CHAPTER II
PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA
CHAMARAJANAGAR DISTRICT

Introduction

Geography affects the lifestyle of people in various ways and its impact on people is a defining feature of societal development. The geography of an area remains an influential factor in all human endeavour. The Socio-economic status of people of a particular region depends on the profile of the region. Karnataka, the land of great antiquity, with its varied geographical features has a heterogenous population. Chamarajanagar, one of the districts of Karnataka is a home for a number of tribals in which the study area comprising Malai Mahadeshwara Hills, also known as M.M.Hills, in Kollegal taluk and BiligiriRangana Hills known as B.R.Hills, in Yelandur taluk are located. In this chapter, the scholar tries to study the entire setting of research. This chapter deals with the various details of Karnataka in general and Chamarajanagar district in particular.

Karnataka

Karnataka has a hoary past. It is blessed with innumerable inscriptions, memorial (viz. Hero, Mahasati and Self immolation) stones and monuments of rich historical and cultural heritage. It is one of the oldest states in India, located in the southern part of India. Its antiquity can be traced to the pre-historical times. The pre-history of Karnataka refers to the Old Stone Age and New Stone Age which lasted from 2,00,000 years to 10,000 years B.C. Man’s life was a struggle for existence during those periods. Among the stone age sites found, Ranganathapura of Mysore of the Old Stone Age and T.Narasipur in Mysore of the New Stone Age are worth mentioning.

Map of Karnataka

1Handbook of Karnataka. The Karnataka Gazetteer Department, 2010, 49
History

The history of Karnataka starts from the period of Mauryas, then there ruled the Kadambas of Banavasi, Gangas of Talakad, Chalukyas of Badami, Rashtrakutas of Malkhed, Chalukyas of Kalyana, Sevunas of Devagiri, Hoysalas of Dwarasamudra, the Vijayanagara Emperors, the Bahamanis, the Adil Shahis of Bijapur, Wodeyars of Mysore and the British. During the British rule, areas that now comprise Karnataka were under as many as twenty different administrative units including the princely state of Mysore, Nizam's Hyderabad, the Bombay Presidency, the Madras Presidency and the territory of Kodagu being the most important ones. After independence, the movement for Unification of Karnataka gained momentum. Finally, in 1955 A.D., the States Reorganization Commission’s report came out in favour of the unification of Kannada speaking districts under one state. Thus the unified Mysore State came into being on 1st November 1956 A.D. It was renamed as ‘Karnataka’ on 1st November 1973 A.D. In 1989 A.D., the Bangalore Rural district was split from Bangalore Urban. On August 2, 1997 A.D., seven new districts were carved out from the existing
districts. They were: Chamrajanagar district from Mysore district, Davanagere district from Chitradurga district, Bellary district and Shimoga district, Bagalkot district from Bijapur district, Gadag district from Dharwad district, Haveri district from Dharwad district, Udupi district from Dakshina Kannada, Koppal district from Raichur district. On 21st June, 2007, two more districts i.e., Ramanagara district and Chikkaballapur district were created by bifurcating Bangalore rural district and Kolar district respectively. On 30th December, 2009, Yadgir district was carved out of Gulbarga district and officially declared the 30th district of Karnataka. For the purpose of administrative convenience the state has been divided into four divisions with head quarters at Bangalore, Belgaum, Gulbarga and Mysore. Chamarajanagar district comes under Mysore division.

Location

Karnataka is one of the states of India which has spread over an area of 1,91,791 km². It accounts for 5.83% of the total area of the country (measured at 3,288,000 km²), Thus occupying the seventh place in terms of size. It is bound by Maharashtra and Goa in the North, Kerala and the Arabian Sea in the West, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana in the East and Tamil Nadu in the South. It covers an area of 760 kilometers from the north to the south and a width of 420 kilometers from the east to the west. It is located on the Deccan Plateau region between 11°30' and 18°30' North latitudes and 74° and 78°30' East longitudes. It is situated on a tableland where the Western and Eastern Ghat ranges converge into the complex, in the western part of the Deccan Peninsular region.

Physical features

Geographically, Karnataka can be divided into three regions; i) The coastal strip also known as Karavalli, extending from the Western Ghats to the Arabian Sea, which is lowland, with moderate to high rainfall levels. This strip is around 320 kms in length and 48-64 kms wide.

ii) The Malenadu region covers the western and eastern slopes of the Western Ghats which is about 100 kilometers in width and approximately in an altitude of 900 mts., from the Arabian Sea. Malenadu covers portions of Belgaum, Chikkamagaluru, Shimoga, Uttara

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2Government of Karnataka Handbook of Karnataka, The Karnataka Gazetteer Department, 2010, 123.
Kannada, Kodagu and Hassan districts. It also covers western foothills of Udupi district and Dakshina Kannada district.

iii) The Deccan Plateau, called the Bayalu Seeme, comprising the main inland region of the state, which is drier and verging on the semi-arid. The humidity in these plains is around 50%.

**Demography**

According to the 2011 Census, Karnataka’s population was 6,10,95,297 of which 3,09,66,657 were males and 3,01,28,640 were females, 85,63,930 were Scheduled Castes and 34,63,986 were scheduled tribes. In 2016 A.D., its population is about 66,07,602 million and it is the ninth highly populated State of India.

Scheduled tribe population of Karnataka:

Karnataka has fifty tribal groups concentrated in Chitradurga, Bellary, Raichur, Mysore, Kodagu, Tumkur and Chamarajanagar districts.

