CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY
AND POLITICAL HISTORY
OF SHIMOGA,
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AND HASSAN DISTRICTS
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Shimoga District

Shimoga is one of the twenty-nine districts of the Karnataka State, and is situated roughly in the mid-south-western part of the state. It has had an eventful history and has a rich cultural tradition. It is also bestowed with abundant natural resources. The western area of the district consists of a mountainous terrain, while on the eastern side there is a striking transition from Malenadu (a largely forested, hilly region with heavy rainfall) and semi-Malenadu (an area having the natural characteristics, to some extent, of both Malenadu and Maidan) to Maidan (an open region of level land). The western part is replete with fascinating natural beauty, being clothed with dense tropical forests stimulated by heavy rainfall. The eastern area consists of an open country with some fine lakes and rocky hills making this part also attractive to the eye.

The district is bound on the east by the Chitradurga district, on the south by the Chikmagalure district, on the west by the North Kanara district and the Udupi district and on the north by the Haveri district and parts of the Davanagere district. The greater part of the district lies in the Malenadu, and it consists of the area west of from Shikaripur to Gajanur. The eastern portion lies in the Maidan region which is an open country. While Thirthahalli, Hosanagar, Sagar and Sarab taluks come under the Malenadu part, the taluks of Shikaripur, Shimoga and Bhadravathi form a semi-Malenadu area. The western portion with its tropical forests and mountain wilds presents superbly enchanting natural scenes. “The view from the head of the descent to the falls of Gerusoppa is probably one of the choicest bits of scenery in the world”.

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There are three ghats namely the Agumbe ghat, in Thirthahalli taluk and the Hulikal and Kollur ghats in Hosanagar taluk. They provide outlets through the picturesque hill country down to parts of the erstwhile South Kanara district.

The Shimoga district slopes from west to east. The general elevation along the watershed is about 640 metres above the sea-level in the west, falling to about 529 metres in the east. The 640 metres contour runs near Sorab, Sagar, Talaguppa, Hosanagar and Nagar, while the 529 metres contour runs near Shimoga.

The western side of the district rests upon the Western Ghats, called the Sahyadri. The rise towards the crest of the ghats is very rapid, a height of 1,343 metres being attained at Kodachadri, a mountain on whose summit meet the two boundaries of Shimoga and the erstwhile South Kanara districts. Kodachadri is a fine peak situated about 16.1 kilometres northwest of Nagar. The interior part of the district is crossed by a chain of hills. The Bileshvarabetta or Agastyparpvata near Humcha is 864.41 metres high. The other conspicuous hills are Govardhanagiri on the western border of Sagar taluk, and Chandragutti in Sorab taluk with a height of 848 metres. The south-western part around Nagar and Kavaledurga, too, is full of hills.¹

Political History of the District as an Administrative Unit

The region could have been a part of the dominions of the Mauryas, but in about the third century A.D. a branch of Satavahanas held sway over the district. Some time later, about ⁴ᵗʰ century A.D. the Kadambas of Banavasi rose to power in the region. While the Kadambas ruled the western portion of the district, the Gangas of Talakad administered the eastern part. In the ⁶ᵗʰ century the Chalukyas of Badami subdued both the Kadambas and the Gangas who, however, continued as feudatories of the former. Later, the Gangas lost a major portion of their territory in the district. In the seventh century, a small
A principality was established at Humcha by Santaradeva, a Jain Chieftain. During the next century, the Rastrakutas of Malakhed established their suzerainty over this region.

