

Chapter - 3

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING AND CULTURAL HISTORY OF HASSAN DISTRICT, KARNATAKA

*Until man duplicates a blade of grass, nature
can laugh at his so-called scientific knowledge.*

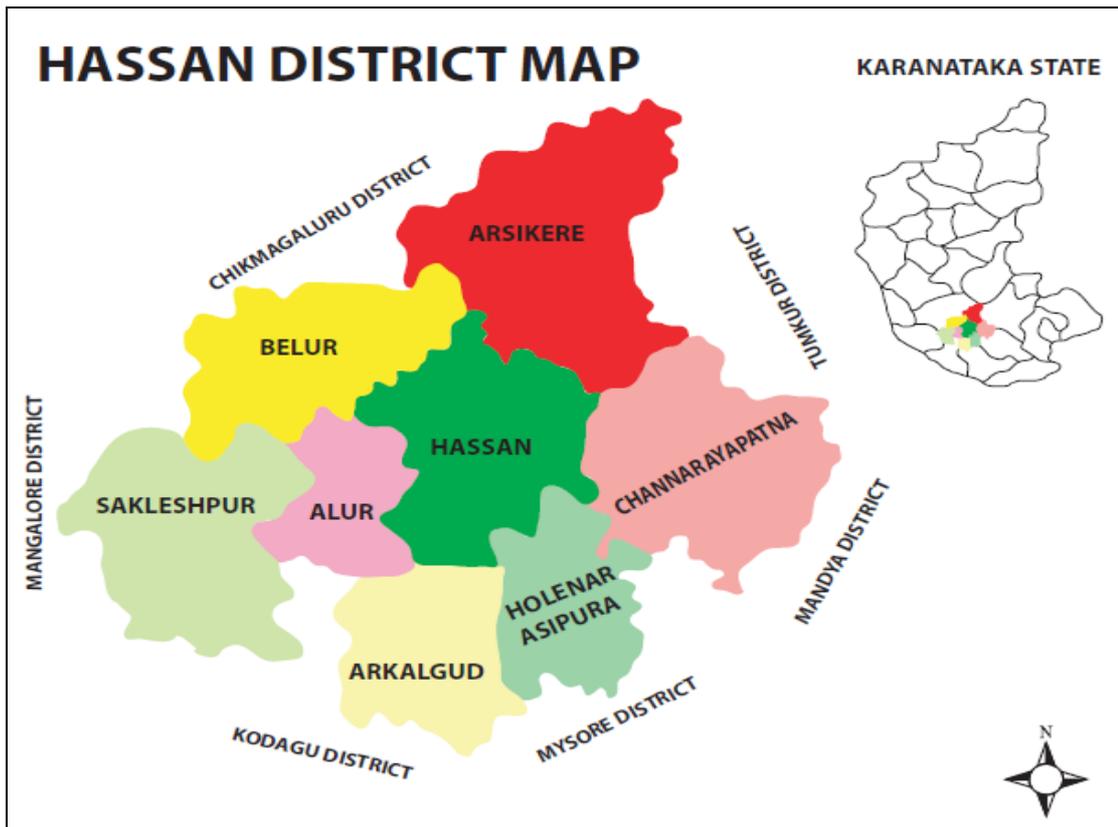
(Thomas Edison)

Hassan District is one of the 30 districts of modern Karnataka state. The district is situated in the south-western part of the state between 12° 13' and 13° 33' North latitudes and 75° 33' and 76° 38' East longitudes and occupies a total area of 6854 sq. Km. It consists of 8 *talukas* viz. Hassan, Alur, Arkalgud, Arsikere, Belur, Channarayapatna, Holenarsipura and Sakleshpur; and 2559 villages. The district is surrounded by Chikmagalur District on the north west, Chitradurga District to the north, Tumkur District to the east, Mandya District to the south east, Mysore District to the south, Kodagu District to the south west and Dakshina Kannada District to the west (Map 3.1).

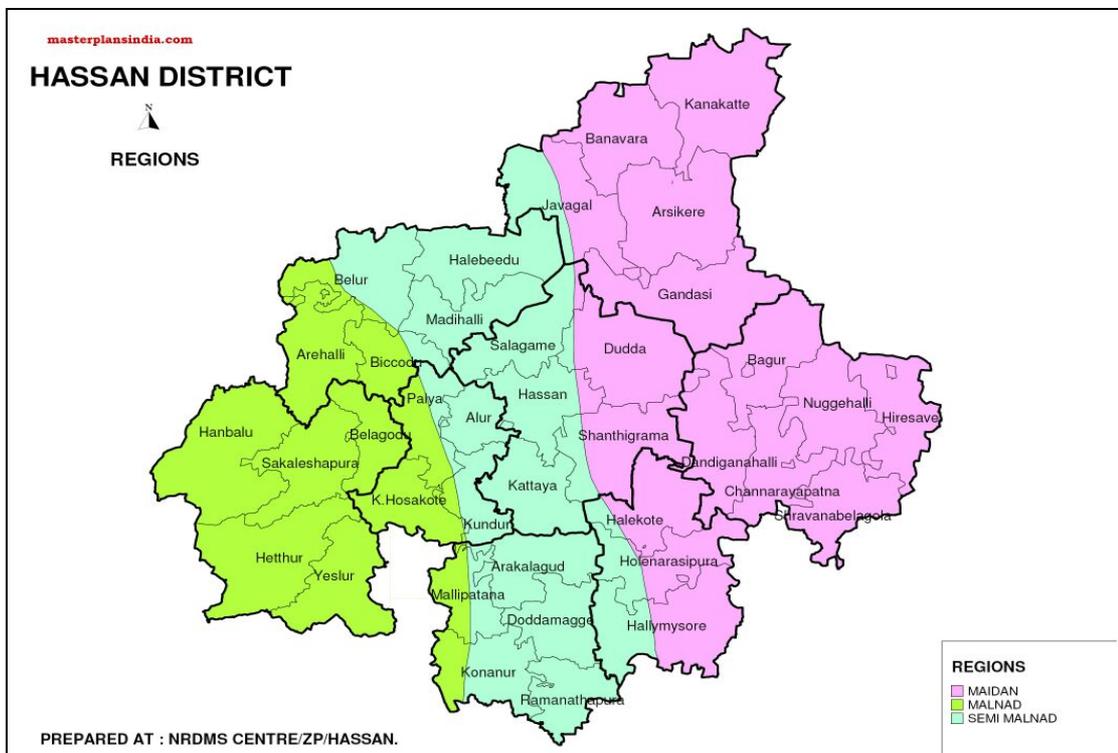
This chapter sets Hassan District, Karnataka within its broad environmental and cultural background. The chapter is divided into two sections. Section 3.1 deals with the environmental setting and Section 3.2 deals with the cultural history of the region till the end of 18th Century CE.