The following table shows that according to the 2011 census, Bangalore Urban, Belgaum and Mysore were the top three highly populated districts of Karnataka, whereas, Chamarajanagar, Bangalore rural and Kodagu were the bottom three districtssince the population is very less.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top 3 Districts</th>
<th>population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangalore Urban</td>
<td>96,21,551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgaum</td>
<td>47,79,661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mysore</td>
<td>30,01,127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bottom 3 Districts</th>
<th>population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chamarajanagar</td>
<td>10,20,791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangalore Rural</td>
<td>9,90,923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kodagu</td>
<td>5,54,519</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2.1**

Population distribution in Karnataka 2011.

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3 Population of Karnataka, 2011.
5 Censuskarnataka.gov.in.
Scheduled Tribe Population Karnataka: 2001-2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>difference</th>
<th>% Growth 2001-2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Persons</td>
<td>34,63,986</td>
<td>42,48,987</td>
<td>7,85,001</td>
<td>22.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>17,56,238</td>
<td>21,34,754</td>
<td>3,78,516</td>
<td>21.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>17,07,748</td>
<td>21,14,233</td>
<td>4,06,485</td>
<td>23.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Census Abstract Data Highlights Karnataka Series 30

It is noted that the population of the Scheduled Tribes in the State has increased from 34,63,986 in 2001 to 42,48,987 in 2011, thereby registering a decennial growth rate of 22.66 per cent. The proportion of the Scheduled Tribe population to total population of the State is 6.95 per cent. Raichur district has the highest proportion of Scheduled Tribe population i.e.,19.03 per cent. Next to Raichur district is the Chamarajanagar District where the proportion is 17.14 per cent urbanised and the least proportion is returned from Mandya District (1.24 per cent).

The decadal growth rate during 2001-11 is 80.8% is due to the addition of several new tribes to the scheduled tribes.

The proportion of Scheduled Tribe population is less than five per cent in twelve districts, between five to nine percent in seven districts and above ten per cent in the remaining eleven districts.

The gender ratio for scheduled tribes in Karnataka is 972 which is greater than the all India average 940 according to the 2011 census. There has been a considerable increase in the gender ratio of STs since 2001 when it was 964 in Karnataka.
Tribal situation in Karnataka

Tribals constitute an integral and considerable part of the total population of Karnataka, who live in every nook and corner of the state. Their settlements are mostly found in the hilly and mountainous regions. While a large portion of them follow Hinduism, there are a few who follow Islam and Christianity. The lifestyle of these tribals is distinct. They consume fruits, roots, vegetables, ragi and other foodgrains along with meat and liquor.

Though Kannada is the main language of these tribals, they converse with others in different languages like Malayalam, Hindi etc. They communicate in their local dialect within the same group. Like any other tribe, these tribals are also fond of dance, music and they celebrate the festivals with great zeal. Fairs and festivals too are an integral part of the culture and tradition of the tribals of Karnataka. A well known dance drama of the tribal communities of Karnataka is ‘Bayalata’. The theme of this dance-drama centres around mostly on mythological stories, and at times on true life incidents. Yakshagana and Doddata are other forms mostly enacted on the stories of the great epics of Ramayana and Mahabharatha.

Traditionally, the tribal economy was based on subsistence agriculture and hunting and gathering. As the tribal people treated land as a common resource, they did not have any land titles which resulted in exploitation by outsiders. Further, they have become small and marginal landholders due to the exploitation of forest resources. Small and uneconomical land holdings of the tribals resulted into the state of wage labour.

There are 34.64 lakh tribals distributed throughout Karnataka as per the 2001 Census. Raichur and Bellary contain a large number of tribal communities. Toda, Beda, Soliga, Hakki-Pikki, Konda Kapu, Koraga, Bhils, Chenchu, Gonds, Maleru, Badaga, Hasala, Media, Iruliga, Jenukuruba, Yarava and Siddis are some important tribes of Karnataka. Jenukurubas, Kadukurubas, Bettakurubas, Sholagas and Yeravas are the major tribal groups living in Heggedadevanakote (H.D.Kote), while Sholigas are a numerically dominant tribal group in M.M Hills and B.R.Hills. According to the 2011 data, nearly 50% of the tribals are labourers in which women constitute about 41.71% of the workforce. It is clear that more than 85% of the working population is in rural areas. The scheduled tribes of Karnataka survive on their own labour. Due to low literacy and lack of vocational skills, they are pushed into jobs with poor remuneration. The annual per capita income of rural tribes is 4,768 as compared with 10,987 for urban tribes. The human development status of the Schedule Tribe is more
than a decade behind the rest of the population of the state and they are the poorest and most deprived of all subpopulation in the state.  

The Jenukuruba, Bettakuruba, Soliga, Yerava, Malekudiya, and Iruligas are living in wildlife sanctuaries, national parks, tiger reserves and protected forest areas of the Western Ghats without basic facilities. Due to various forest policies they were relocated from the interior of the forest to the exteriors and even today they are facing relocation problems in the name of the tiger conservation. The forest based tribals have a symbiotic relationship with nature and their economy and culture is associated with the forest, having an in-depth knowledge of the forest ecosystem. This knowledge can be used for forest conservation. If the government can provide all the facilities within the forest reserve and involve the tribal youths and the community in their present work it would serve the dual purpose of conserving the tiger and preserving the life style of the tribals.

