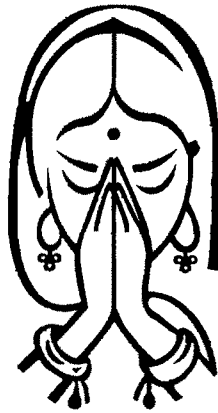


CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION



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INTRODUCTION

Karnataka a region inhabited by Kannada speaking people occupies an important position in the middle of the western half of the south Indian peninsula. It is bounded by Maharashtra in the North, Andhra Pradesh in the East, Tamil Nadu and Kerala in the south and Arabian Sea on the West. It extends over at about 1,91,75,697 sq. kms. between longitudes 14.12 East and 78.30 East and latitudes 11.30 North and 18.45 North. Though the antiquity, nomenclature and the boundaries of Karnataka in ancient period are controversial, it can be broadly described as a region extending from Godavari in the north down to the Kaveri in the South.

Thus, region has a rich cultured heritage. It has not only produced a large number of rulers and governors but also contributed to the socio-religious aspect of the Karnataka culture.

There are voluminous works in general on South Indian history in which the history of Karnataka is covered. The works are available on the dynasties of Karnataka like Gangas, Kadambas, Chalukyas, Rastrakutas, Hoyasalas etc. in which the socio-economic aspects is studied. A galaxy of scholars like A. Nilkantha Shastri, B. R. Gopal, G. Yajdani, R. g. Bhandarkar, M. Gurjaracharya, K. R. Basavraja etc. and their works on south Indian history in general and history

of Deccan or Karnataka in particular have really enriched our knowledge of the history of ancient Karnataka.

It is felt that the socio-religious aspects which is regarded as the base of any culture needs to be studied. Especially in the light of new material and with a fresh approach to a peculiar culture of Karnataka can be interpreted in a different manner. Recently many inscriptions in Sanskrit and old Kannada have been discovered at different parts of this region. An abundant literary sources in the form of *Smritis*, *Puranas*, and *Epics* are available. A cross examination and critical analysis of these sources would throw more light on the various aspects of socio-religious setup in Karnataka. Therefore, the topic **“A Socio-Religious Conditions in Ancient Karnataka”** has been chosen.

As mentioned above the earlier work by various scholars on Karnataka will be used for the present study. But in addition to that an attempt will be made to use original inscriptions duely followed by interpretation. Similarly a picture of society as reflected in contemporary literary sources will also be critically analysed.

For convenience the work has been divided into five chapters.

Chapter – I : Introduction -

Chapter – II : Political Background

Though the history of Karnataka begins with Maurya, Satavahan age, the region was inhabited by human being since pre historic period. A brief account of pre history researches in Karnataka has been taken. The traditional accounts like Ramayana and Mahabharata provides some links about the history of Karnataka prior to the Mauryan age. A brief survey of Karnataka in traditional accounts has been taken. From Mauryas onwards a well sequenced history of Karnataka is available. In this chapter, a brief review of the major dynasties in Karnataka like Satavahan, Kadambas, Gangas, Chalukyas, Rastrakutas etc. has been taken. The contribution of feudatories like Hoyasala, has also been studied. The focus of the work is on socio-religious aspects but a study of political background is also essential for bearing the socio religious condition. Especially the rulers, their caste, religion and polity has made a strong influence on contemporary socio religious structure.

Chapter – III : Social Conditions

It deals with the social formation, various aspects of varna system and caste system etc. Infact the original inhabitants of this region were non Aryans. After the Aryanisation of South India, the traditional *varnasram* system has been introduced in this region

too. That is why, the society in ancient Karnataka shows the same pattern as it was present in other parts of India. The caste system, the rulers, regarding interdinning and inter-marriage the professional, base of caste, family system, education pattern, dress and ornaments, food habits, customs, entertainment, beliefs and rituals, its aspects have been discussed. Position of women with all its characteristics has studied. Inspite of the patronization to Jainism, Buddhism or Veersaivism from the royal dynasties. The traditional structure of society remained unchanged, which has been discussed.

Chapter – IV : Religious Conditions

This chapter deals with the religious aspects with Karnataka. Ancient Karnataka witnessed a number of religions. The political dynasties extended their royal patronage to Hinduism, including Saivism and Veersaivism. Buddhism and Jainism were equally dominant cults in ancient century Karnataka. Buddhism received set back after 6th century A. D. in Karnataka. But the Karnataka proved to be a second home of Jainism.

The religious policies of the royal dynasties, the nature of religion, the beliefs, the religion of the masses, the construction of temples, etc. points have been studied. Actually this study has been made on the basis of a number of inscriptions available at various temples, and copperplate grants. Though there existed three major religions, Jainism, Buddhism and Hinduism Moreover after

12th century A. D. Veersaivism or Lingayatism become the major religion in Karnataka. The minor sects have also been in existence. The interrelationship among these different religions sects show a spirit of tolerance and harmony which has been highlighted in this chapter. In brief, the rise and growth of major and minor religions and the reasons behind it have been studied in this chapters. Again the patronage extended by royal dynasties, their feudatories, rich merchants have been also described in this chapter.

Chapter – V : Epilogue

This chapter provides a brief resume of the whole dissertation with the conclusion.