CHAPTER : I

GEOGRAPHY

A brief description of the geographical aspect of the areas of Karnataka and Gujarat of the present day as compared with the same area as it was during the period 7th to 14th century A.D. is presented, since it can help to appreciate reference to names of cities, regions, etc., in the chapters that follow. It may be noted that this work relates to the same area in Western India, which is occupied by the present day Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka States; but it did not have the same regional names or the boundaries as they exist to-day. The region referred to in this study, also includes, from time to time, areas now remaining as parts of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh, depending upon the boundaries of the ruling dynasty of the period or through social and cultural contacts with them.

The region Karnataka as referred to in this study, refers to the peninsular India from Vindhya hills to the North Pennar River in the South. Arabian Sea, marks its Western limit, while the Eastern boundary is an imaginary line which will run through the present day Hoshangabad, Nagpur, Chanda and Cuddapah. Beyond the North Pennar lay
the Nolamba and Ganga Principalities, which were often under the rule of Karnataka Kings. Eventhough the Northern boundary of this region can be considered as Vindhyas in general, able rulers like Pulakesin II of Badami, Rastrakuta Govinda III, and Vikramaditya VI of Kalyani acquired hegemony over areas of North of Vindhyas, frequently upto Mahi river and occasionally even beyond. It would be even better, to consider this area as lying between Narbada and North Pennar, without the lands of Pala and Yengi in the Deccan, which would amount to the area occupied by the present Karnataka and Maharashtra States.

The term Gujarat in this study refers to the present Gujarat State, which came into existence, as a result of the reorganisation of the Bombay State, with effect from 1st May, 1960. This is situated in the North East of the West Coast of India between 20.1° and 24.7° North latitudes and 68.4° and 74.4° East longitudes. To the North is the Rann of Cutch and the Marwar desert and to the North East, Mount Abu. East is guarded by the Aravalli ranges, followed by Narbada and Tapti, the rainwashed forests of the Vindhyas and the offshoots of Satpuras. The South is bordered by the Deccan plateau.

This area during the period under study was not known as Gujarat. The North-Eastern portion was called Aparanta, the peninsular North-Western part was Saurashtra and the
Southern Gujarat was generally known as Latapradesh.

A brief account of the origin of the names Karnataka, Gujarat and various names by which various areas in this region were referred to, in different periods, will not be out of place in this study.

Karnataka:

The name Karnataka probably was derived from the Dravidian word "Kar" meaning black and "Nādu" which means country. Thus the word Karnataka arises out of the term black country, a term designating its black cotton soil. The main river which waters this land is Krishna, which again is a term for black colour. This area is also known as Krishanbhumikshetra.

Some scholars consider, that the term Karnataka stands for the Kanna or Karna Nādu, which is the land of Satakarnis. Another opinion is that the original word is "Kannada". "Kan" in Kannada means "to reflect" and "al" means "that which is". The word "Kannal" or "Kannala" in course of time became Kannada meaning the power to reflect ones thoughts in a language called Kannada. The place where that language is spoken goes by that name. This appears to be a far fetched idea.

Some confusion can arise in relation to the name Karnataka. Some writers include many other Dravidian speaking areas also in Karnataka. This can be due to three types of
errors. There had been temporary invasions of Tamilian countries by Karnataka rulers and these might have resulted in those areas being included in Karnataka. The later Vijayanagar kings called themselves Karnataka rulers and they had sway over wide areas of Tamil Nadu and this might have influenced some of the writers. A confusion also might have arisen by the similarity of the names Carnatic and Karnataka. Aurangzeb designated Zulfikar Ali Khan, as the Sultan of Carnatic, for an area around the present district of Arcot in Tamil Nadu. This term, Carnatic should not be misunderstood for the Karnataka region, which is the Kannada speaking area referred to in this study.

