CHAPTER V

RELIGION, LANGUAGE & LITERATURE
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RELIGION:

Various religious systems flourished in the region of Banavāsi through the ages. The information that can be gleaned on them from various sources, though scanty and disjointed, is, nevertheless, confirmative. Of the religions that flourished in Banavāsi, the first to which reference is made in our sources of study is Buddhism.

Buddhism:

After the departure of the Śākyamuni Buddha from this world, Buddhist councils are said to have been held at various times in order to preserve and conserve the tenets preached by him. The third such Council, according to the Buddhist chronicles, was held in the reign of Aśōkā Maurya the great. It was held under the leadership of Thēra Moggalīputta who, after the conclusion of the Council, had decided to establish the Buddhist religion in different parts of the country. The Mahāvamsa, which furnishes this information, states that he sent forth different Thēras to different parts of this country on that mission. It is interesting to note that one of the
countries mentioned in this connection is Vanavasa which is unanimously identified by scholars as the country of Banavasi.

According to the information contained in the Mahavamsa, the therā named Rakkhita was sent to Vanavasa. Some more details pertaining to the conversion of the people of Vanavasa country by Therā Rakkhita are also found in this work. The translation of the relevant passages of the Mahāvamsa runs as follows:

"The Therā Rakkhita, who had gone to Vanavasa, preached, floating in the air in the midst of the people, the Anamataggasamyutha. The conversion of sixty thousand persons took place, thirty seven thousand in number received the pabbajja from him, five hundred vihāras were founded in the country. Thus did the Therā establish the conqueror".¹

The passage cited above is of considerable interest for, it appears to suggest that the religion of the Buddha entered the Banavasi region for the first time during the reign of Aśoka Maurya. The mission of Rakkhita must have had compelling effect on the minds of the people of the region. Although it cannot be denied that the statement contained in the Mahāvamsa in respect of the conversion of the people might be exaggerated, nevertheless, it is suggestive of the fact that large-scale
conversion did take place. Many of them must have become monks of the Buddhist order and founded a number of vihāras in various parts of Vanavāsa country. To sum up, the Buddhist religion for the first time found itself fully established in the Banavāsi region in the reign of Aśoka Maurya, i.e., in the 3rd century B.C.

The impact of Buddhism in the region is confirmed only by the scanty evidence coming from the post-Mauryan epoch. While most of the Buddhist antiquities lie buried under the ground awaiting the spade of the archaeologist to uncover them, the small scale excavations at Banavāsi have brought to light the existence of Chaitya-like apsidal structures, at least some of which may be Buddhist in affiliation. Buddhist religion must have flourished in the region, when it was under the Sātavāhana hegemony. Under these rulers, numerous rock excavations of Buddhist Chaityas were patronised in the Western Deccan. The first epigraphical evidence to suggest the prevalence of the Buddhist religion in Banavāsi is that of Viṇhukaḍa-Čhuṭukalānanda Šātakarnaṇi dated in his 12th regnal year. It states that his daughter Śivaskanda Nāgaśrī made a gift of the Nāga sculpture (on which this inscription is engraved) a tank and vihāra (apparently Buddhist) (Pl. XIII, 1). The inscription is ascribed palaeographically to 3rd century A.D. The sculpture was made by Naṭaka, the disciple of Damoraṇa, under the superintendentship of Khadasāti. An interesting aspect of the inscription
is that, as in many other contemporary places of Buddhist interest in the Deccan as also in Banavāsi region, the royal ladies stood by the religion of the Buddha. It appears that the ladies, particularly of the wealthy class, were attracted to Buddhism.

Except the above inscription, there are hardly any others of the period which throw light on Buddhism of the region. However, mention may here be made of the coins of the Ānanda kings, particularly the ones of Śiva-lāñhanda, which bear symbols possibly of Buddhist affiliation. On one side of the coin is depicted the so-called "Hill" symbol which may stand for stūpa. The other side bears the depiction of a tree surrounded by a railing, probably symbolising the Bodhi tree. One of the common auspicious symbols employed in early Buddhist art, namely the triratna, is found stamped on some pot sherds belonging to early historical period discovered at Banavāsi. Mention may also be made here of an inscribed pedestal stating that the image was made by stone-carpenter Gola's disciple and got made by one Balamita (Pl. XIII, 2). This may belong to the same period as the Nāga record.

The fact that Buddhism continued to exist in the region in the time of the Kadambas is established by a few records of those kings, although belonging to the later part of their rule. The Dēvaṇagere plates of Ravi-
varma (year 34) commence with an invocation to the Buddha as follows:

"Victorious is Sarvajña (the Omniscient), Sarvaloka-kanātha (lord of all the worlds i.e. Buddha) whose lotus-like feet are bathed by the rays of the gems in the Sun".

It is stated in the record that at the request of Haridatta, for making the charity, the king granted Asandi for worship in the Siddhāyatana and for the prosperity of the Sangha, additional nivartanas of land belonging to the embankment in the village of Koravega, one nivartana of land, the others, the wet fields dependent upon the embankment to the south of Asandi, one nivartana of land at the time of construction of the embankment. The king granted altogether three nivartanas at Vedirkoṭe, in the presence of all his vassals and the land was to be enjoyed with the right of samādhi and was free from uñchchha. Thus the existence of a Buddhist temple and perhaps a monastery attached to it is confirmed by this record. The grant was made on the occasion of a holy tithi in the bright fortnight of the month of Madhu (Chaitra), the constellation being Rōhiṇī.