3.1. Environmental setting

Hassan District lies partly in the *malnad* zone and partly in the southern *maidan* zone of modern day Karnataka state. Taking into consideration the physical aspects, climate and precipitation, the region may be divided into three zones viz. (a) southern *malnad*; (b) semi-*malnad*; and (c) southern *maidan*. The western and north eastern parts of Belur *taluka*, western and central parts of Alur *taluka* and the whole of the Sakaleshpura *taluka* constitute the southern *malnad* region of the



Map 3.1: Map showing the administrative divisions of Hassan District, Karnataka
(Image source: www.hassan.nic.in)



Map 3.2: Map showing physiographic zones in Hassan District, Karnataka
(Image source: www.hassan.nic.in)

district. The central part of the Arkalgud *taluka*, the western part of Hassan *taluka*, the eastern part of Alur *taluka*, the western part of Arsikere *taluka*, and the central and eastern parts of Belur *taluka* constitute the semi-*malnad* zone. The southern *maidan* region of the district includes the whole of Channarayapatna and Holenarsipura *talukas*, the south eastern parts of Arkalgud *taluka* and the eastern portions Arsikere and Hassan *talukas* (Map 3.2).

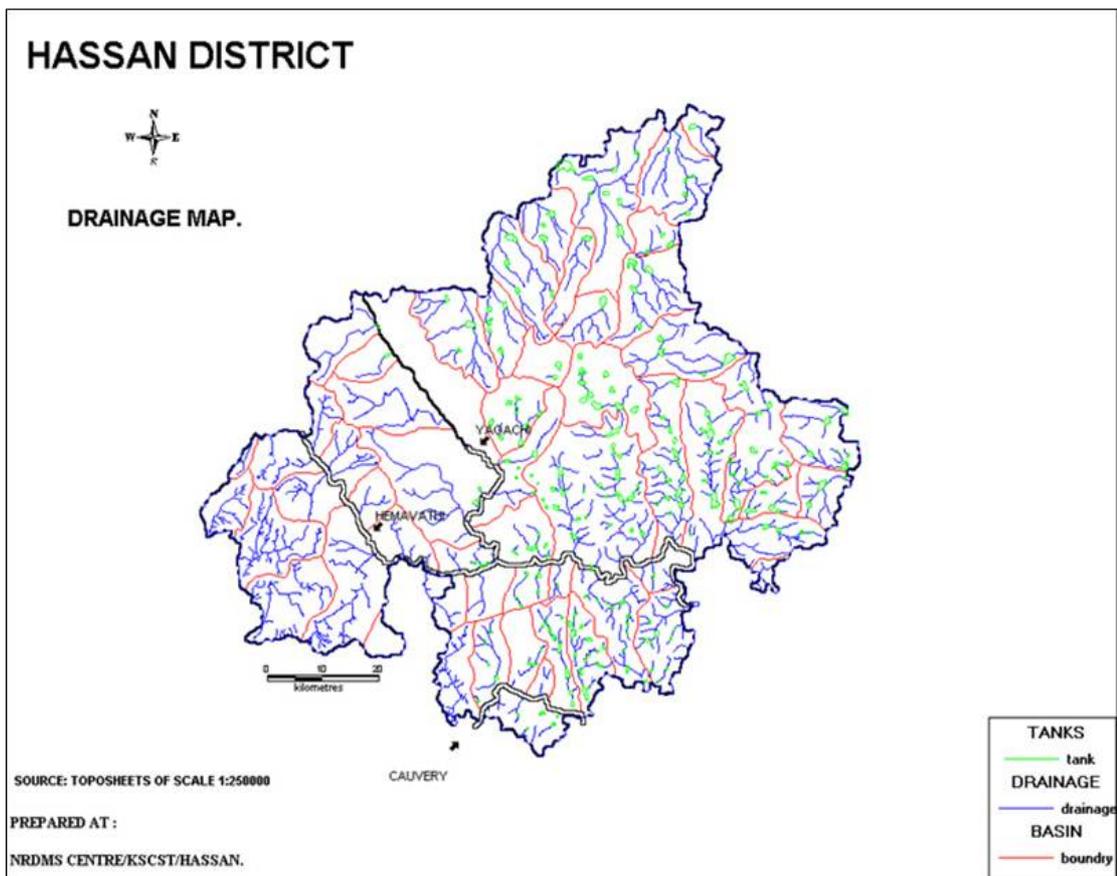
The southern *malnad* zone constitutes a forest covered hilly region characterised by heavy rainfall. A few peaks in this zone such as Pushagiri or Subramanya; Devarabetta, Murukanagudda and Jenkal-betta rise to a height of 1715, 1282, 1300 and 1389 meters respectively. The semi-*malnad* zone bordering the southern *malnad* zone on the east is characterised by more or less similar features to those of the southern *maidan* zone, but the climate, forest vegetation and the economic situation have strong similarities with the *malnad* zone. The villages here are more compact than in the *malnad* and the rainfall here is lower than in the *malnad* zone. The southern *maidan* is much larger in extent than the other two zones and is also the most populous zone in the district. It consists of an undulating plain country, generally cultivated and interceded with sporadic *kavals*. A few isolated hills are also seen in this zone, particularly in the Hassan, Channarayapatna and Holenarsipura *talukas*, the most significant of which are Indra-betta or Indragiri (1020 m), Seegegudda (1286 m) and Mallappana-betta (1063 m) (Mysore State Gazetteer- Hassan District 1971: 1-10).

3.1.1. Drainage systems

Three important rivers viz. Kaveri, Hemavathi and Yagachi flow through the district. While the Hemavathi is a tributary of the river Kaveri, Yagachi is a tributary of river Hemavathi. The river Kaveri flows through a small portion of the district in the Arkalgud *taluka* before flowing into Mysore District. The area of the district largely consists of the Hemavathi river basin, the only exceptions being

the outlying tracts along the western portion of Sakleshpur *taluka* which drains into the Netravati in Dakshina Kannada District and also the Arsikere *taluka* whose water runs north to the Vedavathi in the Chitradurga District.

The river Hemavathi locally known as *Yenne-hole*, is one of the chief tributaries of the Kaveri and the life source of the district. The river originates in Chikmagalur District in the north and flows south and enters Hassan District in Sakleshpur *taluka*. Flowing south through Sakleshpur *taluka*, it receives from the south the Aigur river and the Katte-halla near the border of Kodagu District. Turning east, it flows through a small part of Kodagu District and on re-entering Hassan District receives water from the river Yagachi near Gorur village in Arkalgud *taluka*. With an easterly course, it flows past Holenarsipura *taluka* and then flows into Mandya District.



Map 3.3: Drainage map of Hassan District, Karnataka
(Image source: www.hassan.nic.in)

The river Yagachi rises in the Bababudan hills in Chikmagalur District. It is the chief tributary of river Hemavathi and enters Hassan District in Belur *taluka*. Flowing South, it receives the Biranji-halla from the west and joins river Hemavathi in Gourur village in Arkalgud *taluka*.

There are also several other minor streams and *nalas* in the district, but they are not of much importance as far as the physical aspects of the district is concerned. Furthermore, the area in the district, particularly in Channarayapatna, Hassan and Holenarsipura *talukas* serve as good catchment areas for tanks (Mysore State Gazetteer- Hassan District 1971: 9-11) (Map 3.3).

3.1.2. Climate

The year may be divided into four seasons according to the climatic conditions in the district. The summer season extends from March to the end of May. It is followed by the south-west monsoon season lasting up to the end of September. October and November is the post-monsoon or retreating monsoon season. The period from December to February is the dry season with generally clear and bright weather (Mysore State Gazetteer- Hassan District 1971: 26).

