CHAPTER 5

STUDY AREA AND PROFILE OF THE
BELGAUM DISTRICT SUGAR INDUSTRY
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5.1 Study Area

The study area chosen for the research work is Belgaum District of Karnataka State. Belgaum, earlier known as 'Venugrama' or the 'Bamboo Village', is one of the oldest, prominent and well-cultured historical place nestling high in the western ghats, with history tracing back to the second century AD.

Today, Belgaum is a district headquarter as well as divisional headquarter of North Karnataka. The geographical area of Belgaum district is 13,455 square kilometers. Belgaum is situated at a height of 747 m (2453 feet) above sea level, on the northwest of Karnataka state between 15.23 degrees and 16.55 degrees north latitudes and 74.15 degrees and 75.28 degrees east longitudes. The neighbouring districts towards the east are Bijapur, Bagalkot and Dharwad, towards the north Sangli of Maharashtra state, towards the west Kolhapur and Ratnagiri of Maharashtra state and towards the south, it is surrounded by Karwar district. The population of Belgaum district is 4.2 million as per the 2001 census with a literacy level of 64.42 percent and a population density of 314 per square kilometer.
There are ten talukas in Belgaum district. The district is divided into two regions namely Malnad region comprising of Belgaum and Khanapur talukas which are endowed with a forest cover and the plains comprising of the remaining 8 talukas of Athani, Bailahongal, Chikkodi, Gokak, Hukkeri, Ramdurg, Raibag and Savadatti.

Belgaum city is situated at an equal distance of approximately 500 kilometers from Bangalore, Mumbai and Hyderabad. It is well connected by land, rail and air travel facilities. Approximately 270 kilometers of national highway and 1320 kilometers of state highway roads and 320 kilometers of broad gauge rail tracks pass through the district. The civilian airport is situated at Sambra, which is being expanded and modernized at present. Belgaum has an Air force station at Sambra and is also home to the prestigious Maratha Light Infantry Regimental Centre of the Indian Army. It has a cosmopolitan style of living consisting of multilingual people with Kannada, Marathi and Urdu being the main languages.

There are three major rivers that flow through the district. They are Krishna, Malaprabha and Ghataprabha, with five other smaller rivers or tributaries which join the Krishna river viz. Markandeya, Doodhaganga, Hiranyakeshi, Aganashini and Vedaganga. The total length of these rivers is 275 kilometers with two dams built across Ghataprabha and Malaprabha.

The soil of the district is mostly red loam, black and drained gravel clay type in the gently sloping areas of alluvial plains with moderate erosion. The land is suitable
for cultivation of sugar cane, maize, cotton, tobacco, paddy, ragi, jowar, pulses, fruits and vegetables.

Sugarcane is grown in 137573 hectares of irrigated land, which produces 57.02 lakh tonnes of sugarcane every year. The major sugarcane units in Belgaum district are located in Chikodi, Athani, Hukkeri and Khanapur talukas.59

5.2 Reasons for selection of Belgaum district sugar industry as the study area

The reasons for selection of Belgaum district sugar industry, for the purpose of the research study are as follows

1. About 29% of Karnataka’s existing sugar mills, 13 out of 45, are located in Belgaum district.

2. About 41% of the new sugar mills, 7 out of 17, to be set up in Karnataka, are located in Belgaum district.

3. Belgaum district is called as the sugar bowl of Karnataka.

4. The profile of the sugar mills in Belgaum district varies from progressive sugar factories in both the private and co-operative sectors to sick sugar mills as well.

5. There is an immense potential to develop the sugar sector in Belgaum district and to assist the sugar mills to strategise their activities in light of the opportunities and challenges thrown open by the WTO.

59 District Industries Centre (Belgaum), Government of Karnataka and KLS’ Institute of Management Education and Research, Belgaum, “Vision 2006-2010, A perspective plan for Belgaum district” page 3, 9 and 10