One more inscription of the period referring to Buddhism is the Honnāvar Plates of Kēkaya Chitrāsenā (Year 1). The inscription begins with an invocation to Buddha who is described as endowed with infinite qualities, as a refuge of virtues, as born in the family of
Suaddōhana. It is stated that, in the reign of Ravi, the illustrious Chitrasena Mahakella, on the full-moon-day of Asvayuja, gave the land called Kanasapukkolli along with a garden in Napitapalli, to the Āryasaṅgha.

Although undisputed evidence is lacking, one would expect that the form of Buddhism prevalent in the region was Mahāyāna Buddhism. The image of Buddha or Boddhisattva belonging to the 3rd century A.D., as described above, is one of the pointers to this fact. After the Kadamba period, evidence of Buddhism in Banavasi region proper is wanting till about the 11th century.

However, the existence of a Chaitya-cum-Vihāra in Alhole belonging to about 7th century A.D. does indicate that Buddhism in North Karnataka had not faded away. The figure of Buddha found on the ceiling of this double storied structure and a couple of images of the Buddha, along with the inscriptions mentioning Ānanda Sthavira and Mahēndra on one of the pillars, attest to the Mahāyāna form of Buddhism. Hiuen-tsang records that numerous vihāras existed in the western parts of Karnataka. The arrival of newer trends in Buddhism into the region during the post-Chalukya period is exemplified in an inscription of 968 A.D., found in Kadiri in Mangalore, which records the setting up of an image of Lokēśvara which is also preserved in the same temple. Although found outside Banavasi region, this evidence is a sure indication of
the Vajrayana form of Buddhism in the western parts of Karnataka. In the 11th or 12th century, an image of Tārābhagavatī, a deity of the Vajrayānists, was installed in Banavāsi itself (Pl. XXII, 2). This mutilated sculpture in the gallery has a good parallel in Ballīgāve where also a better preserved image of the same deity had been found long back. It was probably got made by one Nāgiyākka of that place. The existence of Boddhisatva Avalokiteśvara in Ballīgāve is attested to by an image of that deity. The Vajrayāna form of Buddhism seems to have been considerably popular in Shimoga - Sirsi - Dharwad track. At Dambal an inscription records the existence of a Buddhist vihāra named after Tārābhagavatī. So also at Kōlivāṭ near Hubli was found an inscribed image of Tārābhagavatī.

Although these evidences indicate the continuation of Buddhist religion in the region, it should be noted that, compared to other religious sects, the position enjoyed by the Buddhist religion was relatively feeble. Ultimately it must have faded away from the map of Karnāṭaka during the period that followed.

Jainism:

Early references to the prevalence of Jainism in Banavāsi region are wanting. If the tradition that Chandragupta Maurya traversed to the south along with
Jaina ascetic Bhadrabāhu and that he breathed his last as an ascetic in Śravaṇabelagola is to be believed, the possibility of Jainism having made its expansion in the Kuntala country may not be ruled out. Positive indication of Jainism commences with the reign of the Kadamba rulers. In Banavasi itself, recently, a mutilated Jaina image carved out of reddish sandstone has come to light. It represents a Jaina Tīrthāṅkara and was meant for worship in a shrine (Pl. XVI, 2). Kadamba inscriptions themselves occasionally record grants made to Jaina temples and Jaina Sanghas.

The Halsi plates of Kaśkusthavarma, dated in the eightieth year of his victory, begin with an invocation to Bhagavān Jināndra. It records an interesting information that the grant was made to the Commander-in-chief, Śrutakīrti, for having saved the king. The grant included Balovarākṣetra in Khēta grāma. The Khētagrāma is stated to have belonged to the Arahantas. The name Śrutakīrti is interesting as it appears to suggest the followers of the Yāpanīya sect of Jainas. Palāśikā or Halsi, now in Belgaum district, was the second capital of the Kadambas, and from other contemporary records it is known to have been an important centre of Jainas of the Yāpanīya sect.

The Devagiri copper plate of the third year of Mrīgēśavarma is another record furnishing information
about Jainism. This inscription also begins with an invocation to Arahats. It is stated that in the month of Kartika, on the tenth day of the bright half of the moon, a grant of 40 nivartanas of black soil land was donated by the king for the purpose of worship, repairs etc. of the Chaityālaya in Brihatparalūra. Some additional land was also given near the Chaityālaya itself for the courtyard for the Chaityālaya. The inscription is stated to have been written by Dāmakirti who was holding the office of Bhojaka. He has been described as Parama-dhārmika i.e., greatly devoted to Dharma.

The Devagiri plates of the fourth regnal year of Mrigesa is also a Jaina record. The inscription records that in the eighth fortnight of the Varsha season, on the full-moon day, the king having divided the village of Kavalavangu into three parts, granted one to the Jainendra of Arahāchala, another to Śvetapaṭa Mahāśramāna Saṅgha and the third to the ascetics of Nirgrantha Mahāśramāna Saṅgha. The first part was to be used for the worship of and offerings to the deity as well as for repairs of the Jaina temple.

The Halsi plates of Mrigesa's eighth regnal year inform that the king erected a Jīnālaya in Palāsikā for the merit of his father Śāntivarma. He also granted 33 nivartanas of land to the ascetics of the Yāpanīya, Nirgrantha and Kūrchaka saṅghas. The land so granted
is stated to have been between Mātrisarit (river) and Ingañī Sangama. A bhōjaka named Dāmaka and an āyuksa named Jiyanta are mentioned as ājñaptis. The record is interesting because it refers to the three sects of the Jainas, namely the Yāpanīyas, Nirgranthas and Kurcakas in Halsi. This is another indication of Halsi being an early Jaina centre serving as a refuge of various Jaina sects. The erection of a Jaina temple by the king for the merit of his father is also an interesting fact. It raises a faint doubt as to whether Śāntivarma was a follower of Jainism. In this connection, it is interesting to know that Śāntinātha is one of the Tīrthanākaras.

