

## **“Dargah versus Peeta”: Hindutva’s Politics of Appropriating Syncretic Culture in Karnataka**

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For the past couple of years, Karnataka is witnessing the growth of communal politics, manifested in the form of communal conflict or riots. This trend has increased after the demolition of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. In some districts or parts of Karnataka, the frequency has increased such as in Gadag, Mangalore, Hubli, Belgam, and Chickmagalur. The last district is slowly receiving the national focus mainly due to Hindutva’s deliberate attempt to appropriate symbol of syncretic culture and convert the same into a terrain of contestation and thereby expand its social bases in South India. Here lies the larger agenda of constructing one more Ayodhya in South India. This would help in completing its project of capturing the power of Indian state in due course. This is the reason why a sustained effort is being made to retain the tempo of the movement to liberate the “Dargah/peeta” from the clutches of “Muslims”- the presence of the latter is essential to construct an external “enemy” to justify the logic of Hindutva.

The controversial site is located in the hilly regions of the district of Chickmagalur- 40 KMs away from the district headquarters. This region is called Baba Budan Giri Hills

there are different claims on the origin of the name. <sup>1</sup>Nationalist historians claim that Puranic name of the Baba Budan Giri was Chandradrona, the creator of the moon, as it is in the form of crescent or horseshoe form. At the same time nationalist historians claim that present name came from a “Mohammedan saint who took up his residence on one of the southern slopes”. In addition, nationalist historians/historiography, including reports of Archeological Survey of India saw the place being <sup>2</sup>“occupied”. Slightly different is the claim of the Colonial historiography, which comes very closer to the arguments of Hindutva: Colonialist historiography argues <sup>3</sup> “ it was Mohammedan saint who gave his name to the mountain”. However, nationalist historiography and colonialist agree that Mohammedan saint or Sufi saint introduced the coffee culture in Chickmagalur region. The official historians presented a slightly different version. <sup>4</sup>Suryanath Kamath, for example in his note observed differently. He thinks that Baba Budan was not only Sufi saint but also a disciple of Dattatreya. Further he thinks that Baba Budan was the son of Ismail Shah Khadri and thereby negates that he was an adopted son. He identifies <sup>5</sup>1713 as period when Sufi Saint came to settle down in the Peeta. And later on after his death he was buried in the same place.

The controversial Baba Budan Giri Dargha is often referred to “ Guru Dattataraya Bababudanswamy’s Dargha” or “ Guru Dattataraya Bababudan Durga” in the records of the <sup>6</sup>Princely State. Sometime it is simply called Dargah; thereby the state accepted the

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<sup>1</sup> Hayavadana Rao, *Mysore Gazeteer* Vol 5 Government Press, 1930

<sup>2</sup> See *Report of Archeological Survey of India*, 1915 p.82

<sup>3</sup> William Wilson Hunter, *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol.XIV 1887

<sup>4</sup> Suryanath Kamath, *Letter to Upendra*, n.d

<sup>5</sup> Suryanath kamath, *Malenadina Mooru nathapantha Kendragalu, Ithihasa Darshana*, 1998 pp.207-10

<sup>6</sup> *Proceeding of the Government of His Highness the Maharaja of Mysore*, 1906.

existence of dargah. Sometime <sup>7</sup>Dargah and Peeta are interchangeably used. This was treated as one of the “ancient institutions” venerated in high esteem by Hindus and Muslims. The use of “ancient “ by the State- mainly Princely state- in its report of 1934- makes the origin of shrine a difficult one.

It is in these hills there exist one cave containing what Muslims argue presence of the tomb of Baba Budan and the Hindus to be the throne of Dattatreya. There are counter claims too: some argue that there exist the tomb of Dada Hayat Mir Khalandar the first Sufi Saint who came to this region to propagate Islam. It is also argued Dattatraya is nothing but a corruption of Dada Hayat Mir Qalandar. Meanwhile it is argued that Peeta/Dargah was sanctified by the presence and meditation of Dattatrayasswami and others(, Sati Anasuya, Dada Hayat Khalander, and Mama Jigni etc). Nonetheless, inside the cave there are four tombs. Here too problems lies in identifying tombs: Mysore Archeological Report of 1931 states that they were the tombs of “four disciples of <sup>8</sup>Dattatraya: Malik Tajai, Malik Wazir, Malik Kabu and Malik Safir, who are the sons of Padshah of Turan”. Here the report tries to project them as “Hindus” as it makes difference between the presence of Muslim tombs and the tombs of “sishtyas” in the subsequent paragraph. In the case of Muslim <sup>9</sup>tombs it identified the presence in the outer yard within the compound. This particular argument is being contested.

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<sup>7</sup> *Proceedings of the Government of His Highness*, June 4<sup>th</sup> 1945

<sup>8</sup> See *Mysore Archeological Department* 1931, p.21

<sup>9</sup> *Mysore Archeological Department* 1931, p.21

This site is a symbol of syncretism in Karnataka. Here combination of Hindu symbolism and Islamic are quite apparent. Hindus worship The “Paduka” and Nandadeepa by offering flowers, coconuts and burning holy camphor. Muslim offer prayer to the tombs. Interestingly at the time of “Urs “ the Holy Sandal Paste is taken in a procession accompanied by Hindu musical instruments like “Kombu” Khale” and “Tamate. This forms of syncretism has helped in containing the communal riots in Karnataka.

