

MAPPING REGIONAL HISTORIES

Geography is the matrix of history, its nourishing mother and disciplining home. Geography plays a vital role in shaping countries and their people. Telangana was part of Asmaka, it was one of the sixteen janapadhas. It occupies central position in India. It was Major James Rennel who made the first atlas of India in 1783 and named the eastern side of the water body as the Bay of Bengal and the western side of water body as the Arabian Sea. Incidentally, India is the only country which can boast that an ocean was named after of it, for which we are all beholden to Major Rennel.

History of India as it was written by and taught in the academia tilted towards the Gangetic planes. The rise and fall of kingdoms, the concomitant changes in polity and society cataclysm or otherwise occupies overwhelming space in the pages of history. In contrast, the southern riverine civilization, the renaissance and the reformation and efflorescence resistance of the rugged Deccan against depredation, injustice and oppression by the rulers were relegated in to limbo of history unwept and unsung. South Indian history became foot notes of Indian history.

One more drawback in the presentation of material in the Indian history till some time ago is the total neglect of the economic, social and cultural aspects of civilizations or regions. Human life can never be compartmentalized. All these spheres of life interact on each other. To emphasize political happenings alone as it was done on the past is to end up with a stilted view of history. At one place, Macaulay has remarked that the death of an emperor may not be so important as the death of a rat because the latter might have led to an important discovery in chemistry. Therefore, it is proper to give due importance to facts relating to the economic, social and cultural fields of a civilization.

It was in the 06th Century B.C the Haryanka dynasty was established the first ever kingdom in the Magadha region. It was followed by the Shishunaga, the Nandas and the Mauryas. They were confined to Aryavartha. Chandragupta Maurya came to the south as a recluse after the abdication of the throne. After him his son Bindusara came to the power. However, there was not much to write home about him. Ashoka Maurya was appointed as the governor of Suvarnabhumi in the present Karnataka. However, after his accession to the throne he gave autonomy to the Deccan. Rock Edict XIII mentions about Andhra and its autonomy. After the decline and fall of the Mauryas the Sathavahanas came to power. They ruled about 400 years. It was during this time the Deccan became a draw bridge between the north and the south and a vestibule to the Aryan culture in the south. It should be noted that complete Aryanization of south did not take place. Of course, there was a beginning of it. *Samudrayana* was proscribed by the Vedic lore. It was not strictly implemented in the Deccan. That's why it was the Deccan mariners took merchandize to Rome and other countries in ships and brought bullion to India. The Periplus of the Erytherean Sea a book is written by an unknown author, showers encomiums on Indian trade. This credit should entirely go to the Deccan. Because of the mercantilism, India earned the sobriquet of Golden Sparrow.

The ossification of the Aryan system of religion dominated by sacrifices entailed killing of animals. The practice of cattle sacrifice went against the plinth of the day's economic activity. That is, agriculture. In a way Aryan religion did not suit the dynamics of social and economic transformation. That's why people looked towards Buddhism. In a bid to stem this tide symbolism was introduced in the religion.

It was the Deccan sailors who brought coconut into India. With the coconut symbolism came into vogue. A tonsured human head with a tuft and a coconut without coir look alike. Breaking a coconut means, sacrificing one human head. After that, the coconut water mixed vermillion and turmeric which looks like 'blood', is being offered to propitiate vedic gods. With the breaking of coconut during yagnas the practice of sacrificing animals came to an end. Thereby this symbolism became very popular. This rejuvenated vedism. For historian, going to the archives and seeing the primary sources is the *sine quo non* of historical research.

Andhra Mata

It is incredible but true. It was Andhra sailors who brought ginger and Zanzibar (*Shunti*) to India from Malaya (present Indonesia). We cannot imagine an Andhra meal without **Andhra Mata** – Roselle (*Gongura*). It was brought from Tensar Island near Cambodia. With these ingredients, the signature haute-cuisine, Andhra pickles are being made. The credit of *tour de force* should go to unknown Telugu mariners. Similarly, they also colonised Pegu and Bruma and called Suvarnabhoomi. In the history of Myanmar (Burma), there is a mention of Tailong rulers. They were none other than Telugu rulers. It was a cultural conquest of India. Political conquests are ephemeral whereas cultural conquests are eternal. This phase of Indian history is known as greater India. However, it hardly occupies a few pages in Indian history.

Presently, Indian history means only the history of Aryavartha. All along we have been reading political history and writers glorified these events while ignoring economic and cultural aspects. When the north was under the turmoil because of foreign invasions, it was the south which nurtured the Indian culture. Because of this, it is a continuous civilization. Even no less person than Jawaharlal Nehru in his magnum opus *Discovery of India* showers encomiums on the south India. It is time to break with the shibboleths.

