

CHAPTER XIX

PLACES OF INTEREST

Abbi.—This place is three miles from Mercara, where the Mercara stream falls from a height. 'Abbi' in Kodagu dialect means falls. The Abbi falls was formerly called the Jesse Falls in honour of a daughter of the first chaplain of Mercara. It is much admired and frequently visited by picnic parties.

Abbi Matha.—This is an important Veerashaiva matha in Somwarpet taluk. It was established by Dodda Virarajendra Wodeyar. There are many palm leaf writings and manuscript records in this matha.

Abyatmangala.—A village in Virajpet taluk. This is noted for the Attimangala channel, an irrigation work constructed in the early years of this century. This channel feeds the rich rice fields of the Abyatmangala and Valanur-Tegathur villages.

Anandapura.—This Protestant settlement is situated on the road from Siddapur to Virajpet and has gained importance as being the first Protestant settlement in Coorg. One of the oldest Protestant churches in the district, built in the year 1855, is situated here.

Balamuri.—This place is about 13 miles from Mercara and is situated on the banks of the river Cauvery. It is also a pilgrim centre. A large number of people visit the place during the Cauvery festival on the second day of the Thula month. Dodda Virarajendra Wodeyar built a rest house here which is still in good condition. The villagers are taking good care of it. A Mahila Samaja and a Sishu Vihara are run on the upstairs of this rest house. The village has one of the best Coorgi folk-dance parties.

Barapole Hydro-Electric Project area.—This project area is in Kuttandi village in Ponnampet-nad. The site of this project is about ten miles south-east of Virajpet. There is a fair-weather motorable road from Virajpet to the proposed site of the project. The project is designed to generate 180,000 KWTs of electric power. Apart from the fact that the hydro-electric project will be

located here, the site merits a visit for a view of the magnificent spectacle of the mountain ranges, unsurpassed anywhere in the south.

The river Barapole across which the hydel project is to be installed is made up of two major streams known as Kangan-hole and Kakkatu-hole and flows west to the Arabian Sea through Malabar. A dam is being built across the river to impound the waters for running the turbines. The catchment area of the dam is 58.3 square miles.

Betageri.—This place is in the Suntikoppa Nad of Somwarpet taluk. It was once humming with life and activity as the capital of a feudatory of the Chandalvas.

Bhagamandala.—A village situated at a distance of 24 miles to the west of Mercara and connected with it by a good all-weather motorable road.

The place derives its importance from the temples near the rivers, which attract a large number of pilgrims, during the Thula month particularly at the time of the Cauvery festival. The temples have an endowment of about Rs. 3,900. There is an inscription in the court-yard on a stone slab of the Bhagandeshwara temple, in the Tamil language and Grantha-akshara. Tipu Sultan had converted the temple premises into a fort between 1785 and 1790 and had kept a small garrison here. He had named Bhagamandala as Afzalabad. In 1790, however, the fort at Bhagamandala was taken from his troops by Dodda Virarajendra of Coorg, after a siege lasting five days. The Raja himself fired the first cannon from the hill of Mumbaratu, and three copper tiles in the roof of the temple were destroyed in the bombardment. But he replaced them with four tiles of silver immediately.

Bhagamandala is a name well-known to every pious Hindu. It is here that the sacred rivers, the Cauvery and the Kannike, meet. Tradition has it that Sujyothi, a subterranean stream, joins these rivers here. Hence the place is popularly known as "Triveni Sangama".

There are four important temples just above the confluence of the three rivers, dedicated to Ishwara, Subramanya, Vishnu and Ganapathi. This is an important pilgrimage-centre. This place is also called Bhagandeswara Kshetra. Pilgrims first take a bath in the Sangama and offer oblations to their departed ancestors. They then ascend the hills for a holy bath at Talakaveri.

At Bhagamandala, the tourist can also visit an important demonstration and research-cum-training centre in modern methods of bee-keeping.

Bittangala.—A place situated in the Virajpet taluk. The “Saratabhi water fall” is a place of scenic grandeur which is reached from Bittangala. The Barapole river, on its course westwards, falls from a height and this natural advantage is expected to be utilised for generating electricity. The water-fall looks picturesque during the post-monsoon months when water is less plentiful in the river.

Chettalli.—This place is about ten miles from Mercara, on the Mercara-Siddapur-Virajpet Road. About one and a half miles from Chettalli on the Chettalli-Suntikoppa road, there is an orange research station run by the State Government and subsidised by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research. With a view to evolving citrus species suitable for development in the State, many interesting experiments are being conducted here. The Government has a programme to develop this as a horticultural station. On the way to this orange research station, is a coffee research sub-station maintained by the India Coffee Board.

