CHAPTER IV
MUSLIM COMMUNITY
OF MYSORE
4.1. Introduction

“The Internet as a meaningful phenomenon only exists on particular places” (Miller and Slater, 2000). In this chapter, the demographic and ethnographic properties of Muslim community in Mysore are discussed to illuminate the context in which the Internet has been studied in this ethnographic research.

Spread of Islam in India has a long history; there are four major factors that have led to the expansion of Islam in India including 1) conquering India by Islamic forces and forceful conversion, 2) missionary activities of Muslims in India and peaceful conversions, 3) business and trade activities of Muslims in India and 4) immigrations of Muslims to India (Satyanarayana, 1993). Muslims ruled India for many years until 19th century when their political hegemony in India vanished by the colonial British forces.

With a population of 138,188,240 (2001 Census), Muslims are the largest minority population in India and comprise 13.43% of the total population of population in India. Accordingly, India is the 2nd country in the world, in terms of Muslim population. Muslims live in most of areas in India; however some states have comparatively larger Muslim population. Map 4.1 shows the distribution of Muslims in different states of India. Map 4.2 shows the percentage of Muslim population in each states of India.

Karnataka is one of the four southern states of India and is situated on south west of the Indian subcontinent. Karnataka has border in west by Arabian Sea, in east by Andra Pradesh, in north by Maharashtra, and in south with Tamil Nadu and Kerala states. With area size of 191,976 square kilometers, Karnataka is the 7th largest state in India and has the 8th largest population of India with 61,130,704 inhabitants based on 2011 census. Map 4.3 shows the position of Karnataka state in the map of India.

Karnataka has 30 districts (each district with its own sub-divisions) and 7 large cities. Bangalore is the capital, the most important and the largest city in Karnataka state. A great proportion of the state is rural areas. Kannada is the official and widely speaking language in Karnataka state. Karnataka has a very long and continuous history of civilization and has been ruled from ancient time to the present with numerous empires and dynasties which have left a rich cultural heritage in Karnataka.
Figure 5: Distribution of Muslims in India
Figure 6: Percentage of Muslim populations in each Indian state
Figure 7: Situation of Karnataka state in India
6,463,127 (2001 census) Muslim inhabitants live in Karnataka state which constitutes 10.7% of the total population in Karnataka state. Accordingly, Karnataka is the 8th state in India, in terms of the size of Muslim population. Muslims are living in all 30 districts of Karnataka; however the Muslim population in some districts is higher proportionally. Map 4.2 shows 30 districts of Karnataka and the Muslim population of each district.

Mysore district is located in the southern part of Karnataka state with borders with Chamarajanagar district to the southeast, Mandya district in northeast, Hassan district to the north, Kodagu district to the west and Kerala state to the south. With an area of 6,854 square kilometers, Mysore district is the 12th largest district in Karnataka in terms of area size and with a population of 2,994,744 (2011 census) is the 3rd most populated district in Karnataka state. Mysore city on the north eastern part of the district is the headquarters of Mysore district and the district name after Mysore city. Mysore district is known for a good climate.

Mysore city is the biggest city in Mysore district and is the third largest city in Karnataka state. About 146 km southwest of Bangalore, Mysore city is located at the base of the Chamundi Hills on an area of 128.42 square kilometers. The population of Mysore city is 887,446 inhabitants (2011 census). Mysore has an important place in the history of Karnataka. For many years (1399–1947) Mysore has been the center of the Kingdom of Mysore. Mysore city is full of the cultural and artistic remaining from the time of the Kingdom of Mysore and is known as the “cultural capital” of Karnataka. Mysore is noted for its palaces and festivals and is one of the important tourist hubs in Karnataka which attracts a large number of tourists every year. Map 4.4 shows district.s of Karnataka

More than 80 per cent of the whole population in Mysore city is Hindu and Muslims are the largest minority group in Mysore followed by Christians, Buddhists, and Janise. 234,302 (2001 census) Muslim inhabitants live in Mysore city which comprises 20% of the total population of Mysore city. The proportion of Muslim population in Mysore city is fairly above the average of Karnataka state and of even the national average. As in this study is concentrated on Muslim population of Mysore city, the following demographic and ethnographic information is about Muslims of Mysore city.
Figure 8: Districts in Karnataka State

Figure 9: Map of Mysore district
4.2. Geographical distribution of Muslims in Mysore

Most of the Muslims who live in Mysore city are the descendants of immigrants who migrated to Mysore city for different reasons. As a diaspora population, historically they have been always clustered in certain areas of the city; the pattern of geographical distributions which is still observable.

