college professor in Kerala, was one of such kind (Sudhi, 2023). Following the controversy over insulting the Prophet, the police registered a case against the professor under Section 295 of the IPC for hurting religious sentiments. However, within a few days, the accused Professor TJ. Joseph was attacked by the PFI activists, and the assailants cut off his hand.[36] Responding to this issue, a Sunni leader from South Kerala said, "Our secular society initially isolated the professor for his heinous attempt to insult the Prophet. He was also suspended from the college, which functions under Christian management. However, when the PFI chopped off his hand, he garnered public support (personal communication, December 7, 2018). It is noteworthy that, on this issue, the mainstream Muslim organisation in Kerala did not come forward to support the PFI. Moreover, organisations, including Samastha, have condemned such violent modes of protest by pointing out that it would discredit Islam and the entire Muslim communities. It can be argued that such aggressive responses, particularly in the context of rampant Islamophobia, only serve to further isolate Muslims in the public sphere.

[36] Many of those arrested in this case were affiliated with the Popular Front or its offshoots.

It is significant to note that, while introducing the politics of PFI within a progressive paradigm, scholars such as Emmerich (2019, 2019a) ignore the pacifistic approach of Muslim religious leadership (the *Ulama*), which played a significant role in maintaining the social fabric. It is important to note that the moderate approach adopted by the *ulama* was highly praised by the secularists in several instances, especially in the post-Babri socio-political context. Essentializing the *ulama* as an inward-looking and ritual-focused group, Emmerich says that the *Ulama* holds on to the outdated tradition, and they are not able to cater for the contemporary needs of the Muslim community. Arguing so, he presents the PFI as a right-conscious young generation civil society movement fighting for social justice by engaging with the democratic process and legal system of the country.

On the contrary, emerging scholarship offers a comprehensive understanding of *Ulama* activism in the post-colonial period (Visakh et al., 2021; Zaman, 2010; Sikand, 2009). Zaman (2010) observes that in adapting to post-colonial challenges and engaging with the modern state, the *ulama* plays a key role in shaping Muslims in the public sphere. Sikand (2009) pays attention to the initiatives of traditionalist Sunni *Ulama* in promoting modern education and the modernisation of religious educational institutions. He found that the *Ulama* took a bold initiative to reform their religious education system, which is now capable of sending its graduates to India's premier higher education institutes and competing job markets in the country and abroad by incorporating an integrated religious and secular education in its curriculum. Every year more than thousands of young religious scholars from hundreds of Islamic colleges in Kerala and South Karnataka enter such fields as part of this integrated education system (Visakh et al. 2021).

Apart from leading the religious institutions, it can be found that the *Ulama*, through its various sub-wings, carries out voluntary services,[37] charitable works, and various educational projects across the country. Darul Huda Islamic University[38] and its various off-campus in different states and a larger township under the Markaz Knowledge City.[39] Focusing on education, health care, and entrepreneurship are the important initiatives of traditionalist ulama of South India, who attempt to creatively engage with modern education and broader changes brought about by modernisation. Therefore, these changes in the organisational goals and modes of operation can be interpreted as changes in the Muslim community in general rather than being seen as unique to the PFI.

Another significant work that locates PFI in the contemporary Muslim politics is that of Santhosh & Paleri (2021, 2020). Using the framework of 'ethnicisation', they argue that the mobilisation executed by PFI and the militant Hindu nationalism must be seen as a part of the ethnicisation of religion, which dismantles the plurality and social fabric by creating a communally vigilant public and leaving the civic space highly polarised. By observing communal mobilisation in coastal Karnataka and mapping the multifaceted activities of PFI, Santhosh & Paleri (2020) argue that PFI is essentially an exclusivist Muslim organisation, which embarrasses an "invisibilised radical Islamic identity" for mobilising the Muslim community and is involved in several violent incidents "with specific religious motifs", though it extensively uses secular idioms in its posturing (p.15).

[37] SKSSF-Viqaya and SYS-Santhwanam are the trained voluntary wing of the EK and AP factions, respectively, through which the traditionalist ulama engage in voluntary services, especially during epidemics, natural calamities, and other emergencies.

[38] Darul Huda Islamic University, an educational initiative of the Sunni EK faction, has set up its various off campus in different states, which provide free integrated education up to the post-graduation level as part of its educational mission.

[39] Markaz Knowledge City is an integrated township project by the Sunni AP faction.

They emphasise that PFI's social activism is centred on "the single agenda of opposing Hindutva", and its other activities, such as engagement with electoral politics and other social initiatives, are only secondary to it (p.15). Nonetheless, when one analyses the electoral performance of PFI in Karnataka, it can be found that the PFI has been constantly engaged in electoral politics. By capturing more seats and improving its vote share in the civic bodies, the SDPI, PFI's political wing, has achieved a remarkable growth in consecutive local body elections. It indicates that PFI systematically engages with electoral politics where it finds the ground to grow politically. Additionally, it can also be seen that the PFI has extensively carried out various voluntary services and relief activities in those areas where it has a political base.

Critics of the PFI contend that the organisation's engagement with constitutional politics and its avowal of secular principles remain primarily superficial in nature. Furthermore, the critics assert that both Hindutva groups and the PFI are exploiting religious sentiments to foster communal mobilisation. While certain activities draw parallels between the PFI and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), such an analogy overlooks other dimensions of the PFI's operations. It is pertinent to underscore that when addressing other socio-religious communities, PFI uses democratic and constitutional language, refraining from challenging the identity and presence of these communities.

The PFI has refrained from designating all Hindus and other non-Muslims as adversaries. Rather, the PFI explicitly articulates its opposition to the 'fascist agenda' propagated by the Sangh Parivar. The PFI put forward the idea of fostering unity among marginalised sections of society, encompassing both Dalits and Muslims, to counteract the ascent of Hindutva. During an interview held in Bengaluru, PFI's Karnataka State Executive Council member asserted that "we only oppose Hindutva fascism, not the Hindus. Any practising Hindus can work in our political party

without compromising their religious convictions (personal communication, May 30, 2019). During an interview, PFI's national leader, who did not want to be identified, asserted, "actually, we are working towards empowering the backward communities, particularly the Muslims. We carry out many educational and health care activities and many other social services across Karnataka and North India. People who are blaming us are actually doing anything?" (personal communication, May 29, 2019). When comparing the policies, it is not facile to conclude that the PFI and Sangh Parivar are merely two facets of a single entity, though they both harbour radical elements and militant actions/reactions.

Another significant allegation levelled against the PFI is that it has collaborated with anti-national terrorist organisations such as the Indian Mujahideen, ISI, and ISIS. Its activities have been constantly scrutinised by the National Investigation Agency (NIA). The report submitted by NIA to the Central Government said that PFI had been involved in terror acts, including making country-made bombs, running training camps with weapons, and planning to organise terror attacks in south India, collaborating with ISIS. Despite these allegations, the PFI has consistently refuted all such claims (Service, 2017). Dismissing the accusations, a Kerala-based PFI national leader said, "Today, PFI is the only force in India that opposes Hindutva fascism. Many allegations are being levelled against us because we strongly oppose Hindutva fascism" (personal communication, January 15, 2021). During its public programs, the PFI strongly asserts that the BJP Government targets them as it uncompromisingly fights the fascist agendas of Sangh Parivar in the country.

PFI and its Mobilisational Strategy.

Similar to NDF and KFD, the PFI has also employed multi-pronged strategies for mobilising the Muslim community to its ideological platform. The first and foremost one of them is its victimhood politics centred on the security concern of the Muslim community. It has placed the greatest emphasis on the 'discourse of securitisation' by highlighting the victimisation of the Muslim community across the country. Siyech (2021) observes, "the PFI gains support by framing Muslims as victims and by capitalising on the moral injuries sustained by the community, including the persistent violence that India's Muslims have endured since the destruction of Babri Masjid"(p.89). The PFI has been widely disseminated that secular institutions in India are not capable of protecting the Muslims of the country. Alongside their opposition to Hindutva politics, the PFI has also criticised the approach of the INC, alleging that the secular parties that ruled India for 70 years did nothing to ensure the security of the Muslim community in the country. It is within this context that the PFI puts forward the idea of resistance. The PFI vehemently advocates that the challenges posed by Hindutva groups can only be combated through self-defence. Therefore, they assert that the Muslim community should set aside all other differences and stand together.

As part of this standpoint, the PFI has orchestrated campaigns such as 'Resistance is Not Offence' and 'Resist Lynching India.' Inaugurating the nationwide campaign called 'Resist Lynching India' on 1st August 2017, in Jaipur, in response to the mob lynching carried out by Hindutva vigilant groups, A Sayeed, a National Executive Council Member of the PFI and the National President of SDPI, asserted that "I would once again point out that if the situation is left to continue, it would not be mere Muslims or Dalits who are insecure in the country. Everybody would have to face the consequences" (Resist Lynching India; Mob Violence Is a Threat to Our Country's Democracy – Sdpi, n.d.).

