CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Southern Karnataka emerges from the mists of prehistory only in the fourth century when the Gangas established a small principality in the neighbourhood of Kolar. This occurred probably as a result of the stimulus from Northern Karnataka which had been part of the Satavahana principality. From at least the second century A.D., Banavasi in the North Kanara district was the capital of a branch of the Satavahanas - the Çutukulâdana Satakarpis. Around the same time as the establishment of the Ganga Kingdom by Kongunivarman of the Jñânaveya Kula, the Kadambas supplanted the Çutukulâdana Satakarpis to establish their own kingdom with its capital at Banavasi. But whereas the Kadambas were overthrown by the Çalukyas of Vatapi towards the close of the sixth century, the Gangas continued to hold sway over most of the upper Kaveri valley until the early eleventh century except for a brief period when the Rastrakutas established a viceroyalty in this region after overthrowing Sivamara II in the early ninth century.

It is hardly surprising, then, that the area over which the Gangas held sway came to have a distinct identity of its own. As early as the first quarter of the eighth century, it was known as the Ninety-six Thousand country *1 and was designated Gangavâdi or Ganga Manâdala by the ninth century *2. That the regional identity was intimately linked to the longstanding Ganga overlordship is indicated by the fact that even when their dynastic rivals, the Rastrakutas *3 and Cölâs *4 conquered this region it was still known as Ganga Manâdala. The Cölâs in fact tried to break this association by renaming the region as Muçigoçasölâmanâdalam.

Gangavadi like Banavasi 12,000 appears to have been distinct from Karnata desa. Pampa distinguishes between Karnata and Vanavasi (Banavasi) visayas in his Adi Puranam. *5. Karnata desa appears to have signified the Northern parts of modern Karnata particularly the units of Belyola - 300 and Purigere - 300. The Kannada spoken in these units is described as pure (tinulu) in both Pampa's Vikramarjunavijayam *6 and Ranna's Sahasabhimavijayam *7. Both authors preferred it in their works to that spoken in Banavasi or Gangavadi. This was despite the fact that Pampa appears greatly attached to the Banavasi - 12,000 region*8 while Ranna received his education and began his career as poet and soldier in Gangavadi *9. Nevertheless, the heartland of Kannada appears to have been the Bijapur - Dharwad area, and not the southern parts of modern Karnataka.

An attempt has been made in the present study to examine the emergence of the state in this region of Gangavadi. For purposes of comparison the Banavasi region which had a longer history of state formation and which was more exposed to Northern stimuli has also been taken up for study.

The second Chapter on the Settlement Geography examines the physical features of the region and then goes on to examine the nature of the larger politico-geographic units - the visayas or nadas. Were these units circumscribed by natural features? Were they basically ethnic peasant units or administrative units? The significance of numerical suffixes and the existence of nadya level corporate groups and

*5 Pampa's Adipuranam VIII, 65 vacana
*6 Pampa's Vikramarjunavijayam XIV. 58
*7 Ranna's Sahasabhimavijayam 1.42.
*8 Pampa's Vikramarjunavijayam, IV. 29-30.
chieftaincies have also been examined. Thereafter the village has been taken up as a discrete unit in section C. The nature of village boundaries, field and street layout in the village, types of soils and irrigation sources have been dealt with in detail.

The crops grown in this period have also been studied. The nature of hamlets (pallis) has been examined to determine whether they were basically tribal settlements affiliated to larger villages inhabited by upper castes or were offshoots of larger settlements as irrigation works led to the expansion in the area of settlements. Our sources indicate that cattle and sheep rearing was an important source of livelihood in this period. Evidence for the existence of pastoralism and mixed farming is taken up in section D. Finally the nature of urbanism and emergence of urban centres is examined in section E.

In the third chapter titled Political Scenario, section A studies the various theories of the origin of the Gangas and examines the pre- and protohistoric record of Southern Karnataka to elucidate the problem. Sections B and C examine the political developments of the period under study. Two phases have been distinguished for this purpose. Phase I, includes the period between c. AD 400 and AD 725 when the Gangas established their overlordship over this region and the second phase takes up the period from AD 725 to AD 1030 when the Cōlas were fairly entrenched in this region. The predominance of Sanskrit copper plate records reflecting a brahmanical socio-political order in the first phase as opposed to the predominance of lithic vernacular records reflecting a regional variant of the earlier order is the justification for this periodization. After examining the political history chapter IV studies the composition of the subordinate class of feudatories. As we shall see in the second phase the feudatories came to include groups of varied origins. Some belonged to recognized lineages while others merely used the title of arasa without mentioning their origin. Village headmen, the gavundas and officials like Pergades too came to be classified as feudatories (sāmantas) in the second phase. This is in contrast to the first phase when brāhmanas and a few sāmantas with the title of arasa were the only subordinates to whom we have reference in inscriptions. Chapter V first examines the
current debates on the nature of the early medieval state in India and then studies the evidence from our region in section B. The existence or otherwise of a state bureaucracy, a tax collection machinery and a regular army has been studied. Finally, the nature of Cola hegemony over Southern Karnataka has been taken up.

The sixth chapter on Religious Beliefs and Practices takes up the developments in Jainism, Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism separately. In section B the impact of Vedic brāhmaṇism, which enjoyed maximum state patronage in the first phase, is studied. The various forms of response of ṣrōṭiṇya brāhmaṇas to declining state patronage to them are also examined. Section A takes up developments in Jainism. The patterns of patronage, the evolving Jaina pantheon, the structure of the Jaina temple and their rituals and the changes in the Jaina monastic order are studied in detail. Section C examines the developments in Śaivism. Section D takes up the causes of the low popularity of Vaiṣṇavism in early medieval Southern Karnataka and the various forms in which the deity was worshipped. Section E examines the cults of the mother goddesses which enjoyed tremendous popularity in this period. Section F takes up the cults of the deified dead, the earliest forms of which can be traced back to the Sangam period. The worship of memorial stones and the construction of samāḍhi shrines for dead heroes are studied. In Section G the role of the devadasis in the temple ritual is examined.

The sources for this study are primarily inscriptive. Some use has also been made of archaeological reports on excavations and temples. This study also draws on the tenth century Kannada works, the Vaḍḍārādhane, Pampa's Vikramārjunavijayam and Ādi Purāṇam, Ponna's Sānti Purāṇa, Ranna's Sahasābhīmavijayam and Ajita Purāṇam and Cāvundarāya's Trisasthilaksana Mahāpurāṇam. These works have been used to corroborate inscriptions and to explicate the ethos of the period.