Muslims are scattered on Mysore city; in almost all areas of Mysore one can meet at least few Muslims. But most of Muslims are clustered in several areas in northern part of the city. These areas are usually known as “Muslim areas”. None of these areas is homogeneously Muslim setting and in all of them other religious groups live along with Muslims. These areas include: 1) Udayagiri, 2) Bannimantap, 3) Rajiv Nagar, 4) Mandi Mohalla, 5) Shanti Nagar, 6) Ghasia Nagar, 7) Enar Mohalla, 8) Halim Nagar. Except these areas, there are some other areas with less proportion of Muslim population. Map 4.5 shows the map of Mysore district. Generally speaking, geographic distribution of Muslims in these areas is correlated with their socio-economic backgrounds and the socio-economic conditions of Muslim inhabitants vary from area to area. Accordingly, Muslim areas can be divided into three zones.

From east to west, the first zone is majorly occupied by those Muslims who have low socio-economic status. These areas are older and decadent and walking in them one usually can feel poverty. Next to this zone, in the central zone mainly middle class Muslims live. And finally, the western zone is mainly occupied by those Muslims who enjoy higher socio-economic status.

4.3. Ethnic backgrounds of Muslims in Mysore city

(Satyanarayana, 1993) believes that Muslims in India have two major ethnic backgrounds: 1) Muslims who are the descendants of foreign migrants and have foreign origin and 2) Muslims who are descendants of those who have converted from the previous religions and have Indian origin. (Banes, 1893) categorizes Muslims with foreign origins into three major groups: 1) immigrants from north-west, 2) descendent of different Muslim rulers and 3) descendants of Arab merchants and traders.
Historically, most of Muslims in Mysore city are the descendent of a group of immigrants who have migrated to Mysore. Such diverse origins are the basis for the present categories among Muslims of Mysore city. Different Muslims in Mysore city identify themselves by different ethnic backgrounds and use different nominal basis to express such ethnic identity.

(Satyanarayana, 1993) has categorized Muslims of Mysore city with foreign origins based on their ethnic backgrounds and has explained the nominal basis among them to identify each ethnic background. He has identified four major groups as follows:

1) Sayyeds who trace their origin as the descendants of Fatima daughter of the prophet Muhammad and usually use names such as Ali, Mir, Zaffar, Mirza, Razvi

2) Sheikhs who link their background to the associates of the prophet Muhammad and usually use names such as Osman, Omar, Saddiq, Farouq. Sheikhs are the dominant population among Muslims of Mysore city

3) Mughals who trace their origin in Muslim rulers of India and have ‘Beig’ in their names and assume Iranian or Turk origin and

4) Pathans who find their origin among immigrants from north-western frontiers of India, mainly from Afghanistan and usually have ‘Khan’ in their names.

(Satyanarayana, 1993) also has categorized those Muslims of Mysore who has migrated from other areas of India and do not have foreign origin. He also has provided a nominal basis to identify each of these Muslim migrants with Indian origins as follows:

- from Kashmir (Kalal and Peshwari groups)
- from Gujarat (Bohar, Halai Meman and Kachchi Meman groups)
- from Rajasthan (Sonar, Lonar, Nadaf and Pindore groups)
- from Bengal (Mahaout group)
- from Orissa (Chaundhri group)
- from Maharashtra (Patwegar and Rangar groups)
- from Tamil Nadu (Labbai and Rowthe groups)
- from Kerala (Tangal, Musalliyyar and Mappila groups)
4.4. Islamic sections among Muslims in Mysore city

Most of Muslims in Mysore city are Sunnis. After the Sunni majority population, there is a minority of the Shi’a Muslims as well as few Sufi Muslims who are very small religious minority on the context of Muslim community in Mysore city. The dominance of Sunni Muslims in Mysore is observable in most of other Muslim communities in India as well. The Shi’a minority is mainly clustered in ‘Mandi Mohalla

4.5. Family and marriage among Muslims of Mysore

In overall view, the average age of marriage among Muslims of Mysore city is very low. Parents intend to find a couple for their children very soon; it is more applicable for girls who usually get married before the age of 18. The dominant type of marriage is ‘arranged marriage’; however in the case of the younger Muslims, and more educated families ‘love marriage’ were observable on many cases as well.

Generally speaking, joint ‘patrilocal’ families are the common and more accepted type of family in which parents live together with married sons and bride. Traditionally, it is prestigious for men to have his sons and their families living in his household (Satyanarayana, 1993). However the new generation of Muslims in Mysore is more intended to have nuclear families; young couples prefer to live independently and have separate houses. Young couples usually get their own children very soon after their marriage. Muslim community of Mysore is a male dominant society as traditionally men have more social power. It can describe why families are happier when they have a newborn son rather than girl. Elders of family, especially older males have higher respect in family. Divorce is very bad and unaccepted among them.

