



Colonialism for Industrial Sector - with reference to Hassan District

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Abstract: This study explores the historical and industrial development of Hassan District, Karnataka state in India, tracing its evolution from the colonial period to the present. Renowned for its rich cultural heritage and Hoysala architecture, Hassan's industrial landscape reflects influences from various dynasties and British colonial policies. The district's economy historically centered on agriculture and coffee cultivation, with limited large-scale industrialization but a presence of small-scale agro-based industries. This research employs a holistic analytical framework incorporating Internal and External Factor Evaluation (IFE–EFE) matrices and a prioritization matrix to analyze industrial growth factors and constraints. It proposes sustainable strategies for industrial and urban regeneration, emphasizing the integration of heritage conservation with economic development. The findings offer a replicable model for balanced growth and historic urban core regeneration in small cities both in India and globally.

Keywords: Commercial Plantation Economy, Strong Agricultural Base, Socio-Economic and Cultural Movement, De-industrialization of Traditional Crafts

Introduction: Hassan District strategically located in Karnataka, holds significant potential for industrial development due to its favorable geography, pleasant climate, abundant natural resources and skilled workforce. Traditionally an agricultural hub cultivating coffee, paddy, sugarcane, coconut and vegetables, Hassan provides a strong foundation for agro-based industries. Industrial growth accelerated with the establishment of planned industrial estates and development areas, supported by government initiatives and infrastructure improvements in connectivity, utilities and services. Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), particularly in agro-processing, have become vital to the local economy, adding value to agricultural produce and generating employment. Despite these advantages, challenges remain in industrial diversification, support for traditional crafts and

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integrating cultural heritage and tourism into economic planning. A sustainable, comprehensive approach that combines industrial expansion, heritage conservation, tourism promotion and entrepreneurship development is essential for balanced and inclusive growth. This study analyzes Hassan's industrial evolution, infrastructure, resource base, policies, challenges and future prospects, proposing an integrated model for sustainable regional development applicable to similar districts across Karnataka and India

Socio-Economic and Cultural Movement: Hassan District's socio-economic stability stems from its diversified agricultural economy and favorable agro-climatic conditions, bridging the Malnad and Maidan regions of Karnataka. The district's economy relies heavily on agriculture, horticulture and plantation crops like coffee, pepper, and cardamom, especially in Malnad taluks, linking it to national and international markets. The semi-Malnad and Maidan regions cultivate a variety of crops including paddy, coconut, sugarcane and vegetables, with Arsikere serving as a key coconut trading hub. Forestry contributes to rural livelihoods and ecological balance, while the industrial sector remains modest, focused on agro-based and small-scale industries. Mineral resources exist but are underexploited. Key industries include coffee curing, rice and oil milling, handloom weaving and food processing, supported by MSME policies. Hassan's rich cultural heritage, shaped by Hindu, Jain and Islamic traditions and the Hoysala legacy, is reflected in historic temples, festivals, and traditional arts, offering potential for heritage tourism. Despite strengths, challenges like limited industrial diversification, rural unemployment and uneven development persist. A holistic approach integrating agricultural modernization, industrial growth, tourism, skill development and cultural preservation is vital for sustainable and inclusive progress.

Medieval and Modern History of Hassan District

Medieval History: The medieval history of Hassan District is deeply linked to the Hoysala Empire (c. 1000-1334 CE), a prominent South Indian dynasty originating from Angadi in present-day Chikkamagaluru. Hassan served as the empire's core, with Belur and later Halebidu as royal capitals. Under King Vishnuvardhana (1108–1152 CE), the empire expanded significantly, achieving political and cultural prominence. The Hoysalas established an efficient governance system, evidenced by numerous inscriptions detailing administration, taxation and land management. Their architectural legacy is renowned for intricately carved, star-shaped temples such as the Chennakesava Temple (Belur) and Hoysaleswara Temple (Halebidu). The period also marked a golden age of Kannada literature, religious tolerance and cultural growth, with royal support for Jainism, Shaivism

and Vaishnavism. Shravanabelagola remained a vital Jain pilgrimage site, centered around the monumental Gommateshwara statue. Over 800 inscriptions, including about 80 from the Hoysala era, provide rich historical insights into the region's political, religious and social life.

Modern History (18th Century-Present): The modern history of Hassan District began after the decline of the Vijayanagara Empire, with the rise of the Mysore Kingdom under the Wodeyar dynasty. In the eighteenth century, Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan administered the region, implementing military and administrative reforms that boosted development. After Tipu Sultan's defeat in 1799, British influence shaped Hassan's administration and economy as part of the Mysore princely state. The Great Famine of 1876-1878 caused severe hardship, notably reducing the population, but recovery followed through advancements in irrigation, agriculture, and infrastructure. Coffee and other plantation crops expanded, supported by improvements in transportation and education. Post-independence, major projects like the Hemavati Dam (completed in 1981) enhanced irrigation and agricultural productivity, despite submerging some historical sites. Today, Hassan District blends rich historical heritage, agricultural prosperity, religious diversity, and growing industrial development, standing as a culturally and economically significant region in Karnataka.