3.1.3. Temperature

The records of the meteorological observatory located in the district are taken here as the representative of the temperature fluctuations in the district in general. From about the beginning of March, temperature increases steadily. April is the hottest month in the year and the mean daily maximum temperature is 33.5°C. With the advance of the monsoon winds in June, there is an appreciable drop in the temperature. Towards the close of the monsoon season by about the end of September, there is a slight increase in temperature and a secondary maximum in day temperature is reached in October. Later, the weather becomes progressively cooler. December is generally the coldest month in the year in the year with the

mean daily maximum temperature at 26.9°C and the mean daily minimum at 14.3°C.

The highest maximum temperature recorded at Hassan District was 37.8°C on May 5, 1906; while the lowest minimum temperature was 6.7°C on December 5, 1907 (Mysore State Gazetteer- Hassan District 1971: 27).

3.1.4. Rainfall

The average annual rainfall in the district for the past fifty years has ranged between 1031 mm and 1040.7 mm. In general, the southern *malnad* region constituting the region of Western Ghats and its vicinity receives the highest rainfall in the district. The rainfall decreases rapidly from the west to the east. It varies from 2348.7 mm in Sakleshpur *taluka* in the west to 673.1 mm in Arsikere *taluka* in the east. Most of the rainfall in the district is confined to the period between May and October. July witnesses the highest rainfall in the district. The rainfall during the south-west monsoon, i.e. from June to September constitutes 59% of the annual rainfall. The rest of the rainfall is received mainly during the post monsoon season and the pre-monsoon season (Mysore State Gazetteer- Hassan District 1971: 26; www.hassan.nic).

3.1.5. Humidity

Humidity is generally high in the south-west monsoon and post-monsoon seasons. February and March are the driest months of the year when the relative humidity in the afternoon are less than 35% (Mysore State Gazetteer- Hassan District 1971: 27).

3.1.6. Vegetation

Hassan District has a rich and varied flora with over 1500 species of vascular plants. The major contributing factors to the variation in the vegetation are the differences in rainfall and topography within the district. Some areas of the

southern *maidan* zone receive an average rainfall of less than 150 mm, while the southern *malnad* zone gets about 2300 mm during the same period. There is thus, a rapid transition from scrub to the monsoon forests as one moves from east to west. The intermediary stages of dry deciduous, wet deciduous and semi-evergreen form a continuous pattern as the rainfall increases and the plateau breaks up into the lofty peaks and deep valets of the Western Ghats.

Scrub vegetation can be found in the Ramanahalli and Belavathalli State Reserves and along the lower slopes leading to Nagpuri in Arsikere *taluka*. *Canthium parviflorum* Lam. (*Karegidda*), *Dodnea viscosa* L. (*Bandare*), *Cassia auriculata* L. (*Avarike*), *Erythrozyllum monogynum* Roxb. (*Devadaru*) and *Tarennia asiatica* L. are some of the common shrubs in this region. The gravelly soil is sparsely covered by a few prostrate herbs with well-developed rootstocks such as *Andrographis serpyllifolia* Wight and *Stylosanthes mucronata* Willd.

As climatic and soil conditions improve in a few areas, a number of deciduous trees can be seen. A few varieties of dry deciduous trees such as *Anogeissus latifolia* (Roxb.) Bedd., *Boswellia glabra* Roxb., *Butea monosperma* (Lam.) Taub., *Diospyros Montana* Roxb., *Cochlospermum religiosum* (L.) Alston are commonly found here.

It is however, in the larger valleys opening on to the plains that the flora of the district attains its real splendour. The Bisle, Kempuhole, Kagneri, Kabbinala and Kenchekumri forests situated in these valleys, receive the full force of the south-west monsoon. They offer good examples of seasonal rain forests. The canopy trees maybe over 40 m tall and are swathed with innumerable creepers. The area is abounding with soft-wood species such as *Alstonia scholaris* (L.) R. Br., *Artocarpus hirtus* Lam., *Calophyllum elatum* Bedd., *Michelia champaka* L., *Vateria indica* L., *Dipterocarpus indicus* Bedd. and *Lophopetalum wightianum* Arn. The hardwood species are represented by *Lagerstroemia microcarpa* Wight., *Diospyros ebenum*

Koenig, *Vitex altissima* L.f. and *Dalbergia latifolia* Roxb. It is interesting to note that certain species such as *Mesua ferrea* L. and *Poeciloneuron indicum* Bedd., so common in other parts of Western Ghats are extremely rare in Hassan District.

The total area under forests in the district is a little over 510 sq. Km (roughly 7.5% of the total area of the district). Three forest types viz. tropical semi-evergreen, tropical moist and sub-tropical wet forests are seen in the district. The chief sources of forest revenue in the district include sandalwood and other soft and hard woods exploited for commercial activities. Besides, minor forest products like *thangadi* and *kakke* barks, *tupra* leaves, honey, gum, tamarind, bamboo, cinnamon and wax also add to the forest revenue of the district. The continuous demand for more land for cultivation of coffee and cardamom plantations has resulted in the denudation of vast forest areas particularly in the western parts of the district (Mysore State Gazetteer- Hassan District 1971: 15-20).

3.1.7. Fauna

The fauna of Hassan District is rich and varied on account of the diversity in physiography and forest types. More than 50 species of mammals, 250 species of birds and about 35 species of snakes are commonly met within the district.

The major groups of Indian mammals found here include species such as members of cat-tribe viz. *Panthera tigris* L. (tiger), *Panthera pardus* L. (panther), *Prionailurus bengalensis* Kerr (leopard cat) and *Felis chaus* Guldenstardt. (jungle cat); civets viz. *Viverricula indica* Geoffroy (the small Indian civet) and *Paradoxurus hermaphrodites* Pallas (the common palm civet); mongoose viz. *Herpestes edwardsii* Geoffroy. (the common mongoose) and *Herpestes vitticollis* (the stripe-necked Mongoose); *Hyaena hyaena* L. (striped hyena); dog-tribe viz. *Canis Lupus* L. (wolf), *Vulpes bengalensis* Shaw (Indian fox), *Canis aureus* L. (jackal), *Canis alpinus* Pallas (wild dog); *Melurus ursinus* Shaw (sloth bear);

rodents viz. *Ratufa indica* Exrleben (Indian giant squirrel), *Lepus nigricollis* F. Cuvier (Indian hare), *Hystrix indica* Gray & Hardwicki (Indian porcupine); hoofed animals such as *Sus scrofa* L. (wild boar), *Bibos gaurus* H. Smith (Indian bison), *Antelope cervicapra* L. (black buck), *Tetraceros qudricornis* Blainv (four horned antelope), *Boselaphus tragocamelus* Pallas (Nilgai), *Rusa unicolor* Kerr (sambar), *Axis axis* Exrleben (spotted deer), *Muntiacus muntjak* Zimmermann (barking deer) and *Moschiola meminna* (mouse deer); and *Elephas maximus* L. (Asiatic elephant).

Among the 250 species of birds found in the district, about 50 of them are migratory in nature. The species of birds that live in water or near water in the district include moorhens, pelicans, cormorants, herons, egrets and ducks. Most of the storks and ducks are migratory in nature. Among the birds of prey, eagles, hawks, buzzards, kites, hornbills and owls are commonly seen. Most of these are also migratory in nature. Pigeons, doves, pheasants, partridges, fowls and quails are among the game birds seen in the district. Besides perching birds like larks, swallows, shrikes, orioles, drongos, fly-catchers, bulbuls and sun-birds are seen in good number.