4.6. Literacy rate and education background of Muslims in Mysore city

In an overall view, the literacy rate and education level of Muslims in Mysore city is not encouraging. There are some members of the community who are totally illiterate and many with very limited literacy. Generally, the education level among them is the reflection of their economic background; the better financial background the better education level.
Traditionally, there have been two types of education among Muslims of Mysore; 1) Islamic education which is conducted on Madrasas as the education center for Islamic thought and 2) formal education which is held in secular schools. Very few parents these days send their children to Madrasa; their intention is to send their children to secular school. However children learn some basic Islamic knowledge from their parents at home or in mosques.

There are both Urdu and English medium schools. But most of the families prefer to send their children to English medium school. They believe that this is more necessary and effective for the success of their children in the future. That is why comparing with their parents the young members of the community have better English proficiency. Traditionally older male members of family (father and grandfather) have authority to make decisions about the education of children.

Comparing to the last generations, the new generation of Muslims in Mysore is more inclined and motivated for education. Such change in education level of the community is changing the social, cultural and economic dynamism of Muslim population in Mysore city. Media and communication technologies also play very important role in changing the education patterns.

4.7. Economic condition of Muslims in Mysore city

It is publicly accepted notion in Mysore that in general, the economic condition of Muslims in Mysore city is not encouraging. As mentioned before, the economic background and education level of Muslims in Mysore are highly correlated. The two factors amplify each other as financial difficulties led to less education and less education hamper economic improvements.

Due to the low level of education, a great portion of Muslim population in Mysore work as unskilled and semi-skilled workers followed by fewer skilled workers and those who own small and medium size businesses. Few of them are professionals. However as the education level of the new generation has improved, the number of professionals is increasing among them.
It is a common tradition among Muslims in Mysore city to continue their family occupation; many families are known by their family occupations. However it is less trendy nowadays particularly among educated young Muslims. Considering the lower rate of social engagement among Muslim women, it is not surprising that the main earning members of families are men. In many families there is more than one earning member. Usually women and the female children are housewives and/or internal cooperators and are responsible for cooking, cleaning and domestic tasks.

4.8. Languages of Muslims in Mysore city

Urdu is the mother tongue of most of the Muslims in Mysore; almost all of the Muslims in Mysore can speak Urdu. But there are also few Muslims in Mysore who have other mother tongues. These Muslims usually have recently migrated to Mysore city always from the other regions of India. There are some Tamil speaking Muslims, they have migrated from Tamil Nadu. There are also few Muslims in Mysore with Malayalam as their mother tongue; these Muslims have migrated from Kerala state.

A great majority of those Muslims, whose mother tongue is Urdu, can speak Kannada (which is the official language of Karnataka state) and many of them can speak Hindi as well. However Kannada and Hindi knowledge of many of them is limited to basic communication language and they do not have written skills on these two languages. Many of Muslims in Mysore city, especially younger Muslims know English with different level of fluency. The recent inclination to English medium schools among Muslim families in Mysore city has improved the English proficiency of the younger members of the community.

4.9. Religious festivals of Muslims in Mysore city

Daily praying or as it is called Namaz is the most important religious activity of Muslims; it is highly recommended that Muslims should held praying together or as it is called in Jamaa and in mosques. Therefore mosques are very important place for them. Most of Muslim areas have several mosques where Muslims pray together; traditionally, the great majority of men go to mosque for praying, but it is less trendy among the younger members of community. Women do not go to mosques. Normally they pray at
home. In some houses, a separate place is provided for women to pray; this place is called Ashoorkhana.

There are some festivals which are celebrated by Muslims in Mysore. Ramzan is observed during the ninth month of the Muslim calendar. Muslims observe fasting during this month and they eat and drink only between the hours of dusk and dawn. Muslim regions become lively during this month, one of the most important religious festivals in the Islamic calendar is ‘Id-ul-fitr’ which is celebrated at the end of the month as the first day of the next month ‘Shawwal’. In this day, Muslims gather to attend ‘Id-namaz’ on the morning and then relatives and friends greet each other and have special foods. They usually wear totally white cloths on this day.

The other festival is called ‘Idul-zuha’ or known also as ‘Baqr-id’ which is observed as the day of sacrifice all over the Islamic world. Muslims go to ‘Idgah’ on the morning of the festival before having their breakfast and offer animal sacrifices. The first ten days of ‘Muharram’ which is the first month of Islamic calendar is observed by Shia’s who mourn for the tragedy of ‘Karbala’ in which the grandson of the prophet, Hussain was brutally put to death. Another festival is ‘bara-wafat’ which is the commemoration of the death of the prophet Muhammad. ‘Shab-e Barat’ also is celebrated on the night of the 14th of ‘Shaban’ the eighth month in the Islamic calendar. Many members of the Muslim community of Mysore city still preserve their identical symbols and their traditions such as their dress codes, their language, and their family style. But at the same time they are exposed with global forces and changes are highly observable among them.