In fact, syncretic culture in Karnataka is the gift of Sufi Saints. Their arrival in India is traced to 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> century. Islam came to Karnataka through Arab Trade in the coastal belt and through the conquest of north Karnataka. Until 14<sup>th</sup> century Islam was largely confined, as a dominant religion, to north Karnataka- mainly to Bahamani Sultans, Bijapur and Golkonda. However, earliest contact of Islam with South India began in 8<sup>th</sup> Century, during the Rashtrakuta period. In fact, the Rashtrakuta kings, <sup>10</sup>“ being at war with Gurjara Kings, cultivated the friendship with the Arabs of Sind. One result of this new policy was that Arab merchants and travelers began to visit Western India. Interestingly Arabs stated, “Ratrakutas were the greatest among the sovereigns of India”. However, Sufism came to coastal region in <sup>11</sup>four different forms: first was in missionary form; second was in the form of warrior to boost the morale of war; third was in the form of political patronage and also on the basis of invitation and finally, in the form of seeking knowledge and to spread the philosophy. There is one section, which came from the coastal belt to the Baba Budan Giri. It seems the Sufi saint of Baba Budan

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<sup>10</sup> C.Hayavadana Rao *Mysore Gazetteer*, Govt Press, Bangalore, 1930

<sup>11</sup> Rahamath Tarikere, *Karnatakad Sufigalu*, Kannada University, 1988 pp. 34-35

giri combined the spirit of valor with philosophy. However, like wise the other Sufi Saints, Baba Budan also ended up in creating a syncretic culture.

In Karnataka there are large number of Dargahas/Peetas, including the temples venerated equally by Hindus and Muslims as part of Syncretic culture. Some of the well known Sufi saints who created syncretic culture were: Bande Nawaz, Kode Kal Basavanna, Thinthini Monappaya in Gulbarga, Shishunala Sharifa, Gulam Sha Vali in Davanagere, Syed Madani in Mangalore, Shirhatti Pakiresha, Allama Prabhu Kamaluddin, Changa peer etc. There are temples, which have retained linkage with the Islamic culture: in Mulki nearing Mangalore, the Muslim- Bappa Bairy constructed a temple, In Holeyal in Dharwad district the “Gaddige” or the seat is constructed in such a way that half of it appears in Islamic tradition and the other half in Hindu Tradition. Interestingly backward castes/class too venerate Islamic “spirit”- classic case is the “Ali Chamundi Bootha and Bobarya Bootha ” in coastal belt. All these helped to construct a tolerant society and in the process it checkmated the growth of communal politics. This is the reason why historically Karnataka witnessed very few communal riots. This can be seen in the number of communal riots, beginning from colonial period. During colonial period, for example, only one communal riot was reported in 1920s on the issue of Ganesh festival and it was confined to Bangalore city alone. Even until the end of 1980s or till the demolition of Babri Masjid in 1990s, the number of riots were far and few when compared to other parts of India- <sup>12</sup>Belgam, Hospet and Bagalkot (1957), Gulbarga (1964), Mangalore (1967), Chickmagalure and Munireddy Palya (1968), Hubli, Belgam,

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<sup>12</sup> Muzaffar Assadi, “Threats to Syncretic Culture”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.XXIV, No.13, March 17-1999, pp.746-48.

Gulbarga and Bantwala (1978), Kolar and Bijapur (1979), Hasan and Sira (1980). Shimoga (1981), Robertson pet, Davanagere (1984), Shivaji Nagar Bangalore (1984), Mysore, Shimoga and Bidar (1987) and finally Kolar and Sidlaghatta (1988). All these have changed after the Babri Masjid demolition in Ayodhya. Now the frequency of communal riots have not only increased, and but also the communal politics is slowly spreading its tentacles. In fact, the Hindutva stands on two premises: first premise is that communal riots always expand the social bases of Hindutva and, second premise is that broader the secular fabric less will be the space available for Hindutva. It is in this context that syncretic culture became its primary target, as its contribution to secular/tolerant society is much more and that it is coming in the way of creating a “political Hindu” . However the larger agenda was to capture the power of the Indian state so as to capture the power of the Indian in due course.

Nonetheless, there are large number of customs attached to the Dargah or Peeta in Baba Budan Giri: the care taker of the Dargah or Peeta is known as Sajjade; the latter is called Sri Dattatraya Swami Baba Budan Swami Jagadguru; Sajjade is also called “Guru”; that only Sayeds can be the swamis of the matha/Dargah- descendents of Ali; no unmarried man can become Sajjade; Sajjade appoints Mujavars to perform daily rites; Sajjade alone enters the sanctum sanctorium of institutions and puts flowers to the padukas. Khadave and lits the Nanda Deepa.<sup>13</sup> Succession to the office is regulated by the rules governing the succession of Gurus to Mathas, the annual urs is held every year as per Hindu Calendar after <sup>14</sup>three days of holi festival; during Urs Musical instruments of Hindus has to be

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<sup>13</sup> G.O No.1235 dated 24<sup>th</sup> August 1906