Cultural and Religious Significance of Hassan District

Etymology and Local Legends: Hassan District derives its name from **Goddess Haasanamba**, the presiding deity of Hassan city, whose temple is one of the most revered religious centers in Karnataka. The **Haasanamba Temple** is famous for its annual festival, during which the temple remains open to devotees for a limited period each year, attracting lakhs of pilgrims from across the state and beyond. The goddess is worshipped as the protector of the region and is deeply associated with the cultural identity of Hassan. Several legends explain the origin of the district's name. One popular tradition states that Hassan was originally known as **Simhasanapuri**, believed to have been founded by **Janamejaya**, the great-grandson of the Pandava hero Arjuna. Over time, the settlement came to be identified with Goddess Haasanamba, eventually giving rise to the present name "Hassan. Another well-known local legend narrates the story of the **Saptamatrikas (Seven Mother Goddesses)**. According to this tradition, the seven divine sisters arrived in the region in search of a suitable place to reside. Three of them remained in present-day Hassan as manifestations of **Haasanamba**, while another settled at **Alur** as **Kenchamba**. The remaining sisters established shrines in nearby villages, creating a sacred religious landscape

that continues to shape local devotional practices. The **Haasanamba Temple** has historically served not only as a religious institution but also as the nucleus around which Hassan city developed. Various artisan and occupational communities including flower sellers, brass workers, potters, priests, oil merchants, weavers, and traders established their livelihoods around the temple precincts. Religious festivals generated vibrant economic and cultural activities, reinforcing the temple's role as the social and commercial heart of the city. In recent decades, however, the traditional urban character surrounding the temple has undergone significant transformation. Rapid commercialization, increased vehicular traffic and inadequate parking facilities have disrupted the historic pedestrian-friendly environment. Encroachment by modern commercial establishments has reduced the space available for traditional occupations. Handcrafted products have increasingly been replaced by machine-made goods, affecting local artisans and hereditary craftsmen. Traditional institutions such as **wrestling schools (Garadis or Akhadas)**, which once enjoyed royal patronage and promoted indigenous sports, have declined because of changing lifestyles, urban expansion and the growing popularity of modern fitness centers. Consequently, many long-established residents and occupational communities have gradually relocated from the historic core, posing challenges for the preservation of Hassan's cultural heritage.

De-industrialization of Traditional Crafts and Industrial Development in Hassan District: Before British colonial rule, Hassan District boasted a vibrant network of traditional cottage and artisanal industries producing handwoven textiles, metal utensils, pottery, leather goods and agricultural tools, centered in temple towns like Hassan, Belur and Shravanabelagola. The influx of inexpensive British machine-made goods in the nineteenth century severely disrupted these industries, especially handloom weaving, leading to declining demand and loss of skills. Metalworking and fiber product industries adapted but faced challenges as colonial policies favored raw material exports over local manufacturing, causing gradual de-industrialization and artisan displacement. Post-independence, efforts by the Mysore State Khadi and Village Industries Board revitalized rural industries through financial aid, technical support, and cooperative organization, sustaining traditional crafts such as khadi weaving, pottery, oil extraction and apiary activities. Despite these interventions, Hassan remained largely dependent on agriculture and agro-based industries, classified as industrially backward with limited large-scale industrialization. The establishment of the District Industries Centre and industrial estates in several taluks aimed to promote small and medium enterprises by providing infrastructure and support. Hassan's

central location and improving transport and communication networks offer industrial growth potential, but realizing this requires continued governmental support, investment, skill development, and modernization. Overall, Hassan's industrial history reflects a transition from a flourishing artisanal economy through colonial de-industrialization to post-independence efforts balancing heritage preservation with industrial development.

Commercial Plantation Economy and Industrial Transition in Hassan District:

During the colonial period, Hassan District's economy shifted from a diversified agrarian and artisanal base to a focus on commercial plantation crops, especially coffee, cardamom and black pepper in the Malnad region. British policies prioritized export-oriented agriculture, integrating Hassan into the global colonial economy but limiting local industrialization and value-added processing. Wealth concentrated among plantation owners and colonial traders, with little reinvestment in local industries, leaving Hassan dependent on primary agricultural production and delaying industrial diversification. Post-independence efforts to promote industrialization included establishing Industrial Development Areas in Hassan and Sakleshpur, providing infrastructure for small-scale industries. However, these initiatives had limited impact on the predominantly agricultural economy. Today, plantation agriculture remains central, complemented by rich cultural and architectural heritage sites like Belur and Halebidu, which offer potential for sustainable economic growth through heritage conservation integrated with economic development. A comprehensive future strategy for Hassan should leverage local knowledge, indigenous skills and natural resources by strengthening traditional crafts, promoting agro-processing industries, encouraging rural entrepreneurship and expanding heritage tourism. This integrated approach can reduce reliance on primary agriculture, retain economic benefits locally and foster inclusive, sustainable development while preserving the district's unique historical identity.

Conclusion: Hassan District holds significant potential for balanced and sustainable industrial development due to its abundant natural resources, strategic location, rich agricultural base and exceptional cultural heritage. While predominantly agrarian, the district offers diverse opportunities for value-added agro-based industries such as coffee processing, spice and edible oil production and coconut-based enterprises. Mineral resources like chromite, asbestos and limestone present prospects for environmentally sustainable mineral-based industries. Traditional sectors like sericulture, silk weaving, handloom and wood-based industries can be revitalized through modern technology and cooperative efforts, supporting rural livelihoods. Hassan's rich historical and cultural heritage including Hoysala monuments,

Jain pilgrimage sites and archaeological treasures, provides immense potential for heritage tourism integrated with local crafts and cultural industries. Future development should focus on local economic growth by leveraging indigenous knowledge, skilled artisans and entrepreneurship. Emphasizing value addition, MSME promotion, infrastructure improvement and skill development alongside heritage conservation will foster inclusive growth. Industrial expansion in agro-processing, minerals, silk, forest products and tourism can generate employment, stimulate agricultural diversification and improve living standards. A balanced development model combining modernization with preservation will enable Hassan to emerge as a key center of agro-industrial and heritage-based sustainable development in Karnataka, transforming its traditional strengths into modern economic opportunities while safeguarding its unique cultural legacy.

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