

CHAPTER X

RESUME AND CONCLUSIONS

My study is based on the actual spot study of the Sirsi region and the archaeological remains such as temples, monasteries etc. Prior to this there was no single booklet dealing exclusively with the various aspects of art and architecture of the Sirsi region. Otherwise the picture could have been perhaps be considerably more elaborate. Here however, I could make a first time fresh assessment and discuss:

In the foregoing chapters, an attempt has been made to bring out the details of the vicissitudes of the Sirsi region in the history of Karnataka. It is shown in this work that the region has remained an important centre of culture for a longer time than has any other region in the state. The antiquity of human activities in the region goes back to 3rd century B.C. This situation, seemingly, arose from the fact that the place was strategically located in a thickly forested area surrounded by unbounded water resources. Banvāśi grew into an important city and capital in early historical times. Its prospects for continuity as a city of importance and a capital became well established. We have noticed that at least as early as the time of Asōka Maurya the Vanavāsa country with its capital obviously at Vanavāśi had drawn the attention of the political leaders of the times. With the decline of the Mauryas, the Sātavahanas assumed the reins of sovereignty and what happened at Banavāśi under their rule and the matter has been dealt with in the third chapter. However, it is important to note here that
the works dealing with the history of the dynasties ruling over the region have not dwelt at sufficient length itself though ample scope for such a study existed. This becomes the role of geography in shopping the nature of the evolution of the region, the facets of History and culture, with special reference to Art and architecture has been discussed in different chapters of the present work.

As pointed out above, the second chapter attempts to delineate the sources of the history of the Sirsi region. The third chapter attempts to elaborate on the antiquity region. Although little could be said about the period of the Nandās and the Mauryās, the understanding of the times after the fall of the Mauryās becomes clear on account of the existence of sufficient epigraphical material. In fact, the account is more or less fluent with the advent of Gautamiputra Sātakarni though here and there, gaps do exist.

We have also tried to discuss certain problems relating to the rule of certain kings and chronology. For instance, we have tried to show that during Gautamiputra Sātakarni’s reign, the Vanavāsa kingdom was included in the Sātavahana territory. The succession of kings of the Chuṭu-Ānanda dynasty as well as their chronology has also been considered at some length. With the rise of the Chālukyas of Bādami the fortunes of the Kadaṁbas declined and the early Kadaṁba rule came to an end, when Pulakēśi II gave a crushing blow and dislodged the Kadambas from power. The Chālukayas had recognised that the continuation of the Kadaṁbas would be a thorn in their flesh and therefore
entrusted the Āḷupas, their trusted feudatories with the administration at the Banavāsi Mañḍala.

During the closing years of the Rāshtrakūṭa rule (972 A.D), Banavāsi once again saw itself under the second generation Kadambas, though as feudatories commencing with Chaṭṭayyadēva. This dynasty however had its headquarters at Hāṅgal. With the exception of the intermittent transfers during this period, the Kadamba Kings of Hāṅgal were the masters of the region until the rise of the Yādavas of Dēvagiri. The political history of the Sōḍa Nāyakas has also been discussed in detail.

The fourth chapter presents, a discussion of the various facts of the society and religion in the region. The social pattern was almost strictly in accordance with the prescription of the Smritis. The fourfold classification of the society was an established feature. Women of higher classes of the society enjoyed a considerably respectable position and there were poetesses and administrators also. They were also responsible for the prosperity of religious sects like Buddhism and Jainism. The examination of the evidence at our disposal has made it amply clear that various religious sects flourished in this region with considerable royal support. Buddhism found considerable patronage in the region in the earlier phases (3rd century B.C). But after the accession of the Kadambaś, its prominence seems to have slowly diminished until only a few pockets remained here and there. On the other hand, Jainism found considerable royal support under the Kadambaś, particularly from the time of Sāntivarma. It
retained its position through the early Chālukya and the Rāshtrakūta periods (972 A.D) and was a dominant religion during the later Chālukya and the Yādava period. Śaivism, a religion attained great prominence has its antiquity in the region is not only proved by epigraphical evidences, but also by the occurrence of lingas of early times in these parts.

Among the Puranic religions, this was undoubtedly the most dominant. The evidence of the Kadaṁba inscriptions demonstrates that the pāṣupatha Śaivas had already risen to prominence during that period. The followers of this religion were responsible for the execution of several temples in the region during the early Chālukya and post-Chālukya period. One of the later centres of Śaivism in the region was Balligāve where the Kālamukhas were prominent. Vaiśnavism, which is also a religion of antiquity, influenced the region from early times. The references in the Sātavahana records and later ones make this point clear. The Halmidi, inscriptions of the time of Kākusthavarma and the Banavāsi pillar inscription of Mrigēśavarma demonstrate the importance of Vaiṣṇavism in the region.

The topic of Language, literature and script has been dealt with, in chapter VI. In the earlier period, Prakrit was given a place of importance for royal records. From the Kadaṁba period we notice the regular use of Sanskrit as the official language. The manuscripts in the Tigalāri language found are in several places of the region show the existence of the language. The Tigalāri script has been dealt with too. Literary works of the poets of the region have not come
down to us in good numbers. The Sirsi region proved to be a great source of inspiration for the nature loving poets like Pampa, the author of Vikramārjuna-Vijaya. The inscriptions of 10th – 14th centuries in the region amply demonstrate the poetic abilities of the people of the region.

The features of architecture in the region have been discussed in chapter VII. There is little doubt that these sandstone sculptures belonged to an early phase of art history. The significance of the discovery is a clear pointer to the fact that the region’s art and architectural wealth of the early period lies buried underground. The only solution to the problem is large scale excavation of the magnitude of the world heritage sites such as Hampi, Vikramāśīla etc. Only then can it be hoped to be able to appreciate the early art of Banavāsi in the Sirsi region fully. The use of the locally found Deccaan trap and laterite stone is also found in the region for constructing monuments has also been touched upon.