In the 10th century, the Banavasi-12000 region along with some other parts was added to the Ganga Kingdom by the Rastrakutas in recognition of the help rendered by the Gangas in defeating the Cholas. In the 11th century, the Hoysalas became powerful and ruled over the district. As a result of several wars between the Hoysalas and the Sevunas (Yadavas) of Devagiri the northern parts of the district were held by the later for some time. The Kalachuris were in power for only a short period during the 12th century. Belagutti in this district was the capital of a principality during this time and also later. After Hoysala power came to an end in the 14th century, the district became a part of the Vijayanagara Empire. Araga in this district was the capital of a province under Vijayanagara. About the beginning of the 16th century, Keladi Nayakas (also sometimes called Ikkeri or Bidnur Nayakas) established themselves in the area. There was also the small principality of Basavapatna in the east of the district. In 1763, Haidar Ali captured Bidnur, the capital of the Keladi Nayakas, and as a result, this district along with other areas of their kingdom was annexed to Mysore. After 1799 A.D. during the early period of the Wodeyars of Mysore, the Nagar Faujdari included the present Shimoga and Kadur (Now called Chikmagalure) districts. In 1862, the Shimoga, Kadur and Chitradurga districts were formed into the Nagar Division which was, however, abolished in 1879. The Kumsi hobli (revenue circle) was made a separate sub-taluk under the Shimoga taluk in 1862. Nyamathi was made the head quarters of the Honnali taluk in 1869. The headquarters of this taluk was again transferred to Honnali in 1882. Now this area has become part of the Davanagere district.
In 1882, Davanagere taluk was transferred to the Shimoga district but it was reverted to Chitradurga in 1886. Till 1882, the Thirthahalli taluk was called Kavaledurga taluk. The area of the Nagar taluk was extended in 1832-33 by amalgamating it with the Anantapur taluk (Now Anandapuram), but the latter was re-established as a taluk in 1857 and continued as a taluk till 1875 when it was merged in Sagar taluk. The headquarters of the Nagar taluk was transferred to Kallurkatte (now called Hosanagar) in 1893.

Twentythree villages, which formed a part of the Shikaripur taluk, were transferred to the Sagar taluk on the 1st of October 1923. Between 1941 and 1950, the Kumsi sub-taluk was merged with the Shimoga taluk, and a separate new taluk of Bhadravathi was constituted with the Bhadravathi hobli (excluding five villages) and Kudlagere hobli and twenty villages of the Holehonnr hobli of the old Shimoga taluk. Between 1941 and 1951, three villages, namely, Koteshirur, Nagodi and Hebbige of the erstwhile South Kanara district were transferred to the Hosanagar taluk.

For administrative purposes, the district is divided into two sub-divisions, viz., Shimoga sub-division and Sagar sub-division. The Shimoga Sub-division at present consists of Shimoga, Bhadravathi, and Thirthahalli taluks, the Sagar subdivision consists of Sagar, Hosanagar, Sorab and Shikaripura taluks.

Chikmagalore District

The Chikmagalore district (which was called Kadur district till 1947) is one of the twenty-nine districts of Karnataka. It is situated roughly in the southwestern part of the State. A large area of this district is Malenadu, i.e., a largely forested hilly region with heavy rainfall. The stupendous barrier of the Baba-Budan mountain range is in the centre of the district. The Western Ghats range, which borders the western part of the district, rises into some of the loftiest peaks. The landscape of the tract is highly enchanting. The slopes of the
mountains and hills here are replete with fascinating natural beauty. They are clad with thick forests, through which shining streams wind their way, fertilising the narrow valleys and glades.

The district is bounded on the east by the Tumkur district, on the south by the Hassan district, on the west by the Western Ghats which separate it from the Mangalore and Udupi districts, on the north-east by the Chitradurga district and on the north by the Shimoga district.

Large parts of the Chikmagalure district are mountainous. There is a formidable ghat range in the west of this area which has some of the loftiest peaks between the Himalayas and the Nilgiris. The stupendous barrier of the Baba-Budan chain of superior elevation is in the centre. There are also more modest ranges which extend throughout the north and the east with a little exception eastwards. The magnificent Merti peak of Kalasa is a conspicuous landmark. Thus, this district (with a small exception in the east) may truly be described as pre-eminently a high-land area. The eastern parts of Kadur and Tarikere taluks show the features of Maidan, an open tract (level-land). The transition from Malenadu to Maidan is very abrupt and striking on approaching Lakkavalli from the west.

The Chandradrona or Baba-Budan range, the loftiest range on the Karnataka table-land, is situated in the centre of the Chikmagalure district.

