

High and Rising Muslim presence in parts of Karnataka

Among the peninsular States of India, Karnataka has the second largest share of Muslims in its population after Kerala. The presence and growth of Muslims in this southern State is reminiscent of the States of the northeastern Ganga plains. They have a share of 12.92 percent in the population in 2011; their share in 1961 was much lower at 9.87 percent.

Muslims in Karnataka have a significant presence everywhere except in some of the southern districts. Their presence is especially high in a few pockets spread across the State. The northern districts of Bidar, Gulbarga and Bijapur form one such pocket. The share of Muslims in the former two is 20 percent and it is 17 percent in Bijapur. The high presence of Muslims in this region dates back to the pre-Independence period when Bidar and Gulbarga were ruled by the Nizam of Hyderabad. Share of Muslims in this pocket has remained nearly stable since Independence, except for some rise in Bijapur.

Dharwar and Haveri form another pocket of high Muslim presence with their share rising up to 21 percent in the former and 19 percent in the latter. Share of Muslims in this pocket has risen by nearly 4 percentage points since 1961. There has been a similar accretion in their share in the surrounding Bellary, Chitradurga, Shimoga and Davangere region, where the presence of Muslims is somewhat lower. The rising share of Muslims in this region is a phenomenon mainly of the period following Independence.

The most significant pocket of Muslim presence and growth, however, is that formed by the coastal Dakshin Kannada and Kodagu districts. The share of Muslims in Dakshin Kannada is 24 percent and it is 16 percent in Kodagu. Since 1961, there has been an accretion of nearly 6 percentage points in their share in Kodagu and of as much as 9 percentage points in the undivided Dakshin Kannada district that includes Udipi. This pocket thus forms a continuation of north Kerala not only in its geography but also in its sharply changing religious demography.

Bangalore-Kolar region forms another pocket of high Muslim presence and growth. In this region as a whole, the proportion of Muslims has risen from around 9.6 percent in 1961 to around 12.5 percent now.

Nearly two-thirds of the Muslims of Karnataka are urban. They have a much higher presence in the towns of the State than what is indicated by their average share in the underlying district. They are in a majority in as many as 22 towns and their share is above 40 percent in another 19. Such towns include Bhatkal of Uttar Kannada, where Muslims form 74 percent of the population, and which has often been in the news.

Christians have a share of 1.87 percent in the population of the State. Their presence is significant in Dakshin Kannada, Udipi, Kodagu and Bangalore. But their share has been slowly declining in the State and in most of the districts. The decline in the share of Indian Religionists is, of course, much larger.

Religious Demography of Karnataka

Religious Demography of Karnataka, 2001-11

	Numbers		Percent Share		%GR
	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001-11
Total	5,28,50,562	6,10,95,297	100.00	100.00	15.60
Hindu	4,43,21,279	5,13,17,472	83.86	84.00	15.79
Muslim	64,63,127	78,93,065	12.23	12.92	22.12
Christian	10,09,164	11,42,647	1.91	1.87	13.23
Sikh	15,326	28,773	0.03	0.05	87.74
Buddhist	3,93,300	95,710	0.74	0.16	-75.66
Jain	4,12,659	4,40,280	0.78	0.72	6.69
ORP	1,15,460	11,263	0.22	0.02	-90.25
RNS	1,20,247	1,66,087	0.23	0.27	38.12

Karnataka has the second largest share of Muslims in the peninsular India

As seen in the Table above, Muslims form nearly 13 percent of the population of Karnataka. This is highest presence of Muslims in any State of peninsular south India excepting Kerala. The share of Muslims in Karnataka is, in fact, the highest of all States lying to the south and west of the Ganga plains excepting, of course, Kerala. Another notable aspect of the Table above is the sudden decline in the number of Buddhists and ORPs between 2001 and 2011; we shall comment on this towards the end of this note.

The share of Muslims has risen by 3 percentage points since 1961

The share of Muslims in Karnataka has been rising consistently since 1961. There was a slight decline in their share in the first decade following Independence. But between 1961 and 2011, the share of Muslims has risen by more than 3 percentage points, from 9.87 to 12.92 percent. In many parts of the State, as we see below, the rise in the proportion of Muslims has been much more abrupt than this accretion of 3 percentage points in the State as a whole. The share of Christians, on the other hand, has been declining slowly but consistently, excepting for a slight rise during 1961-71. Since 1971, their share has declined from 2.09 to 1.87 percent. Before Independence, the share of both Muslims and Christians in the State was rising.

