



# DOCUMENTING THE FEMALE EXPERIENCE: RE-CONSTITUTING BEARY WOMEN'S HISTORY

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**Abstract:** This paper seeks to reconstruct the history of Beary women in Tulunadu by documenting lived experiences that have remained peripheral to mainstream historiography. Rather than approaching the community through homogenized or externally imposed categories, the study foregrounds everyday cultural practices as archives of meaning. Practices such as attending *waal* gatherings, the socially significant role of the matchmaker in wedding negotiations, lived experiences of widowhood, and the management of households during male migration to the Gulf collectively constitute a gendered historical landscape.

The research pays particular attention to internal theological transformations between Sunni and Salafi orientations within the community. Reformist movements that encouraged women to read and interpret the Qur'an independently facilitated new forms of religious engagement, including women-led congregational prayer. These developments are examined as shifts in epistemic access and religious authority rather than merely doctrinal changes.

Thus, the paper aims to claim that there is a necessity to rethink the idea of "Education". Among communities, which lack documentations of regional histories, or carry-on oral documentaries, the position of women is often missing. It argues that documenting seemingly ordinary practices becomes a transformative historical intervention. By reconstituting Beary women's narratives within regional, linguistic, and theological contexts, this study contributes to gendered historiography and oral history traditions in coastal Karnataka.

**Keywords:** Gender, Education, Women's history, Beary community, Historiography

## INTRODUCTION: LOCATING THE BEARY COMMUNITY

Karnataka accounts for the second-largest Muslim population among the South Indian states, with approximately 78.93 lakh individuals as recorded in the Census of India (2011). Despite this significant presence, the Muslim population in the state is far from uniform. It is marked by considerable diversity in terms of historical origins, ethnic backgrounds, and religious practices, indicating that Muslims in Karnataka cannot be understood just as a homogeneous group. The coastal regions of Karnataka, particularly Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, and parts of Kasaragod, are home to a distinctive Muslim ethnolinguistic community known as the Bearys. The community derives its identity from the Beary language, which serves as a cultural marker of belonging. Historically, the origins of the Beary community can be traced to Arab traders from Yemen and Persia, who arrived along the Malabar and Mangalore coasts through sea trade. Over time, these traders settled in the region and intermarried with local women of coastal Canara, leading to the formation of this socio-cultural group.

Historical accounts further suggest that the Bearys were a prominent merchant community until the nineteenth century, enjoying a position of prestige under various local rulers of Tulunadu (Noori, 1960; Madhava, 1985). This growth occurred well before the emergence of major Muslim dynasties in North India and in other parts of Karnataka, including Bidar, Bijapur, Gulbarga, and Mysore. Scholarly accounts, particularly those of B. M. Ichlangod, suggest that these marital alliances played a crucial role in the processes of religious conversion along the coast. Conversion was not merely theological but was also shaped by existing caste hierarchies, offering alternative social mobility to marginalized groups.

In Tulu, the dominant regional language of South Kanara, the term “Beary” is understood to mean “trader” (Ichlangod, 2011). This meaning is closely tied to the historical role of the local Muslim population, who were deeply engaged in trade and commercial activities. As a result, they came to be identified as “Bearys,” a name that reflected their primary occupation rather than solely their religious identity (Doddamane, 1993). As their recognition within society was largely based on their involvement in trade, rather than on their adherence to Islam, the Bearys also reflected many locally rooted social and cultural characteristics. This enabled them to exist seamlessly into the broader socio-cultural landscape of South Kanara (Ichlangod, 2011). The Bearys of Tulunadu largely came to be associated with the Sunni sect of Islam, with significant religious and cultural influences flowing from the Malabar region through scholars and religious teachers (ustads).

The Beary dialect itself, along with various socio-cultural practices, evolved through interaction with other communities in the region. This close contact is evident in several aspects of everyday life, including naming practices, attire, ornaments, and even the architectural styles of mosques. Until recent decades, these shared cultural elements highlighted a significant degree of overlap and exchange between communities.

It is also important to recognize that a number of favourable regional factors contributed to the Bearys’ social positioning. The political environment, the linguistic diversity and the presence of other community traditions--- the celebration of “appathe mangila” in Beary communities is much similar to those of “seemantha” rituals in other communities in the region. All these played a role in shaping their experience. More importantly, the Bearys’ identity as a trading community, helped them to carve out a distinct and respected place within the public sphere. Their social recognition was thus closely linked to their economic role and local identity, rather than being confined exclusively to their religious affiliation, whereas in contemporary times, religious identity gains larger momentum.