Through such campaigns and the powerful rhetoric, it exhorted the youth that the PFI is capable enough to counter such attacks if the government does not take action. Santhosh and Paleri (2021) designated the counter-mobilisation efforts undertaken by the PFI grounded in the discourse of 'self-securitisation', projecting the threat from Hindutva as 'defensive ethnisisation'(p.15). By asserting 'to pay back' the Sangh Parivar in their own coin, especially in a situation where the legal system fails to protect the rights of the Muslims, the PFI has been employing the idea of self-protection as an important tool to mobilise the community. In order to enable the community for self-defence, the PFI organises physical and martial arts training as well as legal awareness camps for its cadets.

Organisational discipline and the physical training they provided helped to attract young people to their camp. Rashid Sajipa, who is working as a teacher in a private school, said, "Youngsters were very excited to join this group as they organise interesting programs like karate training. Moreover, people are naturally attracted to such groups and their karate training since they live in communally polluted areas" (personal communication, November 29, 2019). Additionally, to attract the youngsters, PFI demonstrates its physical power through organising massive parades of its trained cadets. Organising such massive public spectacles, the PFI is also trying to build up an image among the larger Muslim community that its force is ready to take over the protection of the community when the community face threat from anti-Muslim forces.

Another strategy adopted by PFI is the extensive use of secular idioms in its official posturings. By launching nationwide campaigns, it widely addresses issues pertaining to the constitutional rights of Muslims and Dalits, developmental politics, and social justice. In doing so, it attempts to keep the educated youth with them and divert criticisms from mainstream secular parties.

For PFI, garnering support from prominent figures and organisations involved in the fields of human rights and communal harmony was essential for functioning in the public sphere to counter the labels of ‘communal’ and ‘extremist’ groups. The secular posturing of PFI enabled it to collaborate with social activists from different backgrounds (Jovial, 2022).

Community welfare initiatives are another important way in which PFI mobilises its supporters. In 2008, the PFI formed an NGO named Rehab India Foundation, institutionalising its relief and charitable activities within a modern structure. Emphasising education, healthcare, and economic development, several nationwide projects are systematically being carried out under the Rehab Foundation. PFI has also initiated nationwide annual campaigns, such as 'school chalo,' to popularise its welfare activities. One of the notable projects undertaken by the Rehab Foundation is its Village Development Program, which has been implemented in seventy-six villages. By adopting backward and riot-hit villages for a period of five years, the Rehab Foundation executes the Village Development Program designed to transform the village through educational and economic empowerment. As part of this program, the Rehab Foundation provides microfinance and scholarships and organises skill development programs to enable the villagers as a self-empowered community. To support these efforts, apart from receiving contributions from its sympathisers, it utilises community resources and CSR funding for financial backing to carry out its activities (Popular Front of India, 2019).

PFI's annual report for 2019 states that 14,183 students were granted scholarships worth Rs. 8.79 crore during 2011-19. Additionally, PFI has set up several information centres at various places to provide information about various social welfare schemes implemented by the central and state governments. It also claims to have helped 1,055 students get various scholarships through its help desks (Popular Front of India, 2019). In addition to the national-level projects, its volunteers have

been actively engaged in various relief and charitable activities at the local level. The Hindu reported that the PFI was actively involved in relief and rescue activities during the first and second waves of the COVID-19 pandemic. Its volunteers cremated over 9,000 bodies in several states affected by the pandemic (The Hindu, 2021). According to a special report released by the PFI in 2021, more than one crore rupees have been spent in Karnataka alone for the treatment and allied services of COVID-19 patients (Popular Front of India, 2021). Engaging with people through voluntarism has indeed led to an increasing acceptance of PFI among the people.

Furthermore, by implementing welfare projects and properly documenting them, PFI seeks to counter the allegation that it is merely a communal and anti-national organisation and establish that it is sincerely involved in the empowerment of the marginalised sections of society. Another facet of the PFI's strategy for garnering public acceptance involves the adoption of progressive and reformist interventions. This approach is marked by redressing the prevailing social evils and challenges permeating society. The PFI underscores its progressive stance within the community by drawing attention to concerns such as dowry, girls' education, women's representation, and early marriage. Additionally, the PFI distinguishes itself from other Muslim organisations through the assertion of its code of conduct, such as restricting its members from taking dowry. Through this course of action, the PFI anticipates that it can attract educated Muslims to the organisation by exemplifying its progressive methods in addressing the multifaceted social and educational issues affecting the Muslim community. On the other hand, PFI activists have been involved in incidents of lynching and moral policing at the grassroots level. There have been several instances where PFI members have attacked Hindu boys for mingling with Muslim girls in public places. This can be seen as a significant tactic to mobilise people at the grassroots level.

PFI has formed several sub-sections aimed at engaging the larger Muslim community directly. Of them, the Campus Front of India, the Women's Front, the All India Imams Council, and the Social Democratic Party of India play a decisive role in mobilising people from different fields. Campus Front, the student wing of PFI, formed in 2007, is now very active in many campuses of Karnataka. They were at the forefront of the renowned Hijab protests in Karnataka (Ullekh, 2022). As for PFI, its transition from a non-party movement to a political party can be seen as a remarkable step. By forming its own political party, the PFI directly began to participate in electoral politics, which enabled them to engage with day-to-day affairs of the people and made them more visible in the political landscape of Karnataka.

Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI)

The Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI), the political arm of PFI, was formed on June 21, 2009, in New Delhi. The political intervention of PFI in the label of SDPI caused new developments in local politics. Notably, it was able to raise an alternate to Congress politics in South Kanara, which alone had long represented Muslims. Instead of engaging with the limited space of the Muslim elite class or educated upper class, the SDPI very systematically operates at the grassroots level and engages with the youths and ordinary people in the community. A decade after the formation of SDPI, it has been able to become a pressure group or a decisive political force in some Muslim-majority areas of South India, especially in Kerala and Karnataka.

SDPI claims that it works for social democracy and makes India a welfare state. As per its official website, SDPI stands for “the political mobilisation of all Minority communities and backward castes to lead them to adequate representation and equal justice” (Social Democracy, n.d.para.17). The party highlights the slogan “Freedom from Hunger; Freedom from Fear " through its posters and campaigns by which they problematise the denied civil rights and safety and inadequate

distribution of income and wealth. According to SDPI's constitution, its membership is open to all communities irrespective of religion and caste (Party Constitution, Social Democratic Party of India, 2018). Negating the label of 'communal', its leaders argue that more than 20% of its successful candidates belong to Dalit and backward communities (Khan, 2021).

Today, although the SDPI has very nominal members in the civic bodies across the country, it has gradually made a significant presence in the last elections in Karnataka. The waning power of INC in national and state politics and the poor performance of JDS enabled them to penetrate into the Muslim pockets. Offering its political support and contesting in elections, SDPI has now been playing a vital role in local politics.

In districts such as Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, Uttara Kannada, Kodagu and Charmrajnagar, the Muslim-dominated areas of Bangalore and Mysore city corporation, state assembly constituency of Narasimharaja etc., SDPI has emerged as a decisive power. Of them, the South Kanara region has become a stronghold of the SDPI as the bulk of its elected members to the local bodies are from Dakshina Kannada and Udupi Districts.

The SDPI had not been able to make significant performance in the election during the early years of its formation. However, gradually, they were able to improve their political graph, especially in South Kanara. SDPI managed to win seventeen seats in the election held to the urban local bodies of Karnataka held in 2013 (Mondal, 2013). Thereby, it could secure participation in the governance of a few Municipal corporations such as Madikeri and Chamrajnagar. The party secured four seats in the Chamarajanagar municipal corporation, and its candidate, Waheeda Khanum, was elected as the vice-president (*SDPI Candidate has been Elected as Vice-Prez of Chamraj Nagar*, 2013).

The SDPI bagged seventy-three seats in the gram panchayat election held in 2015. It contested for 272 seats in Dakshina Kannada district and secured forty-five seats. It became the single largest party in Sajipa Nadu Gram Panjayat by capturing seven wards, and the party's candidate Nasir was elected as the president of the gram panchayat. Sajipa Nadu became the first gram panchayat in India, where SDPI came to power.