	IR	M	C
1911	90.05	8.64	1.31
1931	89.01	9.36	1.63
1951	87.79	10.05	2.16
1961	88.06	9.87	2.07
1971	87.28	10.63	2.09
1981	86.89	11.05	2.06
1991	86.45	11.64	1.91
2001	85.86	12.23	1.91
2011	85.21	12.92	1.87

Distribution of Muslims across the State

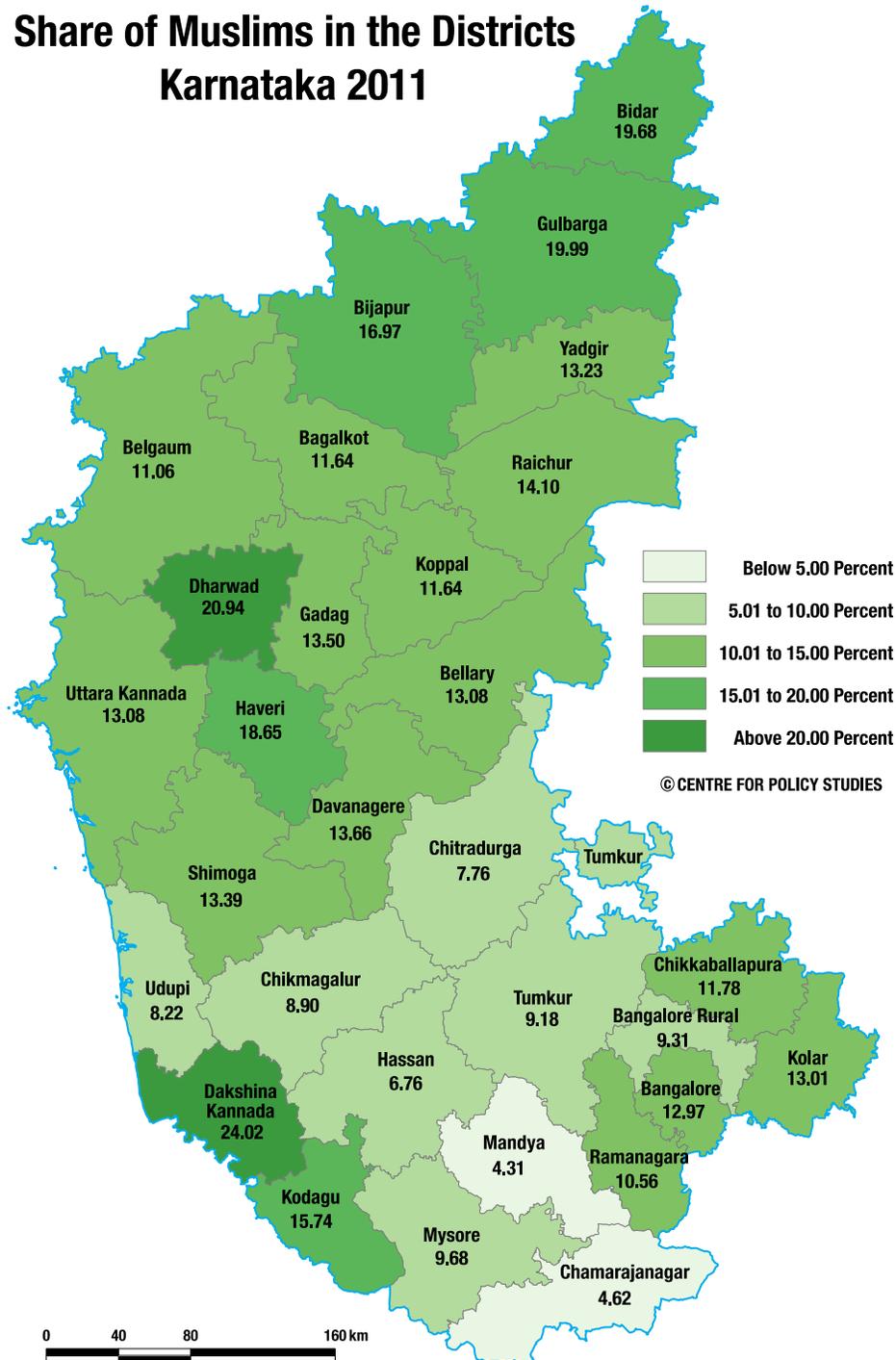
Before proceeding with an analysis of the growth in the share of Muslims, let us first look at their current distribution across the State. As shown in the Map below, Muslims have a share of more than 10 percent in all districts excepting eight contiguous districts in the southern part of the State; in two of these, Mandya and Chamarajnar, their share is below 5 percent. Incidentally, all of these districts of low Muslim presence, except Udipi, were part of the erstwhile Mysore State. Udipi was part of Dakshin Kannada, which came under the Madras Presidency.

Muslims are distributed nearly all across the State, but there are several pockets of considerably high Muslim presence visible in the Map below. These include Bidar-Gulbarga-Bijapur of northern Karnataka, Dharwar-Haveri in the centre, Dakshin

Kannada and Kodagu of coastal Karnataka and the districts around Bangalore. Muslim presence is also quite high in many central districts around the Dharwar-Haveri pocket.