The highest point in the district and in Karnataka is Mullaiyanagiri which rises to 1,926.7 metres (6,317 feet) above the sea-level and is situated towards the south of the range. It is one of the loftiest mountains between the Himalayas and the Nilgiris. Another lofty peak is the Kudremukha (‘horse-face’) mountain. It is 1,895.6 metres (6,215 feet) high. Next to this is Baba-Budangiri 1,895.3 metres (6,214 feet). On the Baba-Budan mountain, there is a noted shrine known as Sri Guru Dattatreya Peetha, also called as Guru Dattatreya Baba-Budan.
Swami’s Dargha, which is highly venerated by both Hindus and Muslims. The conspicuous conical peak on the outer verge of the eastern face is Devirammanagudda. Near the north-east angle is situated Kallattigiri which is 1,877.3 metres (6,155 feet) in height. On the north-east of the mountains is the Hebbe Falls Ballalarayanadurga is a fortified hill in the Western Ghats. It is 1,506.7 metres (4,940 feet) high and is situated near Mudigere.4

Political History of the District as an Administrative Unit

From an early period, the area was a part of the dominion of the Kadambas of Banavasi. Later, the Gangas of Talakad held sway over some parts of the district. In the 7th century A.D., Santara Deva founded a principality at Humcha in Shimoga district and then his dynasty extended its control southwards as far as Kalasa in this district, which became their new capital. The Santaras ruled over the area for a long time. It was in this district that the illustrious Hoysalas had their origin in the early part of the 11th century, at Sorsevur, known also as Sasakapura (now called Angadi), in the Mudigere taluk. Later, with their capital at Dorasamudra (Halebid in the Hassan district), they gradually rose to great power, built-up, a formidable kingdom and played a memorable role in South India upto about the fourth decade of the 14th century.

Under the Vijayanagara Empire, the western part of the district was under the Santaras who had their capital at Katkal in Dakshina Kannada, the southern part under the Nayakas of Aigur and the north-estern parts under the Basavapatna (later known as Tarikere) chiefs. Later, a greater part of the district became a possession of the Keladi kingdom. In the 17th century, Shivappa Nayaka, the Keladi ruler, gave shelter to Sriranga Raya, the fugitive emperor of Vijayanagara with Sakharayapatna (Sakrepatna). Belur and the neighbourhood, as the latter’s estate. However, after a few years, Sriranga Raya left the region. As a result of a treaty between the kingdoms of Keladi and Mysore, some parts
came into the possession of the Wodeyars of Mysore in 1694 A.D. In 1763 A.D. on Haidar Ali’s seizure, after the downfall of Tipu Sultan in 1799 A.D., when royal power was restored to the Wodeyars of Mysore, this district formed a part of the Nagar Division.\(^5\)

There were frequent local changes in regard to the taluk limits of the district. It appears that originally the district had only Kadur, Yagati, Gurudanagiri and Banavar taluks. Later, Garudanagiri taluk was merged with Banavar taluk, and the Yagati taluk was absorbed in Kadur taluk. Till 1875, the western portion of Chikmagalore taluk formed a part of a separate taluk of Vastare, formed earlier in about 1863. The taluk of Mudigere was brought into existence in 1876, bringing together some of the villages of Manjarabad, Belur and Vastare taluks. Lakkavalli gave its name to a taluk which included Baba-Budan Mountains and parts of Koppa and Balehonnur taluks till 1882. In that year, Kadur and Banavar were combined into one taluk of Banavar. The district was restricted to its present limits in 1886 when the Hassan district was restored. The Kalasa Magani (a group of villages) was transferred to Balehonnur taluk in 1897. The headquarters of Koppa taluk was at Hariharapura till 1897. The Yedehalli sub-taluk (now Narasimharajapura taluk) was attached to Koppa taluk till 1897.

In 1947, the name was changed from Kadur district to Chikmagalure district. Prior to this change, in 1865 itself, the district headquarters was changed from Kadur to Chikmagalur town. Till 1958-59, there was a separate Jagir of Sringeri. During that year, it was made an independent taluk with the single Sringeri hobli. Later in 1965-66, Kigga hobli was transferred from Koppa taluk to Sringeri taluk. The taluks of Koppa and Sringeri which were in Tarikere sub-division were transferred to Chikmagalure subdivision in 1973.
Subdivisions and Taluks

For administrative purposes, the district is divided into two subdivisions, viz., Chikmagalure subdivision and Tarikere subdivision. The former consists of Chikmagalure, Mudigere, Sringeri and Koppa taluks while the latter comprises Tarikere, Narasimharajapura and Kadur taluks. The seven taluks of the district have been further subdivided into 32 hoblis revenue circles, each of which, in turn, consists of a number of villages.  