It was the Chola maritime power virtually converted the Bay of Bengal into the Chola Lake. The Chola rulers Raja Raja and his illustrious son Rajendra Chola waged mercantile wars in the south-east Asia. The Pallava temple architecture gave not only a fillip to Indian art but also enlivened Indian culture. Can we afford to forget them? However, there names are mentioned only as passing references. It was during 200 B.C to 200 A.D the Deccan ships were sailing in the Indian Ocean. It is not an exaggeration to call the present Arabian sea albeit Telangana sea.

Telugu Vajram

The kingdom of Kakatiyas was prosperous because nature was kind to them. Diamonds could be found in the river-bed of the Krishna. The world-famous diamond Kohinoor was found at Kolleru in the present Guntur District. it was in the possession of the Kakatiyas. Islamic armies plundered and pillaged the Deccan in the 13th & 14th centuries. It was during one of those raids this world-famous diamond was robbed. That's how it went to the north. The Persian buccaneer Nadir Shah pillaged Delhi in 1779 and took the diamond to Persia. When he saw it for the first time, he exclaimed "Koh-i-noor" (Mountain of light). That's how the name of *Koh-i-noor* is appended to the Telugu diamond. In fact, it should have got the eponym of Telugu Vajram, for it was found in Andhra Pradesh. This diamond belongs to both Telangana and Andhra people. The diamond was neither sold nor was there a buyer. Presently, it is in the British crown (London). Both the Chief Ministers of Telugu States not only should pressurize the Prime Minister of India to get reasonable amount for the diamond from the UK but also request the illuminati and historians lest it should be reading tendentious history both in India and Britain to call this diamond as Telugu Vajram.

The Bay of Andhra

Motupally became an important port from where Andhra ships sailed to Asian ports and China. It is an axiomatic truth that the Kondaveedu virtually converted the Bay of Bengal into the Andhra Lake. There was plethora of schooners in the Bay carrying Kondaveedu insignias on their sails. That's why, Andhra Mahasabha while spearheading the Andhra State movement in the early 20th century demanded that the name of the Bay of Bengal should be changed into the Bay of Andhra. It was in 1783, Major James Rennel, an English Surveyor, while making *Memoir of a map of Hindustan* (Indian Altas) at the behest of the East India company, he christened the eastern part of the Indian Ocean as the Bay of Bengal, then Calcutta was the capital of British India. Certainly, there is some justification in this demand of the Andhras.

After the Sathavahans, the Guptas came to power. According to Allahabad pillar inscription, which was composed by Harisena who was the commander-in-chief of Samudra Gupta. He defeated and annexed north Indian rulers, whereas in the south he defeated them and liberated them. Celebrated historian like Satyanadha Iyer writes Samudra Gupta was not a boy catching butterflies and liberating them, probably he was defeated by the south Indian federation. As Harisena was a protégé of Samudra Gupta he did not make a mention of the defeat. That means Deccan was not part of Gupta Empire. After the Guptas there came the Pushyabuti dynasty to power. Harshavardhana made an abortive attempt to come to the south. However, he was checkmated at the banks of the river Narmada by Pulakeshi II. It was Pulakeshi who thwarted the first foray of the Islamic invasion by sea off the Revathi Dweepa (Goa). That means it was the Deccan – south Indian ruler who stopped the advance of Islamic arms into India. History books are reticent about it. Harsha died in year 657. From the defeat of Harsha at the banks of Narmada and coming of Allaudin Khilji in 1309, the Deccan was free from north Indian inroads.

Andhra Farmer

Economics in action is history, thus said Karl Marx. He even prophesied that India would witness revolution for want food and squalor. However, he was proved wrong by the Andhra farmers. It was largely to the credit of Andhra peasants, for their ingenuity to develop transplantation of paddy crop. Earlier, paddy seeds were broadcasted in the ploughed fields, which caused poor yields. Paddy always thrives after transplantation and yield increases many folds. That's how Andhra farmers swelled granaries. Which Marxist historian writes this economic aspect?

It was to the credit of Andhra farmers, commercialization of agriculture should go. They were the first ever to cultivate Chilli (Mirchi) which was brought to India by the Portuguese and tobacco by the East India Company to India. But there is no recognition of their contribution in Indian history. It was the Andhra ingenuity that enabled to the start no-tax campaign at Chirala-Perala in Guntur District. It was almost successful. However, it was withdrawn at the behest of M.K.Gandhi. He then advised Vallabhai Patel to start no tax campaign at Bardoli, Gujarat. Similarly, the Congress working committee at Vijayawada in 1923 resolved to raise Rs.One Crore for Tilak Fund in India. However, this entire amount was contributed by the Circar districts only. Especially Andhra women gave their jewellery to the Tilak fund. Which subaltern historian writes about it?