These pockets of high Muslim presence have distinct history and geography, and the growth in the share of Muslims in these pockets in the period following Independence has been quite different. In the next section, we discuss these distinct features of the many pockets of high Muslim presence in Karnataka.

Share of Muslims in the Districts Karnataka 2011



Development and growth of pockets of high Muslim presence in Karnataka

Bidar, Gulbarga and Bijapur: a region of relatively stable Muslim presence

The share of Muslims in the northern Bidar and Gulbarga districts is around 20 percent and it is about 17 percent in Bijapur (See, Map above). These districts of northern Karnataka adjoin Osmanabad, Latur and Nanded districts of the Marathwada region of Maharashtra on the west and Adilabad, Nizambad and Medak of Telangana in the east. Both these regions have a relatively high presence of Muslims.

Gulbarga has been split after 2001 to carve out Yadgir; Bijapur was divided earlier, after 1991, to carve out Bagalkot. The Table here gives long-term data for the undivided districts. Muslim presence has been relatively stable in this region since Independence. There was a considerable rise in their share in Bidar and Gulbarga in the period prior to 1951; at that time, these two came under the Nizam of Hyderabad. Bijapur was part of the Bombay Presidency and experienced little rise in the Muslim share in that period; The district, however, has seen an accretion of somewhat more than 2 percentage points to the Muslim share since 1951. Overall, the changes in this region seem subdued compared to the sharp rise in the share of Muslims that has taken place in the other parts that we discuss below.

Percent Share of Muslims, 1911-2011

	Bidar	Gulbarga*	Bijapur*
1911	14.03	14.71	11.71
1931	15.60	15.96	12.14
1951	18.39	16.98	12.37
1961	18.05	17.29	12.35
1971	18.81	17.67	12.92
1981	18.01	16.61	12.71
1991	19.27	17.22	13.39
2001	19.69	17.60	13.83
2011	19.68	17.87	14.50

* Data is for the undivided districts.

Dharwar-Haveri: a pocket of rising Muslim presence

Share of Muslims in Dharwar at 21 percent is the second highest of all districts in Karnataka, and it is nearly 19 percent in Haveri. Dharwar was split into Dharwar, Haveri and Gadag after 1991. The Table here gives long-term data for the three districts together. Unlike in the northern districts, the share of Muslims in this pocket has seen a considerable rise since Independence; the rise has been especially high and consistent after 1981; in the three decades between 1981 and 2001, the share of Muslims here has risen by more than 3 percentage points. During 2001-11 alone, their share in the current Dharwar district has increased from 19.65 to 20.94 percent and from 17.65 to 18.65 percent in the current Haveri.

Share of Muslims in undivided Dharwar

1911	13.35
1931	14.37
1951	14.96
1961	14.73
1971	15.38
1981	15.32
1991	16.44
2001	17.32
2011	18.37

Bellary-Chitradurga-Shimoga-Davangere:

Another region of rising Muslim presence

The presence of Muslims in this region is not as high as in Dharwar-Haveri, but the rise in their share after Independence has been considerable. We have long-term data for all four districts together; in the 6 decades since 1951, the region has seen an accretion of nearly 3 percentage points in the share of Muslims. During the last decade of 2001-11 alone, their share has increased from 12.66 to 13.66 percent in Davangere and from 12.24 to 13.39 percent in Shimoga. This region, particularly Davangere-Shimoga part of it, has been experiencing high Muslim growth. And unlike in Dharwar-Haveri, where much of the rise in the share of Muslims has happened after 1981, their share in this region has been rising consistently since 1961.

Share of Muslims in Bellary-Chitradurga-Shimoga-Davangere

1911	7.11
1931	7.98
1951	8.71
1961	8.76
1971	9.67
1981	10.51
1991	10.90
2001	11.39
2011	12.16

Dakshin Kannada and Kodagu:

A pocket of very rapid Muslim growth

Growth in the share of Muslims has been extraordinarily rapid in this pocket. Dakshin Kannada was split after 1991 to carve out Udipi. The Table here gives long-term data for the undivided Dakshin Kannada and for Kodagu. Between 1951 and 2011, there has been an accretion of nearly 9 percentage points in the share of Muslims in undivided Dakshin Kannada and of nearly 6 percentage points in Kodagu. This is indeed very high level of growth. The level of accretion is even higher in the current Dakshin Kannada district, with the share of Muslims rising from 22.1 to 24.0 percent during 2001-11 alone; in Udipi, their share has risen from 7.5 to 8.2 percent in this decade. Muslims in Dakshin Kannada have recorded decadal growth of 24 percent during 2001-11; in comparison, Indian Religionists have grown by less than 8 percent and Christians by less than 4 percent.