The historiography of the Beary community remains underdeveloped. The absence of systematic documentation has resulted in a fragmented understanding of its past, with limited references to specific dates, events, or chronological frameworks. This lacuna becomes even more pronounced when one attempts to reconstruct the history of Beary women. Their experiences have largely remained outside formal historical narratives, surviving primarily through oral traditions, personal memories, and semi-structured interviews.

The reliance on oral history, however, raises important methodological questions regarding reliability and subjectivity. Yet, as Urvashi Butalia argues in *The Other Side of Silence*, oral narratives possess the unique ability to capture silences, absences, and marginalized experiences that mainstream historiography often overlooks. These narratives enable historians to access the intimate, everyday dimensions of life that are rarely documented in official records. In this sense, oral histories are central to reconstructing subaltern and gendered pasts.

Mainstream historical frameworks often privilege visible, public forms of participation—such as political leadership or direct involvement in landmark events like the Indian independence movement. Within such frameworks, recognition is typically accorded to those whose contributions are documented and publicly acknowledged. This raises a critical question: how do we account for the contributions of women whose roles were embedded within domestic and everyday spheres? Activities such as sustaining households, and women managing social and political life have historically been undervalued, despite being foundational to community functioning.

This study, therefore, seeks to shift the focus towards the everyday practices of Beary women—practices that are often normalized and rendered invisible within dominant narratives. By examining these seemingly mundane activities, the paper aims to uncover the subtle ways in which power, agency, and negotiation operate within domestic and social spaces. These practices, far from being passive or insignificant, reveal complex interactions between gender, religion, and culture.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The use of oral narratives as a methodological tool in reconstructing marginalized histories finds strong support in *The Other Side of Silence* by Urvashi Butalia. In her work on the Partition of India, Butalia foregrounds voices that were excluded from official archives, particularly those of women whose experiences were mediated through silence, memory, and trauma. She argues that “history is not just what is recorded in official documents, but also what is remembered, spoken, and even deliberately left unsaid.” This insight is particularly relevant when engaging with communities like the Bearys, where written documentation is sparse and women’s histories are largely preserved through oral traditions.

Butalia further emphasizes that oral testimonies allow historians to access “the emotional and experiential dimensions of the past,” which are often absent in conventional historiography. These narratives, though sometimes fragmented or subjective, offer alternative ways of knowing and understanding history. They illuminate what she refers to as the “underside” of historical events—spaces where everyday lives, gendered experiences, and silences reside. In this sense, memory is not treated as a limitation but as a productive site of historical inquiry.

Drawing from this framework, the present study posits that the everyday practices and autobiographical narratives of Beary women are crucial to reconstructing a more inclusive history of the community. The hypothesis of this paper is that *the* lived experiences of Beary women—expressed through oral histories, semi-structured interviews, observations, domestic practices, and community rituals—constitute a significant historical archive that challenges and expands conventional, male-centric historiography. By focusing on seemingly ordinary aspects of life, such as household negotiations, ritual participation, and economic contributions, the study seeks to demonstrate that these practices are embedded with forms of agency, power, and cultural continuity.

Writing about oral traditions as a collective process also requires an awareness of one’s position within an ongoing historiographical discourse. The researcher is inevitably embedded within the very traditions they seek to document, navigating between memory, interpretation, and representation. Recognizing this positionality is crucial in engaging with oral histories, as it shapes both the questions asked and the meanings derived.

Furthermore, this study argues that the absence of women in formal historical records is not indicative of their lack of participation, but rather a limitation of historiographical methods that privilege visibility, documentation, and public engagement. Much like the women in Butalia’s narratives, Beary women inhabit spaces that are simultaneously visible and invisible—central to the functioning of society, yet peripheral in its documentation. Therefore, engaging with oral histories is not merely an alternative approach but a necessary intervention to recover these layered experiences.

## AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL POSITIONING AND HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

Colonial records frequently misclassified the Bearys as part of the Mappila community, thereby overlooking important ethnic and cultural distinctions (Buchanan, 1807; Stuart, 1895; Sturrock, 1894). Thus, even today there is a tendency to homogenize diverse Muslim communities can also be observed. Although recent studies have begun to examine the political positioning of Muslim communities in the region, these works often approach the women’s question through the lens of contemporary religious and political developments, thereby neglecting the internal heterogeneity and region-specific dynamics that shape these communities. Autobiographical accounts offer a valuable lens through which the historical experiences of Beary women can be understood. Rather than relying solely on formal historical records, these narratives foreground lived realities, everyday negotiations, and the subtle ways in which women exercise agency within social and religious structures. Through participant observation, it becomes evident that gender relations

within Beary Muslim households are complex and layered. For instance, in the case of auto-ethnographic observation of an middle aged woman Mrs. Z, her performance of fear within a patriarchal household does not necessarily indicate submission. Instead, it reveals a strategic negotiation of power. While her husband embodies a visibly authoritative and patriarchal role, she tactically navigates domestic spaces to assert her influence, often using him as a conduit to achieve her own ends. Such instances demonstrate that agency operates in nuanced and often understated ways, shaped by cultural expectations of womanhood.

Widowhood among Beary Muslim women further illustrates the interplay between social constraints and personal agency. Non-participant observations suggest that a widow's refusal to remarry often brings her a degree of social respect and recognition. Transitioning from marriage to widowhood also necessitates a shift in mobility, compelling women to engage more actively with the public sphere. Over time, this imposed mobility can transform into a space of independence and self-realization. Practices associated with piety become important tools through which women negotiate their identities and social positions.

Cultural practices within the Beary community also reflect a dynamic process of adaptation and exchange. Rituals such as *Appathe Mangila* (also known as *Bayake*), a ceremony celebrating first-time motherhood, highlight the blending of religious and social customs. Traditionally organized by the husband's family, the ritual involves communal gatherings, blessings, and the sharing of food. In contemporary contexts, it has evolved into a more elaborate celebration akin to a baby shower. Similarly, practices like *40 Kuli* indicate the persistence of localized traditions. This indicates the seepages of customs which entered Beary community from other existing communities, they have stood the test of time even as reformist movements within the community attempt to standardize religious practices. Thus, it's important to note that, several rituals where women are the cultural markers of celebration, smoothly transgresses the boundaries and limitations set by the religious laws.

Debates between different Islamic sects, particularly between Sunni and Salafi interpretations, further complicate the cultural landscape. Scholars such as Ahmed Faizy when interviewed, emphasized the importance of understanding these practices within their broader social contexts. Historical accounts suggest that Sunni Islam in coastal Karnataka developed through interactions with Persian and Yemeni traders, while later reformist influences, associated with Salafi thought, trace their origins to movements in Egypt and Saudi Arabia, which reached via migration of Beary men. These reformist ideologies often critique practices such as dargah visitation, devotional songs (*mawlid* and *baith*), and others labelling them as deviations. However, the persistence of these practices reveals the extent to which Beary religious life is interwoven with regional cultural forms, including parallels with Tulu folk traditions like *paddanas*. This indicates that religious traditions are not static but continually shaped by social and cultural exchanges.

The material dimensions of religious practice also deserve attention. Certain non-Islamic elements, such as *vastu*, have been incorporated into everyday life by some members of the community, often for pragmatic or economic reasons. While reformist religious scholars critique such practices, others selectively endorse or reject them, revealing internal debates about authenticity and adaptation. These contradictions underscore the importance of examining religion not just as doctrine but as lived practice shaped by socio-economic realities.

Autobiographical writings, such as "Naa Kande Maikala" of K. A. Aliabba Jokatte, provide insights into the socio-economic transformations of the Beary community. His accounts highlight shifts in occupational patterns, migration, and cultural practices. For instance, earlier practices such as the use of cow dung in households were not considered religiously problematic, whereas contemporary interpretations frame them differently. Migration patterns also played a crucial role in reshaping the community. While earlier movements involved Christians migrating to the Gulf in the 1940s, Beary Muslim migration intensified in the 1970s, largely driven by economic necessity. Many men, often with limited formal education, took up labour-intensive jobs in the Middle East, which lead to a gradual decline in agricultural engagement within the community.

This economic boom in the Gulf region during the 1940's and 1970s brought about significant changes in the livelihoods of the Beary community. Over the past few decades, migration to the Gulf has played a crucial role in enabling the community to establish itself as a prominent mercantile group. The resulting

improvements in income and living standards facilitated their entry into socio-economic spaces traditionally dominated by communities such as the Goud Saraswat Brahmins (GSBs) and the Bunts, who have historically held influence as merchant and landlord groups in the region.