<sup>14</sup> B.S.Vittal Rao, *Facts Relating to Arising Dispute of Datta Peetha and Bababudan Dargah*, n.d

played, Other Hindu practices or customs were: <sup>15</sup> offering of flowers to Padukas; lighting the Nanda Deepas, giving thirtha to pilgrims, breaking of coconuts, Taking Hindu Gurus of religious Mutts with respect; giving “padi”- to the pilgrims (persons who do not take food prepared in the langarkhana are given “padi” ie, provisions like rice, Dhal etc for preparing their food),

. In addition, there are large numbers of stories/beliefs centering on the Dargah/Peeta. One belief is about the story of a Princess who became a disciple of the saint<sup>16</sup>. “ The story goes that that Vira Ballaa who lived in the fort of the hill having heard of the beauty of Mohammedan Princess wanted to get possession of her and with this object sent some who contrived to bring her away while asleep on her couch. The cool breeze of the mountain awakening her, she learnt from the men the purpose for which she was brought there and prayed to god that she might be made to look an ugly creature to be given to the fakir of the hill, i.e., the saint Dada Hayat Mir Qalandar. The latter took her under her care and direct here to give food to fakir’s unseen through an aperture of the cave seated on the platform. On one occasion a mischievous fakir seized her outstretched hand, whereupon his head became severed from the body by the curse of the Qalandar. After this incident, the distribution of food by the princess was ordered to be discontinued. Vira- Ballal was defeated and thrown into prison by the father of the princess”, If this particular story is accepted then the presence of Baba Budan can be traced to the year between <sup>17</sup>1173-1220 A.D when Vira Ballal was reigning. It was a period of perpetual

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<sup>15</sup> See, *Revision petition in the court of the Commissioner for Religious and Charitable Endowments in Karnataka*, Bangalore, and February 25 1989.

<sup>16</sup> C.Hayavadana Rao. *Mysore Gazetteer*: Kadur District, Vol.5, Govt. Press. 1930

<sup>17</sup> C.Hayavadana Rao *Mysore Gazetteer* Vol.II, Govt press, Bangalore 1930 pp.1363.

war between feudatory states- that is why it is said Baba Budan died in a war in around the hill region. Interestingly an inscription built on the cave gave the dates to <sup>18</sup>S.H 396 (AD 1005); thereby one can argue that Sufis might have arrived in the beginning of 10<sup>th</sup> century

There are other stories too: Muslims believe that Sufi Saint- Dada Hayat Khalandar had vanished from one of the Caves to Mecca and Madina and will reappear before the disciples in due course. On the other Hindus believe that Dattatraya meditated in the cave and disappeared from one of the caves. Nonetheless Muslims believe that Dada Khalandar was one of the first followers of Prophet Mohammad called “Has Abhe Suppa” who were directed by Prophet to spread Islam in India. At the same time <sup>19</sup>Muslims argue that the original name of Dada Khalandar was Abdul Aziz Mecci who was bestowed with the title “Khalandar” However the most important story is how the Dargah/Peeta bestowed the children to the Princely State of Mysore. This is a typical story that has the similarity with the stories surrounding the birth of Jahangir, Tippu Sultan etc. This story of the princely state is important for the reasons that it provided the legitimacy to the claims of the Sufi Saints, and at the same time it brought both-Sufi saint and the state for a closer scrutiny: <sup>20</sup> Sri Krishna Raja Wadeyar had no son in his family for a long time. He was worried much about it. Once coming out of the Dargah he saw the stone slab where devotees broke the offered coconut. Struck with an idea, he made a

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<sup>18</sup> However, the Archeological Survey of Mysore dismisses the claims of its dates on the grounds that “ the style of the script and the words Dattatraya and Dada in English and modern Kannada characters at the end clearly show that the inscription was put on stone but recently” See *Archeological Survey of Mysore*, 1915 p.82

<sup>19</sup> Ejasuddin, “*Hazrath Dada hayat Meer Khalandar*”. Bababudangiri, Chickmagalur, 1979, pp/12-14

<sup>20</sup> Sajjada Nashin, *Hazrath Dada Hayat Meer Khalandar*, Chickmagalur, 1979, p.29.

vow quietly that he would split that stone with coconuts on the birth of a son in the family. Soon after that his brother had a son, Sri Jayachamaraja Wadiyar. He came to the Dargah with cartloads of coconuts to fulfill his vow and began breaking coconuts one by one. The stone remained solid even after many cartloads were finished. He was in a dilemma. He had to fulfill his vow but it appeared impossible. At last he realized that in his anxiety he made a vow, which was apparently impossible. He explained the situation and requested Hazrath Peer to take him to Dada and pray for his pardon and suggest a solution. After Hazrath Peer recited the Fateh, Maharaja expressed his gratitude to Dada, repented his folly, sought Dada's pardon and accepted a coconut offered by Peer. Coming out of the Dargah and following the instructions, he broke the coconut on the stone slab. To his pleasant surprise the stone developed a crack”

Dattatraya Cult is not new to this region. Several places in around Baba Budan Giri are associated with the Dattatraya Peeta (Somapura, Inam Dattatraya Peeta Village, Inam Bisangi Matha Village,) although the cult itself very old, but its origin is traced to Maharashtra. However, one branch of the Dattatraye Peeta came to settle down in this region. In fact there exist Guru Dattatraya Palahara Math, in the region. Here the claim is that Dattatraya Peeta is older than the Dargah and thereby it belongs to Hindus. Nonetheless, no one knows the exact period in which the cult spread to old Karnataka region. Interestingly, Dutta Cult is also called Natha Panth, which has places in Mangalore, Belgam and Mandya districts in Karnataka. Even three maths of Dattatraya are also known for Natha Panth

