Chikodi and Gokak Taluks in the Belgaum district of Karnataka have a rich heritage inspiring people to create a bright future with its special geographical location, full of rivers, hills, valleys, plains, forests and resources. The taluks are known for its tourists and industrial potential. Its long history has left many beautiful forts, tanks, temples, mosques and town of historical importance to the posterity.

The physical features of the land have helped to establish the character of the region as a land of varying scenic beauty of resources in water and waterpower.

Belgaum district is picturesque with its hills, valleys, rivers and tanks. The Western part of the Malaprabha and Ghataprabha strips forms a high rocky ridge culminating in the Manikeri hill in the Eastern end of Gokak.¹

The Krishna River and its tributaries constitute the drainage of this area. The gneissie rocks in the South predominantly underlie the region. While its Western edge is characterized by the rocks of the Dharwar series and by lava outflows on the North. The central parts are crossed by the outcrops of Bhima and Kaladgi formations.²

The varied geological foundation of North Karnataka has greatly influenced its morphological aspects adulating "black plain" of the eastern plateau. Interspersed with the residual hills of Gokak and Soundatti.
The river witnesses seasonal floods and during the rainy season its water rises. Normally the river is tame but during rainy season it swells enormously and its water penetrates some time over a miles inland from the banks. Soil erosion and cliff cutting take place under such conditions and it is much more rapid at the junction of its tributaries.

Several small streams enter in the river. Most of the time they are dry. The beds of all the streams are shallow and filled with sand. The water often being muddy and brackish.  

**Geography:**

In the following paragraph is a brief outline of the present environments viz., geographic setting, river system, geology, climate, soils and vegetation is given as it provides the basis for the reconstruction of the environment.

Among the 27 districts of Karnataka, Belgaum district is located in the Northwestern part of the state. It lies between 15° 23' to 16° 58' North latitude and 74° 5' to 75° 28' East longitude. The district is between 450 to 900 meters above the M.S.L. and extends over an area of 13.379 sq.kms., which is 6.99% of the total geographical area of the state.

Chikodi taluka is situated in the heart of Belgaum district and is 75 km. far away from district headquarters, which lies between 19° 21' to 19° 36' latitude and 74° 22' to 74° 46' longitude. From North and West side it is bound by Kolhapur district of Maharashtra state, on the eastern side it is bound by Raibag, Athani and Gokak taluks and on Southern side it is bound by Hukkeri taluka. Chikodi taluka is extended over an area of 1296.5 sq.km consisting of 155 villages and are four
circles namely Chikodi, Sadalaga, Nippani and Nagarmunnoli. Chikodi is 753 meters above the mean sea level.

The neighbouring Taluka i.e, Gokak lies between 15° 59' East latitude to 16° 21' West, latitude 74° 37' North longitude to 75° 16' South longitude. The taluka is bound by Ramadurga taluka on the East and the Western side is bound by Hukkeri taluka, on the Northern side it is bound by Raibag taluka, on the South it is bound by Soundatti taluka, on the Southwest it is bound by Belgaum taluka and on the North West Mudhol taluka. The region is 450-600 meters above the mean seal level (M.S.L.).

There are 107 villages in the taluka. It extends over an area of 1539.9 sq.km. For administrative purposes the taluka is divided into three circles.

River System:

The Western Ghats is the main watershed of the peninsular rivers. In this region separating the short swift flowing West streams from the long winding courses of the eastward rivers. Majority of the rivers in this region are characterized by their Southeasterly drainage.

The source of the river Krishna is on the Eastern brow of the Mahabaleshwar plateau, 7 km West of village Jor in the extreme West of Wai town in Satara district, Maharastra state at an altitude of 1500 metres above sea level. Its total length is about 1280 kms and total drainage is about 31,500 Sq.kms. It flows across almost the entire breadth of the peninsula from West to East in the states of Maharastra, Karnataka and the Andhra Pradesh and than flows into the Bay of Bengal.4
The river Krishna enters in the Chikodi Taluka at Chandur 35 km, North of Chikodi and leaves the region at Ingali in the same taluka. The river flows in the taluka at a distance of about 45 kms. It flows in the South-westerly direction for about 10 kms and joins the river Panchaganga and then enters Kolhapur district of Maharashtra. Again it re-enters in Chikodi taluka near Nippani and flows and as makes boundary between Chikodi and Athani taluka and leaves the taluka at Shahapur and enters in Athani taluka.

River Krishna has nine rivulets. They are Khadapur, Jadakurli, Kerur, Chikodi, Ankali, Manjari, Hirekudi, Examba and Kalloli. All these rivulet flow northerly.