These economic shifts had significant implications for gender roles. As men migrated, women increasingly contributed to household incomes, most notably through the beedi industry, which emerged as a major source of livelihood in the 1950s. The beedi industry marked a transformative moment, providing women with financial agency and a degree of mobility outside domestic spaces. Workspaces known locally as “brenches” (Beary-ised pronunciation of “branch” in English) became sites of both labour and social interaction. Women developed specialized skills in beedi rolling. This shift not only improved the economic standing of many families but also redefined women’s roles within the community. They took over the spaces which held decision making power and handled money coming every month from abroad. Several women experienced mobility at a greater length, once they were pushed into these positions after the migration of the male patriarch.

As migration happened, the growing demand for “formally” educated Beary women must be understood within a specific socio-historical context rather than as a straightforward marker of progressive reform. One of the key motivations behind encouraging women’s literacy, particularly during the period of increased male migration to the Gulf, was functional rather than emancipatory. Women were expected to acquire basic reading and writing skills so that they could correspond with their husbands through letters. In this sense, education was a practical necessity that sustained familial and emotional ties across distances.

This utilitarian approach to women’s education also reveals how marriage itself functioned as a site of learning. For many Beary women, formal schooling remained limited or inaccessible prior to marriage, and it was within the marital household that they were first encouraged—or required—to become literate. Learning to read and write, therefore, was not always a precondition for marriage but often a consequence of it. This reverses the conventional narrative of education as a pathway to empowerment before marriage and instead situates it within the framework of marital responsibility. The husband’s absence, particularly in the context of Gulf migration, created a need for communication that the wife had to fulfil.

However, this process cannot be dismissed entirely as restrictive. While the initial impetus for women’s literacy may have been shaped by patriarchal needs, the act of learning itself opened up new possibilities. Once women acquired the ability to read and write, even at a basic level, it enabled access to other forms of knowledge—religious texts, community information, and eventually broader educational opportunities. What began as a narrowly defined functional skill could, in some cases, expand into a form of agency, allowing women to engage more actively with the world around them. This highlights a critical tension: education was both constrained by and capable of exceeding the purposes for which it was initially encouraged.

These observational insights foreground the central role of women in negotiating tradition, modernity, and economic change, while also highlighting the fluid and adaptive nature of cultural and religious practices.

## **RE-THINKING EDUCATION AND THE BEARY WOMEN’S ENTRY INTO MADRASA**

Rethinking education is crucial in contemporary societies, particularly when examining how knowledge systems have historically excluded or marginalized certain groups, especially women. Feminist scholars have long argued that education must move beyond mere literacy or skill acquisition to become a transformative tool that enables critical thinking and challenges entrenched power structures (hooks, 1994). In this sense, education should not only provide access to knowledge but also empower individuals to question dominant narratives and reinterpret traditions that have historically constrained them.

Within religious contexts, the ability of women to read and interpret sacred texts represents a significant shift in the dynamics of authority and knowledge production. Traditionally, religious interpretation has been monopolized by male scholars, thereby shaping theological discourse in ways that often reinforce patriarchal norms. However, when women engage directly with religious texts, they are able to produce alternative readings that foreground gender justice and equity. As Amina Wadud demonstrates in *Qur'an and Woman*, a gender-inclusive reading of the Qur’an challenges androcentric interpretations and reveals egalitarian

principles within the text itself. This act of reinterpretation not only reclaims women's authority in religious discourse but also creates space for new forms of engagement with faith.

As M. K. Shafi (2018) observes, the Bearys historically maintained close ties with the Makhdums of Ponnani in Malabar for religious education. Makhdum I and II, who were well-known Islamic jurists of the Shafi school in South Asia, played a key role in transforming Ponnani into a major centre of Islamic learning in the 16th century. The Bearys, much like the Mappilas, depended on Ponnani for religious knowledge and followed the rulings of the Makhdums. This historical relationship has continued over time. Shafi further notes that Mappila ulema gained significant recognition in Tulu Nadu, especially as Malabar developed structured systems of Islamic education such as the dars. Even today, many madrasas in South Kanara remain affiliated with Islamic educational boards based in Malabar, often linked to different sectarian groups. As a result, religious texts and instruction in many madrasas are largely in Arabi-Malayalam script, and Malayalam is still used in sermons during special occasions in mosques. Until recently, Mappila scholars were commonly appointed in mosques and madrasas across South Kanara.