Of the 35 species of snakes found here, only four species viz. *Naja naja* L. (Indian cobra), *Naja hannah* Cantor (king cobra), *Ancistrodon hynale* Merrem (humb-nosed viper) and *Trimeresurus malabaricus* Jerdon (pit viper) are considered venomous. The other species of snakes found in the district include *Ptyas mucosus* L. (common rat snake), *Chrysopelea ornata* Shaw (golden tree snake), *Macropisthodon plumbicolor* Cantor (green keel back), *Ahatetula pulverulentus* Boulenger (bronze-back snake) and *Callophis bibroni* Jan (Indian coral snake) (Mysore State Gazetteer- Hassan District 1971: 20-25).

3.1.8. Geology

Geologically, the rocks of the district consist of an older series of schists cut up and intruded by granite gneiss, which occupy a major portion of the district. The

schistose rocks occur in well-defined bands running north-northwest and south-southeast direction, These are prominently found in three belts viz. Seegegudda belt, Doddagudda belt, Holenarsipura belt. Besides, a narrow belt of schist extends from Arsikere to Nugginhalli, Channarayapatna *taluka*.

The gneissic rocks occupy a greater part of the district and consist mainly of a complex of banded gneisses. They generally form low hills and gently undulating mounts, a characteristic feature of the district. The newer granites seen in Arsikere *taluka* form bold hills and stand out as high hills. Dykes of dolerite are quite numerous in the district, striking generally east and west. They are particularly abundant in the neighbourhood of newer granite formations in Arsikere *taluka*. The occurrence of schistose and granitic rocks have been ideally exploited as building stones for domestic and religious architecture and sculptural art from ancient times.

A number of metalliferous and non-metalliferous minerals occur in the district. These include asbestos, garnet, kyanite and beryl in Holenarsipura *taluka*; chromite, copper and kaolin in Arsikere *taluka*; corundum and vermiculite in Arsikere and Channarayapatna *talukas*; feldspar in Arkalgud and Holenarsipura *talukas*; and mica in Hassan and Holenarsipura *talukas*. In spite of being rich in mineral resources, there are very few mineral-based industries in the region (Mysore State Gazetteer- Hassan District 1971: 11-15).

3.2. Cultural history

Hassan District has a rich cultural history dating back to the prehistoric periods. The region however is not thoroughly explored, with very few isolated attempts made to reconstruct the early beginnings of cultural activity in the region. Nevertheless, a comparative analyses of the archaeological remains found here with other regions provide a glimpse of the early cultural beginnings of the region.

The early medieval and the medieval periods in the region in contrast have received greater emphasis amongst the archaeologists and historians.

3.2.1. Prehistoric period

From the Archaeological record, the earliest cultural activity in the region can be traced to back to the Palaeolithic times. A few Palaeolithic implements have been discovered at numerous sites such as Kattebelguli, Cholinahalli, Rudraptna and Konanur in the district. The Palaeolithic phase here was followed by the Mesolithic phase which has been identified based on the presence of microliths made of siliceous varieties of stone at sites such as Kattebelguli, Cholenahalli, Mudalahippe, Halekalgudda and Settihalli (Poonacha 2011). However, the presence of microliths alone cannot attest the presence of Mesolithic phase, as the use of microlithic tools is also observed in the Early Historic periods elsewhere. The Mesolithic phase was followed by the Neolithic phase as per the Gazetteer records (Mysore State Gazetteer- Hassan District 1971: 39); however, Poonacha (2011) does not attest the presence of the same. The Neolithic Phase was in turn followed by the Megalithic phase. The Megalithic phase in the district is largely represented by burial monuments such as stone circles, dolmens and menhirs at sites such as Gunni, Halebid, Honnavara, Pumgame, Pratapalumarigrama, Kondajji and Sompur (c.f. Poonacha 2011). No habitational site belonging to this phase has so far been reported in the region. Since the use of iron broadly coincides with this phase, it forms an adjunct of this culture and thus is also referred to as Iron Age Culture in the archaeological literature (Moorti 1994).

3.2.2. Mauryans

Historically, the earliest significant event in the region is associated with the migration of Chandragupta Maurya and his Jaina preceptor Bhadrabahu in 3rd Century BCE. According to Jaina traditions, which are supported by literary works and inscriptions of later periods, Bhadrabahu foretold the occurrence of a severe

famine in the north which would last for twelve years. On hearing this, Chandragupta Maurya abdicated his throne and migrated to the south with Bhadrabahu and his twelve thousand followers. On reaching Shravanabelagola, Bhadrabahu and Chandragupta Maurya decided to remain behind on the smaller hill (modern Chandragiri), where they decided to undergo various rites to achieve 'ritual death'. According to tradition, Chandragupta survived his *guru* for twelve years which he spent performing ascetic rites at the same place and died there. However, the literary works and epigraphic records which mention such a migration belong to a much later period. Nevertheless, owing to the 'ritual death' attained by the former here, Shravanabelagola is considered to be the foremost amongst the Jaina pilgrimage centers in the region (Mysore State Gazetteer-Hassan District 1971: 40-42; Mookherji 1966; Kamath 2001).

3.2.3. Kadambas of Banavasi

It is not known for certain as to who was ruling the area of present day Hassan District as a whole or parts of it from the time of Chandragupta Maurya and Bhadrabahu's migration to the region to 4th Century CE. However, contemporary inscriptions found in the neighbouring regions suggest the possibility of portions of the area being a part of Mauryan, Satavahana and Pallava Empires. The first dynasty that is clearly known to history which ruled parts of this region was that of the Kadambas of Banavasi. The Kadambas exercised their power mainly all over the central and western parts of Karnataka as independent rulers from about the latter half of 3rd Century CE until the rise of the Chalukyas of Badami. The founder of this dynasty, Mayuravarman, resenting the ill-treatment meted out to him by the Pallava officers, organised armed bands and rebelled against the Pallavas and carved out a kingdom which extended from the west coast to river Krishna in modern Karnataka. He was succeeded by rulers such as Kangavarman, Bhageerathavarman, Raghavarman, Kakusthavarman and Krishnavarman I, who extended the kingdom considerably. The growing influence of the Kadambas in

the political sphere is attested by several matrimonial alliances with other contemporary powers. Kakusthavarman's four daughters were married to princes of distinguished ruling families of the period, namely Madhava II of Gangas of Talakad, Kumaragupta of the Imperial Guptas, Narendrasena of the Vakataka dynasty and Pashupati of the Alupa dynasty.

An inscription belonging to the reign of Kakusthavarman was discovered at Halmidi in Belur *taluka*. It is dated to 450 CE and is considered to be the oldest lithic record in Kannada. It records the grant of Palmidi and Mulivalli villages by Mrigesha and Nagendra who were governing Naridavilenadu to an individual named Vija Arasa who had defeated the combined forces of the Kekayas and the Pallavas. Two copper plate inscriptions recording grant of villages to learned Brahmins belonging to the Kadamba kings were also discovered in the district.