The second river i.e., Dudhaganga flows on the Western side of the same taluka from South to Northern direction. It rises in the Western Ghats near Bhola Karavadi in Maharashtra state. It enters in the taluka near the village Vandoor situated near the National Highway No.4. It travels at a distance of about 107 kms in Belgaum district. It receives the water of vedaganga near village Bhoj and Barwad and joins river Krishna near Yedur from the South, which is a sacred pilgrimage centre for Lingayats. The temple Veerabhadra is located on the bank of river Krishna. Here Daksha had performed sacrifice.

There are many streams which originate in the same taluka and join Dudhaganga. They are Bhoj, Nej, Shamanewadi, Bedkihal, Shirgaon, Malikawad, Sadalaga and Karadaga streamlets. These streamlets flow from Southern direction. Bhoj, Bedkihal, Sadalga and Karadaga are the major ones.

The river Vedaganga rises in the Sahyadrian main range near Pallegavi of Maharashtra. It enters the taluka at the North-west near the villages. Budihal, Kurli.
and Yamgarni. It flows in the Easterly and North-Easterly direction at a distance of about 26 kms and joins the river Dudhaganga from the South near the village Bhoj and Barwad in the same taluka.  

There are several rivulets that joins to the river. They are Benadi, Mamdapur, Akkol, Pangire, Chikalwal, Peenwadi, Lakhanpur, Rampur, Walki, Pattankudi, Khadakalat, Kuthali, Sankanwadi, Nippani, Gavan, Yarnal, Shirguppi, Gondikuppi and Borgaon.

Mamdapur, Akkol, Chikalwal, Lakhanpur, Rampur, Walki, Pattankaudi, Khadaklat, Kuthali, Chinchani, Nippani, Naingaraj and Borgaon were the major rivulets. These rivulets flows on the Southern and the Western side of the region. River Panchaganga flows only around the village Manakapur.

There are other major streams in the region. They are Hirehalla and Doddahalla.

The Hirehalla stream originates on the South of Bidarahalli in the same taluka and flows Easterly for about 29 kms. Then it takes a turn on the South-Easterly direction for 16 kms, and then Easterly direction for 13 kms before it joins river Ghataprabha near Pandaladinni/Pudakalkatti villages in the neighbouring taluka. This is the only stream that links the neighbouring region, which is under study.

The stream has many nallahs. They are Jaganur, Vijaynagar, Kabbur, Belgali, Hanchinal, Nagarmunoli, Bambalwad, Belakud, Karagaon, Kamatyahatti, Hattarwad, Wadral, and Umarani.

In the neighbouring region i.e., Gokak taluk which is under study has two rivers and many rivulets. The rivers are Ghataprabha and Markhandeya. The river
Ghataprabha a major tributary of the Krishna constitutes the drainage in Gokak taluka. The river takes its birth in Sundargad of the Western Ghats in Maharastra and flows East-wards direction for about 59, kms through Maharastra and forms the border between Maharastra and Karnataka for a length of about 10 kms. It enters in the district near Shedihal and runs about 40 kms in North-Easterly direction through Chikodi taluka before it is joined from the West by the Hiranyakeshi River in Hukkeri taluka i.e., the neighbouring taluk of this region. Then it enters Gokak taluka near Sultanpur and takes a sharp turn to the North running along the boundary of the taluka. Again it turns in the South-East and flows straight about 5 kms. to the West of Gokak. The river runs through sandstone before dashing over a cliff about 53 meters high. It leaves the taluka at Avaradi. It may be noted that across the river a dam has been constructed near Hidkal and a small tank is also constructed at Dhupadal known as Dhupdal weir. The total catchments area of the river is about 8.829 sq, kms.8

Many streamlets join the river Ghataprabha. They are Yadwad, Gulaganjikop, Yaragudar, Timapur, Raddratti, Kalliguddi, Kuligod and Hunshyal.

Hirehalla stream joins the river Ghataprabha. It originates at Sutagatti in Bailhongal Taluka in the neighbouring region and enters in the Gokak taluka near the village Kundargi and flows about 28 kms. Northwest and 29 kms North and joins river Ghataprabha at Melavanki village in Gokak taluka.

Mannikeri, Hosatti, Bisankop, Dhavaleshwar, Avaradi, Rajapur, Masaguppi, Patagundi, Kamaldinni, Rangpur, Mudalagi, Munyal, Khanatti, Shivapur, Hallur, Bagamal, Gosabal, Betageri, Chikknandi, Hirenandi, Jamanal, Shiltibhavi,
Padakalkatti, Makkalageri, Ajjankatti, Kolavi and tavag are the small rivulets that join to the Ghataprabha river.

Another river of the region is Markandeya. It originates near village Bailur in Khanapur Taluka. It flows in Northeasterly direction for about 22 km passing through Belgaum, Hukkeri and Gokak Taluka. The river receives the water of Ballarynalla from the South at Basanahatti and Joins the river Ghataprabha below the falls about 3 km and above the Gokak town from one km before joining the Ghataprabha. It jumps down from about 20 to 30 meter height forming the Markandeya falls near Godachinamalki about 16 km from Gokak. 9

Minerals:

So far there is no evidence of any minerals found in the region, but abundent sand (fine particles of crushed rock) is extracted from the Krishna river near Yadur and Manjari. Yellow ochre is exposed below a capping of 1.5 to 2 metres of black cotton soil, which occurs around the Northwest of Chikodi.