Mrigēsā's son Ravivarman is also known to have made grants in favour of Jainism. His copper plate record from Halsi, dated in his eleventh regnal year, begins with an invocation to Bhagavān Jinendra. The record states that in the Hēmanta season, on the tenth day of the sixth fortnight, fifteen nivartanas of land was granted for anointing of Jina on every full moon day. The Bhōjakapadara made the donation at the order of Bhānuvarma on behalf of the king. The donated land is been stated to have/situated in the Kardampati kshētra of Palāsikā.

Another undated record of Ravivarman from Halsi records a grant of four nivartanas of land for the worship of Jinendra by the Prasāda of Dāmakirti's mother.
Damakīrti's younger brother Śrīkīrti is also mentioned in the record.

A third set of copper plates also from Halsi, belonging to the reign of Ravivarma,¹⁹ is an important Jaina record of the period. It refers to the grants made to the Jaina establishments at Halsi earlier by Kākustha, Śantivarma and Mrigēśa. Kākusthavarma had given a village named Purukhēta to Śrutakīrti, a Jains ascetic. Śantivarma and his son, Mrigēśa, had made donations to the mother of Damakīrti who was probably the son of Śvetakīrti. Ravivarma is stated to have made over that grant to Pratihāra Jayakīrti, the son of Damakīrti. It is also stated that the income from the donated village should be used for the festivals to be performed in the Jaina temple, on the full moon day of Kartika month every year for eight days. It was also to be utilised for maintaining and protecting the Jaina ascetics of the Yāpanīya Saṅgha and the enlightened persons like Kumāradatta. At the end of the record, it is stated that wherever the worship of Jinēndra is carried out, there will be development, increase in the power of the rulers and the fearlessness in the towns.

A much debated epigraph of Ravivarma comes from Guḍnāpur about five kilometers from Banavāśi.²⁰ This record begins with an invocation to a god who is described as a Manmatha to the celestial ladies. The record states that a shrine for Manmatha was erected near the
royal palace and the lands in several villages were given away for worship in that temple. A festival was to be conducted in the month of Madhu or in any other month convenient. There has arisen a controversy over the issue of the identification of the god Manmatha. Gopal has argued that Manmatha mentioned in the record is no other than Gommata or Bahubali of the Jainas. He has read the term describing the temple as Kamajinalaya instead of Kamadevalaya. However, some other scholars like Gai have argued that the temple was dedicated to the Hindu god Kama or Manmatha. It may be noted that the record also refers to some other temples in the nearby region which seemingly suggests that the temple might have been of Jaina affiliation. For instance, a Kamajinalaya of Hakinipalli is referred to. Similarly, reference is also made to the temple of Padmavati who is a well known Jaina Yakshi. Thus the Kadambas in the last part of their reign seem to have become associated with the Jaina religion, so much so as to erect a Jaina temple in the vicinity of the royal palace. If the identification of Manmatha with Gommaṭa or Bahubali is correct, then the Guḍnapur record would be the first positive evidence of the worship of Bahubali among the Jainas, as early as 5th-6th centuries A.D. Similarly, this record furnishes the earliest evidences for the worship of Padmavati Yakshi in the Karnāṭaka region.
The successor of Ravivarmā, namely Harivarma, also patronised Jainism. His Halsi plates of the fifth year record that at the request of Bhanuśakti of the Sēndraka family, the king granted a village named Marađe for the regular worship of the deity in the Chaityālāya at Palāśikā and for the use of Sadhus. The grant was received by Dharmanandi who is stated to have belonged to a Śramaṇa-saṅgha named Aharishte.

The Kadambas of Tripārvata line also patronised Jainism. The Devagiri plates of Yuvaraṇa Devavarman, son of Kṛishṇavarman I, record a grant of 12 nivartanas of land in Siddhakēdāra for worship and renovations of the Chaityālāya and for the members of the Yāpaniṇya Saṅgha. It is also stated that the land was given to Jina in Tripārvata for personal merit. Devagiri is in Dharwad District. The record ends with an invocation to Arhat.

The above survey shows that Yāpaniṇyas were the strongest among the Digambara Jaina cult during the early Kadamba rule. This position must have been retained by them through the Badami Chalukya and Rāṣṭrakūṭa periods also. Under the Chalukyas of Vatāpi, the centre of activity turned to the eastern part of Karnāṭaka and it is there that we see the existence of numerous Jaina establishments. Pulikēśi II patronised Ravikīrti and lavishly donated grants for the maintenance of the Jinendra
temple erected by the latter at Aihole. Jaina caves were excavated both in Aihole and Badami. Lakshmeswar, the ancient Puligere, was another centre of the Jainas where the famous Saṅkhajinalaya was located. Chalukyan queens made lavish grants for the Jaina establishment there. However, in the Banavasi region itself, the picture as such is not clear during the Chalukya and Rashtrakuta rule. By the time the Chalukyas of Kalyana took over the political leadership and the Kadambas resumed their rule in the Banavasi region as local feudatories, Jainism had already expanded considerably all over Karnataka. Saundatti was one of the centres where the followers of Yapaniya Saṅgha, Mulasaṅgha etc. and their sub-sects like the Kāreyaṅgaṇa, Pustakagachcha etc. received patronage from the kings and the feudatories. The ascetics of various anvayas founded establishments in different villages and towns. Unlike Buddhism, Jainism had become a living force in the region of Karnataka. Ladies, including the queens, were strongly behind it and helped it flourish.