History has shown that whoever could rule the Deccan was fit to be the master of India. Without the Deccan, there is no all India Empire in ancient India, medieval and modern India. This holds good to all political parties in the contemporary India. The Deccan was the Dauphine of the Mughal Empire. Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb won their battles of spurs in the Deccan and went on to become emperors. However, before them, Allauddin Khilji and Mohammed Bin Tughlaq did the same.

'Delhi is distant' – an old Deccan proverb and many an Indian king has realised its force when grappling with the ineradicable contumacy of his southern province. The Deccan was never intended by nature to have any connection with Hindustan (northern India). The Vindhya and Satpura mountains and the Narmada River from a triple line of natural barricades which divide the high table land of central India from the plains of the Ganges and its tributaries, and should have warned the kings of Delhi that it was wiser to keep their own country. But the Deccan lands were fertile; with their wealth in diamonds and gold was fabulous; and every great ruler of the northern plains has turned his eyes to the mountain barriers and longed to enter a land of promise beyond. Even now, the south has been contributing to the coffers of Delhi. They entered, however, at their peril. To conquer the Deccan was risking the loss of Hindustan (northern India), for, he who invaded the Southern people who dwelt between the ghats but teaching the road to the north.

Deccan Ulcer

It is true, without the Deccan participation, there is no all India Empire. However, the Deccan never accepted the suzerainty of the north and did not submit to their arms. When the Deccan supported, the Delhi rule flourished. It holds good to the contemporary Indian politics too. Allauddin Khilji was the first Musalman ever to cross the Vindhya range and came to the Deccan. Though he defeated the Yadavas of Devagiri, the Hoysalas of Dwarasamudra, the Kakatiyas of Warangal and Pandiyas of Madurai, but allowed them to rule after getting annual tributes. That's why, he was successful, whereas, Mohammed Bin Tughlaq wanted to rule the Deccan effectively in this endeavour he shifted his capital from Delhi to Daulatabad. It was a fiasco. Akbar the Mughal emperor wanted Deccan's participation in his empire building activity. He was successful. His son Jehangir and grandson Shahjahan had emulated him. But Aurangazeb wanted to rule the Deccan for which he waged relentless wars and chasing his own shadow. Of the 50 years of his rule (1657-1707), he spent 25 years in the Deccan and not visiting Delhi. He annexed Bijapur, Ahmednagar and Golconda (1687). The Qutub Shahi's army thwarted his attempts but he bribed one of the Golconda generals who opened the gates of Golconda fort. Where courage and perseverance failed, treason succeeded. By this, Aurangazeb killed the goose that laid the golden eggs. For, the Qutub Shahi's used to pay huge annual tributes. With the conquest of Golconda, Aurangazeb created a political vacuum and unwittingly strengthened the hands of the Marathas. The majority of the vanquished armies naturally joined the Marathas and adopted the calling of the road (Thuggery and Pindaris). But the Deccan did not submit to the arms of Aurangazeb. The Marathas fought against the imperial forces. The Marathi nationalism became nemesis of Aurangazeb. What Spanish ulcer was to Napoleon, the Deccan ulcer to Aurangazeb. The Deccan had become not only graveyard to the Mughals but also to his graveyard at Daulatabad.

In this bid the East India company followed the policy of ring fence : creation of buffer states around her territories for better defence. The immediate concern was the threat from the west (Afghans and Marathas). As a precaution the British chose to befriend the Nizam to defer its territories under the condition that the Nizam would defray the expenses involved in such responsibility.

Even the belligerent Governor General Dalhousie and bellicose Hastings did not venture to oust the Asafjahis from the eastern Deccan (Hyderabad). They only wrested circar districts (Coastal Andhra) and ceded districts (present Rayalaseema). It was during 1857, the Great revolt now euphemistically called as the Great Divide, Canning, Governor General said if Hyderabad revolted it would be a deluge. The Nizam helped the British with men, material and money in their predicament. That's why after the revolt; they reciprocated adequately by bestowing him with "Faithful Ally" title and with the privilege of 22 guns salute.

The Nizam's recalcitrance to merge Hyderabad with the Indian Union can be seen through the same prism. If I am not accused to sailing close to the wind the Government of India, in a bid to placate the Nizam after the

police action in 1948, he was not only allowed to be the His Exalted Highness till 26th January 1950, but also was made Raja Pramukh thereafter.

In the contemporary Indian politics, two Deccan states such as Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh played crucial roles. As long as these two states supported the Congress, its rule flourished in India. Indira Gandhi with utter disregard to geography, she played with the region by appointing chief ministers and removing them at her will. It was not taken kindly by the people. This gave rise to Telugu Desam and this party challenged the hegemony of the north. What Hind Pad Pad-shahi to the Marathas, Telugu maryada (Telugu pride) to Andhra Pradesh.