	Percent Share of Muslims	
	Dakshin Kannada*	Kodagu
1911	11.77	7.51
1931	13.13	8.43
1951	9.71	10.05
1961	9.73	10.81
1971	12.26	12.00
1981	13.19	13.35
1991	14.82	13.63
2001	16.68	14.30
2011	18.32	15.74

* Includes Udipi district

In the Table above, it needs to be remarked that the Muslim share began rising in both districts from 1911 onwards. But, there was some decline in their share in Dakshin Kannada around Independence; it became to rise again after 1961. In Kodagu, the share of Muslims has been rising consistently since 1911 without any interruption.

Bangalore-Kolar region

Bangalore district was earlier split into Bangalore and Bangalore Rural; now Ramanagara has been carved out of the latter. Similarly, Chikkaballapura has been carved out of Kolar during the last decade. The share of Muslims in both composite districts is around 12.5 percent. And in both, there has been an accretion of nearly 3 percentage points since 1961. The rise in Muslim share in this region is not comparable to some of the other pockets that we have mentioned; but this does form a region of relatively higher Muslim presence.

	Percent Share of Muslims	
	Kolar*	Bangalore*
1911	6.55	8.62
1931	7.72	8.95
1951	9.67	10.76
1961	9.63	9.65
1971	10.36	10.76
1981	11.41	11.61
1991	11.40	11.97
2001	11.78	12.41
2011	12.46	12.44

* Undivided composite districts

During the last decade of 2001-11, there has been a decline in the share of Muslims in Bangalore (City) district, from 13.38 to 12.97 percent. The share of Christians in this district has also declined from 5.80 to 5.25 percent. This has implied an increase of 0.91 percentage points in the share of Hindus in Bangalore (City) district. However, there has been a considerable rise in the share of Muslims in the other four districts of this region during 2001-11. The greatest accretion has been in the newly formed Ramanagara district; the share of Muslims in the area corresponding to this district has risen from 9.43 percent in 2001 to 10.56 percent in 2011.

Muslims in the Cities and Towns

Muslims in Karnataka, as in many other States of India, are predominantly urban. Of about 79 lakh Muslims counted in Karnataka in 2011, 50 lakh are in the cities and towns of the State. The share of Muslims in the population of the towns is generally higher than in the total population of the underlying district. Among 348 towns of the State, there are 22 where Muslims have a majority in the population, and there are another 19 where the share of Muslims is between 40 and 50 percent. As we have seen earlier, there are no districts in Karnataka with Muslim presence of above 25 percent.

Among the Muslim-majority towns, there are three where their share is above 80 percent. The highest share of Muslims is in Gargeshwari of Mysore district; Muslims form 89 percent of the population of this small town known for the ancient temple of Gargeshwara and the Yantroddharaka Mahaganapathi; the share of Muslims in Mysore district is less than 10 percent. Allipura of Chikkaballapura and Manjanady of Dakshin Kannada are the other two towns with Muslim presence of more than 80 percent.

There are another 4 towns where Muslims form between 70 and 80 percent of the population. The largest among these is Bhatkal of Uttar Kannada; the share of Muslims in the population of Bhatkal town is 74 percent. Muslim presence is very high also in the other two towns, Jali and Venkatapura, of Bhatkal sub-district of Uttar Kannada.

In the Table here, we have compiled data for all of the 41 towns with Muslim presence of more than 40 percent. Sixteen of these towns are in Dakshin Kannada and another 3 in Uttar Kannada. But there are also several such towns in other districts spread over different parts of the State. Muslim influence in Karnataka, thus, seems much more widespread and deeper than what is indicated by their share in the total population of the districts.