Dargah/Peeta had received large number of Sanadas in its history- these Sanadas were pertaining to appointment of <sup>21</sup>Sajjade Nashin or the care taker of the Dargah, or donation of <sup>22</sup>villages to the Dargah for its up keeping; collection of taxes or claiming sandalwood grown. Even the Dargah/Peeta was not above controversies. In its history controversies centered around issues of appointing Sajjade Nashin or about regularizing hereditary Caretaker such as the one between Miran Shah and Ataulah Shah in 1819. One thing is fairly clear that Dargah/Peeta was closely associated with the state right from period of Malik Kafur. . This is apparent in the appointment of Sajjada- his succession had to be recognized by the state, the state would donate grants/money for the up keeping of the Dargah, as part of endowment programme; the state would pass judgment over collection of taxes. Interestingly the state some time used “Dargah”as a Muslim institution without mentioning the presence of Peeta- for example, the administrative report of 1927-29 of Mysore state observed that <sup>23</sup>“ The Dargah on the Bababudan Hills is another important Mohammedan institution resorted to by many pilgrims during the urus”. This argument is repeated in successive reports too- 1928-29. It is here Hindutva’s argument differ.

## **Dispute**

The dispute can be traced back to the year 1964 when site was listed in the Board of Wakf. Earlier<sup>24</sup> the property was treated as a part of Muzarai department under Religious

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<sup>21</sup> *Proceedings of the Shariat Government of Mysore*, 1819

<sup>22</sup> One of the government proceedings identified following villages: Sarvamanya Village, Dattatraya peeta village and Jannath Nagar, See *Proceedings of the Government of His Highness the Maharaja of Mysore*, 1906

<sup>23</sup> *Report on Administration of Mysore, 1928-29* pp.99. and also Mysore Administrative Report, 1927-28 pp.100

<sup>24</sup> *Proceedings of the Government of his Highness* 1943

and Charitable Act of 1927. Until the beginning of 1960 disputes centered on issues such as succession, internal management of the Dargah etc. All these issues were nothing to do with Hindutva. However, what changed the course was when one B.S.Nagaraj and C.Chandrashekar filed a representative suit before the district court challenging the transfer of property to Wakf Board in 1978. Adding to the issues of transfer of property, issue of removing Padukas and Nandadeep from the shrine in 1975 added to the dispute. Nonetheless the Hon'ble court in 1980 declared that shrine is a religious " <sup>25</sup>institution of holy place of worship belonging to Hindus and Mohammedans alike". At the same time it directed to re-transfer the institution to the control of Muzarai department. However what Hindutva missed was the following sentence: "Neither the disciples nor devotees of a particular religion or faith can claim exclusive right to worship at the said institution". . Hindutva took up the issues of retransfer of the control to the Muzarai department as an indictment of its position. Quoting the court judgement does this: <sup>26</sup> " ... that it is not a wakf Property and therefore inclusion of the property in the list of wakf is improper and illegal. And such inclusion will not offset the rights of the Hindus. .. The second defendant is hereby restrained by means of a permanent injunction not to interfere with Hindus rights in respect of the plain scheduled institution or property"

In between 1970 and early 1980s other disputes came to surface. Most of the time they remained at the appealing level: <sup>27</sup> whether or not the care taker has the right to expand or alter the site without the permission of the state; whether site can be used as a burial

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<sup>25</sup> *Case OS.No 25/1978 Order of the Civil Court of Chickmagalur*

<sup>26</sup> See *Revision Petition, in the Court of the Commissioner for Religious and Charitable Endowments in Karnataka*, dated February 25<sup>th</sup> 1989.

<sup>27</sup> Bharatiya Janata party, *Letter to District Commissioner*, 4/3/99

ground, allowing Hindus to pray; non submission of accounts, that whether Care taker has the right to sell the property belonging to Dargah.and finally 1/3 distribution of <sup>28</sup>property among the family members . However, until the arrival of Hindutva, other than the property issues, the issues raised by different groups were trivial in nature: <sup>29</sup>misuse of water pipes, <sup>30</sup>misuse of funds, harassment. One such group which existed during the late 1970s was <sup>31</sup>Jagratha Praja Samiti, This group <sup>32</sup> in 1978 itself had demanded take over of the Peeta/Dargah by the government, an <sup>33</sup>investigation into the misuse of funds, However it was not strong to make an impact on all Karnataka level- it remained a localized affair..

Interestingly Wakf Board did not move to court for a revision petition against the transfer of property to Muzarai department- it was not filed within one year. Earlier in 1983 Sajjade moved the Court of Commissioner for Religious and Charitable Endowment for a revision order of Assistant Commissioner. The court dismissed the case in 1983. In 1989, the Care Taker or Sajjade once again moved the court of the Commissioner for Religious and Charitable Endowments with a revision petition. This was in pursuance of judgment of high court of Karnataka in a writ petition in 1985. The revision petition was submitted when assistant commissioner in his order of 1983 fixed rents at the time of annual Urs, including opening up a joint account with the Tashildhar. This was resented to, as it was

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<sup>28</sup> See Syed Bandagi Hussain Shah Khadri, *Representation to Assistant Commission of Chickmagalur*, December 10<sup>th</sup> 1986

<sup>29</sup> S.M>Basha, *letter to Chief Executive Engineer*, Sept.19<sup>th</sup> 1978

<sup>30</sup> Jagratha Praja Samiti, *no title chickmagalur* dated 4<sup>th</sup> December 1978

<sup>31</sup> A Muslim called S.M. Basha was the President of JPS. He was raising such issues as murder, police harassment or misuse of funds etc. He later on became the President of Minority Morcha of BJP. Interestingly his opposition to Dargah stems from the fact that once he was caught while stealing coffee beans from the Dargah. He along with his father was attached to Dargah for couple of years.

