CHAPTER I

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Right from the time of the rise of Nandas in Magadha, Deccan has played an important role in the changing face of the history of peninsular India. It was the region which lay between the far south and Uttarapatha and as such the part that it played is not surprising. It played the role of an intermediary in the cultural transmission of the life and times of the people of the land from beyond the Narmadā to the South. Hence, here one sees an admixture of the Dravidian and the Āryan elements at its best. The impact of the rise of the first empire on the soil of India was of great consequence for the history of India. This had a background of what is usually called the "second urbanisation". The rise of the merchant community and its patronage to the new-born religions like Buddhism and Jainism, coupled with the rise of international trade and a well established network of trade routes throughout the length and breadth of the empire, facilitated the birth of newer and newer cities. One such city which merited the attention of even a great monarch like Aśoka Maurya was Banavāsi.

Banavāsi (14°32' N 75°1' E) to-day is a small town in the Śirsi Taluk of Uttara Kannada District of
Karnāṭaka, and until recently it had the looks of a place no better than any other village of Karnāṭaka. But we aught to remember that most other places which had the benefit of being the capital of one dynasty or the other of Karnāṭaka, have suffered in the course of history a fate similar to that of Banavāsi. Yet Banavāsi has enjoyed the status of a capital for a longer period than any other capital of ancient times in Karnāṭaka. It is strategically located on the banks of the Varadā river, at a point where the river takes a sharp turn so much as to surround almost three-fourths of the periphery of this town. It was thus almost a Jaladurga i.e., a fortress surrounded by water. Even the author of the Prāñasti of Pulikēśī II, namely Ravikūrti, did not fail to recognise the importance of the river in the defence of the town Banavāsi. Because of this strategic location coupled with the fact that it was located almost in the midst of the thick green forests of Malnāḍ, the place was soon selected by the ancient rulers of Karnāṭaka as their capital. From the time of Aśoka down to at least the foundation of Vijayanagara in 1336 A.D., its position as a capital, whether of a main royal family or of the feudatory family, remained unharmed. It was at the heights of its glory under the early Kadambas, who had it as their full-fledged capital.
Earlier Works:

One of the early works in which anything like historical information about Banavasi can be found is the work of Francis Buchanan, namely *A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar*.\(^1\) Published at the beginning of the last century, it contains some information about the availability of antiquities, particularly inscriptions at this place. Most important of all the works published in the latter half of the last century was by Fleet, titled *The Dynasties of Kanarese Districts of Bombay Presidency*.\(^2\) It contained for the first time a connected history of the early Kadambas apart from other dynasties which ruled till 1318 A.D. Works of Bhandarkar,\(^3\) Gribble,\(^4\) Jouveau Dubreuil\(^5\) and others also gave some attention to the role played by this part of the Deccan in moulding the history of the region. However, it is M. Moraes's *The Kadamba Kula*\(^6\) which for the first time attempted to sketch the history of the Dynasty of Kadambas and the culture of the people under the Kadamba rulers in a systematic way. Since then a considerable body of fresh material in the form of epigraphs and art remains has come to light. An excellent review of the political history of the Deccan in post-Sātavāhana period was done by Sircar.\(^7\) Further a couple of works as those of Misra\(^8\) and Gopal\(^9\) have come out in print. It should
be noted that they essentially concentrate on the early political history of Banavasi. In a seminar held at Banavasi itself several papers were presented on various facets of the history and culture of the early Kadambas. They have remained unpublished. Publication of certain useful articles by Raghunatha Bhat on the archaeological and epigraphical aspects of Banavasi also deserve mention in this connection.

A perusal of these works would show that in none of them Banavasi itself is the central or exhaustive theme. They restrict themselves particularly to the early Kadamba period or the later Kadambas or both. A detailed historical and cultural study with Banavasi as the centre of attention has not been attempted so far. This inspite of the fact that a lot of information is available for such a study in the form of epigraphs, literature and art-remains. It is but natural that a detailed study of Banavasi, its history and culture, should make a most interesting chapter of history of Deccan with its many sided hectic faces. With this purpose in view, the present study on Banavasi through the ages has been taken up.

Methodology:

In tracing the vicissitudes of a place like Banavasi, one will have to be basically descriptive, but
this description will have to pass through antecedent stages, which foster the ideas which ultimately crystalize into a coherent description. In pursuing the present work, two basic tools for research have been made use of: (i) Collection of published data and (ii) Collection of field data.