The Jenukurubas and the Koragas are declared as the Primitive Tribal groups amongst the fifty Scheduled Tribal communities in Karnataka. A majority of the Scheduled Tribe are living on the plains in the rural and urban areas and around twelve tribal communities are living in the forested areas and their livelihood depends on the forest resources. They constitute 6.6 per cent of the State and 4.1 per cent of the country’s ST population. The growth rate of the Scheduled Tribal population in 1991-2001 was 80.8 per cent which is considerably higher in comparison to the overall 17.5 per cent of the state population. This steep growth is due to the addition of Naik, Nayaka, Beda, Bedar, and Valmiki as sub-groups of Naikad. This sub-group has been enumerated for the first time in the 2001 Census. Of the STs, the Jenukuruba and Koraga have a population of 29,828 and 16,071, respectively, in the 2001 census.

**Chamarajanagar District**

Chamarajanagar District is one of the thirty districts of Karnataka located in the south of Karnataka. It was created on 15th August 1997 A.D. out of the Mysore District. It borders the

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6 Sudarshan, Karnataka Human Development Report, Government of Karnataka, 2006
7 Karnataka Data Highlights: The Scheduled Tribes, Census of India, 2011
Chamarajanagar District is one of the thirty districts of Karnataka located in the south of Karnataka. It was created on 15th August 1997 A.D. out of the Mysore District. It borders the States of Tamil Nadu and Kerala and Mysore District in the west and north and Mandya and Ramanagara Districts of Karnataka to the north-east, Dharmapuri District of Tamil Nadu to the east, Salem and Erode Districts of Tamil Nadu to the south east, Nilgiri District of Tamil Nadu to the south and Wayanad District of Kerala to the south east. It consists of four talukas Chamarajanagar, Gundlupet, Kollegal and Yelandur. Kollegal has 2796 sq. km. having biggest area in the State and Yelandur the smallest Taluk with only 266 sq. km area.

**Topography**

Chamarajanagar is situated 5090 feet above the sea level. Its geographical location is between 11˚ 40’ to 12˚ 48’ North latitude and 74˚ 52’ to 76˚ 07’ East longitude. The terrain of the area has valleys, hills and flat areas. The northern parts are at 450-760 meters high and 900-1200 meters high in south. The western range extends to the southern range in continuity to Nilgiri Hills. Eastern part raise to form Biligiri Rangana Hills and Male Mahadeshwara Hills. Both the ranges are resourceful for varieties of valuable herbs and wild life in terms of biodiversity. The area is rich in black granite which is world famous. The plains have cultivated lands in the southern part and villages inhabited by the tribal and the Lingayats. The area of Chamarajanagar district is 56,85 Sq.Kms., constituting 2.96 percent of the State’s area. 16 Hoblis, 446 habitated Villages, 66 non habitated Villages, 501 Revenue Villages and 120 gram Panchayats and . It is located at a distance of 185 kms from Bangalore, the capital of Karnataka.

The climate of Chamarajanagar District is generally moderate. The temperature varies between 33 degree celsius to 37 degree celsius. The distinctive climatic conditions in the district are due to the interplay of tropical monsoon type as a product of both South West and North East Monsoon. However, the district is prone to drought.

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Chamarajanagar Parliamentary Constitutency consists of Chamarajanagar, Gundlupet, Kollegal, Yelandur, T. Narasipur and Nanjangud. The Chamarajanagar Legislative Assembly Constitutency consists of Chamarajnagar, Santhemeranahalli, Gundlupet, Kollegal and Hanur.

**Administrative set up**

The Deputy Commissioner is the head of the district administration. The collectorate consists of various branches headed by Tahsildars, Shirshtedars or Managers who are responsible for supervision, guidance and overall management of work in their branches. Every branch consists of First Division Assistants and Second Division Assistants among whom all work of the branch is divided.\(^{10}\)

The Deputy Commissioner is assisted by various officials at the district and taluk levels like the Assistant Commissioners (Sub-Divisional Magistrate), Tahsildars, Shrestedars, Revenue Inspectors and Village Accountants. At the Zilla level the Chief Executive officer is assisted by a number of officials.

**Land utilization**

Agriculture is the backbone of the economy. The district has a total area of 5,69,901 Hectares, the net sown area being 1.75 lakh hectares. its forest cover being 2,75,610 hectares, non agricultural land 24,606 hectares and cultivable barren land is 21,434 hectares. Horticultural crops account for approximately 20 percent of the tribal cultivable crops in the district. The total production being 0.198 million tons valued at US.25.27 million. The forests are rich with a number of forest products including sandal wood. and is noted for rich fauna.

**Industries**

Chamarajanagar District is in manufacture of agricultural implements, tiles, bricks, soap, match box, plastic, beedi, agarbathi. Weaving and cottage industries are also popular. There are six medium scale industries i.e., two industries in Chamarajanagar and four industries in Kollegal taluk.

\(^{10}\) Report of MSME Development Institute, Bengaluru, Government of India, Ministry of MSME, 2016, 8.
There are three Industrial Estates in the district. namely, Chamrajanagar, Kollegal and Gundlupet. 1,362 acres of land at Badanguppe and Kelamballi of Chamrajanagar has been identified for land bank.

Mining

This district is endowed with rich mineral resources, both metallic and nonmetallic. The district has a lot of black granite rocks and other mineral deposits. There is lot of scope for development of granite cutting and polishing clusters.

Sericulture

Sericulture is a traditional activity in the district which acts as a supplement to agriculture. The district is identified as a centre for sericulture since the district has good climatic conditions for sericulture. Nearly, 1,769 hectares in all the four taluks of the districts are under mulberry cultivation. Varieties of mulberry are grown. It has been a good economic support for the farmers of the district.