The Karnataka region is mentioned in Mahabharata, Puranas and Brihat Samhita, but the location was not defined. Many of the reference are legendary in nature and associated with the name of Parasurama, Rishyasringa and Agastya. Almost every place in Karnataka boasts of its contacts with epic heroes and Vedic Rishies. These traditions were orally handed down from generation to generation. However, the first epigraphical reference to mention "Karnata" was in Birur grant of Vishnuvardhana. This grant, gives the extent of the Kadamba Empire of the 6th century A.D.. The phrase "Vaijayanti Tilaka Samagra Karnataka Buvarga", suggests that Karnataka included a group
of territories and that Vaijayanti was its ornament. In
the last quarter of the 6th century A.D., the Kadambas
suffered an eclipse with the rise of the Western Chalu-
kyas. The Western Chalukyas took the title of Karnataka
kings and the army of Kirtivarman II was known as Kar-natakabala in the 8th century A.D.².

Thus the term Karnataka refers to the region ruled by
Kadambas, Western Chalukyas, Rashtrakutas and Chalukyas of Kalyani. In still later period (13th century A.D.), this
region was split between Hoysalas and Yadavas. All these
dynasties ruled this area between the period 7th century
A.D. to beginning of 14th century A.D.. Kavirajamarga, a
work attributed to Nṛpatunga (Amoghavarsha I - 814 to 877
A.D.) refers to Karnataka as the land between Godavari
and Kaveri⁷. A later work, Saktisangama-Tantra defines
Karnataka as the land between Ramanatha and Sriranga⁸.
(The name Sriranga must be referring to Srirangapatnam).

This area has been referred to by some writers as
Maharashtra⁹. The term Maharashtra was unknown to the epics.
The Puranas distinguish Maharashtra from Nasikya, Mulaka,
Punaka and Asmaka. Rajasekhara distinguishes Maharashtra
from Asmaka, Vidharbha, Surparaka, Nasikya and Kaunkana¹⁰.
The Ceylonese chronicles of the fourth and fifth centuries
A.D., were the earliest to mention about Maharashtra. They
distinguished Maharashtra from Mahisha Mandala and Aparantaka. Aihole prasasti is the first epigraphical record, where the three Maharashtrakas were mentioned along with Lata, Vanavasi and Konkana separately. All these indicate that the term Maharashtra referred to in these early periods must be for a very small geographical unit, which formed part of the empires of various Karnataka rulers right up to the early 14th century A.D.

The name Kuntala referred to in Mahabharata, Puranas and Brihat-Samhita later became synonymous with Karnataka. In an inscription, Pulakesin II was described as having took the fortune of Kuntala, giving the country of Vengi to his younger brother Kubja Vishnusvardhana. In another inscription having a double meaning, the Krishna basin was referred to as Kuntala. Bilhana in his Vikramankadevacharita uses the titles Kuntalendu and Karnatendu as synonymous in describing Vikramaditya. Thus Kuntala and Karnataka appear to refer to the same region.

This area is also later on known by the names Rattapadi, or Iratta pati which means the land of Rashtrakutas and also by the name Sapthardha laksha (seven and a half lakh country) the meaning of which is not clear.

Parasurama legends, in this area are still in vogue.
Karahata, Karnata and Barbara are supposed to have been reclaimed from the seas by Parasurama. The term Sapta Konkana is given to these areas in many epigraphical records from Karnataka.

**Gujarat:**

There is always the controversy, whether the name Gurjara was applicable to the people or the land, that is beyond the scope of this work. The term Gurjara was also applicable to different places at different periods. The name Gujarat was unknown to the epics and the earlier Puranas. Gujarat was first mentioned by Bana in Harsha Charitra. The next reference was only in the Aihole Prasasti (634 A.D.), but the Gurjaras referred to in that were perhaps those from Nandipuri. The Rashtrakuta inscriptions referring to Gurjara, seem to indicate the Gurjara Pratiharas. According to Hieun Tsang, Kuche-la or Gurjara was about 1800 li, or 300 miles North of Balabh and 2800 li or 467 miles to the North-West of Ujjain.

The first Arab writer to mention Jurz (Gujarat) was Suleiman, the merchant of Basra (851 A.D.). His is the country between the Balharas (Rashtrakutas) in the South and Topita in the North. Jurz was rich in silver and gold mines and horses and camels. According to
Cunningham, Tofik or Takin were old names of Punjab and silver mines existed only in Rajasthan and it was famous for its horses. From Suleiman's account, Jurz seems to be Rajasthan rather than the present Gujarat. South of Jurz was the country of Balharas and hence part of the present day Gujarat must have been under Rashtrakutas.