Conundrum

Conversely, the Deccan never controlled the north. The Marathas were successful as long as they restricted themselves to the Deccan, however, when they made forays into the Delhi politics they met their Waterloo in the third battle of Panipat in 1761. Similarly, N T Rama Rao was successful when he limited his rule to Andhra Pradesh only, but his vaulting ambition to capture power in the North spurred him to start yet another political outfit Bharth Desham Party, it was a *raison d etat*. He met the same fate similar to that of the Marathas. Yet another example is K.Chandra Shekar Rao of Telangana Rastra Samithi 'TRS' was a power to be reckoned with as long as he limited to Telangana polity. However, his overwhelming success in Telangana vetted his appetite and ventured to spread his tentacles in the north which made him to change his party name to Bharatha Rashtra Samithi (BRS). However, he came a cropper in 2023 election. It should be known that geography asserts and history bends. So long Telangana was with the undivided Andhra Pradesh, N.T. Rama Rao and Chandrababu Naidu influenced Delhi and got the things done. Now that Telangana is demerged from Andhra Pradesh, N.Chandrababu Naidu not only capitulated but also begging for funds. The Telangana demand for a state should be seen through the same prism. When the Deccan did not accept the rule of the North, how could it accept the rule of the South - anything south of the Godavari is South India. This England never did nor never shall lie at a proud foot of a conqueror, but when it helped to wound itself. (King John – Shakespeare). This is equally applicable to the Deccan.

Unsung and Unwept

Agit-pop writers deliberately depict Hyderabad (Telangana) as the last Mughal legatee and political back waters. However, despite many hurdles and handicaps, Hyderabadi contributed equally in good measure to the freedom struggle of India. It was Maulvi Allaudin who stormed the British residency at Koti during the 1857 revolt, for which he was sentenced to life imprisonment and transported to the Andaman cellular jail. Incidentally, he was the first freedom fighter ever to be incarcerated in the cellular jail. He breathed his last there only. Hardly any history books mention about it.

It was Hasan Safrani who coined 'Jai Hind' for Indian National Army soldiers to exchange salutations. It was popularized by Subhash Chandra Bose. Safrani was a Hyderabadi. Another arcane information as to who coined the famous 'Do or Die' slogan which had sent shivers down the spine

of British. It is a putative notion that it was given by Mahatma Gandhi during the Quit India Movement in 1942. However, it was coined by Yousuf Mehar Ali. He, as the Mayor of Bombay Municipality organized a Hartal against the Prince of Wales visit to Bombay in 1921 and gave a clarion call of 'Do or Die'. Yousuf Mehar Ali's grandfather was a cloth merchant from Gadwal of Mahaboobnagar District of Telangana. He migrated to Bombay. Having got impressed by the 'Do or Die' slogan Mahatma Gandhi used it in the Quit India Movement in 1942. Which social history historian writer this?.

Truth is stranger than fiction. Yet another Telangana contribution to modern India was the National flag. As there was no standard flag, the Constituent Assembly appointed an Ad-hoc committee under the chairmanship of Dr.Rajendra Prasad to finalize the flag. The committee invited samples from vexillographers. Mrs. Suryya Tayyabji vexillographed sample was selected by the Ad-hoc committee and submitted to the Constituent Assembly for adaptation. It was adopted as the national flag on 22nd July 1947. However, there is an apocryphal narrative about Pingli Venkaiah and the flag. Neither was mentioned his name in the Constituent Assembly debates nor was he present in the flag presentation committee to the Constituent Assembly. True, the first English language lexicographer, had only one Boswell to write his biography, but Pingli Venkaiah had plethora of them. Yours truly (Author) wrote to the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India as to who designed the national flag under the RTI Act. To every once surprise, it replied that it was not having any information about it. More than this the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), New Delhi sent a similar reply. It is incredible, but true the same reply author got from the Governments of both Telugu states. It is a factoid that Pingli Venkaiah designed the National flag. In economics Gresham law says when bad money more in circulation, it drives out good money out of the market. Which Cambridge School Historian writes this?. However, all the above mentioned four names and many other unknown freedom fighters from Telangana were relegated to limbo of history un-wept and unsung.

History as a teacher.

History should be a teacher, and not a template. The purpose of understanding past wrongs to ensure they are never repeated not to demand restitution through acts that recreate the conflict that they seek to avenge. The obsession with returning to perceived Hindustan (North) blinds regions and people to the opportunities of the present and possibilities of the future. As philosopher George Santayana aptly put it: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it". But equally dangerous are those who remember the past only to relive, seeking justice through reversal, not reconciliation. The greatest service we can do to Indian history is not to ignore regions, but to learn from it with humility, not hubris.

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