Hassan District

Hassan, which is one of the twentynine districts of the new Mysore State, is situated in the south-western part of the State. The district has had an eventful and rich history. In the past, it reached the height of its glory during the rule of the Hoysalas who had their capital at Dorasamudra, the modern Halebid in Belur taluk. The district, noted for its enchanting natural scenery of Malenadu (a mainly forested, hilly region of heavy, reliable rainfall) is also a veritable treasure-house of the Hoysala architecture and sculpture, the best specimens of which are at Belur and Halebid. Shravanabelgola in Channarayapatna taluk which is studded with Jaina monuments is a renowned centre of pilgrimage for the Jains.

It is bounded on the north by Chikmagalure district, on the east by Tumkur and Mandya districts, on the south by Mysore and Coorg districts and on the west by the former South Kanara district.

The district lies partly in the Malenadu tract and partly in the southern Maidan (plains) tract. Taking into consideration the physical aspects, climate, rainfall, etc., the district may be divided into three regions, viz., (1) southern Malenadu, (2) semi-Malenadu and (3) southern Maidan. While the western and north-eastern portions of the Belur taluk, western and central parts of the Alur taluk and the whole of the Manjarabad taluk constitute the southern Malenadu
region, the central part of the Arkalgud taluk, the western portion of the Hassan
taluk, the eastern portion of the Alur taluk, the central and eastern parts of the
Belur taluk and the western part of the Arsikere taluk form the semi-Malenadu
region. The southern Maidan region includes the whole of the Holenarsipur and
Channarayapatna taluks, eastern parts of the Arsikere and Hassan taluks and the
south-eastern portions of the Arkalgud taluk.

The southern Malenadu is a forest-clad hilly region with a heavy rainfall. On
the western periphery are the picturesque ghats extending from the pass at
Bisle Ghat to the Jenkal-betta, with some lofty peaks in them. The features of the
semi-Malenadu region fringing the Malenadu area on the east are, more or less,
similar to those of the Maidan, but the climate, the forest vegetation and the
economic situation have strong similarities with the Malenadu proper. The
villages here are more compact than in the rnalnad, but somewhat isolated. The
rainfall in this region is lower than in the Malenadu area.

The southern Maidan is much larger in extent than the other two regions
and is also the most populous region of the district. It consists of an undulating
plain country, generally cultivated, with some extensive kavals here and there.
Patches covered with wild date palm are common and in some parts can be seen
limited tracts of stunted jungle growing upon a gravelly or gritty soil. The high-
lying lands, particularly in the Hassan, Channarayapatna and Holenarsipur
taluks, present a bare and bleak appearance and are so stony that they are not fit
for cultivation. They, however, serve as good catchment areas for tanks.

Some low hills also pass through Holenarsipur taluk towards Hassan and
Channarayapatna. The Indra-betta (Indragiri) in the south-eastern part of
Channarayapatna taluk is 3,347 feet or 1,020 metres high and is noted for the 57-
foot colossal statue of Gommateshwara on its summit. Among the hills in the
Hassan taluk, mention may be made of Seegegudda Mukundur-betta and those
in the Aidahalli Kaval and Kattaya Karle Kaval metres). Hippli-betta in the

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western portion of the Arkalgud taluk, Mallappana-betta in the Holenarsipur taluk and Maharajanadurga in the Alur taluk are among the other hillocks in the district.