Following the death of Krishnavarman I, the Chalukyas of Badami eventually overthrew the power of Kadambas, who were reduced to the status of feudatory chiefs. After their decline at Banavasi, the Kadambas did not disappear entirely from the political sphere in the region but continued to rule as minor feudatory chiefs. A few inscriptions belonging to the 10th Century CE have been noticed in Holenarsipura, Hassan and Sakleshpur *talukas* (Mysore State Gazetteer- Hassan District 1971: 42-45; Kamath 2001).

3.2.4. Western Gangas

The southern and western parts of the district were ruled by the Western Gangas from c. 4th Century CE to 11th Century CE. There is much controversy and uncertainty about the early chronology of the Western Gangas. In the beginning, their capital was at Kuvala (modern Kolar), which was later shifted to Talavanapura (modern Talakad). Their territories came to be known as Gangavadi 96000 of which the modern Hassan District formed a part. A good number of

inscriptions of the Ganga kings have been found all over the district. These inscriptions mostly refer to grants of land to individuals or for the construction and maintenance of temples. A few inscribed *veeragals* belonging to the reign have also been recorded in the district.

Very little is known of the early kings of this dynasty. From the available inscriptions the early kings of this dynasty include Konganivarma, Madhava I, Harivarma, Madhava II (400-420 CE), Vishnugopa (420-440 CE), Tadangala Madhava (440-469 CE) and Avanita (469-529 CE). The real founder of this dynasty was Duruvinita (529-579 CE), who through his military might, diplomacy and matrimonial alliances greatly expanded the political might of the Gangas. He was succeeded by Mushkara, Polavira and Srivikrama, whose rule proved uneventful (579-654 CE); and Bhuvikrama (654-729). During Bhuvikrama's rule, the Pallavas, Kadambas and the Chalukyas who subdued the Kadambas made encroachments upon the Ganga territory. These conflicts with the Pallavas and Chalukyas continued for over a century and a half. Bhuvikrama was succeeded by Shivamara I (679-725 CE), who in turn was succeeded by Sreepurusha (725-788 CE), one of the most distinguished rulers of this dynasty. The kingdom reached its zenith during his rule and came to be called *Sree Rajya* or prosperous kingdom. During his reign, he had to defend his kingdom from the constant threats of incursions from the Rashtrakutas and the Pallavas. Although successful in dealing with external threats, the continuous wars with the Pallavas and the Rashtrakutas emptied his treasury. Sreepurusha is credited with having written an authoritative treatise on elephants called *Gajashastra*, a text on elephant warfare.

Shivamara II (788-812 CE) succeeded Sreepurusha, whose reign is marked by the decline in the prosperity of the Gangas owing to Rashtrakuta incursions into Ganga territory. He was also held captive by Dhruva, the Rashtrakuta king and was only released from captivity upon Dhruva's death. He is stated to be a learned

king and is said to have composed Gajashataka. Following the death of Shivamara II, the kingdom was divided between his son Marasimha and the latter's uncle Vijayaditya, who were subordinate to the Rashtrakuta kings. However, within a few years the Marasimha line came to an end.

Vijayaditya who merged both the kingdoms was succeeded by Rachamalla I (816-843 CE) and Neetimarga I (843-870 CE). During their reign, the Rashtrakuta-Ganga rivalry was reconciled, with matrimonial alliances and the political supremacy of the Rashtrakuta over the Gangas was accepted.

Neetimarga I was succeeded by Rachamalla II (870-919 CE) Rachamalla III (933-936 CE) Butuga II (936-961 CE), Marula (961-974 CE). Marula was succeeded by Marasimha II (963-974), whose reign was full of military engagements. Krishna III, the Rashtrakuta Emperor appointed him as the leader of an expedition to Gujarat, to protect the Kalachuris against the Gurjaras. An elaborate account of achievements of Marasimha has been given in one of the inscriptions at Shravanabelagola in Hassan District (c.f. Settar 1986). He was also successful in defeating the Nolamba chiefs. Towards the end of his rule, he also successfully defended the Rashtrakuta Emperor Khottiga from the Malwa ruler. He also made a futile attempt to revive the Rashtrakuta power under Indra IV against the Chalukyas of Kalyan. He was succeeded by Rachamalla IV (985-1024 CE).

The reign of Rachamalla IV, is better known on account of his great minister Chavundaraya. He was an able warrior, a patron of learning and arts and a devout Jain. He himself was a great scholar and composed, Chavundarayapurana. By his time, Shravanabelagola had become an important place of pilgrimage amongst the Jains and he caused to be made colossal monolithic statue of Gommateshvara in Shravanabelagola. Rachamalla IV was succeeded by his brother Rakkasaganga (985-1024 CE), the last Ganga ruler. Chavundaraya continued to be his minister and was successful in defending the kingdom from external threats. Upon his

death, the Ganga sovereign had to face the incursions of the Cholas under Raja Raja Chola, who had launched upon a career of territorial expansion. In 1004 CE, the Cholas captured Talakad and extinguished the Western Ganga sovereignty. From 1004 to 1024 CE, the Gangas ruled as a feudatory of the Cholas.

From lithic and other records, the pattern of administration of the Gangas can be reconstructed to a fair degree. Their kingdom was divided into provinces which were sub-divided into *nadus* and *vishayas*, comprising groups of villages and towns, the village constituting the last administrative unit. Each province was under the charge of a viceroy, who was either a member of the royal family or a powerful noble of the state. The viceroys maintained their own standing armies and held their own court. The *Heggades*, also known as *Rajadhyakshas* were in charge of districts and undertook both civil and military functions. They were subject to control in financial matters to *Srikarana Sarvadhikari*, who was one of the ministers, supervising the finance department of the kingdom. Other officers subordinate to the authority of the *Heggade* included the *Sunkaveggade* and *Srikarana Heggade*, assigned to maintain register on the amount of taxed due from each individual. The administration at the village-level was looked after the *Gaunda* (headman) who was responsible for the collection of revenue and also execution of judicial and police duties. Each village had an assembly (*Mahajana*) which had both deliberative and executive functions (Mysore State Gazetteer-Hassan District 1971: 43-53; Kamath 2001).

3.2.5. Kongalvas

The Kongalvas ruled a kingdom situated in the south and south-western part of the district, in an area between the river Kaveri and river Hemavathi in Arkalgud *taluka*. They ruled for a period of two centuries between the 10th and 11th Centuries CE. They were a branch of the Aluva kings, who ruled over territories in modern day Dakshina Kannada District. Their territory was known as

Kongalnad-8000 and came to be formed following the Chola invasion of Gangavadi 96000. The Kongalavas served as the Chola feudatories in the region and even claimed their descent to Cholas. The inscriptions of the Kongalvas date from a period between 1020 and 1177 CE. These inscriptions record grants of villages to temples and their conflict with the Nolambas, Chalukyas of Kalyan and the Hoysalas.

The history of the Kongalva rule in the region is largely associated with conflicts with the Chalukyas of Kalyan and Nolambas during the initial period of their reign and with the Hoysalas during the latter part. The names of few kings such as Panchava Maharaya, Prithvimaharaja Kongalva, Rajendra-Chola-Prithvimaharaja-Kongalva and Tribhuvanamalla Chola Kongalva appear prominently in inscriptions. They were eventually subdued by the Hoysalas, who emerged as the paramount power in the region (Mysore State Gazetteer- Hassan District 1971: 53-56).