Devatuparambu.—This is a place about six miles from Bhagamandala. Tippu Sultan called some 5,000 Coorgs with their families to assemble on a big maidan here in 1785 and then treacherously seized upon them, men, women and children, and deported them to Srirangapatna, where he converted them to Islam.

Dhanugala.—This place is eight miles north-east of Hudikeri in Ponnampet Nad. It was once famous for the Palupare or Papare fort of considerable extent, said to have been built by Kolli Ninga and Benne Krishna of the Beda tribe, and which was later destroyed by Tippu Sultan’s armies. There are at present only the remains of a temple within the fort area.

Gargandur.—There is the site of an old fort of the times of the later Changalvas in this place. On this site is a stone pillar with a carved and dome-like top. There are two tanks near the fort site. There is a high school at Gargandur. There is also a fine bridge across Harangi river between Gargandur and Hardur.

Gonikoppal.—This place is on the Bittangala-Mattigodu road, south-east of Mercara. There is an important citrus research station. This is also a busy market place in Virajpet taluk.

Halagote.—A place in Somwarpet taluk. A big tank covering an area of 34.28 acres is located here. The tank is called Halagote tank and is similar in extent to Honnammanakere.

Haleri.—This place is six miles from Mercara on the Madapur road, and noted for its coffee estates. The place is of historical importance because of its association with

the Haleri Rajas who later became Rajas of Coorg. A prince in the guise of a Jangama, it is stated, came from the Ikkeri kingdom and established himself here. Gaining influence, he conquered the surrounding territory. He held sway for a number of years. Since the time the prince (Jangama) from Ikkeri came to this place and settled there, Haleri became important in Coorg history.

Heggala.—A village five miles south-west of Virajpet which is noted for its mountainous pass called the "Heggala pass". Though the huge mountain mass of the Western Ghats is inaccessible from the west, several natural passes are there which provide communication. The Heggala pass is one such, through which the Periyambadi ghat road to Cannanore *via* Watekolli is laid. The Heggala pass became historically famous in the military adventures of Tippu Sultan when he went through the pass to subdue the rulers of Cochin and Travancore. Several times Tippu was pushed back. It is stated that the British forces also marched from Cannanore to Srirangapatna through this pass during their wars with Tippu Sultan.

Honnammankere.—This is an old tank, the oldest in the district, situated close to Somwarpet. The tank is used for irrigation.

Horamale.—There is a site here with some remains of old walls of the palace of the Horamale branch of the Haleri royal family. Now there is a cardamom plantation on the palace site. About a mile from here, there is a small stone-walled and roofed temple of the goddess Bhadra Kali. On the stone pillars at the entrance to the small temple yard, creepers and leaves have been carved. Though small, this temple looks grand. This is the only temple of its kind in Coorg.

Hudikeri.—A village which was once the headquarters of the old Kiggatnad taluk, 39 miles south-east of Mercara. It is situated in a healthy locality on the top of a beautiful grass hill, whence a fine view can be had of the Brahmagiri and Marenad ranges. The "Glen Lorn" tea estate is situated three miles from Hudikeri on the road leading to Mananthody. This is the only tea estate in Coorg.

Hudugur.—Hudugur is the site of the dam to be constructed across the Harangi. This place is about eight miles from Kushalnagar on the Kudige-Somwarpet Road.

Iggutappadevara-betta.—This, in the proximity of the Aiyangeri forest near Paditora pass, is a lofty peak and is a pilgrim centre for the Coorgs in particular and other Hindus in general. Worshippers from all over the district congregate at the shrine and offer poojas and sometimes "Tulabhara",

weighing oneself with rice or coconuts and offering the same to the deity along with some money. The place is highly venerated for the presiding deity Subramanya, the patron god of the Coorgs.

Irupu.—A place of pilgrimage in Kurchi village in South Coorg, about 30 miles from Virajpet. There is a temple here said to have been dedicated to God Shiva by Sri Rama himself, on the banks of the Lakshmanatirtha river. Lakshmanatirtha is the name given to the river formed by the water falling down from the top of the hill. On the day of "Mahashivarathri", pilgrims from several parts of the country-side congregate here to take a holy bath in the river. There is an all-weather motorable road from Virajpet upto Srimangala, a distance of 25 miles, with a number of buses plying on it, and also from Srimangala to Irupu, a distance of five miles. In the proximity of Irupu and towards Wynad, the Brahmagiri peak is another place of interest for tourists. There is a rest house on the top of the hill from where one can obtain a magnificent view of the hills and dales. On clear days, the sight-seer can feast his eyes on an extensive area of South Coorg and a portion of North Malabar.