Fisheries

Since there are a number of rivers, ponds and reservoirs, inland fishing is possible.

Agro and food processing

Since horticulture is flourishing here, there is lot of scope for food processing and cold storage facilities. There is good scope for ancillarisation of poultry farming, tourist based industries. Steel fabrication enterprises.

Animal Husbandry and Dairy

Rearing cattle sheep and goat has become one of the important activity in rural areas of the district. Poultry farming also has become popular.
Table 2.3

Number of livestock in the District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Cows</td>
<td>2,73,798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Buffaloes</td>
<td>28,469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Goats</td>
<td>1,14,861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Pigs</td>
<td>1,005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Dogs &amp; Bitches</td>
<td>18,427</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: District Industrial Profile, 2016.

Dairy development has been encouraged since 1970 under the World Bank, assistance. Landless labourers, small farmers, SC, ST and women are mostly benefitted by this. The participation of women in the above said occupation is remarkable. The district milk producers union mainly collects milk and markets the milk for the dairy farmers. After selling large quantities of milk, the remaining milk is converted into ghee, curd, lassi, masala butter milk, aromatic milk peda, Mysore pak, Badam Barfi, cashew Barfi, and other milk products.

Transport

The district has a total length of 2,760 kms network of roads. The roadways are divided into the following: (a) National Highways of 190.00 kms. (b) State Highways covering a distance of 339.26 kms (c) Main District Highways covering a distance of 995.21 kms (d) Other district and rural roads measuring upto 2672.99 kms and e) Kachacha roads covering 2016.19 kms.1¹ These roadways are helping in overall development of the district. Only Chamarajanagar is connected to Mysore and Bengaluru by broad gauge. The district has railways covering a length of 14.20 kms.

Communication

The communication facilities help in the economic development of the district. In 1997-98 there were 201 post offices. But now there are 324 post offices, 17,732 telephone

connections, 41 telephone centers, 67,316 mobile phones. Mobile phones are in usage widely. Apart from courier, satellite money order, e-mail, fax, etc.

**Banking and Insurance**

The banks have played an important role in the economic and social development in society. Banks provide loans for the infrastructure, industries, agriculture, trade, commerce and transport activities for integrated development of the community. In the undivided Mysore District the State Bank of Mysore was established in 1914. The other banks have been established subsequently. Since 1951, the Reserve Bank policy was liberalised, gradually in tune with the Five Year Plans for the upliftment of poor in the rural areas for extending loans and subsidies through banks. Now there are 41 Commercial Banks, 22 Grameena Banks and 8 Cooperative Banks operating with total credit of ₹ 62,51,450.

The LIC has its branches in all the taluks of the district. There are 98,769 LIC policies running since 1997.

**Health**

There are fifty-seven Primary Health Centres with three hundred and fifty beds and two hundred and forty six Sub Health Centres with one thousand and forty beds. There are four Allopathic hospitals with six hundred beds, two Ayurvedic hospitals with sixteen beds, and two hundred and forty five Private hospitals. There are eight dispensaries with one hundred and fourteen retail stores. Sterilization was done for six thousand, two hundred and fifty persons, Polio doses administered to fifteen thousand and thirty three children, BCG to fourteen thousand, six hundred and eighty three, measles to fourteen thousand, five hundred and fifty six and TT to sixteen thousand six hundred ninety eight.

**Education**

There are four hundred and fifty two Primary schools, five hundred and twelve Middle schools, one hundred and ninety-six Secondary and Senior Secondary Schools, sixty six colleges, and two Technical Universities.

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12 Handbook of Karnataka, The Karnataka Gazetteer Department, 2010. 443.

13 District Industrial Profile, MSME Development Institute, Bengaluru, 2016
**Forest Resources**

Chamarajanagar District has both evergreen as well as deciduous forests in addition to shola and scrubby jungles. The forests are classified as reserve and conserved forests. The forest tracts of M. M. Hills, BR Hills and Bandipur are densely covered with valuable trees such as Teak, Rosewood, Sandal Wood, etc. The wild life here includes Tiger, Leopards, Sloth Bear, Elephant, Deer, Gaus, Wild Boar etc. but The increase in population and livestock population led to free use of forest trees and hunting for wild animals. But it was prevented by the passing of the Forest Act. The Project Tiger which was implemented to conserve the tiger population also helped in conserving Elephants, Leopard, Bear, Deer, Gaur, etc. Recently, under the Japanese Bank of International Committee Assistance (JBIC) the district has undertaken sustainable forest development and management project, afforestation, prevention of soil erosion, conservation of biodiversity, joint management of forest, infrastructure and human development activities. The State Government has also provided funds to Zilla Panchayats under the Vana Samvardhana programme and Grama Panchayats to plant trees in the uncovered areas in their jurisdiction in addition to the social forestry programme. The Government of India Act of 2006 assured the protection of traditional rights of hill tribes and other Adivasis in forests. Accordingly the identification and grant of such rights primarily takes place at the Gramasabha in the Panchayati Raj system.

**Water resources**

The district has water resources like the Cauvery river which flows through Kollegal taluk in the northwest, the Palar river, the Suvarnavathi river and the Gundluhole river which flow from the eastern side of B.R.Hills through the gorges and valleys formed by B.R.Hills and M.M Hills and the Gaganachukki and Barachukki water falls. Guliyuvanuru Halla and Mayalakkiyuru Halla are two small rivers that join Cauvery whereas Maydhagunooruhalla joins river Palar.