<sup>32</sup> Jagratha Praja Samit, *Letter to the Chief Minister*, September 19<sup>th</sup> 1978

<sup>33</sup> S.M.Basha, *Letter to Deve Gowda*, President, Karnataka pradesh Janata Party, December 12<sup>th</sup> 1978

violating the rights of the Sajjade over the maintenance and management of the institution. . Nonetheless, the revision petition restored the position of the Sajjade that existed prior 1975. However in 1980 Wakf Board moved to high court against the transfer of property. High court in its judgment of 1991 allowed the petition by saying that ‘ it is not barred by time’. At the same time court dismissed the Wakf Board claim over the property on the ground that it was not “ dedicated property by the Muslims” Curiously most important judgment came in the form of its observation made about shrine and practice of secularism: <sup>34</sup>“ We can not part with this judgment without placing on record our happiness and appreciation of the spirit of brother hood among the Muslims and Hindus who offer prayer at this Dargah or Peeta. The drab slogan we hear elsewhere in the country day in and day out that Ram and Rahim or Ishwar and Allah is one without practicing the faith in its true spirit, finds its translation into concreted action and practice in this holy shrine. The suit institution “ the Guru Dattatraye Bababudan Swamy “ stands aloft as shining examples of true secularism in this world divided so sharply on narrow caste, communal or religious consideration “

During 1990s the involvement of Hindutva became a known fact. It needs to be seen or located in the context of Hindustan’s rise at the all India level and the subsequent agenda to create a strong base in South India in general Karnataka in particular. During the early part of 1990s after the demolition of Babri Masjid/ Ram Mandir, although Hindutva could able to enter into the domain of central/national politics, the same could not be

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<sup>34</sup> See the Judgement, *The High Court of Karnataka Regular First Appeal No 119/1980* dated March 26 1991. This case was between The Karnataka Board of wakf appellant B.S Nagaraja Rao, Chandrashekar, and The state of karnataka, the Commission of Religious and Charitable Endowments and Sajjade Nashin as respondent.

done in Karnataka. In Politics Karnataka was still known as Congress/Janata bastion-Hindutva's political manifestation of BJP was struggling to make a dent. It was in this context that Hindutva tried to appropriate Baba Budan Giri and to convert the same into a contesting terrain to create a strong base for Hindutva in Karnataka in particular, South India in general. This is the reason why Hindutva employed a large number of discourses, historical myths, symbolism, and selective amnesia. In the process it tried to construct its own history, its own logic, its own myths, its own discourse etc. All these ended up in large number of ambiguities and contradictions. Nonetheless, Hindutva also faced two predicaments: one predicament was employing alternate symbolism to the existing symbolism of syncretic culture second predicament was creating a larger social coalition for converting the same into a "political Hindus", It is here it found appealing to the poor, backward, and lower middle class/caste a difficult one This is the reason why in the initial period Hindutva's politics of appropriating masses confined to dominant caste/upper caste. At the same time it used different arguments to enlarge the disputes.

One of the disputes, before the state government could take over the management was the "denial of ritualistic worship of Dattatraya Padukas". This was supported by series of allegations: missing sacred symbols from the site, burying the dead etc. Hindutva made large number of demands including taking over the management of the Dargah by the government and also employing <sup>35</sup>Hindu Priest in place of Sajjade. This year (2002) Hindutva is demanding the installation of an idol inside the cave and also appointment of Hindu priest to the Peeta

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<sup>35</sup> Vishwa Hindu Parishat, *Letter to The Hon'ble Home Minister*, no date

One of the politics of the Hindutva was to overlook the presence of Dargah in the present peeta, on the ground that they are located in a place called Jannat Nagar. In fact <sup>36</sup>state records shows that Jannath Nagar was one of the villages endowed to the Dargah right from the 17th century. Even the so-called Dattatraya Peeta village looks like a distinct or a separate place endowed to the dargha/peeta. In fact the Epigraphic Indica of 1717 identifies the original throne of Dattatraya Peeta in Dattatraya Palahara Matha- this obviously means that Dattatraya Peeta was not in Inam Dattratraya Peeta- it is originally located elsewhere

Hindutva over the years employed different strategies, tactics to appropriate the site and in the process try to create a base for itself: Initially, in 1983-84 its program was limited to celebration of Datta Jayanti at the shrine. However, in 1997 Hindutva (mainly Bajrang Dal) held a Rath Yatra in around the district. The gap between two periods shows the complete lack of interest and also hidden politics of the Hindutva. During this period Hindutva was much interested in Ayodhya issue and power at the center. BJP's success and the subsequent jolt in the electoral politics in the northern states made them to look for South India. This is the reason why after 1997 the issue of syncretism was severely contested: In 1998 Hindutva took out four Rath Yatras from different parts of the <sup>37</sup>state, including one from Narasabovadi in Maharashtra;latter is one of the known Dattatraya Peetas in Maharashtra. This year Hinduvta adopted the strategy of taking out Datta Paduka Ratha Yatre, Datta Maale, from different parts of Karnataka.