In Banavasi itself, a few bits of evidence in the form of Jaina sculptures (Pl. XXIII, 1) and Nishidhi stones are forthcoming. The fragmentary sculptures, now preserved in the sculpture gallery, are confirmative evidence of the fact that Jainism continued to flourish in this region. Even today a few Jaina families live here and in the vicinity of the Basadis a couple of Nishidhi
stones representing the death of Jainas who followed the vow of Sallekhana can still be seen. In Guḍāṇāpura also, a few fragmentary Jaina images of 11th-12th century A.D. are noticed. Together, these evidences go far to indicate that Jainism played a considerably important role in Banavasi-Guḍāṇāpur area.

Balligave, which is not far from Banavasi, was an important religious and cultural centre from 10th to 14th centuries A.D. It is to be noted that in 1077 A.D., Chāvuṇḍaṇaḍhipati, brother of Nagiyakka, erected the Basadi of Mallikamōḍa-Śāntinātha here. There are references to Ashtopavāsi-Bhaṭṭara-Basadi, Śānti-Thīrthasaha-vāsi-Basadi, Kamalasena-Basadi, Gōlavayaṇa-Basadi, Jujahuti Śāntinātha-Basadi, Pramathasēna-Basadi, etc. in this place. Numerous broken Jaina images found in this place are also an indication of Balligave being an important Jaina Centre during this period.

Śaivism:

During the last centuries preceding the beginning of the Christian era, already two important sects of Hinduism, namely Śaivism and Vaiśnavism had begun to play a prominent role in the life of the people. Of these, Śaivism seems to have had deeper roots as a popular religion of the people. In Karnāṭaka, evidences of its early popularity can be found in inscriptions. For
instance, a record from Konnur in Dharwad District refers to the existence of a Mahadeva temple during the Sata-
vahana period. While discussing the political history of Banavasi, it was pointed out that, the Satakarni mentioned in the Tālagunda inscription of Kakusthavarma, could be identical with Gautamiputra Satakarni, the great Sātavahana king. The Tālagunda record mentions that the Śivalinga of Sthana-Kundurū had been worshipped by Satakarni and other rulers. This seems to have come down as a genuine memory of the inhabitants of Tālagunda and recorded in the famous inscription. Thus the antiquity of Śaivism in the region can be taken back at least to the beginning of the Christian era if not earlier still. The Chuṭu kings had such names as Śivalananda, Vishnurudra etc. which are also indicators of the influence of Śaivism in the region. The Malavalli record of Viṅhukaṭa Chuṭukulananda invokes a god named Malapaladeva who may be a Śaiva deity. Several villages were redonated by Śivaskandavarma at a later date. The most important record of Śaiva affinity with the Kadamba period is the one from Tālagunda. It begins with an obesiance to Śiva followed by an invocation to Śiva the bearer of matted hair. The record gives the genealogy of the Kadambas and mentions the excavation of tank in Sthana-
kundūra in the vicinity of the Śiva temple. The inscription closes with an invocation to Bhagavan Mahadeva who dwelt in Sthānakundūra. Considering the description
given in the record, it appears that the temple must have been regarded as of great antiquity by then itself. The god is described in various terms such as Bhava, Adideva etc. It is also clear that the place had been occupied by the Brāhmaṇas.

In the Halmidi inscription of Kakusthavarma, a person named Paśupati belonging to Alapagana and Bhaṭarikula is referred to. Another record from Tāla-gunda, also of the same period, begins with an invocation to Śiva as Paśupati having Gaṅgā and the moon in his hair. This record states that grants were made for feeding thirty Brāhmaṇas in Sthānakunja-pura-Tīrtha i.e. Tāla-gunda.

In an inscription of Mrigēśavarman grants are recorded for two Brāhmaṇas named Rudrārya and Nandyārya of Bhārgava gōtra. Another record of the same king mentions of Somāsarman. Kuntagāṇi plates of Ravivarman mention the land on either side of the tank excavated in Variyaka village as Karpaṭēśvara. It was donated to a Brāhmaṇa named Bhavasvāmi. Śirsi plates of Ravivarman, dated in his 35th regnal year, record a grant on Kārtika Śukla Pañchami to Śiva temple (Mahādevāyatana) of Ni-la-kaṇṭha Dēśāmātya who was the king's pet doctor. The grant included four nivartanas of land by Bambare tātaka. The record also mentions one Āryasvāmyi and the Paśupatas.
This is perhaps the first direct epigraphical reference in Karnataka to the existence of Pasupata Saivas. The inscription probably belonged to Saregrama.

The Sangolli plates of the 8th regnal year of Harivarma\(^37\) begin with an invocation to Śiva. It records a village named Tedava granted to 23 Brahmaṇas of various gōtras. The king is described as Parama-maheśvara, a great devotee of Śiva. Among the donee Brahmaṇas, there were persons with Śaivite names, such as Śivaśarma, Nandisarma, Pasupatisarma, etc.

The Anaji inscription of Śivanandavarman (of Chitradurga District) describes the king as Parama-Maheśvara.\(^38\) It is stated that Śivanandavarman took to an ascetic way of life and passed away after a battle fought between the Pallavas and the soldiers of Kṛishṇavarman in which the latter were totally defeated. Śivanandavarman is supposed to have belonged to the family of the Kekayas, possibly born of Kadamba Kṛishṇavarman I.