Additionally, in this election, the party became decisive power in five-gram panchayats. The party opened an account in Bangalore city corporation in 2015 as its candidate Mujahid Pasha got elected from the Siddhapura ward. The SDPI candidate's role was crucial as no single party had a clear-cut majority to rule the corporation. With the support of SDPI and a few other independent candidates, the INC-JDS alliance won the mayor seat and key posts in the Bangalore municipal corporation (Akshatha, 2020). SDPI Bangalore District President Mujahid Pasha asserted that "the party could improve the health and infrastructure facilities in Sidhapura ward by establishing health centre and constructing roads" (personal communication, September 28, 2021). When I interviewed him at his office at Sidhapura, he was very optimistic to say, "SDPI can win more seats in the upcoming Bangalore corporation election as the people are now more familiar with the party". Mentioning INC, he added, "at present, people experience the difference between what they had (INC) done in the previous term and how we have done things in this time" (personal communication, September 28, 2021). It can be observed that the PFI's cadre system effectively facilitates public service delivery and provides its own voluntary services in areas where the PFI has elected representatives. Although the SDP is not a key player in the state electoral politics, their vote is decisive in many urban bodies and gram panchayats. This increased the political significance of the SDPI not only in the local election but also in the election at the Muslim-dominated state assembly seats.

Thereby, its cadets strived to expand their social base to the nearby localities. Capturing more than two hundred seats, SDPI bagged a landslide victory in the gram-panchayath election held in 2020. The party fielded its candidates from diverse social backgrounds, ranging from businessmen to Auto-rickshaw drivers. SDPI fielded its candidates in 690 seats across fifteen districts, and it managed to win 225 seats, of them more than a hundred seats they secured from Dakshina Kannada district. The number of panchayats governed by SDPI increased from one to three. With the retention of power in Sajipa Nadu gram panchayath, it seized power in the two nearby local bodies, namely Sajipa Munnoor and Malar. Additionally, its role is decisive in ten Gram panchayats (Masoud, 2021).

The PFI's political expedition in Dakshina Kannada and bordering districts increased their popularity and made them more significant in the community spaces. PFI's entry into parliamentary politics made them capable of engaging with the community space in terms of developmental issues and accessing state resources. While a non-party movement, the PFI only had limited access to religious institutions. After they engaged in parliamentary politics, their presence became unavoidable in the community spaces such as Mahal Jamaath. It can be seen that the PFI is constantly trying to negotiate with the administrative bodies of Muslim religious institutions and influence their policies, using its newly acquired political influence. This often leads to disputes with the traditionalist Sunni organisations, which have long overseen the socio-religious matters of Muslim Mahal jamaats. On the other hand, it is significant to point out that SDPI's entry into electoral politics also contributes to perpetuating a heightened communal consciousness and assertiveness in the region.

Unpacking the Differences: The Traditionalist Sunnis Vs NMPFs

While it can be observed that the ascent of Hindutva politics poses a pressing political crisis for the Muslim community in South Kanara, it is imperative to develop a nuanced understanding of the manner in which the community engages with this development. It is evident that the Muslim community's response to Hindutva politics does not adhere to a uniform pattern, as different organisations within the community adopt varied positions and strategies in relation to it. Despite this, scholarly attention on this subject tends to concentrate on the emergence and consolidation of the NMPFs (Santhosh & Paleri, 2021,2020; Awasthi, 2020; Emmerich, 2019, 2019a). By underscoring the assertive language of the NMPF, these studies tend to overlook the divergence of approaches and contestations within the Muslim community concerning their engagement with Hindutva politics. In order to develop a more nuanced understanding of the divergence of Muslim responses, it is necessary to explore the policies, perspectives, and activities of the various Muslim organisations. To ensure the feasibility of such a study, the focus will be on two influential sections within the Muslim community: the ‘traditionalist’ Sunni organisations and the NMPFs. The well-established traditionalist Sunni organisations led by the ulama, which represent the vast majority of the Muslims in the region, are too significant in the social and political life of the community. Within the traditionalist Sunnis, the AP and EK factions, the most dominant and institutionalised religious leadership in the region, will be examined in particular. Among the NMPFs, the KFD and its new avatar, the PFI, and its political arm, the SDPI, have been chosen for examination as they have emerged as significant stakeholders in Muslim politics over the past two decades.

The question of how to respond to Hindutva remains a theme of long-standing contestation among the Muslim community, especially between the traditionalist Sunni organisations and the NMPFs. Interpreting the religious texts, the traditionalist ulama and the NMPFs propose ideologically

different approaches and strategies to deal with the political crisis. The traditionalist Sunni Ulama in the region approaches the current political challenges, particularly those posed by the Hindu right, based on the idea of tolerance, self-correction, and negotiation outlined in religious texts. They view this as the most pragmatic approach in engaging with majoritarian politics. In contrast, the PFI emphasises the Quranic verses related to struggle and resistance as a means of addressing political challenges. They argue that the physical violence inflicted by Hindutva groups can be countered in a similar manner. Projecting the security concerns, communally sensitive issues, victimhood, and marginality of Muslims, the PFI urges the Muslim community to prepare for self-defence and self-empowerment of the Muslim community to encounter socio-political threats challenging the community. They allege that the traditional Muslim religious leadership are incapable of organising the Muslims against the political agenda of Sangh Parivar, and they are only involved in internal sectarian debates. Conversely, seeking spiritual/moral explanations for threats under the Hindutva regime and collaborating with secular parties (such as INC and JDS), the traditionalist Sunni organisations often negotiate with governments and employ pacific settlements in communally sensitive issues. The traditionalist *ulama* discredits the aggressive approach and violent reactions of PFI and alleges that it misinterprets the idea of *Jihad* in Islam.

It can be observed that the traditionalist ulama approach towards the challenges posed by Hindutva politics predominantly in two ways. On the one hand, they attempt to frame this issue within a spiritual dimension, relating it to the moral concern of the testing/punishment from God due to the aberration of the Islamic way of life. In this regard, they underscore that it needs to be resolved internally by reviving the self through strict adherence to Islamic values. On the other hand, the *ulama* is often found to be adopting a moderate position conditioned by discouraging violent responses when communally sensitive issues arise. They assert that violent and provocative actions

can only create more crises for the existence of Muslims. Arguably, despite the favourable political conditions to grow, this stance of the traditionalist *ulama* has often impeded the efforts of the PFI to easily penetrate Muslim pockets in the region. Consequently, this often leads to arising disputes between these groups either directly or indirectly. The differing ideological views between the traditionalists and the NMPFs have been evident in their respective publications and programs. Mosques, publications, organisational programs, and social media platforms often serve as the venues for such discussions and contestations.

Ulama and the Moral Perspective of Political Threats

An in-depth understanding of how the traditionalist *Ulama* interprets the political crisis and how they impart their views to ordinary Muslims can also be further elucidated based on insights from field interactions. As previously discussed, the AP and EK factional groups are the most prominent traditional Sunni organisations in South Kanara. These groups are led by their respective supreme councils of *Ulama*, each consisting of 40 members, referred to as mushavara. The traditionalist Sunni *ulama* often conveys their views and ideas to common people through Islamic lectures held on significant occasions such as Friday sermons, Urs, and anniversaries of Islamic colleges. For instance, a religious lecture on the Islamic way of life, held at Zeenath Bakhsh Masjid, Mangalore, one of the most renowned mosques in Dakshina Kannada, headed by the Samastha EK faction, illustrates how the *ulama* impart their views on political issues to the common people. During the customary Ramadan speech held at the masjid in 2018, Shareef Ponnani, a resource person of SKSSF's Da'wa wing, attempted to relate the existing threats from the Hindutva nationalists with the growing anti-Islamic elements practiced by the Muslim community.

Citing the anti-minority stand of the BJP-led Central Government, he preaches:

> If we follow Islam perfectly, we will not be fearful of any regime. Until we perform our religion perfectly, we would be tested by cruel and oppressive rulers. After the first four Caliphs in Islam, when the Arabs alienated themselves from the Islamic way of life, Allah tested them for centuries through cruel rulers. The only real solution here is to return to the way of Allah (June 18, 2018).

By interpreting the Quran and Hadith and narrating instances from the life of the Prophet, the *ulama* connects issues such as political crises in the Muslim world and situations like natural calamities and epidemics with spiritual decadence of the community. In other words, historically, the traditional Sunni *ulama* interprets such issues as the relentless test/punishment of God for failing to adhere to religious rituals and principles in their personal and social life. It is significant to note how Zainuddin Makhdoom II, the most revered Islamic scholar in the 16th century, interpreted the troubles faced by the Muslims of the West Coast during the Portuguese invasion. Though he called for *Jihad* against the invaders, he framed the inhuman acts suffered by the Muslims during the Portuguese invasion as a punishment from God for not being good Muslims. He remarks that "when the Muslims ignored the blessings of Allah and lived a sinful life, Allah made the Portuguese a dominant power over them" (1942). It can be observed that the present traditionalist *ulama* most often adopts the same perspective while engaging with the crucial socio-political crisis affecting Muslims. Instead of promoting violent mobilisation, they largely raise the theo-moral concern for reviving the self to deal with the socio-political challenges.