List of Towns with Muslim presence of above 40 percent

District	Town	Total	Muslim	%M
Belgaum	Kudchi (TP)	23,154	16,087	69.48
Bijapur	Talikota (TMC)	31,693	12,826	40.47
Bidar	Basavakalyan (CMC)	69,717	34,471	49.44
Bidar	Chitgoppa (TMC)	25,298	11,758	46.48
Raichur	Mudgal (TP)	22,731	9,382	41.27
Uttar Kannada	Bhatkal (TMC)	32,000	23,724	74.14
Uttar Kannada	Jali (CT)	10,802	7,768	71.91
Uttar Kannada	Venkatapura (CT)	6,928	4,127	59.57
Haveri	Savanur (TMC)	40,567	24,988	61.60
Haveri	Hangal (TMC)	28,159	13,582	48.23
Haveri	Bankapura (TMC)	22,529	10,705	47.52
Shimoga	Siralkoppa (TP)	16,864	9,028	53.53
Udipi	Mallar (CT)	7,765	4,133	53.23
Udipi	Bada (CT)	8,117	3,255	40.10
Tumkur	Sira (CMC)	57,554	23,441	40.73
Bangalore	Maragondahalli (CT)	8,824	5,971	67.67
Dakshin Kannada	Manjanady (CT)	10,401	8,344	80.22
Dakshin Kannada	Belma (CT)	6,452	4,842	75.05
Dakshin Kannada	Sajipanadu (CT)	5,847	4,261	72.87
Dakshin Kannada	Addur (CT)	5,426	3,797	69.98
Dakshin Kannada	Harekala (CT)	6,814	4,596	67.45
Dakshin Kannada	Pudu (CT)	13,533	8,765	64.77
Dakshin Kannada	Munnuru (CT)	8,864	5,441	61.38
Dakshin Kannada	Kairangala (CT)	5,788	3,406	58.85
Dakshin Kannada	Ullal (TMC)	53,773	30,169	56.10
Dakshin Kannada	Talapady (CT)	9,532	4,989	52.34
Dakshin Kannada	Thokur-62 (CT)	7,433	3,869	52.05
Dakshin Kannada	Kuvettu (CT)	7,041	3,473	49.33
Dakshin Kannada	Arkula (CT)	5,077	2,231	43.94
Dakshin Kannada	Badagaulipady (CT)	7,062	3,053	43.23
Dakshin Kannada	Thumbe (CT)	6,230	2,635	42.30
Dakshin Kannada	Uppinangady (CT)	7,813	3,279	41.97
Mysore	Gargeshwari (CT)	5,343	4,758	89.05
Gulbarga	Aland (TMC)	42,371	19,353	45.68
Yadgir	Gogipeth (CT)	7,544	3,603	47.76
Kolar	Kolar (CMC)	1,38,462	64,393	46.51
Kolar	Mulbagal (TMC)	57,276	26,297	45.91
Chikkaballapur	Allipura (CT)	9,930	8,240	82.98
Chikkaballapur	Sidlaghatta (TMC)	51,159	26,618	52.03
Ramanagara	Ramanagara (CMC)	95,167	45,349	47.65
Ramanagara	Channapatna (CMC)	71,942	30,907	42.96

Christians in Karnataka

Christian presence in Karnataka is small but concentrated

As we have seen, a total of 11.43 lakh Christians are counted in Karnataka in 2011; they form 1.87 percent of the population. Their share has been marginally declining for the last several decades; in 1971, they formed 2.09 percent of the population. But, as we see below, Christians in the State are highly concentrated in Bangalore and Dakshin Kannada, where they form a significantly large component of the population.

Nearly half of the Christians are in Bangalore

Of 11.43 lakh Christians counted in 2011, 5.05 lakhs, forming nearly half of the total are in Bangalore (City) district. They have a share of 5.25 percent in the population of this district; their share was 5.80 percent in 2001. Between 1991 and 2001, however, there was slight improvement in their share.

Another quarter of the Christians are in Dakshin Kannada and Udipi

Another 2.3 lakh Christians, forming about a quarter of the total, are in Dakshin Kannada and Udipi. They have a share of 8.20 percent in Dakshin Kannada, which is the highest of all districts in the State. Their share of 5.59 percent in Udipi is the second highest. Dakshin Kannada (including Udipi) was part of the Madras Presidency and a centre of Christian missionary activity during the British period. The share of Christians in the population of this district was, therefore, rising consistently up to 1951. After 1951, their share began to decline, but their share of Christians in the district still remains the highest in the State.

Share of Christians Dakshin Kannada*

1911	8.03
1931	8.91
1951	10.99
1961	10.45
1971	9.67
1981	8.96
1991	8.15
2001	7.66
2011	7.26