3.2.6. Changalvas

The Changalvas were a line of chiefs who ruled in the western portion of the district. Their inscriptions are found mostly in Hassan, Arkalgud, Alur and Belur *talukas*. Their original territory was Chenganad, corresponding modern Periyapatna and Hunsur *talukas* of Mysore District. Very less information is available regarding the rule of Changalva chiefs in the district. The available inscriptions are mostly fragmentary in nature. Among the few Changalva kings of whom mention is made in the inscriptions include Nigalankamalla Madeyarasa Changalva, Nanni Changalva and Mahadeva Changalva.

Following the Chola invasion of the region under Raja Raja Chola, they served as the feudatories of the Cholas. The Chola suzerainty over the Changalvas lasted for a little over a hundred years from 1004 to 1106 CE. They soon succumbed to the

Hoysala expansion in the district, and were reduced as subordinate chiefs under the Hoysalas. From the latter half of the 12th Century CE, their rule was centred in the neighbouring Kodagu District, with Srirangapatna as their capital (Mysore State Gazetteer- Hassan District 1971: 56-61).

3.2.7. Hoysalas of Dwarasamudra

Hassan District is particularly identified with the rise and growth of the Hoysala dynasty, which formed the core area of their kingdom. Following the decline of the Ganga power in the region, the Hoysala rose to power initially in the hilly regions in Hassan and the neighbouring Chikmagalur Districts as feudatories of the Rashtrakutas and later under the Chalukyas of Kalyan. They expelled the Cholas in 1116 CE and suppressed the local chiefs such as the Kongalvas, Malepas and the Changalvas, who served as feudatories of the Cholas and continued to be in power till the middle of the 14th Century CE.

The Hoysalas claimed to be descendants of the Yadava race, whose origin is associated with the legend of Sala, the first king of the dynasty, who at the instance of his guru killed a tiger. This legend formed the basis of their crest, which depicts Sala killing a tiger (Coelho 1950; Derret 1957). He was succeeded by Nripa Kama (c. 1022-1045 CE), whose reign is associated with periodic conflicts with the Changalvas for the supremacy of the region.

Nripa Kama was succeeded by Vinayaditya (c. 1045-1098 CE), who is considered as the real founder of this dynasty. Although he served as a feudatory chief of the Chalukyas of Kalyan, he through his military might extended the borders of his kingdom from Wynad in the south to Konkan in the north. He also established Belur as the first capital of the kingdom and later shifted the capital to Dwarasamudra (modern Halebid) for strategic reasons. Vinayaditya was succeeded by Ereyanga (c. 1098-1100 CE), who was the first ruler to have assumed the title of

Veera Ganga, which indicated the Hoysala claim as heirs to the Ganga kingdom. He served as the feudatory of the Chalukyan Emperor Vikramaditya VI, often been described as the right hand the Emperor in epigraphic records.

Ereyanga was succeeded by Balalla I (1100-1108 CE), whose reign was brief and peaceful. He was succeeded by Bittideva, better known as Vishnuvardhana (1108-1154 CE). As a prince, he served as the Governor of Tonnur where he happened to be influenced by Srivaishnana teacher Ramanujacharya and became a lay disciple of his. Upon assuming the throne, he is said to have expelled the Cholas from Gangavadi and is also said to have annexed the regions around modern Coimbatore into his kingdom. The Kongalvas, Alupas, Nolambas, Pandyas of Ucchangi, Kadambas and Changalvas were also subdued thus greatly contributing to the growth of the Hoysala kingdom. To commemorate his victories, he is said to have assumed the titles *Talakadugonda* and *Nolambavadigonda*. He is also said to have led incursions against his overlord the Chalukyan Emperor Vikramaditya VI. However, following his initial victories, he was defeated and was forced to accept the suzerainty of the Chalukyas. He was the first Hoysala ruler to issue coinage of his own. He was a great patron of arts and caused to be made the Channakeshava temple and the Kappe-Channigaraya temple at Belur, Siddeshwara temple at Marale and Hoysaleshwara temple and Parashwanatha *basadi* at Halebid.

Vishnuvardhana was succeeded by Narasimha I (1152-1173), who did not share the qualities of his father and led a life given to pleasures. Although, the kingdom continued to prosper owing to the efficiency of the generals and the ministers loyal to the throne, a considerable portion of their kingdom in the north was lost to the Kalachuris. Narasimha I was succeeded by Ballalla II or Veera Ballala (1173-1220 CE). His reign witnessed the fulfilment of his forefather's aspirations and the kingdom reached the zenith of its glory. The Hoysalas under him finally attained independent status, freeing themselves from Chalukyan over lordship. He defeated

the Sevunas and Yadavas and his kingdom extended to river Malaprabha in the North and river Kaveri in the south. In the south, he interfered in the politics of the Tamil country, by helping the Cholas reclaim their territories against the Pandyas of Madurai. For this act, he assumed the title of *Cholarajya-Pratishthaoanacharya*, 'establisher of the Chola kingdom'. He was a patron art and caused to be made the Kedareshvara temple at Halebid.

Ballala II was succeeded by Narasimha II (1220-1235 CE), who followed the policy of his predecessor by checking the Pandyan advances upon the Chola kingdom. He is said to have defended the Pandyan incursions against the Cholas thrice and to mark his victory against the Pandyas, is said to have erected a pillar of victory at Rameshwaram. He was given the area of Kannanur by the Chola king for his assistance in defeating the Pandyas. However, while he was occupied with the south, some territories in the North were lost to the Sevunas.

Ballala II was succeeded by Someshvara (1235-1260 CE), who made Kannanur his permanent residence. The Cholas who were allies of the Hoysalas adopted a hostile attitude against Someshvara, who now was forced to seek the help of the Pandyas in subduing the Cholas. Subsequently, the Cholas appear to have been reconciled to Someshvara. On realizing the difficulty in managing the affairs of his vast kingdom with its two capitals, he divided the territory into two parts viz. the northern part with Dwarasamudra as its capital under the charge of his elder son Narasimha III, and the southern part with Kannanur as its capital under Ramanatha. However, in spite of the partition, the two brothers remained hostile, often encroaching upon each other's territories. Their mutual fights have been referred to in several lithic records dated between 1260 and 1290 CE. This prolonged conflict weakened both of them. The disturbed political scenario in the region allowed Sevunas to wrangle more territories from the Hoysalas in northern Karnataka.

Ballala III (1291-1342 CE) succeeded Narasimha III in Dwarasamudra. Vishwanatha who had succeeded Ramanatha, ruled for only a few years and died without an issue. In about 1301 CE the southern Hoysala areas were united to the ancestral kingdom and Ballala III became its sole ruler. Ballala III suppressed several refractory chiefs and also the Sevunas and the Yadava kings who were encroaching upon Hoysala territory. His reign witnessed the first Muslim invasion of the Hoysala territory under Malik Kafur in 1311 CE, who sacked Dwarasamudra. Malik Kafur left Dwarasamudra laden with riches and also extorted the assistance of Ballala to march far south against the Pandyas at Madurai.

