

**CHAPTER – V**

**EPILOGUE**



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### EPILOGUES

Karnataka one of the important region in South India has played a dominant role in the development of Indian culture. Its unique geographical position had facilitated the people for becoming a meeting ground of diverse cultural currents. Though the exact nomenclature and the origin of word Karnataka became a subject of controversy among the scholars. It can be broadly described as a region extending from Godavari in the north down to the Kaveri in the South. The historical period of Karnataka begins with the Mauryas, but prior to that, the history of this region can be described on the basis of archeological sources and traditional accounts.

As stated earlier this region was inhabited since prehistoric period. The stone age dwellers were really speaking the original inhabitants of this region. A remarkable feature of the physical features of these people was there non Aryan origin as they belong to Seytho Dravidian group. A wave of Aryanisation of South India including Karnataka, can be evidenced through a careful study of the traditional literature. Infact the reference from Mahabharata or Ramayana give us an information about the development of social and political life. Similarly a cultural conquest between Aryans of north and the non Aryans of South can be easily visualized. One thing is clear that,

the people in Karnataka had developed, contacts with the north in pre Mauryan period.

With the age of the Mauryas a new chapter in the history of Karnataka was opened. It is a well known fact that the Chandragupta Maurya left Patliputra and came down to south with Saint Bhadrabahu and settled at SravanBelgola and observed Sallekhana. Apart from that, there are no records of political relations between Chandragupta Maurya and South Indian Kingdom. But this lacuna has been filled up with the era of Ashok. The discovery of Ashokan edicts, at Muski, Sidhapur, Brahamagiri etc. places in Karnataka has proved a well established political contacts between the Mauryas and Karnataka. Not only that, but this region was an important administrative part of Mauryan empire. As Ashoka had a vice-royalty at Suvarngiri, with Aryaputra as a viceroy. It is very clear then that, Mauryan administrative pattern had been introduced to this region by Ashoka.

The Satavahanas, who ruled Deccan from second century B. C. to 2<sup>nd</sup> century A. D. seems to have established their supremacy over Karnataka. Though most of the inscriptions of the Satavahanas are found in Maharashtra, the Karnataka region came under their sway. On the basis of the abundant literary sources bearing on Satavahana age. A socio-religious aspect of the history of ancient Karnataka can be obtained. In political field the Satavahanas had many victories to their credit which is discussed in Chapter II. But the most influential factor

of their rule was their religion and social base. The people in Karnataka were already acquainted with the "Varna" system and with the advent of the Satawahanas, the already existing system became more rigid. The Satawahanas were the followers of Vedic tradition. By caste they were Brahmins and they tried to maintain the social structure on the basis of Varna system. Therefore, during Satawahana period, Maharatis, Mahabhojas, Mahasenapti followed the higher caste. There also existed a class of merchants and cultivators, and many other professions like goldsmith, carpenters, gardeners, blacksmith, fishermen etc. Brahmanical religion was dominant and naturally, a social order according to Brahmanical tradition was emphasised. The Satawahanas gave patronage to Jainism and Buddhism too. In the field of religion people seems to have enjoyed liberty provided that, the social structure should not be challenged. Therefore, inspite of a considerable number of Jains and Buddhists under Satawahanas, the caste system continued.

A political order established by the Satawahanas, was continued by the renowned ruling dynasties, like Kadambas, Gangas, Chalukyas, Rastrakutas, Hoyasalas, etc. A brief review of this political background of Karnataka has been taken in Chapter II. It was necessary to understand the caste and religion of particular dynasty for a better understanding of socio religious structure.

From Kadambas to Hoyasalas one common feature of the rulers was a patronization to popular religion. With some exceptions all rulers were followers of either Shaivism or Vaishnavism. But the nature of earlier Vedic religion totally changed. During this period temple cult became popular and naturally the temples of Vishnu or Shiva were constructed on a large scale. It is reflected through the land grants and other donations given to the temples by these rulers. With the introduction of temple cult the nature of worship, the rituals, beliefs etc too was changed. Therefore, during this period one can easily observe a social life bounded by stereo typed rituals. Of course this happened with other parts of India too. The society in ancient Karnataka was not an exception. On a whole a relationship among different religions was peaceful. A spirit of harmony was prevailed. But a striking feature with the anti-vedic cults should also be taken into consideration. The Jainism and Buddhism during this period show a shift from original nature. With the acceptance of idol worship of the "Tirthankars", the other rituals in the temples were also introduced. The Jain temples and the worship was quite similar to that of Hindu temples. The indirect effect of this imitative spirit reflects in contemporary social conditions. Jainism basically an anti-vedic cult, did not challenge the existing caste system or untouchability. The foreign travellers like Hiuen Tasang, or Alberuni, during 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> century A. D. support the existing social reality. Regarding the position of women too, the same fact remained. The women from royal family seems to be enjoying a higher status.

But on a whole the position of women was not high as in patriarchal society, the head of this family is man. The reference to courtesans, prostitutes or dancing girls in the temple in Kadamba and Gangas records are sufficient to understand this side of social reality. The anti Vedic cult like Jainism have accepted the existing beliefs in society. In the fields of art, architecture and literature a lot of contribution has been made by Jain scholars during this period. But the existing social order with all its characteristics was not shaken. A number of restrictions were imposed on women during this period. With all religions the same social structure was maintained as it is.

Veershaivism or a revolutionary religious sect, introduced in 12<sup>th</sup> A. D. tried to challenge the existing social disabilities. Widow remarriage or denial of caste system, rejection of untouchability etc. were introduced by Basawashwara, a founder of Veershaivism. The philosophy of Veershaivism theoretically challenged the social evils. But in practice the social system was not changed. The society in Karnataka in ancient period (1 to 1200 A. D.) seems to have maintained the Brahmanical social order.

One more interesting feature of society was flexibility for higher caste. Right from Satavahanas, it has been found that, the Brahmins were enjoying a higher status. They were able to accept any occupation as per need. This was reflected in Smrities too. In "Apaddharma" the Brahmins were allowed to engage in trade,

agriculture, cattle breeding or any other occupation. They can become rulers as the Satavahanas, though Brahmins became the rulers. This flexibility of change in occupation was present only for the Brahmins. There is no example of a Kshtriya or Vaishyas or Shudras becoming a Brahmins by following the occupation prescribed for a Brahmin. The Ganga records substantiate this tendency where we find a Brahmin doing a work in a palace, or engaged in a war. A Brahmin can follow any existing occupation, but his social status will remain at higher level. This was a picture of social hierarchy at this time. The population was divided on religious basis. There were followers of Shaivism, Vaishnavism, Jainism and to some extent Buddhism. But the main characteristics of social system did not change. A spirit of harmony and tolerance was confined to religion. But for social condition the traditional caste base was continued.

The Chalukyas, Rastrakutas, Gangas, Hoyasalas etc. rulers accepted a policy of equal patronage to all religions. Therefore, no incidents of religious conflicts were recorded. This was an era when the Islam had already made its inroads in South. That might have affected the existing social structure. The rulers might have avoided to interfere in the social matters. All the contrary they tried to maintain a status-quo in case of social structure.

In spite of being a non Aryan belt, Karnataka seems to have followed the Aryanised pattern in every field. Of course a variety

of diverse cultural currents are evidenced. A mother goddess cult and its popularity is evident in Karnataka which is basically a non Aryan element. But a study of socio-religious conditions indicates that, without shaking the traditional Brahmanical social system, different religious sect were introduced and worked together.