Śirsi plates of Kṛishṇavarman II, dated in his 19th regnal year,\(^39\) mention the grant of a village to a Brahmaṇa named Somasvāmi. In the Beṇṇur plates of the same king, it is stated that, while he was on an expedition to Vaijayantī on the Śukla pratipada of Pushya month, he granted a tenth portion of Palmaṇi village and six nivartanas of land to a Brahmaṇa named Bhavasvāmi, in front of Mahādeva temple at Inguṇagra.\(^40\)
The Shimoga plates Mandhāta record the grant of a house and six nivartanas of land in Kaggigrāma and another land called Chatushpāt-Kṣhētra in Palgalinī grāma to a Triyāmbakasvāmi of Ātreyagōtra. The villages donated were located to the south of Chennagiri (Shimoga District).

The Tagare plates of Bhōgivarma, found in Hassan District, mention the grant of Kirukudalure, a hamlet of Tagare Mahāgrāma, to one Bhūtasarma of Kāsyapagōtra. The Aravālem (Goa) Śivalinga inscription, which is only partially preserved, gives a beautiful description of the site consisting of gardens and forests where Hara i.e. Śiva was always present. This suggests the existence of a Śiva temple here. There is also a reference to Yōgis who were engaged in meditation and Yōgasānas and who belonged to the Mahālaja i.e. Śivālaja. The inscription is ascribed to Kadamba Mrīgēsavarma. It was inscribed on a pillar which had been later converted into Śivalinga and is installed in one of the shrines of the cave at Aravālem.

The direct reference to the Pāṣupatās in the later records of the early Kadambas and indirect references through such names as Pāṣupati in the earlier records clearly suggest that Pāṣupata cult was one of the most important Śaiva sects in the first half of the first millenium A.D. This position continued to prevail in the
succeeding periods. The early Chalukyas were inclined to be the worshippers of Vishnu till the end of the reign of Pulikesi II. Inspite of this, they did erect some Shaiva temples such as the Shaiva caves at Badami and Aihole and the Makuteshvara temple at Mahakuta. In the caves at Badami which belong to the early phase of the Chalukya rule, there are depictions of Lakulisa Pasupatas in the region. The Chalukyas came under the direct spell of the Pasupata Shaivas from the time of Vikramaditya I who took the Shivamandala diksha at the hands of the Guru Sudarshanacharya. The conversion had its impact on the art and architecture of the Chalukyas. Most of the temples erected by the Chalukyas from the time of Vikramaditya I onwards were dedicated to Shiva. In fact, the area attracted Shaiva ascetics from North India also. The Trisula Pillar inscription at Pattadakal informs that it was erected by one Jhana Shivacharya who had come all the way from Mrigathanikahara on the northern banks of the Ganga. The followers of Pasupata sect were also called Lakulas and Maheshvaras.

This position in relation to Pasupata Shaivism must have remained unaltered during the regime of the Rashtrakutas. Krishna I erected a rock-cut temple for Shiva, at Ellora. In Dantidurga's reign, a Buddhist vihara at Ellora was got converted into a Shaiva cave with beautiful carvings of Shiva's various feats.
The Pāśupata Śaivas, if we have to judge from the caves and temples dedicated to Śiva in the Chālukya and the Rashtrakūṭa periods, do not seem to have been intolerant of other religious systems. Numerous depictions of various forms of Vishnu are found on these temples. Even in the post-Rashtrakūṭa period, the same policy of religious tolerance continued in Kāndāraka so far as the Pāśupatas were concerned.

An important centre of the Śaivas during the later Chālukya period was Balligāve. The Kōdimathā, attached to the Kēdāreśvara temple there, probably came into existence around 1025 A.D. By the 12th century A.D. it had become famous, so much so that in an inscription of 1162 A.D., it is stated that Balligāve was Dakshina-Kēdāra where the Brahmachārīś and Śaiva ascetics performed penance. The Kōdimathā seems to have been controlled by the Kālamukhas. The Kālamukha ascetics were well-versed in various branches of learning. For instance, in an inscription of Kalachuri Rayamurari Sōvidēva, Vāmaśakti has been described as an expert in grammar, drama, music, poetry etc. as well as in the Lakulīśa-siddhānta. There are also references to scholar ascetics like Kēdāraśakti, Śīkanṭha, Sōmeśvara, Vidyābharanaśakti etc. They are described as belonging to the Śaiva branch called Śakti-parikshā, incarnated in Parvatāvalī. The Pāñchalinga-mathā at Balligāve was another centre of activity of the...
Kalamukhas. Its founder was Lakulīśa, an expert in logic. Apart from this, other mathas of the Śaivas like Agnīśvara matha, Kallēśvara matha, Jagadaikamallēśvara matha, Tripurāntaka matha, Bherunḍēśvara matha, Mūlasthāna Nandikēśvara matha also existed in this place.51

In Banavasi itself, Śaivism was no less popular. The numerous lingas of early form, some of which can be found installed within the compound of Madhukesvara complex, are sure indications of this fact. The Madhukesvara temple itself, most probably a non-Śaiva temple originally, was later on converted to Śaiva dedication. However, by the time the Kadambas arose as feudatories of the later Chalukyas, the conversion of this temple had already taken place. Extensive renovations were introduced and the gateways built on the North and East by 12th century A.D. The Madhukesvara temple became the centre of Śaiva activity in this place. Of the other temples in this place Ādimadhukesvara, Kadambēśvara, Sithikaṭṭēśvara, Pañchalinga, Prabhulinga, are important. Some of these shrines have Śivalingas of early form.52

Vaishnavism:

One of the important religious sects, the antiquity of which can be traced back to the Vedic times, is that of the followers of Vaishnavism. Like Rudra Śiva, Vishnu was a minor god of Vedic times, who rose to prominence
and attained to the status of the deity *par excellence* among his worshippers. In this development, various currents have contributed, the most important being that of the *Bhāgavata*–*Pāñcharātras*. By about the second century B.C., Bhāgavatism of the Vāsudeva worshippers had assumed prominence in central India. Its impact was also felt in the Deccan. The Nāšik inscription of the Sātavāhana queen, Nāganikā, begins with the invocation to Saṅkarshaṇa and Vāsudeva among other deities. These two were important divinities worshipped by the Bhāgavatas. The influence of Vīṣṇu worshippers continued during the Sātavāhana period. This is indicated by various epithets of Vīṣṇu used in the Nāšik cave inscription of the 2nd century A.D. A record from Chinnam in Andhra Pradesh belonging to Yajñāśrī Sātakarnī and dated in the end of the 2nd century A.D. invokes Bhagavān Vāsudeva.