After the departure of Malik Kafur, Ballala rebuilt his capital and secured the release of his son who was carried off to Delhi as a hostage. He further assisted the Pandyan king against the defiant local chiefs in the region and strengthened his position in Kannanur region. There was again a second Muslim invasion under Mohammad bin Tughlaq, the Sultan of Delhi during which the rebuilt city of Dwarasamudra was completely destroyed by the invading army. The invading army marched further south into Madurai and appointed a governor, who functioned as an independent Sultan to oversee affairs in the south. Upon the destruction of Dwarasamudra, Ballala III shifted his residence to Tonnur initially and later to Annamale (modern Tiruvannamalai). He appointed an official named Harihara, who later founded the Vijayanagara Empire, as the governor of his northern provinces and strengthened his position by acquiring territories and making strategic allies to defeat the newly established Sultan of Madurai. However, his endeavours proved unsuccessful and he died in combat. Ballala IV, who succeeded Ballala III in 1343 CE, was not an able ruler to meet the grim needs of the times through which south India was passing and nothing is known of him after 1346 CE and the kingly leadership passed into the hands of the Vijayanagara rulers.

The Hoysalas had to a considerable extent adopted the system of administration that was implemented by the Gangas. Their kingdom was divided into a number of provinces under the control of governor or *Samantas*, who belonged to the royal family or powerful noble families. Each governor had a capital city of his own in which he resided. As civil officers, they were responsible for the collection of taxes due to the government and their remittance to the treasury, as well as for administration of civil and criminal justice. The provinces were divided into *nadus* for the purpose of administration. The officer under the direct charge of the governor was the *Heggade*, also known as *Rajadhyaksha*, who was in charge of both civil and military affairs. Other officers who assisted the *Heggade* in the discharge of his duties included *Sunkaveggade*, *Khanaveggade* and *Dhandayaveggade*. The village was the smallest unit of administration under the *Gauda* (headman). The village assemblies (*Mahajanas*) under the Hoysalas functioned similarly as under the Ganga rule. They had their own revenue and possessed their own functions (Coelho 1950; Derret 1957; Mysore State Gazetteer-Hassan District 1971: 62-79; Kamath 2001).

3.2.8. Vijayanagara Empire

The Vijayanagara Empire was co-founded by Harihara I (1136-1356 CE) and Bukka Raya I (1356-1377 CE) of the Sangama dynasty, who were formerly officers in the court of Ballala IV, the Hoysala king. Following the death of Ballala IV, the Hoysala generals and feudatories now owed allegiance to them. The Empire rose to prominence as the culmination of attempts by the southern powers to ward off Islamic invasions. The Empire had its capital initially at Anegondi and later at Vijayanagara (modern Hampi) and was ruled by four successive dynasties viz. Sangama (1336-1485 CE), Saluva (1485-1491 CE), Tuluva (1491-1570 CE) and Aravidu (1542-1646 CE). Upon assuming the throne, Harihara I gained control of most areas south of river Tungabhadra. He was succeeded by Bukka Raya I, who annexed the Goa, Tungabhadra-Krishna doab and parts of modern Telegana. The

co-founders of the dynasty were succeeded by able rulers such as Harihara II (1377-1404 CE), Deva Raya I (1406-1422 CE) and Devaraya II (1424-1446 CE), who successfully led campaigns against the Gajapatis of Odhisha, Zamorin of Calicut, Ceylon and claimed lordship over the kings of Burma at Pegu.

The rule of the Sangama dynasty came to an end, when a general Saluva Narasimha Deva Raya (1485-1491 CE) overthrew the last Sangama ruler in 1485 and established the Saluva dynasty. The Saluva dynasty ruled briefly between 1485 and 1491 CE, and they were in turn ousted by a general Tuluva Narasa Nayaka (1491-1503 CE), who founded the Tuluva dynasty. The greatest ruler of this dynasty was Krishnadeva Raya (1509-1529 CE). During his reign, the Vijayanagara Empire dominated all of south India and fought off invasions from the Deccan Sultanates. The Empire annexed areas formerly under the Sultanates in northern Deccan and the territories in the eastern Deccan, including Kalinga, while simultaneously maintaining control over the subordinates in the south. Many important monuments were either completed or commissioned during his reign. Upon his death, Rama Raya, who was initially serving as regent of the adolescent king Achutya Deva Raya (1542-1565 CE), revolted and declared himself Emperor, initiating the Aravidu dynastic rule. Rama Raya eager to take advantage of the disunity among the Deccan Sultanates involved himself in the political affairs of the powers across the river Krishna in the north. His ploy of supporting one Sultanate against another, often changing alliances initially brought rich results. However, by 1563 CE, exhausted with intrigues, the rival Sultanates formed an alliance and clashed with the Vijayanagara forces in 1565 CE at Talikota, during which the Vijayanagara forces were defeated and Rama Raya was killed. In the ensuing confusion, the capital was overrun by the Sultanates' army and was reduced to a ruinous state, after which it was not occupied. The Empire went into a slow decline with its capital at Penukonda, although trade with foreign powers continued. In 1632, the Empire was finally conquered by the Sultanates of Bijapur

and Golkonda. The largest feudatories of the Vijayanagara Empire- the Mysore kingdom, Keladi *Nayaka*, *Nayakas* of Madurai, *Nayakas* of Chitradurga, *Nayakas* of Gingee and *Nayakas* of Tanjore declared independence.

The Vijayanagara kings did not rule over the region comprising modern Hassan District, Karnataka directly but through *Nayaka* or *Palegar* chiefs who served as their feudatories (Mysore State Gazetteer- Hassan District 1971: 79-81; Kamath 2001).

3.2.9. Balam Principality

The Vijayanagara kings had taken a particular interest in the province of Balam (the hilly regions of Hassan and Chickmangalur Districts) as it was the home province of the Hoysalas. Encouragement was given to settlers of all communities by granting lands at low rents. The western portions of the present Hassan District had been bestowed, with adjoining tracts to Veera Ramappa, a musician in the Vijayanagara court. After a reign of some years, he abdicated this province of Balam, which was then made over to Hiriya Singappa Nayaka, a general in 1397 CE. The Balam *Palegaras* had their capital at Aigur which was sometimes mentioned as Maninagapura.

After Hiriya Singappa Nayaka up to the 16th century CE, very little is known of the chiefs of the principality. A few chiefs whose name appear in the inscriptions include Krishnappa Nayaka (1524-1566 CE), Venkatadri Nayaka (1566-1584 CE), Krishnappa Nayaka (1588-1625 CE), Krishnappa Nayaka (1755-1794 CE) and Venkatadri Nayaka (1799 CE). The *Nayakas* of Ikkeri, who had once been feudatories of the Vijayanagara kings, had become powerful rulers following the decline of the Vijayanagara power. In 1657, Shivappa *Nayaka* of Ikkeri invaded and seized the area of Hassan and Belur. Kanthirava Narasaraja Wodeyar I of Mysore went to the help of the Balam chief, but was defeated and the Balam

chief's son was taken prisoner. After this, Shivappa Nayaka of Ikkeri established Sriranga Raya, heir to the erstwhile Vijayanagara Empire at Belur in 1659 CE. In 1662 CE, the combined forces of the Ikkeri *Nayakas* and Sriranga Raya laid a siege to Holenarsipura, then in the possession of Mysore Wodeyars which proved unsuccessful.