Jinadatta Suri, in his "Ganadharasardha Sataka" mentions Gujarat, with its capital at Anahillavada, where Durlabharya was the king. It is peculiar to note that Rajasekhara in his Kavyamimamsa, did not mention Gurjara, but mentioned Saurashtra, Anarta, Arbuda, Kachcha, Avanti, Marubhum, Sindhu, Dasapura and Bhrugukachcha in Western India.

According to Mahabharata, from Konkan to Prabhasa was Aparanta, Aparanta seems to be a general name for Western India according to Markandeya Purana. But later on this area was divided as Lata, Anarta and Saurashtra. Lata was neither mentioned in Puranas nor in the epics. Lata seems to connote different areas at different times. The earliest reference was by Ptolomy. According to him Larika, followed Syrastrane (Saurashtra) and lay in the mouth of the river Mahis (Mahi) and the cities of Barygaza (Broach) Ozene (Ujjain) were in its political division. Periplus refers to this as Ariake, bounded by the gulf of Barygaza. Paethana (Partishtana) was 20 days journey from Barygaza, which shows that there might have been a road route. In
the time of imperial Guptas, Lata Vishaya became an administrative unit. A 5th century inscription speaks of Lata, with reference to a temple having been constructed by the silk weavers from that place.

The 8th century writer Uddyotana Suri places Dwarika in Lata. According to him, Lata constituted Saurashtra also. According to Dasavatara cave inscription, Lata was between Mahi and Narbada, which Dantidurga conquered. In Manasollasa, Somesvara III, refers to Lata bhasha, in Gitavinoda. In the Kaumariaka khandha of Skandapurana, Lada (Lata) comprised of twentyone thousand villages. Sakti-sangama Tantra, places Lata to the West of Avanti and North West of Vidarbha. This was the land between Mahi and Tapti and included Broach and Navasarika.

The name Anarta, derived from the name of Anarta, the son of Yayati, is referred to in the two epics, might be northern Gujarat. It is unknown to Puranas, may be due to the fact that it did not exist separately from Malava or Saurashtra during that time.

Saurashtra:

Saras of Pliny (77 B.C.) and Strabo (50–20 B.C.) Syrastrane of the author of Periplus (80 A.D.) and Ptolomy (150 A.D.) are all corrupt forms for the name Saurashtra. In Kishkinda Khandha, Sugriva places it in West. It was referred to in Markandeya, Kurma and Vishnu
According to Hieun-Tsang, Su-la-cha or Saurashtra was a dependent of Balabhi and was 4000 li, or 667 miles in circuit, and touched the river Me-hi on the West. If this identification is accepted, the entire peninsula, down to Cambay was Saurashtra. According to KaumariKh Khanda, it constituted fifty-five thousand gramas. The land from Konkana to Hingulaja covering hundred Yojanas was named Saurashtra as well as Gurjara according to Saktisangama Tantra. It can however be noted that contemporary writers, Hemachandra and Somesvara, mentioned Lata and Saurashtra, as separate from Gurjara mandala.

Physical Features and Climate:

A. Karnataka:

There are three broad divisions (1) the long coastal line (2) the plains watered by the rivers and (3) the mountains and plateau.

(1) The coastal line stretches from the southern end of North Canara to Damanganga river and merges with coastal Gujarat which looks like a continuation of the Saurashtra coast. This is an estuarine region, with smaller rivers viz., Vaitarani, Ulhas, Amba, Savitri, Kali, Tadri, Sharavati and Netravati.
The plains: The basins of Godavari, with its tributaries, Pen Ganga, Indravati, Kadam, Pranhita, Sabari, Sileru, Sindphana, Manjra, Kinara and Wai-ganga, and Krishana with its numerous tributaries Panchganga, Tungabhadra and Bhima have a wide stretch of land. This basin is covered with the black matured soil, from which probably the name Karnataka got derived. Description of physical features of Karnataka will be incomplete without due reference to the rivers mainly Godavari and Krishna. The 1450 km. long Godavari ranks high among the sacred streams in parallel to Ganga. Its sanctity is testified in the Gotami mahatmya of Brahmapurana and narrated in about 100 chapters (70th to 175th chapters). It is described as 200 yojanas long with 3½ crores tirthas. Rising in the Western ghats, behind Triambak, it crosses the entire Deccan plain and cutting across a valley through Eastern ghats reaches the Bay of Bengal in seven branches, forming a high delta at the mouth. Probably due to this, it is also called the Sapta Godavari. Krishna literally meaning "of black colour" probably derives its name due to the black colour developed by black sand and
silt that it carries. It rises in Sahyadri near Mahabaleshwar and its length is 1290 km.