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<sup>36</sup> See *Proceedings of the Government of His Highness the Maharaja of Mysore*, 1906

<sup>37</sup> Other three places were Kurugadde in Raichur District, Ganigapura in Gulbarga district, Melukote in Mandya district.

### **Hindutva's Argument:**

Hindutvas' argument begins with dismissing large number of historical facts and in the process tries to construct its own version of history. However one thing is fairly clear that Hindutva also agrees to the fact that it was Baba Budan who brought the coffee cultivation to India.

Firstly, its narrative begins with myths and constructs the same as historical fact. This begins with a narrative on Dattatraya – his history is traced to <sup>38</sup>Satyayugah. His parents are identified as Athri and Anasuya who was born after “Gora Thapasya” and he is the reincarnation of one of the trimurthies –he represents Vishnu. The representation of Vishnu is essential for the Hindutva, so as to essentialism the politics of upper caste/higher gods confronting Sufi saints. If former is treated as one representing upper caste/middle caste, the latter is treated as representing backward caste/lower caste, including the Muslims. It is here the politics of Hindutva can be located. Nonetheless, Hindutva combines the politics of power, and politics of detachment simultaneously. This is apparent in the way Dattatraya was projected as the king after the death of sage Athree and also as one who was detached from the worldly life. At the same time, Hindutva projected the “Dattatraya’s penance to escape from the children of Sages, walking continuously for eight hours every day, etc” as historical fact. Meanwhile Hindutva goes for selective amnesia: it is silent about the <sup>39</sup>Nath Panth of Maharashtra; it is silent about the contribution of sufi saints to the growth of capitalist economy; it also silent about the

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<sup>38</sup> B.N.Vittal Rao, President, BJP, *Dattatraya, (unpublished Manuscript)*, n.d

<sup>39</sup> Suryanath Kamath, *Ithihasa Darshana*, 1999, p.207

“healing tradition’ that the sufi’s offered in this particular area.; it is silent about the larger caste nexus between different Mathas in this region.; and finally it was also silent about the fact that the disputed peeta was once controlled by Lingyats

On the contrary The Hindutva argues that Peeta is a <sup>40</sup>“Punya Kshetra “ of Hindus, a place of Mahasati Anasuya, mother of Dattatraya, a penancing place of Dattatraya Muni and his four disciples; that the four tombs inside the caves were nothing but the seats of the disciples of Dattatraya which has been converted into tombs by the Muslims. This does not mean that Hinduvta’s arguments are without any ambiguities. The ambiguities and contradictions are apparent in the way it constructed the arguments/ narratives and discourses. For example it projects the arrival of Sufi Saint – Dada Hayat Khalandar some time to 17th Century and <sup>41</sup> some time to 18<sup>th</sup> century, “ who came as a pilgrim and left for Tiruchinapalli”. This argument is again and again constructed to prove the point that the Dargah doesn’t exist in the disputed place and in the absence of such a dargah, Muslim have no claims over the site. .At the same time it argues that in 1717 for the first time that the Care taker was appointed by Hyder Ali. Some time it argues that <sup>42</sup> it was in the middle ages the place slipped into the hands of Sufi saints and during Tipu Sultan’s time part of the shrine came to be called Dargah”. In fact it argues that the original name of Baba Budan was Budan Shakadri, an adopted son of Ismail Shakhadri (died in 1737). This is done by refereeing to one court <sup>43</sup>judgment 1819 about the succession and the distribution of property among the family members. Meanwhile it

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<sup>40</sup> P.K.Nanariah, President, VHP, *letter to the Government*, April 16 1997

<sup>41</sup> B.S>Vittal Rao, *Letter to L.K Advani*, n.d

<sup>42</sup> Vishwa Hindu Parishat, *Letter to the Hon’ble Home Minister*, n.d

<sup>43</sup> This particular judgment awarded equal share between two family members, along with the fact that the Mutavalliship was given to two persons. See Court of Shariat, Government of Mysor, Judgment, 1819

equated <sup>44</sup>Meer Hayat Khalandar and Baba Budan as one and the same person Further it is argued that the Dargah was constructed in the year 1917, by referring to the Directory of Religious Institutions. At the same time the Hindutva is silent about the fact that the same records says that, <sup>45</sup>“The Peeta is almost three hundred years old”. Further, it argues in a typical fashion of Colonialist that the Cave was “Occupied” by Dada and his disciples. Again, it argues that Peeta (in Inam Dattatraya Village) and Dargah (Nagana Halli) are located in different villages- this is done by constructing an argument that the first Sufi saint- Hayat Khalandar- had <sup>46</sup>left the place without being buried in the Hill. Hence Peeta can not be equated or called as Dargah. This is further substantiated by advancing revenue records... However, the records shows that the owner of Survey no <sup>47</sup>57 and 58 (comprising 14 acres and 20 guntas of land) in Naganahalli is the Bababudan Dargah Nowhere it is stated that the Dargah is located in that Survey land. It is true that there are tombs in Nagenahalli but no one knows whether they belong to Baba Budan. On the contrary, the revenue records shows that the Dattatraya Peeta is located on the Survey no95 of the <sup>48</sup>tourist department/Gomal land in Inam Dattatraya Peeta. The records further state that the owner of the property is government. In fact, Gomal Property is always located outside the villages. The Cave structure is located at the top of the hills. It is here the argument of Hindutva is defeated. At the same time it is possible that the property of the Dargah can be spread out between different places. This is because the Dargah or the Peeta received Inam lands from different rulers spreading different villages/