About the year 1693 CE, a part of this principality was conquered by Chikka Devaraja Wodeyar of Mysore and Doddaveerappa Wodeyar of Coorg. In 1694 CE, following the peace treaty signed by Ikkeri and Mysore kings, Balam was allowed to retain six *nads* and the rest of the principality was divided between Ikkeri and Mysore. In 1792 CE, the Balam chief Krishnappa Nayaka joined the army of the Marahatha general Parashuram Bahu when the latter was advancing to co-operate with Lord Cornwallis against Tipu Sultan. On the conclusion of peace between Tipu Sultan and Lord Cornwallis, Krishnappa Nayaka is said to have fled to Coorg fearing the displeasure of Tipu Sultan; but the latter is said to have induced him to return and permitted him to resume the government of only a part of his principality to the south of Balam. The rest of his principality was annexed to the Mysore kingdom. Venkatadri Nayaka was in possession of Aigurseeme at the time of the fall of Srirangapatna in 1799 CE and put up a resistance against the British. A force sent by the East India Company captured the fort and he and his followers were hunted after by the Company's troops. Ultimately he was caught and hanged in 1802 CE. Thereafter the principality of Balam ceased to exist and merged into the newly formed Mysore state (Mysore State Gazetteer- Hassan District 1971: 81-83).

3.2.10. Other *Palegars*

The rest of the region comprising of modern Hassan District was under the jurisdiction of the *Nayakas* of Holenarsipura (administrative jurisdiction included areas comprising parts of modern Holenarsipura and Channarayapatana *talukas*;

Javagal (parts of modern Arsikere *taluka*), Nugginhalli (parts of modern Hassan, Arkalgud and Channarayapatna *talukas*) and Durga (parts of modern Arkalgud *taluka*). There exists very little information from historical and epigraphic sources on these chiefs, with most inscriptions being restricted to donations made to temples. The *Nayaka* rule in the region came to an end towards the end of the 18th Century CE, following the aggressive policies of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan (Mysore State Gazetteer- Hassan District 1971: 83-86).

3.2.11. Religious conditions in Hassan District, Karnataka

The religious conditions that were prevailing in Hassan District were more or less similar to those prevailing elsewhere in southern Karnataka. Jainism was the most prominent faith from the early part of the Christian era till the 11th Century CE. As per popular traditions, the advent of the Jaina faith in the region is attributed to the migration of Badhrabahu and Chandragupta Maurya along with twelve thousand disciples to Shravanabelagola. Following the 'ritual death' achieved by the former two at the center, it came to be associated as one of the foremost Jaina pilgrimage centers in the region. The Chandragiri hill in this center during its early history came to be specifically associated as 'suicide hill', where the members of the Jaina faith strode to achieve 'ritual death'

The faith received patronage amongst the Ganga, Chalukya and the early Hoysala kings and even enjoyed the status of being the state religion. The rulers however were tolerant to other faiths as well. Among the several Jaina *basadis* in the region, the most significant ones include the Shantinatha, Suparshvanatha, Parshvanatha, Chandragupta and the Chavundaraya *basadis* at Shravanabelagola which were constructed during the Ganga rule; Parshvanatha, Adinatha and Shantinatha *basadis* at Halebid which were constructed during the Hoysala reign. The Ganga reign in the region also witnessed the construction of the colossal statue of Gommateshvara on Vindhyagiri at Shravanabelagola in the 10th Century CE. The

huge statue of Gommateshwara measuring 57 feet in height is the largest monolithic statue in the world. It was perhaps caused to be made by its patron to overlook the suffering of the members of the Jaina faith during the pursuit of 'ritual death' in the valley of Shravanabelagola (Settar 1990).

Towards the end of the 11th century CE, Jainism was on its decline in the region. The religious prevision of Jainism in the region coupled with the arrival of Sri Ramanujacharya and the novelty of *Vishishtadvaita* which he propounded induced a large number of people, including the Hoysala kings to embrace Vaishnavism. Ramanujacharya established a center at Tonnur in the neighbouring Mandya District, which eventually became the seat of Vaishnavism under royal patronage. During this phase, several Vaishnavite temples such as Chennakeshva temple, Belur; Laxmi Narasimha temple, Haranahalli; Chennakehava temple, Annekere; and Laxmi Narasimha temple, Nugehalli were caused to be made during this period.

Shaivism also gained foothold in the region following the decline of the Jainism. The spread of Lingayatism to the region also strengthened the faith here. Lingayatism which initially started out as an anti-brahmanic movement soon took shape as an independent organised religion and became very popular in the region particularly amongst the merchant community. Several temples associated with the Shaivism such as Hoysaleshwara temple and Kedareshwara temple, Halebid; Bucheshwara temple, Koravangala; and Someshwara temple, Haranahalli were caused to be made during this period.

During the succeeding Vijayanagara and the Nayaka periods, Jainism underwent further decline. The Shravanabelagola inscription of Bukka Raya I speaks of a conflict between the Jainas and the Srivasihanavas, which was resolved by the Vijayanagara king (*Epigraphia Carnatica* 1973, Vol. II 475). The terms of the settlement was however lopsided in the favour of the Srivaishnavas and the

acceptance of such a disadvantageous arrangement by the Jainas reveals their helplessness under conditions from which they were trying to save themselves from (Settar 1990).

Thus apart from a few instances of religious intolerance, the people in the region lived in harmony with each other. The large number of monumental edifices belonging to different creeds attests the communal harmony in the region (Kamath 2001).

3.2.12. Social conditions

The society in the early phase, i.e. during the Ganga and the Hoysala periods in the region evolved during a time when many devotional movements were being popularised and where the local vernacular attained significance. Inscriptional evidence suggests women occupied a significant position in society, playing an active role in local administration and as patrons of art. Women of royalty, for instance Shantaladevi, the chief queen of Vishnuvardhana besides being well versed in dance, caused to be made the Hoysaleswara temple at Halebid and the Chennakeshava temple at Belur. She also proved to be a good administrator while the king was away on military campaigns. Polygamy was prominent and practiced by the wealthy. The practice of sati, though voluntary was prevalent and practiced by the members of royalty and prostitution was socially accepted. *Devadasis* or temple courtesans were common in temples and some were well educated and accomplished in arts.

Trade along the west coast brought many foreigners to India resulting in the exchange of ideas and cultural norms. During the 10-12th centuries CE, large scale migration of people from present day Tamil Nadu to Karnataka and vice-versa occurred, owing to the political expansion of the regional powers, shift in focus of art activity and religious movements. The temples besides being a place of worship

also served as surrogate courts, especially when built from royal endowments. They were seen as palaces, banks and a venue for education. A few temples also found patronage from rich landlords. The society was characterised by hereditary and hierarchal caste system, although the religious and social movements that took place during these periods often challenged the existing social order.

During the succeeding Vijayanagara and Nayaka periods, the societal norms continued on a similar note, although the hereditary and the hierarchical caste system became more rigid. There were restrictions imposed upon the social mobility and interactions between different communities. However, there are also few instances of individuals who distinguished themselves in war to high-ranking positions irrespective of their caste. Furthermore, the position of women in society weakened and various restrictions were imposed upon them. The practice of *Devadasi* and prostitution thrived and certain streets were meant for them. The instances of sati increased in comparison to the preceding periods, although it is said that it was practiced mainly by the royal and soldier families (Coelho 1950; Kamath 2001).