The collection of published data consisted of both modern works on the subject as well as the ancient epigraphical records bearing on the history and culture of Banavāsi. After collecting these data, they were carefully analysed and interpreted in order to cull out worthy information pertaining to the history and culture of Banavāsi. The technique of field work has been basically employed for purposes of the study of art and architecture of Banavāsi proper. Several visits were made to the place to make a detailed study particularly Madhukēśvara temple complex. While much of this field data has been used for reconstructing the artistic and architectural history, it has also been made use of, now and then, for studying religion and society. Thus here we have a blend of published and field data resulting in a descriptive account of Banavāsi and its culture wherein all important stages of research such as collection, analysis, interpretation and synthesis have been employed.
The Name Banavasi:

Ancient records refer to Banavasi by various alternative names: Vanavasaka, Vanavasi, Sañjayantī, Vaijayantī, Jayantipura, Kanakapura, Banavasi. The term Vanavasaka occurs in Mahāvamśa and in a Nāgarjuna-konqā inscription. The Nāga stone inscription of Chuṭukulānanda Sātakarṇi mentions the place as Sañjayantī. Vaijayantī is mentioned in the Sātavāhana inscriptions, as for instance the Nasik Inscription of Gautamīputra Sātakarṇi in which the king is stated to have been camping at Vaijayantī. A label inscription from Karle records donation by Bhūtapāla who is referred to as a merchant from Vējayantī (Skt. Vaijayantī). The Mahābhārata refers to Vanavasika and Sañjayantī as the city conquered by Sahadēva at the time of Aśvamēda sacrifice performed by Pāndava king Dharmarāja. Kadamba records mention Vaijayantī as the capital. Some records from Banavasi belonging to a Sōndā chief mentions Kanakāvati as a synonym for Vanavasi. The term Banavasi occurs frequently in the epigraphs and literature of early medieval period.

Rev. Kittel has suggested that the term Banavasi derives from two routes, Bana meaning "forest" and Basi or Base meaning "spring". According to him Vanavasi is the Sanskritized form of Banavase. However this interpretation has not been accepted by many
scholars. According to Fleet, Banavase is a Kannada form of Sanskrit word Vanavāsa. Gopal feels that Fleet is right in his suggestion. Its beauty and prosperity probably gave it the other alternative name Vaijayanti, "the city of Gods".

**Banavāsi in Purānas:**

It has been already mentioned, that in the Mahābhārata Sahadeva, one of the Pāṇḍava brothers, is stated to have conquered Sañjayantī city, in the course of his conquests. Since Andhra, Pāṇḍya, Chōla and Kērāla countries are also stated to have been conquered along with Sañjayantī, it is possible that the city referred to is Banavāsi itself. The Chuṭu inscription referred to above also mentions Sañjayantī.

The Skānda Purāṇa gives a legend in connection with the Madhukesvara temple at Vanavāsi. In the Vanavāsi Mahātmya of this Purāṇa the following story is given: Madhu and Khaiṭabha were demons, who lived in Vanavāsa. The elder of these Madhu got constructed the Madhukesvara temple of this place and the younger got constructed the Khaiṭabhēśvara temple at Ānavaṭṭi across the river. Both these demon brothers are stated to have been killed by Vishnu in this place i.e., Banavāsi. The local people still believe that the Pāṇcha-Pāṇḍavas spent their forest-life in Banavāsi itself.
The *Harivamśa Purāṇa* gives the following story in its *Vishnuparva*: The king of Anarta had five children. Of them the son named Madhava was appointed as successor to the throne of Anarta. The remaining four brothers were sent away to found new kingdoms. Of these four, the son named Sarasa founded the city of Krauṇḍhapura in the country of Vanavāsi. It is surmised that Krauṇḍhapura was another name of Banavāsi. It is difficult to say how far these legends recorded in Purānic literature can be regarded as authentic.