Ulama and Pacific Settlement

The traditionalist ulama's stance on controversial issues often distinguishes them from the NMPFs. They often adopt a moderate position on communally sensitive issues, which do not exacerbate polarisation between communities or incite violent reactions (for example, the Hudaibiya treaty and its Sunni interpretations). The open statements of the leaders of the AP and EK groups on the verdict of the Supreme Court on the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi dispute, one of the most crucial incidents in post-independence Indian politics, testify to how they approach controversial issues. Responding to the judgement, Syed Hyder Ali Shihab Thangal, the vice president of Samastha (EK group) and one of the most influential Muslim leaders in Kerala and South Kanara, said, **"**We honour the court verdict, no matter whether it is in favour of Muslims or not. And I would like to say that all of us have the responsibility to ensure religious harmony in our society" (Naha, 2019, para. 4). Despite his expression of disappointment with the verdict, Syed Muhammad Jifri Muthukkoya Thangal, the president of Samastha, affirmed, "We accept the judgement" (Tnn, 2019, para,4). Similar responses were issued by various other religious scholarly bodies, including the Samastha AP group. Kanthapuram A P Aboobacker Musaliyar, the General Secretary of the AP group, responded by emphasising the importance of the unity and integrity of the country, stating, "It is not a question of who won or lost, but the unity of the country is of paramount importance" (Tnn, 2019, para,5). While saying that the court verdict is disappointing and they will file a review petition, these groups have clarified that they accept the verdict, and that people should maintain harmony and not resort to violence.

It is worth noting that the Ulama predominantly relies on religious texts concerning tolerance, self-correction and negotiation while explaining their views on controversial political issues. For instance, referring to the verdict, in his speech, Dr. Abdul Hakim Azhari (henceforth Dr. Azhari),

an Islamic Scholar and general secretary of SYS (AP faction), stated, “the Muslim leaders of our country have done all the legal battles that can be done in a democratic country. Therefore, the Muslims must accept the judgement” (KPM Uruval, 2021). Interpreting its religious perspective, he referred to an incident of a wrong verdict of a Muslim jurist during the period of Ali Bin Abu Talib, the fourth Caliph of Islam. As per the incident, in a dispute between the Caliph and a Jew over the former's lost armour, the judge ruled against the Caliph due to the lack of evidence, although the truth was with him. Therefore, the Caliph accepted the verdict. Dr Azhari emphasised that “it is the model in Islam which we must follow until the end of the world. It is the duty of the Muslim to abide by the judgement of the court, whatever it may be” (KPM Uruval, 2021). Additionally, instead of taking up a confronting mode of engagement, the traditionalist ulama adopts a language of pacific settlement while engaging with the state and political system. During a discussion over the counter mobilisation of the PFI, Ashfaq Faisy, a Sunni Scholar from Bantwal, said, "according to Islamic jurisprudence, rioting against the state is not permissible. It is not permissible for us until the Government denies our freedom to live as a Muslim" (personal communication, December 20, 2018). He further added that:

> As an Islamic State, Muslims should be safe in Saudi Arabia in terms of their security and freedom, but are things happening like that? Here, even under Yogi’s Uttar Pradesh, to an extent, we can perform our religion, we can move legally, and we can question them in court. The emotionally driven ideas, especially in a Hindu majority country, would adversely affect the Muslim community.

Sunni leaders often opine that India offers greater religious freedom compared to Arab countries. Such remarks are based on the fact that in Islamic countries like Saudi Arabia, conventional ritualistic practices of traditionalist Sunnis, such as the celebration of the Prophet's Day and the

veneration of Sufi dargahs, are restricted. They also argue that their mosques and madrassas in India have the freedom to operate according to their own beliefs and customs. Therefore, they argue that instilling hatred and anti-nationalism among the youth by exclusively highlighting the challenges faced by Muslims in India should be discouraged.

Locating the Discord

The interpretations of Islamic scriptures and moderate political stances of the traditionalist *ulama* often contradict the political assertions of the NMPFs. Both the AP and EK groups are often seen condemning the aggressive vocabularies and violent mobilisations carried out by the PFI, alleging that they misinterpret Islam. Consequently, contestations often arise between these groups, particularly in the turbulent political situations affecting Muslims. These disputes are most often manifested through various channels, such as organisational campaigns, publications, and social media engagements. For instance, a cover story on victimhood in SKSSF's fortnightly, Sathyadhara, issued in February 2022, gives a better illustration of such controversies. The primary objective of releasing this cover story is to counter the propaganda disseminated by the NMPFs, which exacerbates public anxiety in relation to the Central Govt's Citizenship Amendment Act (personal communication with SKSSF leaders, January 18, 2022). The special issue titled "Victimisation Devours the Muslims" implicitly denounces the strategies of victimhood politics employed by PFI in order to mobilise the community (Sathyadhara, 2022).

In a feature titled "Victimisation and Spiritual Reading" in this issue, Haithami (2022) posits that the social life of the Muslim community should not be centred on opposition to a perceived enemy, as this can foster a sense of being oppressed and victimised. Drawing upon an Islamic perspective on the present world and the hereafter, Haithami argues that the absolute realisation of justice can only be attained hereafter. Therefore, solely focusing on opposing the injustice inflicted by the

enemy is not productive, as this can lead to perpetual entrapment by adversaries. Instead, Haithami suggests that Muslims should follow the approach of the prophets and Sufis during times of political crisis by practising the basic virtues of determination, sanctity, compassion, and honesty in life. These virtues enabled the Prophets and Sufis to earn the respect and admiration of even their adversaries. Additionally, he observes that the Sufis often adopted a policy of maintaining as much restraint and cooperation as possible with rulers to create a fearless environment conducive to worship and preaching.

It is evident that PFI and traditionalist ulama interpret the same quotes and events from religious texts according to their perspectives, which often contradict with each other. And it results in arising fresh debates and disputes between them. For instance, the remarks made by Afsal Qasimi, an iconic figure of the All-India Imams Council, during his speech in PFI's mammoth gathering on 17th September 2022, held at Calicut, on an incident cited in *Hadith* better illustrate how these organisations interpret the same text in different ways.

As per the Hadith narrated in *Riyad* as-Salihin, *A* Bedouin snatched the Prophet's sword while he was resting under a tree. Then he asked, who will save you from me? The Prophet replied: "Allah". On hearing this replay, the sword fell down from the Bedouin, instantly the Prophet caught it and asked the same question, who will save you from me? Helplessly, he asked the Prophet for forgiveness. Then the prophet released him on the promise not to fight the prophet. After returning to his companions, the Bedouin said: "I have come to you from one of the best of mankind" (Riyad as-Salihin 78, n.d.). The traditionalist ulama usually quotes this hadith to highlight the Prophet's unwavering faith in God and his inclination towards tolerance.

On the contrary, Afsal Qasimi cited this *hadith* during his speech to establish the idea that one should react boldly to enemies and not exhibit restraint. He declared that Muslims are the followers of the Prophet who took back the sword that was pointed at him, pointed it to the enemy's neck, and asked, who is there to save you from me. Explaining this hadith, he said that the Prophet taught that we should not try to explain the humanity of Islam to those who come to attack us but rather respond strongly to them and fight defensively (Rajeev, 2022).

Afsal Qasimi's interpretation of this hadith drew strong condemnation from various corners of the community, particularly from the two Sunni groups. They alleged that Qasimi misquoted the prophet for their vested interest, and they always employed this method to incite emotions and extreme thoughts among people by taking only certain parts of history (Rajeev, 2022). Meanwhile, PFI activists took to social media to strongly support Afsal Qasimi's interpretation, which resulted in heightened disputes between the PFI and other Muslim organisations.

Besides interpreting religious rulings, the Sunni organisations have frequently made strong political claims that the actions of the PFI are largely counter-productive in practice. It often culminated in making public statements and campaigns against the violent mobilisations of the PFI (Prashanth, 2018). During an interactive session as part of the SKSSF Campus Wing State Council held at Calicut on 17/01/2021, a delegate from Mangalore asked its leaders, "is there any problem if we support PFI and SDPI?". It was when SDPI achieved a splendid victory in the local body election in Dakshina Kannada.

Responding to his question, Sathar Panthalloor, SKSSF's former general secretary, said

> There are only two dominant political alliances in the country. One is the BJP-led fascist front, and the next is the alliance of secular parties opposing the BJP. Muslims must stand on the secular front. Organisations with extremist ideas like the Popular Front can only help weaken the alliance of secular parties. Their provocative acts have always caused problems for the Muslim community in the public sphere. Because of their emotional reactions, the Muslim community is becoming isolated in our society (January 17, 2021).