**Tourism potential**

There are places of natural and scenic beauty in this district. They are as follows:
• Survarnavathi Reservoir, located at a distance of sixteen kms from Chamarajanagar, is famous for its scenic beauty.
• Kanakagiri hill is one of the popular Jain centres in the world. It is also known for its sandalwood and rich forestry.
• Thriembarkapura is famous for the big temple of Thrikadambeshwara deity, built in the period 1250-1350 AD.
• Huguligana murudi, situated 6.5 kms to the South of Terakanambi, is famous for the Temple of Lord Venkataramanaswamy.
• BR Hills Wildlife Sanctuary, located in Yelandur Taluk is known for its Biodiversity. It consists of rare species of wildlife and located at an altitude of 1500 mtrs above MSL.
• Sri Male Mahadeshwara Hills, in Kollegal Taluk is popularly called as MM Hills. It is a holy place believed to have 777 wide hills, 77 important hills, 7 lively hills around.
• Bandipura National Park in Gundlupet Taluk is spread over an area of 970 sq.Kms. It is one of the rarest wildlife sanctuaries in India known for its world famous Tiger Reserve.
• Barachukki is a waterfall, located in Kollegal Taluk which is 100 ft high. There are a number of hillocks all around falls.
• Himavad Gopalaswamy Hills in Gundlupet Taluk is a great pilgrimage and trekking centre.
• The Suvarnavathi River which is sixteen kilometres from Chamarajanagar. The net storage capacity of the dam is 1258.76 mft and the length of the dam is 160ft. The top width of the dam is 18 ft.
• The Kanakagiri Hill has been described by ancient writers and historians as ‘Nakopama Shaila’, meaning a hill in the form of a heaven. Apart from being a Jain centre, Kanakagiri is known for its sandalwood and other trees. The inscriptions, engraving of footprints, Samadhi Mantapas and Nishadi Caves are testimony to the rich heritage and the contributions of Jain saints who lived here. The religious importance of the place is also understood from the abovementioned monuments.

CHAMARAJANAGAR DISTRICT MAP.
The original name of this place was Arikotara. It was named in 1818 A.D. by Krishnaraja Wodeyar III of Mysore, after Chamaraja Wodeyar IX, who was born here. In 1825 A.D., he built a large temple of Chamarajeshwara in Dravidian Style. About five kilometres to the east of Chamarajanagar is located Ramesamudram, which from 1921-1962 A.D., was a separate municipal town. The two towns were merged with one another as a single unit at the 1961 census.

It is said that the Gangas, one of the oldest dynasties, who established their rule in the 2nd century A.D., ruled over the greater part of the district till 1004 A.D. and the areas under their rule was known as “Gangavadi-Ninety Six Thousand”. According to a tradition, the Gangas initially had their capital at Skandapura, a place which is supposed to have been located at Gajalahatti on the banks of Moyar beyond the south of the Chamarajanagar taluk. Later, during the 3rd century, the Gangas shifted their capital to Talakad on the banks of the river Cauvery in TirumakudaluNarasipur taluk of the present Mysore District. During this period Chamarajanagar District formed part of the ‘Punnadu Ten Thousand’ kingdom with its capital at Kittipura identified with Kittur on the banks of the river Kabini in Heggada Devana Kote taluk of the present Mysore District. In the 5th century, Ganga king Avinita

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14 Ganga kingdom, divided into 96 administrative units.
15 Punnadu was part of the Ganga kingdom.
married the daughter of Skandavarma the Punnadu king and later, his son Durvinita absorbed ‘Punnadu Ten Thousand’ into the Ganga dominions.

As per the 2011 census, the total population of the district is nearly about 10.20 lakh among them 51% are males 49% are females. The density of population was 200 inhabitants per square km. and the growth rate of the population over a decade i.e., 2001-2011 was 5.75%. As on 17th November 2015 A.D., the population was 1,144,408. The district has a sex ratio of 989 females for every 1000 males and literacy rate is 61.12%. The district has four taluks, it has four taluks namely, Yelandur, Kollegal, Gundlupet, Chamarajanagara, five educational blocks Chamarajanagar, Yelandur, Kollegal, Gundlupet and Hanur, 5 Taluk panchayaths with 120 gram panchayats and 461 villages. The district has one revenue sub-division, one Lok Sabha and five MLA constituencies.

Tribal Population

The district has a majority tribal population consisting of the Soligas, the Yeravas, the Jenukurubas and Bettakurubas. The major concentration of Soliga, as mentioned earlier, is in and around the Biligirirangana Hills and Mahadeshwara Hills of Chamarajanagar District.

The Kurubas

The Kuruba is the largest shepherd tribal group of Karnataka. Thurston (1909), quoting the Madras Census Report 1891 writes that the Kurubas or Kurumbas are modern representatives of the ancient Kurumbas or Pallavas who were once very powerful in South India. The Kurubas are divided into a number of sub castes such as the Jenu Kurubas, Betta Kurubas and Kadu Kurubas.16

The Jenukurubas are said to be the original residents of the forest regions of the Western Ghats and also other places of South India. The Jenukurubas are recognised as the primitive tribes in Karnataka, whose population is found in the four districts of Karnataka, namely, Mysore, Chamarajanagar, Hassan and Kodagu. Majority of them are found in Heggadadevanakote, Hunsur, and Periyapatana taluks of Mysore district, Gundlupet taluk of Chamarajanagar district and Virajpet, Somavarpet and Madikeri taluks of Kodagu district.17 Jenukurubas speak Jenu nudi, a dialect of Kannada, and one of the south Dravidian

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17 Boralingiah, and Prabhakar, Tribes of Karnataka A Pictorical Encyclopaedia, Hampi: Kannada University, Press.2013,35.
languages. They speak to others in Kannada. They use the Kannada script. Their settlements are called “Haaddis”.