* Including Udipi

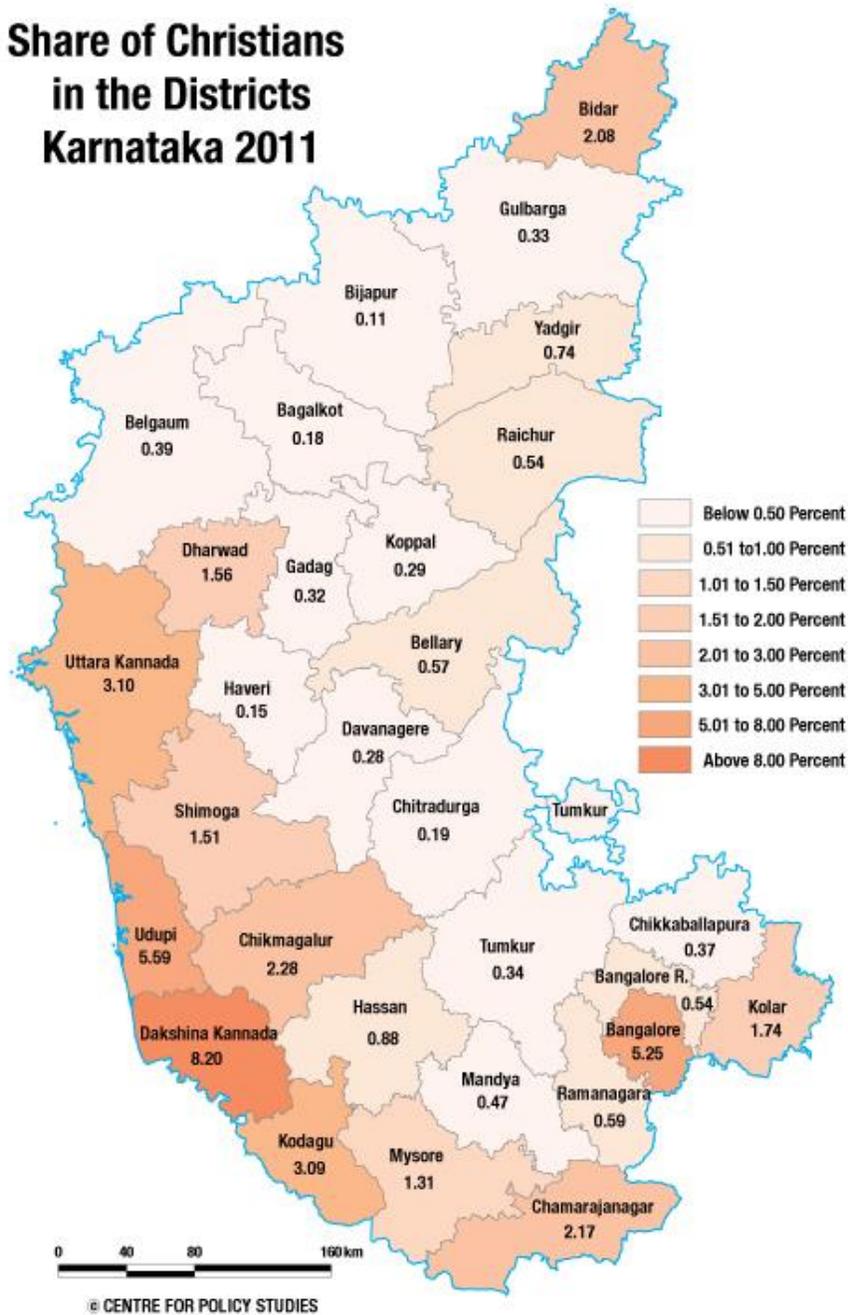
As seen in the Table above, share of Christians in the undivided district has declined quite sharply from 10.99 percent in 1951 to 7.26 percent in 2011. We have earlier seen that the share of Muslims in this district has been rising sharply in this district. It seems that the rise in the Muslim share has been partly at the cost of the Christians. Of the 9 percentage points that Muslims have gained since 1951, nearly 4 have come from the share of Christians.

Indian Religionists have suffered an even greater loss in Dakshin Kannada

The remaining Muslim gain of 5 percentage points is of course at the cost of Indian Religionists, mainly Hindus. The share of Indian Religionists in the district has declined from 79.82 percent in 1961 to 74.41 percent in 2011. This is for the undivided district. In the current Dakshin Kannada district, Indian Religionists have a share of only 67.8 percent; the share of Hindus in this is 67.2 percent.

Besides Bangalore and Dakshin Kannada, Christians have a presence of about 3 percent in Uttar Kannada and Kodagu. They have a share of somewhat above 2 percent in Mysore, Chikmagalur and Bidar, and somewhat below in Kolar. In all these districts, their share has been slowly declining for the last few decades. The Map below shows the share of Christians in the various districts.

Share of Christians in the Districts Karnataka 2011



Christians of Karnataka are also largely urban

Like the Muslims of Karnataka, Christians of this State are also largely urban. Of 11.43 lakh Christians counted in 2011, 8.33 lakh are in the cities and towns and only 3.09 lakh are in the rural areas. This is partly because of the high concentration of Christians in Bangalore (City) district. But, even though the urban ratio of Christians at 72.9 percent is higher than that of Muslims at 63.5 percent, yet Christians do not have a dominantly high presence in any towns. There are only 22 towns with Christian share of more than 10 percent. Among these, there are only four where the share of Christians is above 20

percent. The highest share of Christians is of 36.7 percent in Neermarga of Dakshin Kannada district. Another two towns in this district have Christian presence of between 20 and 25 percent. The fourth town with more than 20 percent share of Christians is Belvata of Mysore; Christians form 20.12 percent of the population of this town.