Referring to the police firing that happened in Bangalore in 2020, he added, "See what happened in Bangalore last year. Their provocative protest ended in violence, which led to the deaths of three innocents in police firings". His remark was about the PFI-backed protest and subsequent police firing in DJ Halli, Bangalore, on 11th August 2020. Following a controversial Facebook post insulting Prophet Muhammad, put up by the nephew (named Naveen) of a Congress MLA from Pulikeshi Nagar constituency, the infuriated mob gathered protesting and sieged local police stations. Times of India reports that:

> The protest took a violent turn, vandalising the MLA's house and that of his nephew nearby. A bid to torch MLA's nephew's house was failed as a fire tender arrived in time. While police sought time to look into the complaint, mobs attacked KG Halli and DJ Halli police stations. Vehicles parked on the roadside in both station limits were torched. After the bursting of tear-gas shells and lathi charge disperse the mobs, police opened fire (Kalkod, 2020).

Three people were shot dead, while several others were injured (Bharadwaj, 2020). Following the riot, Section 144 of the CrPC was imposed across the city, and 110 people were arrested for arson and assault on police. The NIA arrested 17 PFI and SDPI functionaries, alleging the conspiracy and their involvement in rioting. However, SDPI denied the allegation, accusing that the delayed arrest of the culprit led to mob violence. SDPI state president Illyas Mohammed Thumbe said:

> "The SDPI vehemently condemns the violent incidents. The criminal intent of Naveen and negligence of the police are the real causes for the untoward incidents. It is visible that the BJP has conspired in the violence keeping an eye on the upcoming BBMP civic polls and Assembly elections" (Johns, 2020).

Although PFI strongly denied the allegations, the government agencies and various other sources have observed their involvement in the riot. Devaraj, a Bangalore-based journalist, said, "Following the controversial remark, many stories began to spread on social media. The infuriated mob gathered near the MLA house based on anonymous messages circulated through social media calling for protest. In fact, these messages were spread from PFI networks" (personal communication, December 5, 2020).

In 2019, similar allegations were levelled against the PFI in connection with a controversial police firing in Mangalore. As part of anti-CAA agitation, SKSSF called for a protest at the District Commissioner's office, Mangalore on 19th December 2019. However, due to the imposition of Section 144 in the area, SKSSF postponed its protest gathering to another day and announced the change through local news media and its social media networks (Gatty, 2019). Meanwhile, despite the prohibitory act remains, people gathered to protest based on the false anonymous messages spread through social media. The untoward incidents that followed led to police firing, which claimed two lives. The government agencies have testified to the conspiracy of SDPI in the

'unlawful' protest (Bharathi, 2020). On this issue, the district leadership of SKSSF responded by expressing their suspicion about the role of PFI in manipulating the protesters through the spread of false information (personal communication with SKSSF leaders, January 18, 2022). The traditionalist Sunni organisations alleged that it is the usual practice of the PFIs to push the people into violence and then shirk responsibility for it. They maintain that the emotionally driven ideas of PFI will only serve to push the community into more crises.

In order to legitmize the defensive strategy and violent mobilisations, the NMPFs too rely on religious texts. In such discourses, they mostly cite the Quran and hadiths that refer to struggle and resistance. Furthermore, the PFI and its sub-wings often have been made direct or indirect remarks against the moderate approach of *ulama* and traditionalist Muslim organisations. They alleged that the *ulama* has remained apathetic even as the very existence of the community has been questioned in the country for decades. Mentioning the circumstances that led to the formation of NDF, in a public speech, Ashraf Moulavi Moovattupuzha, an SDPI office bearer, asserted, "What should we do hereafter is the question of the Muslim youth who are frustrated with the seditious attitude of Muslim religious organisations and political parties who did not dare to send at least a thousand people to Ayodhya when millions of Karsevaks were about to demolish Babri Masjid" (Saleem Ponnani Ndf, n.d.). The PFI leaders alleged that instead of organising the Muslim community against the fascist forces, the religious leadership is sacrificing the interests of the community before the political elites.

The NMPFs argue that the idea of self-restraint in this political climate is a sign of cowardice and that the community should be prepared for self-defence. During the interview with him, in reference to the Hindutva aggressions, Shadin Baikampady, a PFI cadre who hails from Surathkal, said, "should we remain inactive when fascists attack Muslims? Religion teaches us that if those

who see evil cannot be stopped with their hands, they must oppose it with their mouth". (personal communication, December 4, 2020). He further added, "there have been many battles in the history of Islam, not just peace treaties". Talking about the defensive strategy of PFI, Risvan, the former joint convener of Campus Front of India, asked, "Do you know why the Delhi riots ended so quickly? Others (Hindus) were also killed in the riots. The dead bodies recovered from drainage were not only those of Muslims. There were a lot of Hindus in it. If there is a sense of retaliation, then they will not be so aggressive (personal communication, December 8, 2020). Many such stories can be seen being propagated by PFI activists. During a discussion, Shaheer, a research scholar and a member of PFI, added, "people in the bordering areas of Rajasthan have the licence for keeping weapons like guns for hunting purposes. In fear of reaction, Sangh Parivar does not attack the Muslims of such localities even if any issues occur between the Muslims and RSS" (personal communication, December 8, 2020). Through such narratives, PFI cadres attempt to substantiate that self-defence is practical in the present sociopolitical context of the country.

Human Chain vs Freedom Parade

The campaigns and public events being organised by the traditionalists and the NMPFs explicitly demonstrate how they engage in the community space and public sphere. Even the programmes conducted under the same thematic framework by these organisations exhibit notable diversity in their perspectives. For instance, take the examples of SKSSF's *Manava Sarapali* (Human Chain) and PFI's Freedom Parade, which the former has been organised on every Republic Day (26th January) and the latter had been organised on every Independence Day (15th August). Both are massive public spectacles with specific dress codes that have been conducted in various parts of the country.

In terms of their objectives, these two events are organised to show the commitment of Muslims to the nation and promote India's national integration. However, a closer examination of the way these events are conducted, and the vocabularies used in the events, it becomes clear that they convey different messages and perspectives.

SKSSF Human Chain held at Kadaba on 26/01/2019.

Source: *https://skssfchembirika.blogspot.com/2011/01/blog-post_28.html*

The SKSSF's Manava Sarapali (also known as Manushya Jalika in Kerala) was first organised in Calicut in 1993 as part of Republic Day celebrations, with the theme of "Guard of Unity for Integrity of the Nation". According to SKSSF leaders, the event has been held for over two decades with the goal of promoting patriotism and inter-community relations. SV Muhammed Ali, a former secretary of SKSSF, says that “the event was created in response to the socio-political situation of the 1990s, when extremist groups were beginning to gain a foothold within the Muslim community, and Muslims were becoming increasingly isolated from the public sphere”. He further adds, “the event aimed to advance national integrity, elucidate the Muslim community's

commitment to the nation within the public sphere, and foster communal harmony". At present, the event is conducted in various locations across India and abroad on Republic Day. However, it is predominantly held in Kerala and Karnataka, with significant levels of participation. Usually, the Manav Sarpali would begin with a large rally at 4 pm, followed by a public gathering. SKSSF's leaders and sympathisers, who dressed in white, would take part in the program. Important dignitaries, such as leaders of various religions and political parties and social activists, mainly from other religious communities, would be invited as the chief guests. The event would feature a human chain formation, with participants holding hands as a symbol of unity.

The stage during the event would feature a symbolic representation of secular figures, with Hindu priests, Christian priests, and political leaders sitting alongside Sunni *ulama*. The nature of the speech delivered in the event mostly focuses on religious harmony that remained in India and the role of the Muslims in the freedom struggle, etc. The leaders purposefully avoid any statement that provokes or threatens any communities or institutions. By doing so, the traditionalists intended to convey harmonious living in the multi-cultural space without compromising their religious identity.

The PFI's Freedom Parades were held every Independence Day in the different urban centres of the country until the government banned the program. The key highlight of this program is the massive parade of its trained cadets accompanied by orchestra bands. Carrying India's national flag at the front of the parade, PFI's cadres would be deployed as troops of 33 in three rows headed by a troop commander (desk, 2008).

PFI Freedom Parade

Source:*https://twocircles.net/2009aug15/thousands_took_part_pfis_freedom_parade_north_kerala.html*

Mimicking the military parade of the Independence Day, PFI organises a massive public spectacle by which it demonstrates its strength and physical power and asserts that its volunteers are capable of taking on the protection of the Muslim community (Santhosh & Paleri, 2020).However, since multiple state governments initiated restrictions on the Independence Day freedom march, citing security concerns, the PFI restructured its parade into a Unity March, commemorating its Foundation Day.