Kadamkallu.—This place is in the confines of Kumaralli forest region and is noted for its first rubber estate in Coorg. A new road is being constructed from Mercara through Kadamkallu to Sri Subramanya, a noted shrine in South Kanara district. The road, when completed, will cut short the distance considerably and afford easy access to the celebrated place.

Kakkabe.—This place is five miles from Napoklu and has gained importance historically, as a village of approach to the Nalknad Palace, described later. Those who desire to visit the Nalknad Palace have to pass through Kakkabe. The road from Napoklu to Virajpet passes through Kakkabe.

Kodlipet.—It is to the north of Somwarpet and is on the border of the Coorg District. The Sakleshpur-Arkalgud road through Coorg runs across the north of the Somwarpet taluk through Kodlipet, and from this place the main road to Mercara runs south, past Sanivarasanthe, through the length of the taluk. A cross road connects Sanivarasanthe with Hebbale. This is a commercial place linking the cardamom-growing centre of Sakleshpur with Coorg.

Kudige.—Three miles from Kushalnagar is a place called Kudige on the road to Somwarpet. This has now been converted into a model agricultural and dairy farm. A Basic Training College for the training of teachers was also started here in 1956. The farm has been extended to cover an area of more than 500 acres, mainly for conducting experiments on several

agricultural crops, including paddy and ragi. A Sericulture farm has also been established where silk cocoons are reared and then sent to the Government Silk Factory at Mysore. The Government dairy farm maintains a large number of pedigreed cows for purposes of demonstration as well as for the supply of pasteurised milk to the urban areas of the district. An artificial insemination centre was opened in the farm as early as in 1952, making maximum use of the good pedigreed bulls maintained there. The centre has become very popular as it caters to the needs of the majority of the livestock breeders. A fodder research station was also started in the farm in the year 1954. A gram sevak training centre was opened here in 1958.

Kumaralli.—The Pushpagiri or Subramanya hill, the celebrated mountain (5,626 feet), is in the north-west of Coorg, about 23 miles from Somwarpet and one mile from Kumaralli, which is amidst dense jungle. This is a remarkable two-pointed hill of precipitous height and peculiar shape and resembles, as seen from Mercara, a gigantic bullock hump. The ascent, which, on account of the precipices of the southern and western parts of the hill, can only be effected by a circuitous route, is more difficult than that of Tadiandamol. Starting from Bhagati, at the base of Pushpagiri, it is about six miles walking, the ascent taking a good walker about three hours. A dense jungle, full of wild elephants, has to be penetrated during the ascent. The summit commands an extensive view of Coorg, South Kanara and Mysore. There are on this hill numerous Hindu memorials in the shape of stone mounds. Within an enclosure, there are two stone structures, with the traditional imprint of two feet (*pada*) said to be of celestial origin. There is a temple of Ishwara also on the top of the hill. Pujas are performed on a grand scale every year on the occasion of “Thula Sankramana”.

Kushalnagar.—Kushalnagar is a growing town, 19 miles from Mercara, on the Mercara-Mysore Road. It is situated on the banks of the Cauvery. The name, Kushalnagar, was given to the town by Haider Ali, on receiving here a happy tidings of some victory. Later, during the British rule, the town was named Fraserpet after Colonel Fraser, the first Chief Commissioner of Coorg. Its original name of Kushalnagar has now been restored.

The Cauvery is crossed here by a strong stone bridge. Because of its position, it is warmer than Mercara, and, during the heavy Coorg monsoon, offers a pleasant retreat from the violence of the rains.

Besides the main Mysore-Mercara road which passes through the town, cross-roads run south to Siddapur, north to Hebbale, and north-west to Somwarpet.

In the days of the Chief Commissioners, the place was the monsoon headquarters of the head of the Coorg State. A new polytechnic is set up here for the whole of Coorg. Kushalnagar is also a centre for big game hunters. The Anekad and the adjoining Attur State forests are closeby. The town is a busy place for trade.

Kutta.—This place is on the Wynad border and is close to Manchalli forest encompassing the magnificent Brahmagiri hill. This Brahmagiri hill is quite different from the other Brahmagiri hill at Talakaveri. The place is a frontier outpost, situated as it is in the dense Wynad jungles known for its elephant herds. The Kutta-Nagarhole road originates from this place.

Madalapur.—A dam is constructed across a small stream here and about 1,000 acres of paddy growing lands are irrigated from the water stored in this dam.