The above survey shows that Bhāgavatism had become considerably popular in the Deccan by the end of the 2nd century A.D.

In the Banavāsi region, the successors of the Sātavāhanas continued to help Vaishnavism to retain its importance. The Chuṭu kings, for instance, bore such names as Vīṣṇupuskanda, Vīṣṇurudra, etc. In fact, an inscription found in Nāgārjunakoṇḍa and belonging to the Ābhīra king Vāsuśeṇa informs that in about the middle
of the 3rd century A.D., the kings of various places participated in the erection of a temple for God Ashtabhujasvāmi which is a name of Vishṇu. The list of kings in this inscription includes also the name of king Vishṇurudra-Śivalānanda of Banavāsi. The description of the God Nārāyaṇa contained therein clearly indicates the status of Vaishṇavism in the contemporary society. There are also other records, ascribable to the 3rd and 4th centuries A.D., which attest to this fact. During the Pallava occupation period there was a further impetus for the growth of Bhāgavata religion. The early Pallava kings expressly claimed to be Parama-Bhāgavatās - great devotees of Vishṇu. The evidence of early Tamil literature and the Gāthāsaptasatī of Sātavāhana king Hāla further indicates that not only in the Deccan, but also in Tamil Naḍu, Vaishṇavism had greatly influenced the society.

In the North Kanara region itself iconic worship of Vishṇu is indicated by a two-armed stone image found at the village of Kontapāla. This sculpture has been stylistically assigned to the 3rd century A.D. It is said to conform to the iconography of Manushavāsudeva given in the Vaikhanāsagama. This is an early indication of the existence of a Vishṇu temple in the Kanara region.

The early Kadamba records, many of which record grants to Brahmānas following the Vedic practices, are noted for the fact that the donees were followers of one
of the Brahmanical religious sects such as Śaivism and Vaishñavism. From the time of Kakusthavarma particularly, we notice the occurrence of Vishṇu's invocations in the records. This influence was possibly due to the fact that contemporaneously with the Kadambas, the Guptas in the north and the Vakāṭakas to the south of the Vindhyas were ardent followers of a Vaishñavism.

The Halmidi inscription\(^6^2\) of the time of Kakusthavarma, commences with the invocation to Vishṇu as Achyuta who is embraced by Śrī and who holds the Śāṅga bow and looks like the fire occurring at the end of the Yugas to the eyes of Demons, but is the pleasing Sudarśanachakra to the good people. The lotus-like carving at the top of the record is interpreted as representing the Sudarśana Chakra of Vishṇu.\(^6^3\)

The next important inscription of the Kadambas to throw light on Vaishñavism is the Banavasi pillar inscription of Mrigesavarma (C. 460 A.D.)\(^6^4\). It commences with an invocation to Vishṇu who is described as radiant, the refuge of knowers of the Supreme Being and the Maker of the universe, who has manifold forms and who is all-powerful and the master of the movable and the immovable. The aspects of Bhakti, characteristic of the Bhagavata religion, are clearly indicated by this record. The reference to the manifold forms of Vishṇu is an indirect allusion to the avatāra concept. It has been suggested
that the inscription was set up in front of a Vishnu temple in Banavasi probably dedicated to Narasimha form.65

In the Hebbatat grant of Vishnuvarma66 of the Triparvata line, an invocation to Vishnu is contained as follows:

"The world is conquered by that worshipful Vishnu in whose breast goddess Šrī herself shines and (in whose) lotus of navel (shines) the God Pitāmaha".

The concept of Lakshmi residing in Vishnu's chest is clearly indicated by this invocation. There is also a reference to him as the God having Brahma seated on the lotus issuing from his navel. This is the Padmanabha or Anantasayana form of Vishnu.

Another record of the same king which is considered spurious, invokes the trinity Hara, Narayana and Brahma.67 Names of persons with Vaishnavite characteristics such as Govindasvami are not wanting in the Kadamba records.68 In a record of Krishnavarma II from Banahalli,69 an invocation to Vishnu as Hari is as follows:

"Be that Hari victorious who is the destroyer of the rising might and power of the king of demons and who is the weilder of the illusion of the maintenance, destruction and creation of the universe".
The reference here seems to be either to Narasimha or Vamana-Trivikrama form of Vishnu.

In the records of Harivarna, we come across Brahmana donees, who bore names like Vaikunthaśarma, Vishnuśarma, etc. One of the Kadamba kings was named Damōdara.

With the advent of the Chālukyas of Badami, the Banavasi region soon passed into the hands of the new rulers. The Chālukyas were great devotees of Vishnu as indicated by the title Parama-bhāgavata. They remained so until the end of Pulikeśi II. They erected numerous monuments including two cave-temples dedicated to Vishnu in their capital. However, the status of Vaishnavism in Banavasi region cannot be assessed, as evidence is lacking. It is possible that the Madhukēśvara temple was originally dedicated to Vishnu and was perhaps erected by the Ālupa king who was in charge of Banavasi Maṇḍala under Vijayaditya. A fine sculpture of Vishnu which was undoubtedly meant for worship in the central shrine, is now preserved in the temple itself (Pl. XVII, 2). It has rather unique characteristics and stylistically may belong to c. 8th century. It is not impossible that this may be the original icon enshrined in the garbha griha. There is one more fragmentary sculpture in the typically early phase of the Chalukya style, depicting the head of a male deity, now preserved in the sculpture gallery.
(Pl. XVII, 1). This may also be the head of Vishnu image. Except these fragmentary evidences, there is no other direct evidence forthcoming from the region. We may note in this context that the Vishnu sculpture in the Madhukeshvara temple reveals that the concept of Dasavatara was already known.