The program would feature speeches highlighting the role of Muslims in the anti-British struggle and exposing the British allegiance of Sangh Parivar leaders during the period of freedom struggle. Furthermore, through these speeches, its leaders strongly condemn the Hindutva politics in the country and publicly declare that they are always ready to face the aggressions against the Muslim community.

PFI Unity March

Source: *https://www.daijiworld.com/news/newsDisplay?newsID=438703*

It is of significant importance to underscore that both Manava Sarapali and Freedom Parade serve as explicit manifestations of the contrasting strategies employed by traditionalist Sunni organisations and NMPFs in their involvement with majoritarian politics within the public sphere. These public spectacles distinctly elucidate the moderate stances of traditionalists and the assertive Muslim politics advocated by the PFI.

While the traditionalist *ulama* enjoys a leading position in the socio-religious realm of the Muslim community, the communally charged political atmosphere and the failure of legal institutions to ensure the security of Muslims have been conducive to the defensive politics of the PFI. This situation often grants legitimacy to the PFI's involvement within the political and religious sphere of the Muslim community. PFI has transformed into a decisive force in many Muslim pockets, and

its hundreds of members were elected to various local bodies, where they have been becoming an indispensable presence in the Muslim Mahal Jamaats. Although the PFI could exert influence over a significant portion of the youth, it has not yet succeeded in altering the power dynamics within the majority of the Muslim Mahals Jamaats, where traditionalist Sunni organisations play a predominant role in the socio-religious life of the Muslim community. Both Sunni factions have recently distanced themselves from the PFI, imposing restrictions on their members and followers to discourage participation in PFI's programs. Such a stance of traditionalists creates predicaments to the mobilisation efforts undertaken by the PFI. Therefore, PFI has strived to penetrate the Muslim Mahals system and religious institutions functioning at the local level. Parallelly forming a council of the *ulama*, known as the All-India Imams Council, the PFI attempts to claim legitimacy for their interpretation of religious texts in accordance with their perspectives.

Conclusion

Thus, it can be observed that there have been apparent ideological and operational distinctions between various Muslim organisations concerning their response to Hindutva politics. Regional dynamics and sectarian-factional contestations within the community play a significant role in shaping these differences. Therefore, while analysing Muslim political engagements, it becomes imperative to account for these diversities. In the context of South Kanara, the differences are evident between traditionalist Sunni organisations and the NMPFs, both in terms of their ideological orientations and operational strategies when engaging with majoritarian politics. These differences often lead to contestation, even when addressing the same issue.

While the PFI advocates for self-defence and counter-mobilisation in response to Hindutva aggression, the traditionalist *Ulama* discredits violent responses and seeks a pacific settlement to deal with communally sensitive situations. It is noteworthy that the traditionalist *Ulama* not only proposes their moderate approach as the most practical method for engaging with Hindutva majoritarianism but also grounds it in an ideological stance deeply rooted in the traditionalist interpretation of Islamic texts.

CHAPTER VII
Conclusion

This thesis has addressed two broader questions concerning the recurring communal conflicts in the South Kanara region of Karnataka. Firstly, it inquires the ways in which the identity of the Beary community has undergone a transformation in the post-Independent South Kanara region under various socio-political conditions. Secondly, it looks at how Beary Muslims responded to and negotiated with Hindutva majoritarian politics over the past several decades. The study argues that the religious affiliation of the Bearys has become the primary identifier of the community in the wake of the rise of Hindutva politics in the region. While the Hindutva project remains a dominant factor in essentialising and stigmatising Muslims, this work delineates other internal factors that fix their identity. The study also explores sectarian and factional contestation in the intra-religious realm of the Muslim community and its significance in shaping the response and negotiations of Muslims under communalised political settings. Addressing these concerns, this work explores how the Muslim community engages with majoritarian politics. It underscores that the Muslim community's response to militant Hindu nationalism does not adhere to a uniform pattern but rather exhibits variations influenced by regional dynamics and internal contestations. This inquiry unpacks the multifaceted nature of Muslim responses to communal politics in contemporary India rooted in regional dynamics and internal contestations.

The study tried to locate the Beary Muslim community within the expanding corpus of literature that addresses the diversities among Muslims. This scholarly discourse highlights the fact that the Muslim community cannot be regarded as a homogeneous group because of multifarious dimensions of diversity with respect to internal and external factors. The Bearys of South Kanara can be categorised as a community with a unique identity that fits within this framework.

The Beary community has been subject to historical misrepresentation, often erroneously identified as Mappilas in colonial and post-colonial historical accounts. This misrepresentation stemmed from the focus on similarities in origin and shared religious tradition between the Mappila Muslims of Malabar and the Bearys of Tulu Nadu. As a result, colonial and post-colonial historiography failed to recognise the distinct socio-cultural identity of the Beary Muslim community.

This study contributes to the emerging scholarship that sheds light on the regional characteristics and cultural distinctiveness of the Beary Muslims in South Kanara. Despite being adjacent regions, the cultural differences between Tulu Nadu and Malabar establish the Bearys and the Mappilas as two distinct identities. The Beary dialect is a distinguishing factor that sets the Beary community apart from the Malayalam-speaking Mappila community.

The socio-cultural practices of the Bearys are more similar to those of other communities in the region with whom they have had long-standing engagements. The 'Aga' system and the prevalence of matrilineal family systems remained among the Bearys, along with their traditional attire and ornaments, can be understood in conjunction with their interactions with other communities in South Kanara. Notwithstanding these differences, the Bearys share similarities with the Mappilas in terms of religious tradition and maintain historical connections with them, a bond that endures to this day.

The *ulemas* of Malabar retain significant authority in moulding the religious practices of the Bearys of South Kanara. It is noteworthy that this religious affinity transcends regional boundaries, surpassing the linguistic and sociopolitical boundaries that define the modern states of Karnataka and Kerala.

Socio-Political Dynamics and Changing Notions of Muslim Identity

It is shown in this work that Bearys has been a significant merchant community and religious group in the present South Kanara. Historically, the patronage of the local rulers was remarkable in the emergence of the Beary Muslim community as both a religious and a trading community. However, the religious identity of the Bearys became a political issue due to the communalisation process in the post-independent period. The significant changes that have occurred in the political geography of the region since 1970, such as the escalation of communal violence, the decline of secular politics and the ascendance of Hindutva, have had the potential to reconfigure the traditional identities of the various socio-religious communities. Consequently, religion has emerged as a predominant factor in determining identity, transcending other aspects of identities such as caste, sect, language, etc. The study found that, owing to these broader developments, the local identity of Bearys has undergone several transformations, shifting from that of a localised trading community to a community defined primarily by its adherence to religious faith (Islam). While the identity of the Beary itself underwent a shift in terms of religious articulations, the perception and religious branding from outside over decades had profound implications in the life of Bearys in the region.

This work has elucidated a broader context of how the region has been conducive to communal identity assertion and how the religious identity of the Bearys has undergone stigmatisation in recent times. When tracing the history of the region, it is significant to note that the political climate, pluralism, syncretic religious traditions, and social hierarchies like caste, in the South Kanara (Tulu Nadu) region during both the colonial and pre-colonial periods did not provide a ground for communal consolidation. (Doddamane 1993; Ramesh 1970). Colonial policies were

influential in fostering religious consciousness and suspicion of others across the country (Chandra, 2008; Bhagat, 2001; Kaviraj, 1997). However, they did not adversely affect the social fabric of the South Kanara. However, the entire landscape has been undergoing tremendous changes in the realms of economy, politics and religious practices, in the post-independence phase, particularly since the early 1970s, which have been observed as instrumental in the communal consolidation between Hindus and Muslims (Assadi, 2002; Tolpadi, 2003). The present study follows the instrumentalist perspective to comprehend the process of communal mobilisation and applies the theoretical framework of 'Institutionalised Everyday Communalism' by Pai and Kumar (2018) to analyse contemporary patterns of communal mobilisation and conflicts in the South Kanara region.

It is worth mentioning that the remarkable socio-economic changes ushered in as a result of land reforms, the Gulf boom and the neoliberal transformation of the region altered caste relations as the dominance of upper castes declined in the wake of the economic prosperity of lower castes and other backward communities. The sweeping changes in the economy and employment sector brought about some improvement in the livelihood of the backward castes and communities such as the Billavas, the Mogaveera, and the Bearys. Interestingly, vectors of socioeconomic mobility enabled them to enter into the clear-cut space of upper castes groups, such as the Goud Saraswat Brahmins (GSBs) and the Bunts, who are the dominant merchant and landlord groups in the region, respectively (Kathur, 2019; Assadi, 2002). The anxiety of survival forced the upper caste to align with Hindutva politics with the view of retaining their hegemony over historically subordinated groups. (Kathur, 2019; Tambs-Lyche, 2011). Targeting such an end, the local Muslims have been projected as a significant "other" whose interests are seemingly at odds with those of the majority community.