Madapur.—This place is thirteen miles from Mercara and twelve miles from Somwarpet. The ancient family cemetery of the Coorg Rajas is here. The tomb of Lingarajendra Wodeyar I, the father of Doddavirarajendra Wodeyar and Lingarajendra Wodeyar II, is situated on the banks of the Madapur river, but it has no claim to architectural merit. It is surrounded by narrow outhouses which crowd too closely upon it. It is about 40 feet square and of nearly the same height and stands on an elevated base. It consists of two storeys, the bottom one enclosing the sepulchres in a central apartment, the one above being of the same size as the central apartment, leaving room for a passage and a low balustrade all round. The lower storey is ornamented with a large figure of Basava, sculptured in syenite, and similar images adorn the capitals of four small pillars placed at angles on the top of the building.

Madapur is also called Jambur, because it is said that the Haleri Rajas of Coorg were going in procession from the Madapur matha which is by the side of the cemetery, to the river on the other side of the village. This procession was called Jamboosavari and hence the name of the village as Jambur. Madapur is the shortened form of Mahadevpur.

Makut.—This place is on the borders of the Cannanore district of Kerala and is in the midst of the Periyambadi ghat. There is a rubber estate closeby. At one time, a small tram line was laid here to transport timber, and this opened prospects for the laying of a railway line from Nanjangud to Tellicherry across Coorg. The survey was completed but the proposed railway line was given up due to the intervention of the war. The road leading to Cannanore from Virajpet suddenly takes a descent from Makut.

Malambi.—This place is situated in the north-east of Coorg on the road from Somwarpet to Sanivarasanthe. The peak closeby is remarkable for the beauty of its conical shape. Though not remarkable for its height, the conical shape attracts the sightseers.

Mercara.—The headquarters of Coorg district, is a town with a population of 14,453 according to the Census of 1961. It is not linked by railway. But there are excellent motorable roads both from Mysore and Mangalore. Mercara is at a distance of 75 miles from Mysore and 84 miles from Mangalore. Situated in 12° 25' North latitude, 75° 46' East longitude, it is a picturesque town situated on uneven ground and commanding enchanting views from several points. A stroll along any path in the less busy parts of the town reveals at almost every turn a new and delightful view to the eye.

Mercara is the name given by the Britishers to "Madikeri", the headquarters of Coorg or the "Kodagu" district. The town is picturesquely situated on an elevated plateau on the Western Ghats. 'Madikeri' was founded by a prince of the Haleri dynasty—Muddu Raja—in the year 1681. The Coorg Rajas had their residence in Haleri till the founding of Mercara. Muddu Raja selected this site for his fort and capital on account of its central, as well as its inaccessible position. Tradition has it that the Raja chose the hill on which the fort and the palace now stand, as he found a hare chasing a dog, when he had gone there to hunt. But such stories are attributed to almost every spot in India where forts have been built. Muddu Raja built a mud fort, and also a palace with mud walls inside the fort, in 1681. The town was then named "Muddu-Rajakeri" after its founder Muddu Raja. In 1815, Lt. P. Connor who had been deputed by the East India Company to make a survey of Coorg, referred to this town as "Muddukayray". Later, it came to be called "Madikeri" by the local people, and "Mercara" by the Britishers.

In the beginning of the 19th century, Mercara was a very small town, with almost no trade with the neighbouring places. The houses of the officials of the Raja were in the immediate vicinity of the fort. Between 1800 and 1805, Virarajendra built the new town of Mahadeopet to the north of the fort, in memory of his second and favourite queen, Mahadevammaji. At the northern end of this town, he built the Petta Subedar's Cutcherry or office. The Mercara Municipal School is at present housed in that building. The Rajas' seal ('V') in Kannada has been inscribed on a stone slab and fixed in the wall just above the front door of that building, and can be seen even to-day.

Mercara offers to the tourist several interesting places worth a visit. Among these are the fort, the former palace, the

Omkareswara Temple, the Gaddige (or the Rajas' Tombs) and the Raja's Seat.

The fort stands on an elevated ground, practically crowning the town. It is an imposing structure. The present fort, which is of stone, was built by Tippu and named by him 'Jaffarabad'. It, however, fell to Virarajendra in 1790, when his troops cut off supplies to the garrison stationed in the fort and all its guns, ammunition and treasure were delivered to the Raja. The fort was in the hands of the Coorg Rajas from this time upto April 1834 when the last of the Rajas was deposed by the British. It is still in pretty good condition but it must have been of little strategical value, being surrounded by hills all round and within short cannon range. It is an irregular hexagon, and nearly conforms to the shape of the hill top, leaving enough space for a ditch all round. There are bastions at the six angles, and the whole structure is built of strong masonry. The entrance, which is on the east, is intricate and circuitous and guarded by three successive gates. In the inner fort, towards the southern front of the palace, a temple of Virabhadra was removed in 1855 to make way for the present English Church, whose spire is a conspicuous object from all sides. The church was built under the direction of the Reverend A. Fennel, and his handiwork contributed to its interior fittings. In the words of Sri Muthanna, the English Church "is a neat structure in plain Gothic style".