**Political History of District as an Administrative Unit**

In the early period of the known history of this region of the State, parts of this district were included in the kingdoms of the Kadambas and the Western Gangas (from about the 4th century to the 11th century). The Kongalvas, according to their inscriptions dating from 1020 to 1177, ruled over a small kingdom situated mainly in the Arkalgud taluk, between the Cauvery and the Hemavathy rivers. The Changanas also held sway over a part of the district for a long period from the 10th century. But the district is more particularly identified with the rise of the Hoysala power. The dynasty came into prominence in the 11th century and continued in power till about the middle of the 14th century. The Hoysala kingdom, which had been extended vastly, was very prosperous. The district next came under the rule of the Vijayanagara kings, who had eventually become paramount over all the regions south of the Krishna. They are said to have taken a particular interest in the province of Balam, the centre of which was the present Manjarabad, the area which was the former stronghold of the Hoysalas, and people of all castes were encouraged to settle there by granting them land at little or no rent. The wealthier among the immigrants were made patels and received large inams. Later, all the western portions of the district, along with the adjoining tracts above and below the ghats, were bestowed upon one Veena Ramappa, a court musician. Again, after some years, i.e., in 1397, the entire province of Balam, then yielding revenue of three lakhs of pagodas, was made over by the Vijayanagara rulers to Singappa Nayaka, one of their generals and son of an old paleyagar. The Balam paleyagars had their capital at Aigur, in the present Manjarabad taluk, and ruled for some generations.
In 1633, the Mysore Rajas gained possession of Channaranyapatna from the *paleyagar* of Holenarsipur. But shortly afterwards, Shivappa Nayaka of Ikkeri occupied a part of Balam province and held it for 37 years. However, under a treaty concluded in 1694 between Mysore and Ikkeri, six *nads* or revenue circles of Manjarabad were ceded to the old chiefs and the remainder of the Balam province was divided between the two contending parties. From this time, the whole of Hassan district, except Manjarabad, formed a part of the Mysore territory. The Arsikere taluk appears to have suffered considerably from the raids of the Marathas and at one time was even handed over to them as security for the payment of tribute. Krishnappa Nayaka was ruling Balam during Tipu Sultan’s time. As a result of his joining the camp opposed to the Sultan, the former fled to Coorg fearing the Sultan’s displeasure. But Tippu induced him to return and, however, gave him the Government of Aigur-sime, forming the south of Balam. His son, Venkatadri Nayaka, was in possession of Aigur-sime during the fall of Srirangapatna in 1799.8

During the nineteenth century, the Hassan district first formed part of the Patnada Rayada, and was then called the Manjarabad Faujdari. From 1832, it was included in the Ashtagram Division, which was, however, abolished at the time of the Rendition in 1881.

The Krishnarajpet and Nagamangala taluks, which now form parts of Mandya district, were a part of the Hassan district upto 1882. Consequent on a revision of territorial divisions of the State, these two taluks were detached from the Hassan district during that year and included in the Mysore district. Till 1882, Banavar and Harnahalli were headquarters of two different taluks of the same name. While Banavar taluk was included in the Kadur district, Harnahalli taluk was in Hassan district itself. In 1882, Banavar taluk was abolished and was absorbed in the Arsikere taluk and transferred to the Hassan district. Similarly, Harnahalli taluk was also abolished and absorbed in the same taluk. The Arkalgud taluk, which initially consisted of ten hoblies (revenue circles), was
also abolished in 1882 and its hoblies were distributed among the adjoining taluks. During the same year, the district was reduced to a sub-division under Kadur district, with only four taluks, viz., Arsikere, Belur, Hassan (with Grama sub-taluk) and Manjarabad. However, the Arkalgud taluk was revived in 1886, but with only six hoblies, and during that year, Hassan was re-established as a district with seven taluks, viz., Hassan, Manjarabad, Belur, Arsikere, Channarayapatna, Holenarispur and Arkalgud and a sub-taluk, viz., Grama, under Hassan taluk. In 1894, the Grama sub-taluk was abolished and in its place Alur, which was the headquarters of the old Maharajanadurga taluk till 1875, was made a sub-taluk under Hassan taluk. In 1904, the number of hoblies of the Arkalgud taluk was further reduced to five by distributing the villages of one hobl among the remaining hoblies. Later, in 1941, Alur was also made a full-fledged taluk, and, since then, the district came to have eight taluks as at present.

The eight taluks of the district were divided into three revenue sub-divisions, viz., Hassan Sub-Division, Holenarispur Sub-Division and Sakleshpur Sub-Division, for administrative purposes. While the Hassan Sub-Division consisted of Hassan and Alur taluks, the Holenarispur Sub-Division had, under it, the taluks of Holenarispur, Arsikere, Channarayapatna and Arkalgud. The Sakleshpur Sub-Division consisted of the remaining two taluks, viz., Manjarabad and Belur. The Holenarispur Sub-Division was, however, abolished in 1920, and since then there have been only two revenue sub-divisions in the district, viz., Hassan and Sakleshpur. Now the Hassan Sub-Division consists of Hassan, Arsikere, Channarayapatna, Holenarispur and Arkalgud taluks, while the taluks of Manjarabad, Belur and Alur come under the jurisdiction of the Sakleshpur Sub-Division. These eight taluks have been further sub-divided into 38 hoblies or revenue circles, each of which, in turn, consists of about 40 to 80 villages on an average.9

Thus the above is a brief historical geography and divisions of the region.
END NOTES