The area of catchment, including those of its two famous tributaries Bhima and Tunga stretches about 95,000 sq.miles. Krishna flows through Karnataka, where it is joined by Koyana and Varna. In Bijapur, Ghataprabha and Malaprabha join Krishna. The twin streams the Tunga and the Badra passing through the Mysore States unites with Krishna at Alampur and then runs past Srisailam and enters the sea after passing through Vijayawada. The river basins of Krishna and Godavari are very broad and fertile and are a great source of wealth, being useful for both navigation as well as irrigation.

(3) The mountains and plateau: The Sahyadri ghats have a longitudinal range of 960 kms. extending from Tapti till they merge with Nilgiris at the Southern extremity. The northern part of the range styled as Sahyadri by ancient writers was also called Satmala (Sapta Kulaparvta). It records a good height with the peaks Saptasringh, Tryambak and Mahabaleshwar having an average height of 4500 ft. Starting from North, the Sahyadri ranges in the Maharashtra area are (i) Satmala Hills (ii) Inhyadri and (iii) Ajanta chain followed by (iv) Balaghat and (v) Mahadev ranges. In the middle, it loses its height
B. Gujarat :-

Gujarat also has three distinct physical divisions viz., (1) Peninsular region of Saurashtra and Kutch (2) Plain from Rann of Kutch to Daman Ganga and (3) The North Eastern hilly tract upto Sahyadri.

Kutch and Saurashtra :-

Kutch is a low and arid region, with low rain fall. Though on the whole barren, rocky and arenaceous, these features are varied by ranges of hills and isolated peaks, rugged valleys and flat plains here and there. Saurashtra is a plateau in the centre with a rugged coast-line on the three sides watered by the small rivers. Moderate rainfall and forests are a boon to the place, in addition to the long sea coast.

The plains of Gujarat :-

This is watered by large rivers, like Banas, Saraswati, Mahi, Narmada, Tapti and the small rivers like Vishvamitri, Dhadhar, Kim, Purna, Ambica, Auranga and Damanganga including some streamlets which help the fertility of the soil and carry the monsoon waters to the Gulf of Cambay. The alluvial deposits of these rivers favour the agrarian development except the sandy coast. Hence the agricultural development was mainly in the central belt of Gujarat.
Generally speaking the plains of Gujarat form like an arc backed by the chains of hills in central India and Maharashtra.

**Hilly region:**

The hilly region from Abu to Aravalli ranges in the North, Pavagadh in the East, Rajpipla hills, better known as Satpura hills, Parnera mountains in Bulsar, merges in the end with the Sahyadri mountains. The highland arc is in contrast to the plains climatically and geologically. The major part of the rocks are crystalline, mainly granite, which withstood erosion. Towards the South, closer to Deccan, the intense erosion made this region a land of alternating valleys and water partings.

**Rivers:**

Narbada which is 1290 kms. long is also called Reva. It is the river that bifurcates Deccan from the North, and has a wide basin. It rises from the Maikad section of Vindhyan ranges and flows through Malava and then Gujarat and enters into the Gulf of Cambay by an estuary near the city of Broach. As the river takes its course between Vindhyas and Satpura ranges, it is fed by a large number of small tributaries. Its navigability is confined within the limits of Gujarat.
Tapi, which enjoys less reputation for sanctity than Narbada, flows into Arabian sea. Originating from Maltai plateau, it flows through Maharashtra and Gujarat and meets the sea just a little above Surat covering 698 kms.

In the monsoon, these two rivers become formidable torrents, but in summer they dwindle away and almost cease to flow. Navigability is limited to the last 20 kms. The 500 kms. long Mahi is not navigable, because of its ravines. In the river Purna, Auranga, Par, Kalata and Damanganga only country crafts can go. Dhadhar is navigable for a very short distance. Kim is not navigable.