The entry of Beary women into madrasas marks a significant turning point in the social and intellectual history of the Beary community. Traditionally, women's roles were largely confined to the domestic sphere, with limited mobility and minimal access to formal or religious education.

The gradual inclusion of women in madrasa education brought about a quiet yet profound transformation. Madrasas became one of the earliest institutional spaces where Beary women could step outside the confines of the home in a socially sanctioned manner. This shift did not immediately challenge cultural norms but worked within them, allowing women to gain religious literacy while maintaining community acceptance. Learning to read and understand religious texts gave women direct access to knowledge that had previously been interpreted for them, thereby altering their relationship with authority within both the household and the community.

Madrasa education enabled Beary women to develop a sense of intellectual and spiritual agency. With the ability to read and interpret religious teachings, they were no longer passive recipients of doctrine but active participants in shaping everyday religious practices. It also allowed them to question, negotiate, and reinterpret certain norms that governed their lives. In many cases, madrasa education fostered informal networks of discussion among women, creating new spaces for dialogue and shared learning. The salafi women is often taught These interactions contributed to a subtle reshaping of gender relations, as women began to assert their voices in matters of faith, family, and community life.

Over time, this shift had broader historical implications. The movement of women into madrasas not only expanded their educational opportunities but also redefined their social roles. It paved the way for increased mobility, participation in community activities, and, in some cases, economic engagement beyond the household. What began as a modest step towards religious education thus evolved into a transformative process that reshaped the contours of Beary society. In this sense, the madrasa became more than a site of learning—it became a space through which Beary women gradually reconfigured their position within history itself.

## THE SUNNI AND THE SALAFI DIMENSIONS

The documentation of Beary women's experiences necessitates an engagement with oral history as both method and epistemology. In communities where written archives are limited, women's histories often survive through memory, hearsay, and everyday narration. While hearsay is frequently viewed with skepticism in conventional historiography, it is important to recognize that such narratives are not merely anecdotal; rather, they function as lived expressions of the past within the present. Oral accounts, therefore, do not simply recount events but actively interpret and reconstruct them, making them crucial sources for understanding gendered histories. As oral historians suggest, these narratives embody both memory and meaning, offering insights into how communities perceive and transmit their pasts.

Field-based observations indicate that the religious and social lives of Beary women are deeply shaped by context, mobility, and generational shifts. For instance, one narrative highlights how a woman who had never attended a mosque in India continued to refrain from doing so even after migrating to the United Arab

Emirates, despite having greater access and opportunity. This illustrates that access alone does not determine participation; rather, deeply internalized cultural practices and personal choices shape women's engagement with religious spaces. Such accounts underscore the importance of situating individual experiences within broader socio-cultural contexts rather than interpreting them in isolation.

Generational differences further complicate the understanding of Beary women's roles. Younger women—particularly those who are educated and employed—often exhibit different attitudes toward work, mobility, and religious participation compared to older generations. Marital dynamics also play a significant role, especially in cases where women marry into households aligned with specific Islamic sects. For instance, women entering Salafi households are often expected to adhere to stricter codes of dress and conduct, and in some contexts, a Salafi daughter-in-law may be accorded a particular form of respectability than the Sunni one. At the same time, differences between Sunni and Salafi practices—ranging from dress codes to ritual participation—shape women's everyday experiences in distinct ways, reflecting broader theological and cultural divergences.

Religious spaces themselves function as important sites of negotiation and agency for women. The Sunni Beary women has access to Dargahs, which also is a part of syncretic tradition in Dakshina Kannada. This often serves as an inclusive space that enable women's participation. In Certain Salafi mosques permit women not only to attend congregations but also to deliver sermons. Similarly, gatherings such as *waal* (Islamic sermons) and *Taraweeh* prayers create socially sanctioned opportunities for women to assemble. These events extend beyond purely religious functions; they act as vital social spaces where women can interact, build networks, and experience mobility without social stigma. For married women, particularly those with children, such gatherings are often perceived as moments of reunion and collective engagement, temporarily expanding the boundaries of their otherwise restricted movement.

The increasing visibility of reformist movements and the influence of transnational ideologies, particularly those linked to Gulf migration and the spread of Salafi thought, have also contributed to processes of religious homogenization within the community. These developments are closely tied to broader political and economic changes, including the migration of men to the Gulf and the circulation of religious ideas. Understanding these shifts requires not only textual analysis but also attention to lived experiences, as women often navigate, adapt to, or resist these changing norms in complex ways.