The word ‘Jenu’ means honey and ‘Kuruba’ refers to the caste. The Jenukurubas are traditionally a hunting and gathering tribe with their livelihood system centered on forest products. Since they are people of nature, their indigenous knowledge of flora and fauna is praiseworthy. They can identify the honey hives from the movement of honey bees. Apart from honey collection, they are well versed in trapping elephants and training them. Jenukurubas are short-statured with a monocephalic head shape and show broad facial and nasal profiles. Their nasal profile is comparatively broader than the kadukuruba. They are non-vegetarians. Ragi and rice are their staple food.

They were originally food gatherers and practised collection of honey, herbs, roots and fruits from the forest. Though cultivable lands are provided by the Government, majority of them are still employed as daily wage labourers. The community has not responded positively towards the idea of saving money and continues to depend on money lenders and shop keepers for procuring loans. Women participate in all economic activities and contribute to the family income considerably.

As far as the marriage is concerned, monogamy is practised and alliances are generally made through negotiation. Marriages by elopement have also taken place. Divorce is allowed and remarriage of widows, widowers and male or female divorcees is permissible. The Jenukuruba bury the dead and observe pollution for twelve days. The family deities are Chikkamma, Doddamma, Patalamma, etc. They celebrate festivals of navarathri, ugadi, mahashivarathri and a few others.

After independence, Jenukurubas were displaced from their forest habitat when dams were constructed across the rivers Kabini and Taraka, and Nagarahole, Kakanakote, and Bandipura were declared as National Parks. Tribal groups who are displaced from their forest habitat do not have access to development programmes.

The Bettakurubas is an endogamous population in Karnataka, who on the other side of the borders in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, are called as Urali Kurman. It is said that they served as soldiers to the Hoysala and Pallava rulers. They live in the high reaches of Western Ghats of South India.

Ibid.,
Ethnically Kadukuruba and Bettakurubas are the same. But their profession over centuries, unnoticed has brought in rift, after their contact with the civilized world. Betta Kurubas speak a dialect of their own, which has similarity with Kannada language. The kadukuruba are short-statured, round headed and broad faced with a very broad nasal profile. Their settlements are found in the slopes of the hills and beside the streams of Heggadadevanakote taluk and Nanjangud taluk of Mysore district, Gundlupet taluk of Chamarajanagar district, Virajpet and Somwarpet taluks of Kodagu district. They prefer living as nuclear families. They follow monogamy and prefer to marry late in life. Love marriages are very common among these tribals. The elders don’t object to this kind of marriages. The marriage is performed at the bridegroom’s residence where the bride and bridegroom exchange areca nut and betal leaves and the bridegroom ties the sacred thread around the bride’s neck. The nuptial ceremony is performed at the same place. Once married the couple start living independently. Pollution caused by birth of a child is observed for seven days, though there are a number of restrictions lasting from three to five months. Post marital residence is patrilocal, divorce is granted if sought for reasons like allotter and maladjustment. Remarriage of widows, widowers and divorcees is allowed. After a divorce, the children become the liability of the father. The property of a deceased person is shared equally by all his sons and he is succeeded by the eldest son. They have a tribal council which decides the intra community disputes in an amicable manner with a hereditary headman called “Yejaman.” They are primarily Hindus and have faith in local deities like Mugappaji, BommaDevaru and Madappa. They celebrate most of the Hindu festivals. They sing folk-songs on the occasion of ugadi and other festivals.

The dead are buried and pollution caused by this is observed for ten days followed by a ceremony on the eleventh day. They are non-vegetarians and majority of them eat pork whereas ragi is their staple cereal. They have symbiotic relationship with nature. They make every effort to conserve the forest. They help the forest department during forest fires. They follow Hinduism and worship oflinga is a common practice. They worship the ancestors as well.

The primary occupations of the Kadukuruba are agriculture, agricultural labour, basket-making and rolling of beedies. Some of them are given land by the government. The

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V. Vijayalakshmi, Scheduled Tribes And Gender: Development Perception From Karnataka, The Institute For social and Economic Change, Bangalore. 2003.
women of this community participate in all domestic, social and economic activities. The Kadukurubas are highly skilled elephant trappers and they are experts in handling them. They are aware of the importance of formal education for their children. So they send their children to the Residential schools located in their villages which even provide nutritious meals to them. The Public Distribution System is a great boon to these tribals through which they get enough supply of essential commodities.

Kaniyans means people who are able to calculate and predict the future. They are found in the Bangalore, Mysore, Mandya, Hassan, Chamarajanagar and Dakshina Kannada Districts of Karnataka. Majority of them reside at present in the Kollegal taluk of Chamarajanagardistrict. Kannada language is spoken by them.

Their staple food consists of ragi, rice and jowar. Marriages by negotiation are common monogamy is the general rule. Bride price is prevalent and is paid in cash. Marriage is performed at the Bride’s house and very rarely in a public place. Divorce is not allowed. Remarriage is allowed only for widowers. They prefer nuclear families. The eldest son succeeds the father. Parental property is divided equally among the sons. The naming and tonsure rites are performed. Puberty rites for girls are observed by them. The dead are buried and pollution is observed for ten days. Annually they worship their ancestors.