The Chalukyan inscriptions refer to the Varaha and Trivikrama forms of Vishnu. Numerous names of Brahma donees, with Vaishnava inclination can also be found in their records. They include Narayana, Vishnu, Gopa, Krishna, Vamana, Kesava, Damodara, Madhava, Trivikrama, Hari, Gadadhara, Rama, Janardana, Upendra, Yajna, Govinda etc. The sculptural depictions, found in the Badami region, also reveal the various forms of Vishnu avataras and stories related to Krishnas life.

As in the case of the Chalukyas of Vatapi, there is little to be said about the direct evidence pertaining to Vaishnavism in the Banavasi region under the Rashtrakutas. It can only be surmised that Vaishnavism progressed further during their period. One of the important features was the popularity of the Chaturvimsati forms of Vishnu as conceived by Pancharatras. In the early part of the 10th century, there is a reference to the setting up of the image of God Kesava by one Gomabbe in Ottur (Shimoga District).

Between the 10th and the 14th centuries, when the
Banavasi region was again in the hands of Kadambas as feudatory rulers of Chalukyas of Kalyana, the progress of Vaishnavism must have been considerable as elsewhere. In North Karnataka numerous temples dedicated to one or the other forms of Vishnu were erected in this period. In Banavasi proper, except a few fragmentary sculptures, no such evidence is forthcoming, but an idea of the development can be had from Balligave in Shimoga District which is not far from Banavasi. Here, a temple of Vishnu was erected in 1048 A.D., another of Kesava in 1065 A.D., one more of Narasimha in 1072. In 1014, the images of Anantasayana and Chaturvimsati murtis were got made. In c. 1149 A.D. there is again a reference to God Narayana. These references go to show how popular Vaishnavism had become in this region. There is a reference to Narasimha temple in Sirali in the 13th century A.D. Taking into consideration all these evidences coming from North Karnataka, it may be stated that the Chaturvimsati forms of Vishnu, the Sthanaka, asina and Sayana forms as well as the Vibhavas or avatāras were popular concepts among the Vaishnavas of the period. Bhakti played an important role and listening to the Harikirtana was regarded as meritorious. Grants of various sorts in the form of lands, feeding arrangements, gardens, coins, incense, perpetual lamp etc. are frequently mentioned in the records of the period. In short it had paved the way for the future Haridāsa movement which became characteristic of the Bhakti
school of Vaishnavas during the Vijayanagara period. It may passingly be mentioned here that a shrine dedicated to Venkatesa belonging to Vijayanagara period is located near the Madhukeshvara temple complex at Banavasi.

Language and Literature:

From the very early times literature has been patronised by kings in Karnataka. It was not uncommon to have a reputed poet in the king's court. Samskrita and Prakrita were doubtless the earlier languages in which literature poured out and received the attention of the rulers. An early example of the literary inclination of the kings in Karnataka is furnished by the Satavahana king Hala to whom is attributed the Prakrita collection of Gathas titled Gatha Saptasati. Scholars have disputed the contemporaneity and the authorship of all the Gathas contained in this work. The Gatha Saptasati may be in reality a compilation of the freely circulating gathas among the people.

The very fact that all the inscriptions of pre-Kadamba period in Karnataka are in Prakrita sometimes displaying an influence of Samskrita shows that this language enjoyed popularity among the ruling and the learned classes of the society. Even the donations given to the Brahmanas and the performances of the Vedic sacrifices by the Brahmanas are recorded in Prakrita
language. In Karnataka it was not until the advent of the Kadambas that Sanskrit assumed the status of the official language. It pushed aside the Prakrit language and asserted itself. This position was probably the outcome of the southern invasion of the great Gupta conqueror Samudragupta which took place about the middle of the 4th century. It will be of interest in this connection to note that the very first inscription of Kadamba Mayuravarma, discovered in Chandravalli in Chitradurga District, is in Sanskrit language. All other epigraphs of the Kadambas followed suit in respect of the use of Sanskrit as the official language. It is not known if this was partially influenced by the fact that Mayura hailed from a Brahmana family which the Talagunda record so eloquently describes.

The introduction of Sanskrit as the official language must have had its repercussions in the literary activity of the region. This is implied by the fact that even the records of non-Brahmanic creeds like Jainism and Buddhism were written in Sanskrit language in spite of the fact that their canonical literature to a great extent was in Pali or Ardhamagadhi. Poetic geniuses must have thrived in the courts of the early Kadamba kings. There is a tradition that the great poet and dramatist Kalidasa visited the court of Kuntala king as an emissary of the Guptas whereupon he wrote the work
If there is any truth in this tradition, then it will have to be maintained that the Kuntala king was no other than a Kadamba king. In any case, evidence is not lacking in Kadamba inscriptions for the existence of great Sanskrit poets. Many of their records are excellent examples of poetic composition though the names of the composers are not known in all cases. Perhaps the best example of the Kadamba inscriptions in kavya style is the Tāḷagunda inscription of Kakusthavarma written by Kubja. A similar example of poetic quality can be discerned in the Guḍnapūr inscription of Ravivarman.

