
CHAPTER - VI

**CONCLUSION : GOKAK SAVALAGI MATHA
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This is a Case Study of a Veershaiva/Hindu-Muslim religious institution which has a standing of 300 years history of religious integration and religious harmony from the period of the Moghul King Aurangzeb. Such institutions symbolising communal harmony have spread throughout Northern Karnataka. Yamanoor Changdev, Shiratti Pakeereshwar, Tinthani Mouneshwara, Shishunal Sharif and Bande Nawaz of Gulbarga are examples. They combine in themselves elements and faiths of Muslim-Hindu-Veerashaiva religions. The history of Gokak Savalgi Math was seen to be related to the interactions of Shivalingeshwar and Sufi saints like Khwaza Bande Nawaz. Sufism, based on the principles of love, brotherhood and peace brought the singer saints of different religions together.

The miracles and personality charm of the saints was so much (according to the written records and oral narratives/memories of the people handed down from generation to generation) that the Moghul Kings and the Local kings and Jahagirdars like Desai of Shindikurabett, donated land and

service functionaries to Gokak Savalgi Matha. Various kings and administrators who came under the influence of Veerashaiva-Muslim Sufi saints constructed many such secular, integrative, monasteries throughout Karnataka and even other South Indian States like Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu. In India, we see a close relationship between the Kings, Rulers and the promotion of religion, temple construction and architecture.

Gokak Savalgi Matha and its secular structure is thus a product of the past history. But, the researcher went beyond this. An exploratory Research Design was used. One of the objectives of the present study was to test the ground level reality at the village and regional context. Thus, the researcher studied the role of Gokak Savalgi Matha as an institution of religious communication. The researcher is a native of Avargol - the village which was studied as a representative rural society in the vicinity of the Matha. He is also a follower of the Matha, which is a strength as far as collecting descriptive data on fairs, festivals, rituals, castes and other data on the service functionaries is concerned. The subjective bias was however, minimised by my guide by constantly reminding me of the importance of keeping objectivity besides participating in the Matha's activities for gaining the subjective experiences, for enabling to get the data on people's participation.

The researcher interviewed various devotee respondents (a total of 50) from different backgrounds. The data indicate that religious purpose is the primary reason, followed by respondents 'To be free from family problems and diseases', Shivalingeshwar as family god, for recreation, etc. were other reasons. As regards, Muslim participation, their faith in Shivalingeshwar and the Savalgi Math was strong. They were also found to worship gods like Hanuman, Lakshmi, Basaveshwar, and other Hindu village gods and goddess. Muslims also keep fasts like the other Veershaiva castes.

The Matha besides communicating religious philosophy, ideas, practices, was also found to communicate educational, political, legal, household, health, and other development ideas to the villagers. Not only communicational, but the Matha was a great saviour of the poor and toiling masses. This institution provides food and other economic support to all those who visit the Matha and otherwise. It maintains cordial benefactor role and good-will relationships with the Veerashaivas and other communities. This is not to say that everything is well with all Mathas. There are a cross section of people who also criticize the Mathas and their functioning. But, the researcher, found that during the various festivals and fairs, the conflicts and rigidity of caste norms are relaxed. Gokak Savalgi Math was promoting Communal Harmony in this region especially the rural areas. With increased

agricultural modernization and economic development, the number of devotees is constantly increasing . In all more than one lakh devotees visit the Matha in the annual fair.

From the Avargol study, we find that, an important system which maintains reciprocal relations among Veerashaivas and Muslim caste is the Balutedari system. Different service castes or ayagars like carpenter, blacksmith, barber, potter, cobbler, etc. also provide services to the land owning Muslims. Muslims in turn who work as Gavandi (Masons), are engaged in petty business, and also interact with Veerashaiva castes. Thus, this socio-economic relationship together with the sacred complex or centre of Gokak Savalgi Matha has been responsible for harmonious relationships among Veerashaivas-Hindus-Muslims in Avargol and other nearby villages. The Kannada language of social interaction and communication, dress type, food, and Matha's religious socialisation brings in communal harmony which is not so much the case in the urban areas. Such sociological and anthropological studies, need to be carried further, to understand not only their positive roles, but as an anti-thesis of the phenomenon of communal tensions in India.