Agricultural labour, silk worm rearing and silk reeling are the occupations followed by them. They have shown a positive attitude towards formal education. Some of them are qualified as engineers and doctors. Their attitude towards the modern health care system is favourable. The Kaniyans are Hindus and followers of Ramanujacharya.

Soligas

The Soligas live in the tropical evergreen forests of south India. They inhabit the states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. In Karnataka, they are found in the hilly regions of Mysore and Chamarajanagar Districts. The hilly regions covered with forests, low humidity and heavy rainfall are ideal locations of the Soligas. The soliga tribes are semi-nomadic in nature. The forest regions of Chamarajanagar, Yelandur, Gundlupet and Kollegal including the hilly tracts and foot hills of Biligiri rangana and Male Mahadeshwara in the southern part of Karnataka.

Soliga means “People of the Bamboo” as they believe that their ancestors originated from the bamboo. It might also have been derived from ‘Solai’ or ‘Cholai’ which means
thickets inhabited by them. The Soligas have a symbiotic relationship with nature. They believe that human life is intertwined with the eco-system. The tribal laws reflect their love for nature.

The Soligas are below medium statured people with a long and narrow head shape, an oval face and broad nose. They consume ragi, rice, tubers, pulses etc., apart from non-vegetarian food. They consume beverages like milk, coffee and tea and smoke beedis and wild Indian hemp. They also chew betal leaves. They speak ‘Soliganudi’ which is similar to Kannada. They use Kannada to communicate with others.

The Soligas have five divisions, viz. Uralisoliga, Kadusoliga, Malaisoliga, Urubathi or Dasayya or Burudesoliga and Poojari. The ‘Malai’ and ‘Urali’ are the most numerous. These sub divisions are differentiated on the basis of territory, language and social structure. The Soliga settlements are called as “Podus”.

Adult marriages are common and are performed by negotiation. When marriage is preceded by elopement, the newly wed couple host a community feast afterwards for social approval and recognition of their marriage. Divorce is sanctioned in case of adultery and maladjustment. Remarriages are permitted for divorcees and widowers. The dead are buried and ancestors are worshipped annually.

Karayya, Kyate Deveru, Jadeswamy and some other deities are worshipped by the Soligas. Mahadeshwara is the regional deity not only worshipped by the Soligas, but also by the non-tribals. Rotti Habba and Mane Devarahabba are some of the festivals celebrated by them. Rituals during the naming ceremony, puberty of the girls and death are performed.

They were practising shifting cultivation, but have more or less given up this practice now. They grow ragi for subsistence, although their main source of income is harvesting and sale of non-timber forest products like honey, gooseberry, bamboo, lichen etc., The women of this community fetch water, collect fuels and non-timber forest products, take care of children and even all other works related to agriculture and thus contribute to the family income.

They have their tribal council to decide the local disputes headed by the headman called ‘Yajamana’. They have a favourable attitude towards formal education and modern health care facilities. They even believe in traditional medical practises.
Male Mahadeshwara Hills

Male Mahadeshwara Hills is located in the Kollegal taluk of Chamarajanagar district. The hills are located about three thousand feet above the sea level. According to the Puranas, the Male Mahadeshwara Hills consists of seven hills, namely, Anumale, Jenumale, Kanumale, Pachchemale, Ravalamale, Ponnachimale and Kongumale. It is a pilgrimage town as the Malai Mahadeshwara temple is located here. The hill derives its name from a saint by name Mahadeshwara.

According to the legends, Mahadeshwara was the son of a virgin called Uttarajamma, who belonged to the Madiga caste, and were living in Srishaila in Andhra Pradesh. The Madigas are skilled leather workers. It is believed that Mahadeshwara belonged to fifteenth century and from his boyhood, he was spiritually inclined. He was guided by the pontiffs from Suttur and Kunthur Mutt. Mahadeshwara had come from Sri Shaila to perform penance in Mahadeshwara hills. When he went into the dense forests, he saw a number of saints who were taken captive by a demon king called Shravanan. This place is known as Thavasere and the place where Shravanan lived is called as Shravana Boli. Mahadeshwara is said to have released all the saints and performed a number of miracles. It is believed that he is the incarnation of Lord Shiva. Even he is depicted as seated on a Tiger (Hulivahana). Mahadeshwara established a mut and enlightened and uplifted the hill tribes and made them his disciples. He is worshipped as the family god by the hill tribes such as the Soligas, Jenu Kurubas, Kadu Kurubas and Kuruba Gowdas. Mahadeshwara established a mut in order to look after the ecclesiastical afftairs of M.M.Hills.