**Geographical and Geological Background:**

The district of Uttara Kannada in which Banavāsi is located, is drained by four major rivers namely, the Kālīnadī, the Gangāvalī, the Aghanāśiṇī and the Śarāvatī, all of which flow westward to join the Arabian Sea. Of the other rivers flowing in this district the Varadā, the Belekeri, the Kumta, the Ānehoḷe, the Baḍagaṇi, the Venkatāpur and the Saravatī are notable. The river Varadā, unlike the others flows eastwards. It originates in the north-east part of Shimoga district and flowing north and east passes through a corner of Uttara Kannada, near the town of Banavāsi. Later it joins the Tungabhadra at Gaḷaganātha in Hāveri Taluk, Dharwāḍ District. The river Dharmā, which originates at Islur tank, also flows eastward and joins the Varadā in Dharwāḍ district. From a strategic point
of view, for Banavāsi, the river Varadā has been of great utility because it flows round the town almost providing a defence on its three sides; almost going around the remaining side, completes the circle, making the fort of Banavāsi virtually a Jaladurga, i.e., a fort defended by water on all the sides.

The district has rock formations of archaean complex which occur over the whole of the area. It is characterised by the system of ridges and plateaux on the west descending rapidly to a narrow strip of low land covered by alluvium. This area receives abundant rainfall and supports cultivation. This lowland appears to have emerged from the sea owing to sea level changes. Almost parallel to the coast line, there is a range of hills with several peaks descending westwards. It comprises of granites and schists. These ridges separate the Sahyādris consisting of Deccan traps from the western ghats consisting of Dhārwād schists. The interior eastward of the district is almost entirely hilly consisting of Dhārwād and the peninsular gneisses. The Dhārwārs are represented by chloritic schists. The peninsular gneiss consists mostly of fine grained granites, outcropping in the lower levels of central and southern parts of the district. The archean granites and gneisses are capped by laterite in many places of the district. These are tropical rocks, resulting from alternations under tropical conditions of the basement.
rocks. They are quarried and used as bricks for construction in the district.

Various types of forests cover the district. They are evergreen, semi-evergreen, moist, desiduous, scrub and thorny and unwooded.

In the Širsi Taluk, the forests are of semi-evergreen and evergreen types. The evergreen forests are found in patches here and there. They provide timber, firewood, bamboo, and so on.

The location of Banavāsi in this area is significant from the point of view of the thick vegetation of forest types. In fact, the very name of the place seems to have been derived on account of its location in the evergreen forest area. Thus the place would also deserve to be called Vanadurga i.e., a fort defended by thick forests.\footnote{24}

Sources:

Sources furnishing information about the history of Banavāsi are as numerous as those pertaining to Indian history. They may be broadly classified into two classes namely archaeological and literary. Archaeological sources may be further classified into four categories namely excavations, epigraphs, art and architectural remains and coins. Of these epigraphs
are undoubtedly the most important. A good number of epigraphs which help reconstruct the history and culture of the region are found in Banavasi itself or nearby places, particularly in Shimoga district. However, many more inscriptions of importance are also found outside Banavasi. The inscriptions begin to appear in Banavasi from the period of the Sātavāhanas. So far only one inscription of the Sātavāhanas has been found in Banavasi and it belongs to Vāśishṭīputra Śivaśrī Puḷumāvi. One inscription of the Chuṭu dynasty which succeeded the Sātavāhanas in this part of the Karnāṭaka is also found at this place. It should be pointed out that these do not throw direct light on the political events taking place in the region because as in the case of most of the inscriptions of India, their purpose was donatory. So far as the history of the Kadambas is concerned the Tālagunda inscription of Kākusthavarma still retains its importance. This well-known inscription furnishes the events leading to the foundation of the Kadamba kingdom and delineates the succession of kings of this dynasty till Kākusthavarma under whom the Kadambas were at the zenith of their glory.

Another important inscription discovered recently is the one from Guḍṇāpur which has helped to trace the genealogy of the Kadambas backwards by two more generations. The earlier belief that Vīraśarma mentioned as the guru of Mayūraśarma in Tālagunda inscription is
now given up in the light of the evidence of Guḍnāpur inscription which mentions Viṣṇuśarma and Bandhushena respectively, as grand-father and father of Mayūraśarma. For the post-early Kadamba history of Banavasi, we have to look up to Chālukya, Āḷupa, Rāṣṭrakūṭa and Gaṅga records. There was a temporary eclipse of the rule of the Kadamba dynasty till the advent of Chaṭṭayya as a feudatory officer of the Rāṣṭrakūṭas in the last years of the rule of that dynasty, though Banavasi continued to enjoy the position of the head-quarters of an administrative division named after it. For the history of later Kadambas, a number of epigraphic records are available which have to be critically reviewed to cull out proper history. The Banavasi inscription of the later Kadamba king Kīrtideva may be mentioned in this connection.