It is worth noting that Gulf migration and neoliberal transformation of the region enabled the Beary Muslims to emerge as a dominant merchant class in the last three decades. The transformation of Beary Muslims into significant competitors in the trading sector, along with their expanding presence in various other fields (such as education, healthcare, and real estate) has been projected as a serious threat to the Majority community. The aim was to mobilise the fragmented Hindu community in order to overcome the socio-economic challenges. Meanwhile, the political landscape has acted as a catalyst for expanding Hindutva ideology owing to the decline of secular politics, which had been the hallmark of the region till the late 1970s. The steady decline of the INC in the late 1970s created an empty ideological space that was duly filled by Hindutva ideology. The new economic order and the post-Babri political climate transformed the entire region into a communally intolerant one.

The work empirically examined how the Hindutva discourse essentialises and stigmatises the religious identity of the Beary Muslims. It attempts to establish a 'unified Hindu' community by concealing caste divisions and other internal contradictions and to essentialise the Islamic identity of local Muslims as a potential threat to Hindu interests. In addition to the typical stereotypes regarding the Muslim community, the Hindutva rhetoric incorporates Islamophobic discourse similar to that in the West after the September 11, 2001 attacks (Kathur, 2019; Mondal, 2015). While introducing the Muslims as a significant other, the Hindutva discourse intentionally overlooks ethnic and theological differences and various competing collectivities within the Muslim community, which is part and parcel of the everyday life of Muslims in India. By dehumanising the Muslims as intolerant and anti-national and imposing terrorist elements, the Hindutva discourse produced an essentialist picture of the ethnically distinct and theologically fragmented local Muslims of the region.

Contrary to the Hindutva discourse, the Muslims of South Kanara can be observed as a heterogeneous community characterised by a multitude of diversity. It can be observed that the everyday religious life of the local Muslims of South Kanara has been bounded by various types of sectarian and factious orientations. Interestingly, these differences often contribute to the formation of exclusive boundaries within the community. The internal contestations among Muslims often lead to various kinds of identity assertion that provides more visibility to Islamic symbols in the public sphere. While remaining as different groups with clear-cut exclusive boundaries, sectarian groups primarily project the generic universal symbols of Islam in order to articulate their identity. The study argues that these manifestations, by upholding generic symbols, often contribute to the unintended process of communalisation. Such an articulation of identity, especially in the new political circumstances of south Kanara, is highly appropriated by the Hindutva political forces**.** The Hindutva discourse pays more attention to the visibility of the Muslim community without referring to the complex process of theological differences and sectarian disputes. Notions such as the growth rate of the Muslim population, the increasing number of Muslim socio-religious institutions and their visible symbolic identities in South Kanara have been highlighted as the Muslim fundamentalist project for Islamisation of the entire region and as a serious threat to the existence of the majority Hindu community. The new narratives of the Hindutva on the articulation of sectarian identities succeeded in constructing a significant Muslim other in the perception of the majority community, and at the same time, it was instrumental in mobilising the majority community into the ideological fold of Hindutva. It is worth noting that the historically known local identity of the Beary Muslims as a trading community has been undermined by new Hindutva narratives.

Muslim Response to Communal Politics

The response of Muslim community in the context of communalisation in India is a significant question. Scholarly research in this area has primarily concentrated on specific facets, with a predominant focus on investigating the impacts of communal violence on the Muslim community itself. Most of the works in the field revolve around the themes pertaining to Muslim victimhood, marginality and the manifold socio-economic challenges that arise in the aftermath of communal conflicts (Puniyani, 2018; Lokhande, S. B. 2016; Engineer, 2003, 1997, 1991). There is also an emerging body of scholarship that attempts to locate the political engagements of the Muslim community (Santhosh, 2021, 2020; Emmrich, 2019). However, these studies have overlooked the regional aspects and the heterogeneous features among Muslims. This is due to the excessive focus on the religious and political articulations in the past three decades- from post-Babri communal violence to contemporary Hindutva politics. Significant differences can be observed among different Muslim groups in different regional settings in their approach in engaging with Hindutva majoritarianism. However, these studies failed to map the divergent perspectives and strategies of various Muslim organisations. This work intervenes in this emerging literature by incorporating regional dimensions and internal diversities, thereby enhancing our understanding of the multifaceted nature of Muslim responses to communal politics in contemporary times. It argues that the Muslim community's response to militant Hindu nationalism does not adhere to a uniform perspective but rather exhibits variations influenced by internal differences and contestations. There have been apparent ideological and operational distinctions between various Muslim organisations concerning their response to Hindutva politics. While analysing the Muslim political engagements, it becomes imperative to account for these diversities.

In the context of South Kanara, traditionalist Sunni organisations led by the Ulama specifically, Samasta EK and AP faction) and neo-Muslim political formations (PFI and SDPI) constitute influential forces within the community. They have emerged as significant stakeholders in Muslim politics over the past two decades, engaging with the political landscape of the region in different ways. The work has examined in detail the background for the emergence and growth of the NMPFs, such as KFD and its new avatar, the PFI, by tracing the broader developments in the realm of politics and religion in South Kanara. The undulating political scenario of 1990s, including widespread communal conflicts across South Kanara, the ascendance of Hindutva, the decline of the INC, the lack of adequate political alternatives to secure Muslim interests, the failure of the legal system in dealing with communal issues, all of which facilitated an easy track for these organisations. Additionally, it is significant to note that the broader developments in the realm of religion, such as the impact of puritanism, pan-Islamic trends and sectarian and factional schism, have been favourable for KFD to penetrate into the community spaces. Therefore, it is argued that the growth of the NMPFs must be understood in the larger framework instead of depicting it as a mere reaction to militant Hindu nationalism.

However, in the existing literature on PFI, the dominant perspective aligns with the state narrative that portrays the PFI as an extremist/radical Islamic organisation that poses a significant threat to national security (Ameerudheen, 2017; Awasthi, 2020; Behera, 2013 Sharma, & Behera, 2014). Nonetheless, recent studies on new trends in Muslim politics have provided a more nuanced understanding of the PFI. (Santhosh & Paleri, 2021; Siyech, 2021; Emmerich, 2019). However, these studies are primarily centred on locating PFI in some particular domain, overlooking its multifaceted activities.

Emphasising its initiatives centred around pragmatic legalism, grievance-based citizen politics, welfare initiatives and secular posturing, Emmerich (2019) and Siyech (2021) characterise the PFI as a neo-Islamic movement that assertively addresses the social backwardness and challenges faced by the Muslim community under the Hindutva regime.

On the contrary, it can be seen that they ignore the involvement of PFI in deepening communal polarisation at the grassroots level. Santhosh and Paleri (2021) argue that PFI promotes a radical Islamic identity to mobilise the Muslim community and has been involved in several violent incidents with specific religious motifs. They argue that PFI's social activism is centred on 'the single agenda of opposing Hindutva'. However, an examination of the SDPI's electoral performance in South Kanara reveals its consistent involvement in electoral politics. This suggests that the PFI actively participates in electoral politics whenever it identifies opportunities for political expansion. Additionally, it is evident that the PFI has extensively undertaken voluntary services and relief efforts in regions where it enjoys political support. Hence, instead of falling into these binaries, this work tried to offer a comprehensive examination of why the KFD and PFI emerged as significant political actors in South Kanara.

Furthermore, by mapping the multifaceted activities of the PFI, the study has elucidated their mode of operation within the community and the public sphere. While analysing the mode of operation of the PFI, it can be observed that it has employed a multi-pronged strategy for mobilising the Muslim community. It encompasses victimhood politics, the extensive use of secular idioms in official posturing, legal pragmatism, community welfare initiatives, and the adoption of militant elements such as aggressive counter-mobilization, political violence, and moral policing at the grassroots level.

It can be observed that the organisation mainly capitalises on the security concerns of the Muslim community to consolidate its support. This approach is particularly effective in localities characterised by intense communal polarisation between Hindus and Muslims.

Towards the end of the thesis, the divergent nature of Muslim responses towards Hindutva by examining the contesting positions of the PFI and the traditionalist Sunni organisations is demonstrated. Interestingly, by interpreting the religious texts, the traditionalists and the PFI propose different approaches and strategies to deal with the political crisis. These differences are evident in terms of their ideological orientations and operational strategies when engaging with majoritarian politics. While the traditionalist ulema addresses contemporary political threats by drawing upon the concepts of tolerance, self-correction, and negotiation outlined in religious texts, the PFI, in contrast, places emphasis on Quranic verses related to struggle and resistance as a means of confronting political challenges. Projecting the security concerns, victimhood and marginality of Muslims, PFI urges self-defence and self-empowerment of the Muslim community. The PFI argues that the physical violence inflicted by Hindutva groups can be countered in a similar manner. They allege that the traditional Muslim religious leadership are incapable of organising the Muslims against the political agenda of Sangh Parivar, and they are only engaged in internal sectarian debates, which is not a significant issue being faced by the community today.