In Gokak taluka moulding sand deposits are noticed at Ankalgi, Gujanal, Kundargi, Maldinni, Upparahatti and below the Markandeya and Ghataprabha river.

Kaladgi Sandstone deposits are found at Kolavi, Mamadapur, Arabhavi and at Gokak. Schist's are used for roofing and paving purposes at Hosur, Kukadoli, Ninganmath and at Chiknandi. Quartzite deposit of fine grained and light pink occurs in bedded form at Kolavi area. The Kaladgi area is made up of conglomerate.

Sandstones, limestones and quartzites are horizontally bedded sedimentary rocks, which directly overlie uncomfortably over the folded and
eroded Achaeans lying in between the valleys of the Ghataprabha and the Malaprabha quartzite and cherts were the favourite raw-materials employed in the preparation of tools by the early and middle stone age man respectively. It may be noted that these sites are found in these areas.

Limestone consists of Bluish gray, granular, crystalline high calcium. Limestones are exposed over a length of 25 kms in an east-west direction from Sunadholi in the west right upto eastern side of Gokak taluk. These limestone bands pass through Sunadholi, Kuligod, Bairanatti, Haleyangudari, Yaragudari, Yadwad and other villages of Gokak taluk. The entire area or vicinity come under the lower portion of lower Kaladgi series.

Climate:

The climate of the Krishna basin is typically monsoonal with the characteristics four months of monsoon climate followed by eight months of dry winter and summer. The cold weather starts by about the middle of November and continues till about the middle of February. The minimum temperature in this region is 30°C to 33°C. While the mean daily minimum temperature is 14°C. The hot season sets in March and heat becomes greater in the month of April and May.

Soils:

The soils in the major part of the region are black cotton soil group and are of grassland pedocal type. Deep black soils are confined to low lands and mainly in the valleys of the main rivers like the Krishna, Ghataprabha and Malaprabha. The depth of soil is often over 6 to 1- metres. Medium black soils are the prevalent variety occurring on uplands and slopes throughout the basin. These are light
coloured and shallow. The red lateritic soils show their best development in the hilly heavy rainfall lateritic region.

These are slightly acidic. The mixed black and red soils are found, where both trap and laterite exposures occur side by side.

Vegetation:

The types of vegetation found in the region are mainly dependent on the rainfall and the degrees of moisture. The heavy rainfall areas (200 cms more than) are characterized by evergreen to semi-evergreen forests. (100-200 cms). Deciduous woodland Savannah predominates. In the semi-arid eastern region (less than 60 cms) dry deciduous and thorn scrub forests are well developed.

Agriculture:

Agriculture is the main occupation of the people in the region. The main commercial crops are sugar cane, maize, jawar and tobacco. In Northern part of Chikodi taluka majority of agriculturists depend on rainfall. The government has built a small reservoir and tanks for providing good water facilities.

In Gokak taluka nearly 22,882 hectares of land is used for cultivation. The main commercial crops of the region are sugar cane, maize, jawar, cotton, tobacco, wheat, bengal gram and ground nut.

Industries:

Many crafts and industries have flourished in the region. Brick making industry has flourished around Yadur and Manjari villages. Beedi industry flourished in Nippani town, production of jaggery and sugar candy were the other notable industries. Sugar factories were established at Nanadi and Nippani.
Gokak taluka is endowed with rich agricultural resources like cotton, sugar cane, oil seeds, tobacco, abundant forest wealth, stock of limestone and other mineral resources. There are good roadways, railways that have helped greatly for the development of industries.

Flora and Fauna:

The pattern of vegetation is mainly based on the rivers as well as rainfall in both the talukas. The forest types in the region are semi-evergreen, moist deciduous, dry deciduous, thorn and shrub. The moist deciduous forest occurs in that area where the average rainfall is about 125-cm. Dry deciduous forests are found in areas having annual rainfall of 75.-125 cm. The crops grown in this region are sugarcane, jawar, cotton, maize, wheat, bajara, pulses and oilseeds.

Fauna:

Common langure, rhesus, sloth bear, jungle cat, toddy cat, stripped hyena, Indian mongoose, Indian Jackal, Indian fox, black napped hare, bat, house rats, field rats are the principle wild animals in Chikodi and Gokak taluka.

The birds namely the black vulture, rock horned owl, common swallow, wire tailed swallow, white breasted kingfisher are common in both taluks.

Domestic animals found are namely cow, buffaloes, goats, sheeps, horses, donkeys, mules, cat and dog.
Foot Notes:

2. Ibid,