While these examples should suffice to draw attention to the importance of epigraphs so far as political history is concerned, the epigraphs are of no mean value for reconstructing cultural aspects. For example, epigraphs throw ample light on the various facets of the society such as the different classes of the people, the food, costumes, amusements etc. These have been examined separately elsewhere in this work. More important are these epigraphs for tracing the history of the religions, language and literature in the region.
Another valuable source of information is the remains of art and architecture. Some excavation has been done in Banavāśi proper revealing certain aspects of the early brick architecture of the place. The sculptural and architectural remains of Banavāśi not only give us an insight into the artistic achievements, but they also help in identifying the types of ornaments, iconography and the religious beliefs prevalent in the region. Right from the Sātavāhana period structures begin to occur, culminating in the famous Madhukēśvara temple.

Although very few hoards of coins have come to light from the Banavāśi region, they are of considerable significance. Some coins for instance have revealed names of kings who are otherwise unknown from epigraphs. The names of Śivalānanda and Mudānanda are good instances of the utility of coins for reconstructing the political outlines.

Literary sources fall into two categories namely foreign and indigenous. The Ceylonese Buddhist work Mahāvaṃśa may be cited as a good example of a foreign source for culling out information about the early history of Buddhism in the Banavāśi region. Similarly, Varāhamihira's Brihatsamhitā and Chāmarasa's Prabhulingalīle are also useful works. Another example is Pampa's Vikramarjunā-Vījaya. Similarly Chālukya king
Someśvara's Manasollasa is of great value for providing glimpses of the otherwise unknown facets of the society.

The foreign accounts containing the notices of Banavāsī are not exhaustive. The mention of Banavāsī by classical writer Ptolemy is noteworthy. He mentions Banavāsī as an important town of Dakshināpatha. Similarly the account of Hieun tsang, the Chinese traveller who visited India in the 7th century A.D. gives information about the Buddhist vestiges of the place.

The above survey amply demonstrates that a lot of source material is at our disposal for making a critical study and to reconstruct a connected history of the Banavāsī region.

The Plan of the Work:

The period covered in this work extends from the period of the Nandas to the foundation of Vijayanagara in 1336 A.D. The latter is an accepted terminus ad quem for it connotes the commencement of a new era in the politics of the Deccan and deserves separate study. The work has been arranged in various chapters which deal with specific aspects of the history and culture of Banavāsī. The second chapter concentrates on the political history of the region from earliest times down
to the foundation of Vijayanagar empire. The history of various dynasties that ruled over the region has been dealt with in detail in this chapter.

In the third chapter, an account of the Administration of Banavasi is given against a chronological background.

In the fourth chapter the various facets of the society covering the social classes, food habits, dress, ornaments and certain economic aspects are dealt with.

Religion, language and literature of the region form the theme of the fifth chapter. Herein are provided detailed accounts of various religions, the development of language and an outline of literature in the region during the period under study.

The art and architectural remains have been described and examined in the sixth chapter.

In the last chapter i.e., the seventh, concluding remarks have been given. The work is illustrated with necessary line drawings and photographs. A bibliography is also appended at the end of the work.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


11. Most of his articles in Kannada have been brought out in collective form in his book titled Karnataka Šāsana Kale (Mysore, 1977).

12. Mahāvaṃśa (ed. by Wilhelm Geiger, Colombo, 1950), Ch. XII, p. 82; also Dipavaṃśa, Ch.VIII, 10.


18. SII., Vol. XX, Nos. 253, 254, 256.


24. The information pertaining to Geography and Geology of Uttara Kannada district has been summarised here from the District Gazetteer, Kamat, S.U. (Ed.) *Karnataka State Gazetteer: Uttara Kannada District* (Bangalore, 1985).


28. Ibid., No. 23.


30. Supra, Chapters IV and V.

31. See Chapter VI.

32. See Chapter II.

33. *Mahavamsa*, Ch. XII, pp. 82-83.

34. See Chapter III.


36. Ibid., 252.