While examining the traditionalist's approach to the challenges posed by Hindutva**,** the study found that it predominantly follows two ways. On the one hand, they attempt to frame this issue within a spiritual dimension, relating it to the moral concern of ‘testing’/’punishment’ from God due to the aberration of the Islamic way of life. In this regard, they underscore that it needs to be resolved internally by reviving the self through strict adherence to Islamic values. On the other hand, the ulama is often found to be adopting a moderate position by discouraging violent responses when

communally sensitive issues arise. They assert that violent and provocative actions can only create more crises for the existence of Muslims. By supporting secular parties (such as INC and JDS), often negotiating with governments and employing pacific settlements in communally sensitive issues, the traditionalist ulema discredits the defensive approach and violent reactions of PFI and alleges that it misinterprets the idea of Jihad in Islam. They argue that resorting to violent or provocative actions in such situations could ultimately be counterproductive. These ideological and operational differences often lead to disputes arising between these groups either directly or indirectly. Therefore, the study argues that approaching the question of Muslim response to the ascendance of Hindutva politics through the lens of assertive Muslim politics is a myopic approach.

While the traditionalist ulama enjoys a leading position in the socio-religious realm of the Muslim community, the communally charged political atmosphere and the failure of legal institutions to ensure the security of Muslims have been conducive to the defensive politics of the PFI. This situation often grants legitimacy to the PFI's involvement within the political and religious sphere of the Muslim community. PFI has emerged as a decisive force in many Muslim pockets, and its hundreds of members were elected to various local bodies, where they have been becoming an indispensable presence in the Muslim Mahal Jamaats. Although the PFI could exert influence over a significant portion of the youth, it has not yet succeeded in altering the power dynamics within the majority of the Muslim Mahals Jamaats, where traditionalist Sunni organisations play a predominant role in the socio-religious life of the Muslim community. It is argued that the efficacy of neo-Muslim political formations in garnering support from the Muslim community is heavily influenced by two factors - the availability of secular alternatives and the role played by the traditionalist *Ulema*.

It is significant to note that the defensive politics of the NMPFs and the resulting political complications have been contested from within the community itself. The traditionalist Sunni Ulema plays a pivotal role in this opposition. Moderate interpretation of texts and the pacifist approach adopted by the Ulema have posed predicaments to the growth of neo-Muslim political formations within the Muslim community itself. It is noteworthy that the traditionalist Ulema not only proposes their moderate approach as the most practical method for engaging with Hindutva majoritarianism but also grounds it in an ideological stance deeply rooted in the traditionalist interpretation of Islamic texts.

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Appendices

Glossary

Bay'ah	Pledge of allegiance
Bhoota	Spirit
Bhoota aradhane	Spirit worship
Bid'ah	New inovation in Islam
Gupta sangatane	Hidden organisation
Hanafi	One School of Law in Islam
Hanjamana	Trade guild
Ijtihad	Independent reasoning
Istighasa	Seeking help from the noblemen other than God
Miladul Nabi	Birth day of the Prophet
Moulid	Praising hymns about the Prophet
Shafi'i	One School of Law in Islam
Shirk	Shirk polytheism
Taqlid	The practice of rigidly adhering to the religious rulings and interpretations of the Islamic scholars
Urs	Death anniversary of Sufi saints, usually held at the dargahs

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THE HISTORICAL TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE BEARYS OF SOUTH KARNATAKA

K. Mohammed Shafi

Introduction

West-coast of India was well known for trade link with Arab merchants until the advent of European forces. That linkage was a major determining factor for the origin of several ethnic communities throughout the west-coast India namely, Mappilas in Malabar, Navayats in north Karnataka (Bhatkal), Bearys in south Karnataka etc,. Metcalf (2009) observes that trade brought Arabs to India's southern seacoasts at least by the early eighth century. The continued influx of trade, intermarriage and conversion are highlighted as the reason behind the growth of Muslim population in the south coast. Ichlangod (2011) argues that, similar to Malabar, the local Muslims of coastal south Karnataka are the progeny of Arab merchants. The origin of the Bearys is traced back by the trade link between Arab merchants and the indigenous people of coastal south Karnataka (Madhava,1985). Mangalore was one of the major trade centre along the seacoast during that period.

Sturrock (1894) points the history of Muslims to 7th century AD. For Doddamane (1993), Islam came to Tulunadu during the period of Prophet Mohammed or little late due to the centuries-long trade relation between local people and Arabs but, the date of official missionary propagation is a further researchable question. He observes that the first mosque in south karnataka built by Dinar missionary at Barkur in 644 AD followed by Mangalore and Kasaragod. The Bearys attributes their history to the conversion of Chera king named Cheraman Perumal and there by the arrival of Malik Bin Dinar and his companions, and their religious propagation along the seacoast of the region.

There are several interpretation related to origin of the term Beary. It is generally believed that the word Beary is derived from a Tulu word 'Byara,' which means trade or business. As they were widely engaged in commerce, the local people rightly called them Bearys. Doddamne(1993) suggests that Tulu word 'beara' is a more acceptable interpretation about the origin of the word Beary instead of the Arabic word 'bahri' or Sanskrit word 'vyapari'. But he does not entirely reject the narrations related to the conversion of 'Vyapari' community to Islam, and gradually they are known as Bearys. Ichlangod (2011) posed more probability to the Arabic word "bahri" which means sea-farer.

Beary dialect

The word Beary itself represents both an ethnic community and a dialect. Beary *bashe* is a Muslims own dialect in South Karnataka. Upadhyaya (2011) acknowledges that 'it is a distinct language developed from the Dravidian family of language.It is made of Malayalam idioms with Tulu phonology and grammar, and it does not have a script. As a local dialect, the Beary *bashe* developed from the contact of Tulu, Malayalam, Kannada and Konkani. The influence of Arabic is also visible in this dialect. The Beary dialect is otherwise known as Nakknik which originated and developed through the business link of native Muslims with other communities. This language was used by the community only for their personal communication. Around 15 lakhs people have been assumed to be speaking

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June 30, 2022

Dear Mohammed Shafi K,

Please accept this letter as a certificate of your participation in the **King's India Institute Graduate Conference 2022 – *Change & Continuity in South Asia: Unpacking Identity, Security & Technology***, hosted in a hybrid format in London and online from 21st to 23rd June 2022. This year's conference brought together Ph.D. candidates from research institutions in Asia, Europe, North America and Oceania. The event was curated in the context of the King's India Institute's 10th anniversary and in cooperation with the South Asian Studies Programme at the National University of Singapore.

The Steering Committee would like to thank you for presenting your paper ***'Beyond Essentialisation; Trajectories of Muslim Identity'*** as part of the panel titled **Challenging Socio-Political Hierarchies. How Marginalised Groups Reinterpretate Identity and Citizenship in Modern India**.

It was a great pleasure to host you at this year's Graduate Conference. We wish you every success in your future endeavours.

Sincerely,

Dr. Louise Tillin
Professor of Politics
Director, King's India Institute
King's College London

Certificate of Participation

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This is to certify that Mohammed Shafi K presented a paper titled 'Making of the 'Other': Identity and Politics in South India' at the Graduate South Asia Conference Virtual Conference, 29 September to 01 October 2022, organized by the Canada India Research Centre for Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), University of Guelph

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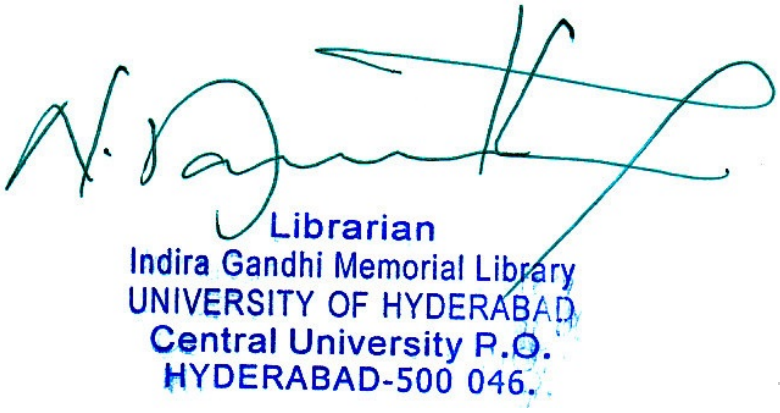
by Mohammed Shafi



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