We are, as yet, not aware of any original contribution to the field from the Sirsi region. At Banavāsi, excavations have revealed apsidal or rectangular structures of bricks which compare favourably with the Sātavahana structures encountered elsewhere. Here again only large-scale excavations can enlarge our knowledge into adequacy. The picture of the art activity of the early Kadaṁba period is still obscure, although one might anticipate a large number of remains of that period to turn up. As in the case of the earlier structures and art remains, possibly the remains of the Banavāsi Kadaṁba period may also have been buried underground. The inscription of Mrigēśavarma at Banavāsi which is a master-
piece of calligraphy obviously indicates that the pillar on which it is inscribed
once formed a member of a temple of Vishnu. This pillar itself was found buried
considerably deep in the ground. Another site also rich in the Kadamba remains
is Guḍnāpur which is still awaiting the spade of the archaeologist.

Large-scale use of stone for architectural purposes in the Sirsi region
probably commenced only from the time of the Chālukyas of Vāṭāpi. After the
Chālukyas wrested power from the Kadambas they placed the province under
the Āḷupas. It would seem, as we have tried to demonstrate elsewhere, that the
original temple of Madhukēśvara in stone was erected under the patronage of
the Āḷupas. Certain art motifs, pillar shapes, capitals, etc., as well as the use of
sandstone blocks show clearly that the style is linked to the one found in the
region around Bādami, the capital of the Chālukyas. Whether the sikhara of this
temple represents the original one is debatable but if it is original it is also an
interesting point to note that it is very close to the early temples of Mukhalingam
in Āndhra Pradesh.

The period of the Rāṣhtrakūtās witnessed frequent changes in the
administration of the Banavāsi country. As such one cannot expect any large
scale art-activity in the absence of a continuous patronage. The picture however
changes with the advent of the feudatory Kadaṁba family of Chaṭṭaya. Large
scale renovations and additions to the Madhukēśvara temple were made under
the patronage of this feudatory family. The varieties of pillars, the delicately
carved sculptures, many of which are now found in the Sculpture Gallery at
Banavasi, the beautiful entrance gateways on the east and north of the temple, are all excellent specimens of art of the period of the later Kadamba kings. That this healthy tradition was continued even in the post-Kadamba period under the patronage of the Vijayanagara king or their officers is testified to by the fact that a number of temples of various faiths, particularly Saiva, were erected at Banavasi during that period. Even the Chiefs of Söda contributed to the art heritage of Banavasi by contributing the excellently carved Trailokamanṭapa, the stone cot, the images of the Dikpālas etc. The Venkataramana temple at Manjuguni seems to have been renovated in the Söda Nayaka period.

The significance of the art and architecture of the Sirsi region lies in the fact that the rulers who ruled here promoted a synthetic but new style which differed from their predecessors. They retained the hard medium of stone but as far as the style is concerned, the influence of the regional element becomes noticeable. Geographical factors and topography had its influence on the architectural style. This prompted them to make suitable changes in the selection of the location, material, ground plan, elevation, roof, style of sikhara, nature of the all decorative motifs and other elements of the sculptures. Thus, structurally they followed their master, but stylistically stood apart.

The Islamic design carvings on the Kumbi of the Sōmesvara temple at Somasagara testifies to the impact of the Indo-Saracenic style in the construction of the architectural monuments and the sculptural art therein. Apart from that, we have also found marvelous stucco images at the four corners of the roof of the
Sōmēśvara temple, Sōmasāgara. This is a noteworthy feature of the Sirsi region. This was done by the Sōnda Nāyaka period (16th century A.D).

Based on the facts, and after an analysis of the factors contributing to the evolution and development of an indigenous sub-style of architecture in the region, the art of the region may be rightly termed as having a ‘regional style’

The sculptural art of the region has received detailed attention in Chapter VIII. The recently discovered sculptures referred to above are only fragmentary but they speak volumes about the achievements of Banavāsi in the field of art. The nāga image of the style may be encountered at such sites as Sannati and Nāgarjunakonda but the head of the female figure, almost life sized, is really a master-piece of about the same period with hardly any parallels elsewhere. The miniature sculptures of the Yakshas etc. are also important indicators of the artistic achievements in the Sirsi region.

The art of the Hero-stones, Mahasati-stones, and Nisidhi-stones has been dealt with, in chapter IX and the artistic workmanship of the sculptors has been noticed.

This resume brings to the fore certain important things to be considered in the future course of research. The first thing is that large scale excavations of the site should be taken up as early as possible to save the remains buried underground from human depredations, or natural destruction. It is only then that we can hope to make out a clear picture of the political and cultural aspects of the early Banavāsi times. Secondly, each of the topics dealt with in the various
chapters of this work may be further studied exhaustively so that a clearer picture and more minute details of the facets of the region can be brought to the fore.

On the basis of the archaeological and literary evidence, it may be noted that the culture here was essentially one nurtured by the people in the form of the folk arts and traditions. This would be a new field for future research.

A large collection of the palm leaf manuscripts found in the region represents a rich source for material to be examined for further systematic studies of the region.

The spiritual part of the culture aspect with particular reference to the religious ceremonies and festivals should be more systematically studied as it constitutes a vital aspect of the temple institution also and that might help us in appreciating more fully the temple art and architecture of the region.

The study of art in relation to the contemporary social life both at the classical and folk levels may be pursued by analyzing the art works, ornaments, utensils, dress and other factors so that a socio-cultural and economic picture of life can be gleaned there from. From the foregoing survey of the Art and Architecture of the Sirsi region, it is evident that the contributions made here to the field are not only considerable but also distinct.