Compared to Sanskrit, the regional language of the people which must have been the language of the people at large was late in assuming enough importance in the ruling class. The earliest inscription in the Kannada language is the Halmiḍi stone inscription. This inscription begins with an invocation to Vishṇu in Sanskrit and records the purport in Kannada. Scholars have noted that already numerous Sanskrit words had entered into the usage and the style of this time, i.e., by about the middle of the fifth century. This only goes to show that Kannada was the language of the people from at least a few centuries before. Once the use of Kannada was approved in the records of the rulers, it did not take long to assume importance as a language of the inscriptions,
particularly, those which were meant to be read and understood by the common people. Thus, already in the period of Ravivarman, we notice one more epigraph in Kannada. The Chalukyas who succeeded as the imperial authority to the throne of Karnataka popularised it further.

With the shifting of the centre of political activity to Badami in Bijapur District under the Chalukyas of Vatapi, the attention of poets seeking patronage must have also shifted to that region. The Chalukya monarchs, like their predecessors, were great patrons of literature. Although they preferred Samskṛita for their royal charters, they encouraged the setting up of Kannada inscriptions whenever occasions arose. Great poets like Bhāravi and Kālidāsa were widely read in Karnataka. This is clearly implied by the fact that the composer of the Mahākūṭa Pillar inscription of Mangalēśa virtually imitated passages from Kālidāsa's Raghuvraṇa. Likewise, poet Ravigiri, the composer of Aihoḷe prāṣasti of Pulikēśi II, expressly claimed that his poetical ability was in no way inferior to that of Kālidāsa or Bhāravi. A daughter-in-law of Pulikēśi II, named Vijjīka or Vijayabhaṭṭarika, was the author of a Samskṛita work titled Kaumūḍi Mahōtsava. Though this work has not come down to us in its entirety, a few passages quoted by critics like Kshemendra from this work are considered as
excellent pieces of composition.\textsuperscript{88}

The progress of Kannada as a language of literary merit was also perpetuated under the Chalukyas. An excellent piece of Tripadi composition in Kannada has survived at Badami in Kappe Arabhaṭṭa's inscription.\textsuperscript{89} The Ālupas, who held their sway over Banavāśi maṇḍala for quite some time as subordinates of the Chalukyas of Vatapi, also experimented with Kannada as a language par excellence.\textsuperscript{90} One of the inscriptions found in Udyāvara in South Kanara District shows that its composers tried to exemplify some Śaṁskṛita meters in Kannada.\textsuperscript{91}

The Rāṣṭrakūṭas, who became the overlords of Karnāṭaka after the fall of the Chalukyas of Vatapi, continued the heritage of their predecessors. Most of their inscriptions found in Karnāṭaka including the Banavāśi maṇḍala are in Kannada. In fact, king Nṛpatuṅga-Amogha-varsha was a poet of unusual abilities. He laid the pathway for Kannada composers through his work Kavirāja-marga which is the earliest surviving Kannada work so far known. His love of the Kannada land and, the Kannada language is amply testified to in this work.\textsuperscript{92}

It was just before the rise of the Chalukyas of Kalyāṇa that masterly Kannada literary works began to be produced, particularly by Jaina poets. Among the ever remembered poets of this period, mention should be made of Pampa who is rightly described as Ādikavi in Kannada.
His graphic description of the Banavāsi country is an oft-quoted one. This shows that he had visited Banavāsi country and had been enamoured of the natural beauty of that land. He had been so much attracted by Banavāsi country that he says he would love to be born in that country either as a honey-bee or as a cuckoo. His Vikramārjuna-vijayam, composed in praise of his patron Arikēsari of Vēmulavāda, contains the above allusions to Banavāsi country. It can only be imagined how many more poets of the Banavāsi country might have derived inspiration from the arresting beauty of that evergreen land.

Numerous inscriptions which are of considerable poetic merit are encountered in the Banavāsi Maṇḍala, under the Kadambas as the feudatories of the Chālukyas of Kalyāṇa. But only a few inscriptions give the names of their composers. In an epigraph of 1068 A.D. belonging to Lakshma, the governor of Banavāsi, a reference is stated that he had compiled a work Sukumāracharita. Śāntinātha was obviously a Jaina by faith. According to the inscriptions, his preceptor was Vardhamānayati, his father Gōvindarāja, his elder brother Kamaṇḍārya and his younger brother Rēvaṇa. The last mentioned is described as the ornament of speech. Śāntinātha bore such titles as Daṇḍanātha-pravara, Paramajinamatāmbhojini Rājahamsa, Sarvātīmukhamukura, Sahājakavi, Chaturakavi and Nissahāya Kavi. Another poet whose name we come across in an
inscription dated 1070 is Nagavarmāchārya. He wrote Chandrachūḍamani in Kannada. He was the minister of peace and war to Udayāditya who was the governor of Banavāsi 12,000. An inscription found in Shikāripur taluk of Shimoga District mentions a Nagavarmāchārya who is probably the poet mentioned above. He was also probably the poet of Halsi inscription of Śivachitta.

The Kupāṭūru inscription of Kadamba Kīrtidevā reveals the name of another poet named Harivarma. He was probably a court poet of Kīrtidevā. Another name found in the inscriptions of the period is that of poet Chandrarāja who was probably the author of Madanatilaka. He was patronised by Māchirāja the governor of Sāntalīga under king Jayasimha of Kalyāṇa Chālukya dynasty. He was probably a Brahmaṇa poet. An inscription from Hāverī mentions one Nārāyaṇadēva of Visvāmitra-gōtra. The inscription states that he was praised by other poets thereby indicating that he might have been a poet of some renown.
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