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<sup>44</sup> Shri Dattatraya Peeta Savrankshana Samiti, *no title*, Chickmagalur, 1998

<sup>45</sup> *Directory of Religious institutions*, 1917

<sup>46</sup> Shri Gurudattatraya Peeta Sawvardhana Samit, *Peetada Oliu Nimma Sankalpavagali*, (Pamphlet) n.d

<sup>47</sup> *Land Revenue Records, Pahani Extract for 1998-99*

<sup>48</sup> See RTC Records: *Taluk-Chickmagalur: Village Inam Dattatraya Peeta for the year 1999*

One of the important ways Hindutva is trying to construct the “Hindu identity” is by constructing an “imagined enemy’s” and by abusing the <sup>49</sup>history/historical figures. Muslims became the “imagined enemy’s” and in the process their contribution is undermined. Nonetheless one cannot deny the Muslim or the Islamic contribution to the Karnataka. Muslims/Islam introduced and interpreted Persian and Turkish paintings, Persian immigrants brought or introduced “Damanscening”, ivory inlay, and lacquer work; they introduced number of plants from Arabia and Persia, including Coffee. In the case of Karnataka history, two Muslim Rulers have been the victims of Hindutva: Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan. More than Hyder Ali, Tippu Sultan is often abused; he is treated as a religious bigot, a communal, regional chauvinist, anti- Brahmin/Coorgi and anti Christian. On the contrary, Tippu was one who donated liberally to the famous temple at Sringeri- one of the Mathas that Sri Sankaracharya established in India and that it was looted by the invading Maratha forces. His donation to famous temples in Nanjangud, Sriranga in the capital is a well-known fact. His<sup>50</sup> wars against British were a part of opposing the imperialist power/colonial rule. He destroyed the Brahminical hold over the land, and thereby he became the harbinger for the growth of new social relations He introduced new market system and thereby linked the local with the larger market. In this way he introduced new capitalist relations, Tippu also laid the foundation stone for constructing a <sup>51</sup>dam across Cauvery river- it was laid on the same place wherein the famous Krishna Raja Sagar Dam at present is located. All these have become the part of

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<sup>49</sup> Achin Vanaik, *Communal literary mars secularism debate*, Indian Express, September 7 1992

<sup>50</sup> Karnataka Vimochana Range, *Hutatma Tippu, Swatantra Karnatakada Harikara*, Bellichukki, 1999

<sup>51</sup> During the end of Tippu’s rule there were nearly 39,000 small and big dams, According to 1803-04 reports nearly 8,13,491 acres of lands were under irrigation. -Nearly 35 per cent of the total land.

larger amnesia-Kirmani, who chronicled Tippu's life story had following to say with regard to the changes brought in the dress codes of women: <sup>52</sup>“In the whole of the territories of the Balghaut (Palghat at present) most of the Hindoo women go about with their breast and their heads uncovered like animals. He therefore gave orders that no one of these women should go out of her house without a robe and a veil or covering for the head.” This is the reason, unlike Shivaji in Maharashtra, Tippu never became a rally point against the neo-imperialism

Hindutva's attempt to appropriate the Baba Budan Giri, other than creating Hindu identity and converting South India into a bastion of Hindutva, also lies in the political economy of the Coffee plantation. Baba Budan Giri is replete with Coffee plantation. (In <sup>53</sup>Nagenahalli itself Dargah has more than two hundred acres of coffee plantation) In historical records coffee is often described, as “Boond. There is no accurate account on the introduction of coffee plantation in Mysore district. It seems Baba Budan, who brought <sup>54</sup>seven seeds from the Mecca, first introduced it in the areas of Baba Budan Giri. At the same time there are others who argue that one Hazrat Shah Jama Allah Magarabi introduced the coffee. At the same time the controversy also centered around two more issues: its actual period of introduction and the place of introduction. Colonial historians argue that it was introduced during <sup>55</sup>16<sup>th</sup> century; thereby the arrival of Sufi Saints is estimated during 16<sup>th</sup> century. Interestingly, the nationalist historians or biographers fixed

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<sup>52</sup> Mir Hussein Ali Khan Kirmani, *The Nishani Hyduri* (Translated by Colonel W. Miles) Union Press, MDCCLXIV, pp.201

<sup>53</sup> See *Index of Lands, Village: nagenahalli*, year 1998.

<sup>54</sup> H.L.Nagegowda Bettadinda Battlige Athava Coffee Kathe, *Sahitya Sadana Arasiker*, 1969 pp44-46. In the same book author, a well known folklorist argue that Mecca, the holy place of Muslims was once a Hindu place. - This argument very well suits Hindutva.