The main cities were either in coastal belt or closer to the rivers. The important in-land cities of this period were Anahilawad Patan (Patan) near Saraswati, Prahaldanpur (Palanpur) on Banas, Karnavati (Ahmedabad) on Sabarmati and Baroda on Vishvamitri. The coastal cities of Broach, Cambay, Surat on the side of Southern Gujarat and Dwarika Porbandar and Verawal on Saurashtra were famous from early days. Navsari and Sarbhon had easy access to the rivers.

Vegetation :-

Rice and wheat needs a rich soil, a fairly large amount of warmth and more water. A very dense population
is also necessary, since these two require a considerable amount of human labour. Great many hands are required for digging, sowing, harvesting and later on for husking the grain. All these requirements were available in Western India. Several varieties of rice were mentioned by Somesvara and Hemachandra. The Arab traveller Al Idrisi (12th century), found Cambay to be rich in rice, wheat and Indian Cenna. Ishtaqri (950 A.D.) found the cultivation of paddy in Sandan in Konkan.

Sugar cane which needs a high temperature, rich soil and high humidity with abundant labour, suited certain places in Western India. Sandan and Saymur were rich in coconuts according to Ishaquri. The sandy coastal belt was utilised for coconuts and palms. Friar Jordanus even found the extraction of toddy. Somesvara in his Manasollasa also refers to the extraction of toddy from palmyrah trees.

Arab travellers noted that teak and bamboo were abundant in this region. The forest environment of the Sahyadris, Girnars and around Saputara, might have even promoted industries relating to wood. Gujarat was famous for its wood work. Even to-day the teak of Mysore has its reputation.
Another most important produce is cotton throughout the ages, in this part of India. It plays a vital role in the economic life of people.

The finished products of cotton were an article of export known to the Greeks and Romans, even in the pre-Christian era. The author of Periplus noted that textile industry flourished in Gujarat. Coarse cotton fabrics noted by him in Gujarat developed into wonderful buckram from Cambay and Broach in the time of Marco Polo. Baraji and Cambayati, apparently named after the cities, were noted down by the Egyptian traveller Abu Abhas Nawayri.

Cotton also needs warmth and summer rain. It cannot stand frost or cold winters. The black soil formed by the surface distintegration of volcanic rocks — called regur or regar — is suitable for cotton. It is formed as a result of decomposition of trap rocks of Satpura and Vindhyan ranges, although the gneisses have also contributed to some extent in Gujarat. In Karnataka they are formed from the Deccan trap hence called 'trap soil'.

Large population is necessary for cotton growing, which needs very meticulous and continuous care for the preparation of the soil, sowing, watering, harvesting
and later on for making finished products. All these things are available in plenty in Western India.

All the above mentioned crops are found abundant in the plains of Karnatak and Gujarat where the black cotton soil or the trap soil prevails in most of the tract. The soil has argillaceous character, retentivity of moisture and natural tendency to regain fertility after a season of hot sun.

Abundance of Indigo in Gujarat was noted by Marco Polo. Cattle wealth of Gujarat gave an impetus to the tanning industry of Gujarat. The fact, that ships laden with tanned leather, left the coasts of Gujarat was mentioned by Marco Polo. Cambay, Sandan and Subara were famous for sandals, according to Al Masudi. Several types of shoes, shoe maker and leather bags for carrying water, and leather bottles for keeping oil were all mentioned by Hemachandra. Somesvara refers to the leather shoes of variegated colours inlaid with ivory and gold, worn by the kings.

It may be seen from this brief account, that the Western India, considered in this study, constituted a contiguous area geographically, wherein, different parts of it, came into contact with each other through ages,
slowly shaping up into major regions like Karnataka, Saurashtra and Gujarat, in its earlier phases, which against went through further evolution to Karnataka, Maharashtra and Gujarat as it exists to-day. The period from 7th Century A.D. to early 14th Century A.D., constitutes a very important period, in the historical geography of this region, when this region, through its political and social contacts started shaping into these three socio-political entities. These aspects will be presented in greater detail in the subsequent chapters.
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