Of the 18 towns with Christian share between 10 and 20 percent, 7 are in Dakshin Kannada, 9 in Udipi, 1 in Shimoga and 1 in Kolar. Thus, the Christian presence in the urban areas of Karnataka is not as widespread or as deep as that of the Muslims.

In Mangalore, the district town of Dakshin Kannada, Christians have a share of 13.2 percent; the share of Muslims here is higher at 17.4 percent. In Bangalore Municipal Corporation area, the share of Christians is around 8 and of Muslims around 14 percent.

Decline of Buddhists and ORPs during 2001-11

Finally, let us consider the sharp decline in the number of Buddhists and ORPs during the last decade.

Buddhists

The number of Buddhists in the State has declined sharply from 3.93 lakh in 2001 to less than 96 thousand in 2011. But as seen in the Table here, there was a similar or even larger rise in the number of Buddhists between 1991 and 2001. That rise happened because of

Buddhists in Karnataka, 1991-2011

	1991	2001	2011
Karnataka	73,012	3,93,300	95,710
Bidar	44,274	1,22,083	30,453
Gulbarga	2,914	1,53,619	17,559
Mysore	15,218	72,038	21,066

the conversion of large numbers mainly in Bidar, Gulbarga and Mysore districts. The data indicates smaller level of conversion in some other districts also. It seems that nearly all of those who had converted to Buddhism during 1991-2001 have reverted to their original religion during 2001-11. This conversion and re-conversion seems to be related to the changing political compulsions of those who have been advocating conversion of the scheduled castes to neo-Buddhism. Such reversion of neo-Buddhists to their original region has happened in many States during the last decade, as we have described in an [earlier note](#). But, the phenomenon seems to be the most remarkable in Karnataka.

Other Religions and Persuasion (ORPs)

Number of persons counted under the category of ORPs in Karnataka had also increased suddenly from around 6 thousand in 1991 to 1.15 lakh in 2001; this number has now reverted to a much lower level of about 11 thousand. Like that of neo-Buddhists, the number of ORPs is also often

ORPs in Karnataka	
1991	6,325
2001	1,15,460
2011	11,263

influenced by considerations extraneous to religion. Certain groups often undertake concerted mobilisation among mainly the scheduled tribe communities to get them counted as other than Hindus. The sudden rise and fall in the number of ORPs in Karnataka is indicative of some such effort. But, unlike the Buddhists, rise in the number of ORPs during 1991-2001 was not confined to any specific districts. The Census of 2001 has also not given the complete break-up of the specific religions and persuasions for the

1.15 lakh persons counted as ORPs in that Census. Therefore, it is not possible to further analyse the sudden rise and decline in their numbers.

Summing Up

1. The share and growth of Muslims in Karnataka is the second highest in peninsular India after Kerala; it is also the highest for any State, except Kerala, lying to the south and west of the Ganga plains.
2. Muslims form 12.92 percent of the population of the State. Their share has reached this level from 9.87 percent in 1961 and 8.64 percent in 1911.
3. Muslims have a significant presence in all parts of the State excepting a few southern districts. But, they have a much higher concentration than the average of the State in certain pockets.
4. One such pocket comprises the northern districts of Bidar, Gulbarga and Bijapur. The share of Muslims is nearly 20 percent in the former two and about 17 percent in the last. Bidar and Gulbarga were under the rule of the Nizam of Hyderabad before Independence. There was considerable accretion to the share of Muslims in these districts during that period; but their share has remained more or less unchanged since Independence. Bijapur was under the British Bombay Presidency in that period. There was little change in the share of Muslims in Bijapur before 1951; but it has seen some accretion after that.
5. Dharwar and Haveri comprise another pocket of high Muslim presence. Share of Muslims in Dharwar is around 21 percent and in Haveri about 19 percent. There has been a considerable accretion to the Muslim share in this region, particularly since 1981. In undivided Dharwar (which includes Haveri and Gadag), the share of Muslims has risen from 15.3 percent in 1981 to 18.4 percent in 2011.
6. Bellary, Chitradurga, Shimoga and Davangere districts that surround Dharwar-Haveri have somewhat lower presence of Muslims, but their share in this region has been rising consistently since 1961. In the region as a whole, Muslims formed 8.8 percent of the population in 1981; their share in 2011 is 12.2 percent.
7. Dakshin Kannada and Kodagu comprise a pocket of the highest and fastest growing Muslim presence. Muslims form 24 percent of the population in the former and nearly 16 percent in the latter. The share of Muslims in undivided Dakshin Kannada (including Udipi) has risen from 9.7 percent in 1951 to 18.3 percent in 2011; and in Kodagu, it has risen from 10.0 to 15.7 percent in this period. Much of the change in Dakshin Kannada has happened after 1961, though there was considerable accretion to the Muslim share in the British period also. In Kodagu, the rise in the Muslim share has been continuing uninterrupted since at least 1911.
8. Bangalore and Kolar region comprising a total of 5 districts now forms another pocket of high and rising Muslim presence. The share of Muslims in both undivided Bangalore and undivided Kolar has risen from about 9.6 percent in 1961 to 12.5 percent in 2011.
9. Muslim presence is even higher in the urban areas. Nearly two-thirds of the Muslims of Karnataka are in the towns and cities of the State.
10. Among 248 towns of Karnataka, Muslims have a majority in 22 and their share is between 40 and 50 percent in another 19.