<sup>55</sup> William Wilson Hunter, *Imperial Gazetteer of India* Vol.xiv, 1887

the “occupation” in 1605, the <sup>56</sup>year Jagir was granted to the Sufi saint. Even some government <sup>57</sup>publications locate its introduction to twelfth century. This periodization has become a contesting issue for the Hindutva. Dargah had large number of lands under coffee plantation- it argues that it had more than <sup>58</sup>6930 acres of lands. which were disposed off by the caretaker. Any reclaiming land would definitely bring in huge capital to the Hindutva fold. More than that the coffee economy, after the introduction of Free Sale Quota, is directly linked to the larger market- principally the western/global market. Al though at present the coffee economy is facing the problem of depression, due to the arrival of surplus coffee from Argentina, however there is a possibility that the economy would recover in years to come. Hindutva is not concerned about the present status of the economy. - It aims at future. Capturing the plantation is most important thing for the Hindutva. This is the reason why the Hindutva demanded “<sup>59</sup> survey the coffee cultivation by the authority of Survey of India and to take measures for vacating unauthorized cultivation”. Further it also demanded a <sup>60</sup>prohibition on the sale of property by the caretaker. Meanwhile its larger design of capturing the dargah/peeta for the reasons of economics becomes clear when it calculated the total income from different sources. Every year, it calculated that Dargah would able to collect more <sup>61</sup>than thirty-two lakhs rupees from such sources as shops, business, etc. For two important reasons the capture of economy mediating through the Dargah or Peeta is essential: one, it provides

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<sup>56</sup> C.Hayavadana Rao. *Mysore Gazetteer: Kadur District*, Vol.5, Govt. Press. 1930

<sup>57</sup> Government of Mysore, *Karnataka Through the Ages* 1968, p. 723

<sup>58</sup> S.Vittal rao, *Press Statement* February 12 1999

<sup>59</sup> BJP, *Letter to Suresh Prabhu*, Hon’ble Minister for Environment and Forest, Feb 3<sup>rd</sup> 1999, Chickmagalur

<sup>60</sup> BJP, *Letter to district Commission*, January 4 1999

<sup>61</sup> Its calculation came to Rs.32,75,900=00 per year

the economic means to expand social bases of the Hindutva and two, it provides means to sustain its ideology at the larger level.

In addition any claim over Dargah/Peeta also had the agenda of bringing back the hold over the bio diversity of the Dargah/Peeta. In fact, dargah /peeta had received many Jagirs from the state throughout the history. Kings of <sup>62</sup>Anegondi, the successors of Vijayanagar Empire granted 20 villages, Tippu Sultan restored the latter. <sup>63</sup>Hyder Ali granted Dasrahalli and Krishna Raja Wodeyar III Salaguppe. Even Humayun, Akbar, the Chiefs of Ikkeri gave the sanadas, Jannatha Nagar and Dattatraya Peeta are other two inam villages endowed to the Dargah Dargah/Peeta lost much of the lands when Karnataka government introduced Inam Abolition Act. Despite the loss the Dargah/peeta still hold vast tract of land, rich with bio diversitys. These lands contains rare medicinal plants such Sanjeevana Medicinal and Siddharasas which are known for curing people suffering from kidney stones, diabetes, reviving people from unconsciousness, etc. Hindutva had an eye on this bio diversity, which became clear in one of its letters written to the Central government:<sup>64</sup> “The Puranic Chandrodaya Parvartha which is now called as Bababudangiri is renowned for its exotic Medicinal herbs. This hill is known for a particular herb specified in Ramayana to revive Laxman who was unconscious during battle with Ravana. There is also a copper plate date 1698 AD found in Sri Dattatraya Phalaharamut in which the inscription reads as this Parvatha is containing rare Sanjeevana Medicinal Plans and Siddharasas. The bio diversity of this hill (particularly

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<sup>62</sup> *Mysore Archeological Department* 1931, p.21

<sup>63</sup> C.Hayavadana Rao. *Mysore Gazetteer: Kadur District*, Vol.5, Govt. Press. 1930

<sup>64</sup> BJP, *Letter to Suresh Prabhu*, Hon'ble Minister for Environment and Forest, Feb 3<sup>rd</sup> 1999, Chickmagalur

near Jannath Nagar) is in danger. Immediate action should be taken to stop". Knowing very well that the future belongs to biotechnology and patenting over the bio diversity would bring in huge profit/capital, and also links up with the larger market, the Hindutva's larger design becomes very clear

However, poor, backward caste/caste would become the first victim of Hindutva. Any appropriation of symbols would create cultural crises and the crises of the identity for poor and backward class/caste, since they constitute followers of Dargahs/Peetas constructing their identities and cultural practices around the syncretic culture. At the same time, Hindutva's politics of appropriating the symbolism of syncretic culture has not received the required support from these categories, rather from the lumpenised categories and partly middle class. Middle Class support is rooted in the retrieval of loss of identity in the context of the globalization. Even a segment of coffee planters also support Hindutva. More interesting is the covert support extended by the state by including the Hindutva/Sangh Parivar in the panel of administration after taking over the same from the Sajjade Nashin. Of late some of the administrators, including the members of the government participating in the Yajna and other ritualistic programmes conducted by the Hindutva in the site. In the whole process the state machinery is extending its helping hand to the growth of Hindutva- slowly it is allowing the Hindutva sympathizers to be a part of the state. This is a most dangerous trend. If the present trend is not checkmated, the days of seeing institutes of Indian state falling prey to Hindutva is not too far.. This would be the tragedy of our secularism and syncretic culture.