The Temple consists of a gopura at the entrance and a big Nandi. Many small shrines are seen around the main temple such as Sri Adi Madappa, Indi Basaveshwara, GaujalaKatte, Bale KalluBasaveshwara, Sri Tapasare, Paadadhare, Karaih’s Boli, and KanaveBasappa. Apart from this, there is a stream called ‘Antharagange’, flowing from a perennial source. As a holy dip in this is considered as sacred, a large number of pilgrims take bath here to cleanse their sins. The people believe that Mahadeshwara is still performing penance in the form of Shivalinga. The first worship in this temple starts at 5.30 A.M and continues till 8 in the night with breaks. Special Poojas are performed on festival days and every full moon and new moon. During ‘Shravana’ month, four Special Sevas are held. Maha Jyothi Darshanam, Homa and Deepada Girioddu’ are held on the last Monday of Karthika Maasa. During Sankashta Hara Chathurthi, Abhishekaanto Sri BalamuriGanapathi is performed. Mahashivarathri is celebrated in a very special way, when devotees throng in large
numbers to get the blessings of the Lord. During Mahalaya Amavasya, Diwali, Shivarathri and Ugadi, special Poojas are performed. The Mysore Wodeyars have gifted a lot to this temple. The Alambadi Fort lies in the restricted forest area of this hill. There is a Hanuman temple of the Vijayanagara times, Aranganathaswamy temple is found inside the fort. The temple was under the control of Madras Government and after the unification of Karnataka, it came under the control of the trust committee, appointed by the Karnataka Government under the ‘Muzrai’ Department.

Most of the people use road transport system to reach the place. Some people still use the Bull route i.e., by walk. There are 22 buses operated by the Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation, Government of Karnataka, 16 buses run by the private companies, 10 buses by the temple, and 19 buses by the Tamil Nadu Road Transport Corporation every day. Special buses are operated on festival days. Approximately 4,000 people visit this temple every day. Free food is provided by the Dasoha Bhavana. This service started in 1987 when free meals were given once a day. From April 1989, it is increased two meals a day. From 8th July 1998, the free meals are served in the Dasoha Bhavana, constructed at a cost of Rs. One crore. Gurudarshini, Mahadeshwara Bhavan, Shyla Bhavan, Giri Darshini, Seventy Six Hall, Surya Bhavan, Shiva Darshini are the different accommodation units built by the Government of Karnataka. Apart from the above, there are sixty special cottages and forty-two private cottages.

The Biligiri Rangana Hills

The Biligiri Rangana Hills, popularly called as B.R. Hills is located in the Yelandur taluk of Chamarajanagar district. In Kannada language ‘Biligiri’ means white hills. In Sanskrit the hill is called Swethadri. The hills are called so because of the White clouds that surround them. Dense forests surround the hills and the peak of the hill reaches about 1332 metres above sea level.

The hills are famous for the temple of Lord Ranganatha or Lord Venkatesha which is situated on top of the hill. The deity is said to have been installed by sage Vashista. The local form of the deity is called “Biligiriranga” and is depicted in a unique standing position.

The deity was originally called as Lord Srinivasa. It is believed that when Tippu Sultan was ruling Mysore, once he happened to visit this hills on an hunting expedition. As he saw the hills from the plains he was surprised by the majestic view of the white hills. On
further enquiry, he came to understand that there was a temple for Lord Srinivasa. As he was the ardent devotee of Ranganathaswamy of Srirangapattana, he made liberal grants to this temple. So later on Lord Srinivasa came to be known as Ranganatha.

The temple is constructed in the Dravidian style and medium sized. It has a huge enclosure and the two idols of Vishnu—one in the Garbhagriha and the other outside are enchanting. The God is depicted as carrying a sword apart from the conchshell and the wheel. A saint from Karnataka known as Kanakadasa is said to have visited this place and sung the glory of the Lord. There is a cave on the hills called the ‘Kanakadasa cave’ where he is supposed to have stayed. The Goddess has a separate shrine with a Tamil name “Alamelumangai Thayaar”. Idols of some of the Alwars are also found in the temple in separate shrines, which confirms that in the past, the place must have been a centre of Tamil Vaishnavites.

The Annual Car festival of the deity known as ‘Rathothsava’ held during “Vaishakha” i.e., in the month of April, has become very popular. The Soligas not only take care of the maintenance of the temple but also participate in the festival in large numbers. They believe that Lord Ranganatha had a Soliga tribal consort. The festival attracts thousands of pilgrims from far and wide. Nearly 50,000 outsiders gather here. The other festival is the Kalyana Uthsavam. This is a celebration of the marriage of the deity. After the celebrations, the Lord and his consort are seated opposite to each other in the ‘mandapam’. It is said that the Goddess is a ‘Padithanda Pathni’, which means ‘one who never crosses the threshold’. The priest representing the Lord will request the Goddess to go out with him in the procession. At that moment, someone in the crowd would release a rabbit which would go in between the two deities. Then the Goddess would indicate that since the rabbit had crossed her path, it is inauspicious for her to go out. The Lord alone goes out in procession to give ‘darshan’ to the devotees. Every year, huge leather chappals measuring one foot and nine inches are prepared and offered to the Lord to enable him to go around and protect the people living in the forests. Lot of flowers and fruits are offered to the God during this time. Little away from the temple is found a huge Champak tree which is said to be more than 700 years old. There are a number of black stones found around the tree, said to be ‘Salagrama’ stones. An ashram known as Vishwashanthi Ashram
is located here. An experimental station for sericulture and a potato research centre is located here. Coffee and cinchona plantations are coming up.

The Biligiri Rangan Hills was declared as a Wildlife Sanctuary under Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. The wildlife sanctuary with an area of 322.4 square kilometres was created around the temple on 27th June 1974, and enlarged to 539.52 square kilometres on 14th January 1987. It is located between 11° and 12° N and the ridges of the hills run in the north-south direction. This area was declared a tiger reserve in January 2011 by the Karnataka government. Nearly eight hundred species of plants from various families and animals like elephants, sambhar, chita, barking deer, four horned antelope, tigers, leopards, wild dogs, cats, sloth bears, two species of primates and three species of squirrels including the giant flying squirrel are found here.