11. Among the Muslim majority towns, there are 7 where they form more than 70 percent of the population. The town of Bhatkal of Uttar Kannada, which has often been in the news, is one such, with Muslim presence of 74 percent.
12. Towns with a high share of Muslims in their population are spread throughout the State. This makes the Muslim presence in Karnataka much more widespread and deeper than what is indicated by their average shares in the districts.
13. The share of Christians in the population of Karnataka is only 1.87 percent and it has been slowly declining since 1971, when they formed 2.09 percent of the population.
14. Though the average share of the Christians is not very high, they have a considerable presence in Bangalore (City) district and in Dakshin Kannada. Half of the Christians of the State are in the former and another quarter in the latter district.
15. Christians have a share of 5.25 percent in Bangalore (City) district. Their share in this district was 5.80 percent in 2001.
16. The share of Christians in Dakshin Kannada is much higher at 8.20 percent. Like in Bangalore, in Dakshin Kannada also, there has been a decline in their share since 2001, when they had a share of 8.69 percent.
17. Undivided Dakshin Kannada (including Udipi) was part of the Madras Presidency and an important centre of Christian missionary activity during the British period. The share of Christians here kept rising consistently during that period and had reached nearly 11 percent in 1951. Since then, their share has been declining consistently. This decline is mainly because of the rapid rise in the share of Muslims in this district.
18. Karnataka thus seems to be a State of high religious demographic contention. Christians made a significant place for themselves in several parts of the State during the pre-Independence period. Muslims also acquired significant presence in several parts; their share was especially rising in the northern districts that were under the Nizam of Hyderabad. After Independence, particularly since 1981, Muslims have begun to rise rather rapidly, leading to an erosion of the share of both Christians and Hindus.
19. This contentious religious demography of the State seems partly related to its history; historically different parts of the State have been under different empires, some of which owed allegiance to Islam and Christianity. But the larger part of the recent changes is related to the sharply changing religious demography of North Kerala; the high Muslim presence and growth of that region seems to be creeping upwards into parts of Karnataka. Kasaragod, the northernmost district of Kerala, has a considerable proportion of Kannada and Tulu speakers. As we have seen in [our note on Kerala](#), the share of Muslims in this district has been rising very rapidly; similar rise is seen in the neighbouring Dakshin Kannada. The extraordinary rise in the share of Muslims in Dharwar-Haveri region is also probably an indicator of the northward spread of the phenomenon of very high growth of Muslims in North Kerala.
20. It is a measure of the contentious religious demography of this State that even the numbers of the Buddhists and ORPs have been rising and falling rather abruptly during the last three decades.
21. To fully understand the causes of the sharply changing religious demography of several parts of Karnataka, it is perhaps necessary to study the phenomenon at the micro-level in districts like Dakshin Kannada, Dharwar, Haveri, Shimoga and Davangere.

Postscript:

One of the peculiarities of the religious demography of India is that there can be towns and larger rural habitations with very high share of Muslims in their population even in regions and districts with fairly low presence of Muslims. We have noticed some such towns above in the pre-dominantly Hindu districts like Mysore, Tumkur or Udipi. Such towns and habitations, often become the locus of much communal conflict and tension.

Last week, there was news of the deployment of 400 policemen in Ranisagar of Bhojpur district in Bihar as communal tension gripped this rural habitation following some WhatsApp post. Ranisagar falls under Shahpur taluk (sub-district), where the share of Muslims is less than 5 percent. It seems that nearly all of the 4.5 thousand rural Muslims in Shahpur taluk are concentrated in Ranisagar, which according to the news report has 70 percent Muslims in its population. Unfortunately, the Census does not release detailed community-wise data for rural habitations.

There was another news from Piro town of the same district, which was also experiencing communal tension and arson last week. Piro is in the taluk of the same name. According to Census 2011, Muslims formed 79 percent of the population of about 34 thousand in this town. Muslim share in the rest of Piro taluk is barely 10 percent. Average share of Muslims in the population of Bhopur is less than 14 percent. But it is not their average presence in the district or the taluks but their high concentration in places like Ranisagar and Piro that seems to be of greater consequence.

This underlines the need for continuous micro-level studies of the changing demographic balance in different parts of India. Unfortunately, our social scientists have chosen to ignore the task.