The distinction between madrasa education and formal schooling is particularly significant, as madrasas historically provided one of the earliest avenues for women's mobility and literacy, while contemporary educational institutions have expanded their access to professional and intellectual spaces.

Oral history, particularly when dealing with recent or ongoing transformations, may be understood as a form of "immediate history," where the boundaries between past and present remain fluid. In such contexts, interviews are often complemented by available written and media sources to construct a more comprehensive account. The aim is not only to preserve these narratives but also to generate awareness among participants about their own histories and experiences. By foregrounding the voices of Beary women, this study seeks to document the subtle, everyday practices through which they negotiate identity, religion, and agency, thereby contributing to a more inclusive and nuanced historiography.

Everyday practices among Beary women offer a rich and nuanced archive through which their historical experiences can be understood. Activities such as attending *waal* gatherings, participating in *baiths*, negotiating marriages through matchmakers, navigating widowhood, and managing households in the absence of men due to Gulf migration are not merely routine or cultural acts; they are deeply embedded in structures of gender, power, and community life. These practices collectively constitute a gendered historical landscape, where women's roles, though often unrecorded, are central to the functioning and continuity of the community.

Religious gatherings such as *waal* and *baiths* function as significant spaces of both spiritual engagement and social interaction. While they are framed within the domain of religious devotion, they simultaneously provide women with opportunities for mobility and collective presence in the public sphere. For many married women, especially those with limited access to spaces outside the home, these gatherings become socially sanctioned occasions to step beyond domestic confines without attracting moral scrutiny.

They also enable the circulation of knowledge—religious teachings, community updates, and personal experiences—thereby creating informal networks of communication and solidarity. In this sense, such gatherings operate as parallel spaces of discourse, where women not only listen but also interpret, internalize, and sometimes subtly question religious narratives.

Marriage negotiations, particularly the role of the matchmaker, further highlight women's embedded agency within structured systems. The matchmaker, often a woman, plays a crucial mediating role in arranging alliances, assessing compatibility, and maintaining social networks. This position grants her a form of authority and mobility within the community, allowing her to navigate multiple households and social circles. At the same time, it reflects how women's participation in sustaining kinship structures is both expected and valued. Rather than being passive participants in marital arrangements, women—whether as matchmakers, mothers, or relatives—actively shape the processes that define family and community continuity.

Widowhood presents another critical dimension of Beary women's lived experience. While widowhood may initially signify loss and vulnerability, it can also open up new forms of agency and social recognition. In many cases, widows who choose not to remarry are accorded a certain degree of respect within the community, often associated with piety and moral strength. This transition frequently necessitates increased mobility, as women take on responsibilities that were previously managed by their spouses. Over time, this shift can foster a sense of independence and self-reliance. The social perception of widowhood thus operates in a complex manner—simultaneously reinforcing certain expectations of sacrifice while also enabling women to renegotiate their roles within the household and society.

The impact of Gulf migration on Beary households has further redefined women's roles, particularly in terms of economic and managerial responsibilities. With a significant number of men migrating to the Gulf for employment, women are often left to manage households, oversee finances, and make critical decisions related to family welfare. This shift places women at the centre of domestic governance, expanding their authority in practical terms, even if not always acknowledged formally. The absence of men also reshapes gender dynamics, as women become the primary anchors of stability and continuity within the family. At the same time, the inflow of remittances and exposure to transnational influences introduces new aspirations, practices, and tensions into everyday life.

Taken together, these practices reveal that Beary women's lives cannot be understood solely through the lens of restriction or marginalization. Instead, they demonstrate a continuous process of negotiation, adaptation, and subtle assertion of agency within existing social frameworks. These everyday actions, often dismissed as routine, are in fact deeply historical—they carry traces of cultural continuity, social change, and evolving gender relations. By examining such practices closely, it becomes possible to reconstruct a more inclusive history of the Beary community, one that recognizes women not merely as participants but as active agents shaping its social and cultural fabric.

## CONCLUSION

This study highlights the importance of documenting women's experiences in communities like the Bearys. It shows that history must move beyond official records to include oral narratives and everyday practices. Beary women's lives demonstrate how agency operates within constraints and how ordinary actions can have deep historical significance.

By rethinking education, history, and gender, this paper argues for a more inclusive understanding of the past—one that recognizes women as active contributors rather than silent participants.

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