THE PALACE.—Lingarajendra Wodeyar II, who ruled after Virarajendra, rebuilt the palace within the fort in brick and mortar in the years 1812 to 1814. An inscription on the metal plate in one of the palace rooms mentions the date of commencement and of completion of the construction of the palace, and concludes, "The pious who praise Almighty God by whose grace this magnificent palace was constructed after the removal of the rugged hill top, shall enjoy eternal happiness in this world and in the world to come". Lt. Connor describes the palace in these words—"This edifice consists of two stories, is lofty and spacious and like most Hindoo buildings of this nature, covers a great extent of area. It is of a square form having a small court in the centre; three of its sides present nearly a blank space varied only by a few apertures to admit the air. Considerable innovations, however, have been made in the architecture of the country with regard to the face of this structure which is quite after the European fashion, presenting a very handsome front of about 110 feet long; a range of arches runs along the whole extent of the bottom part, the upper having a contiguous row of windows shut in by glass sashes and venetian blinds, a balustrade surmounting the whole. The front rooms are quite after the European manner, and visitors are received in an apartment the architecture and furniture of which differ in nothing from an English one; as to the interior arrangements, they are

doubtless more consonant to native ideas of excellence and comfort. The whole, however, is an exceedingly stately fabric presenting something greatly superior to most Hindoo palaces, being conceived and executed after a much better taste than those royal residences generally are; it is of brick and altogether finished with equal solidity as elegance". The superstructure of the palace was twice thoroughly repaired by the British. A clock-tower and a portico for parking the Commissioner's car were built at the right end of the palace in 1933.

Two life-size elephants made of mortar, striking in their majesty, catch the eye as one enters the fort.

The palace now houses all the important Government offices. A public library called the Mahatma Gandhi Public Library is in front of the palace to the right. In a room of this library building, a museum of historical relics and records has been opened recently.

THE OMKARESHWARA TEMPLE.—Another important structure erected by Lingarajendra in 1820 was the Omkareshwara temple in the hollow to the east of the fort. Tradition has it that Lingarajendra put to death a very learned, pious and good Brahmin unjustly and cruelly, for having prevented the satisfaction of his carnal desires, and that in consequence, the learned Brahmin's spirit turned into a "Brahma-Rakshasa" and began to torment the Raja day and night. Therefore, in order to appease the spirit of the Brahmin, the Raja, it is stated, built a temple and installed therein a "Shivalinga" specially brought for the purpose from Varanasi (Benares). The Shivalinga was called "Omkareshwara Linga" and the temple "Omkareshwara Temple". From that time, it is said, the Brahma-Rakshasa ceased to torment the Raja.

This temple is built in the Muhammadan style of architecture, with a dome in the centre and four turrets at the four corners. There is a tank below in front of the temple, in the middle of which there is a small "mantapam" connected by a narrow causeway. The temple and its surroundings present a calm atmosphere.

RAJAS' TOMBS.—Lingarajendra also completed the tomb of his elder brother Virarajendra, which had been begun in his life-time. The tomb is situated at the northern extremity of Mahadeopet and is enclosed by a high embankment. Viraraja's and his wife's remains are interred there. Virarajendra is deified and his samadhi is worshipped even to this day. In the same plain, to the right of Viraraja's tomb, is Lingarajendra's tomb built by his son, Viraraja the younger, in 1820. There are also the tombs of the Raja's priest Rudrappa, built by Dewan Cheppudira Ponnappa in 1834, and of Biddandra

Bopu and his son Somayya, the Sarva Karyagaras (the chief commandants of the army) of Doddaviraraja and Chickaviraraja, respectively. There is a Kannada inscription on Bopu's tomb inscribed by the orders of Doddavirarajendra, paying tribute to his services to the Raja, in the latter's wars against Tippu Sultan, and in his hunting expeditions.

An account of General Welsh's visit to the precincts of Viraraja's tomb with Lingarajendra Wodeyar in 1811, makes very interesting reading. He says, "The town is remarkably clean and well built, about half a mile off by an excellent high road and at the farther extremity there is a rising ground, with a strong mud barrier, after entering which you come upon a small plain with a magnificent tomb, erected by the present Raja to the memory of his late brother and his wife. It is much in the style of Muhammadan edifices, being a wide square with a handsome dome in the centre and four turrets at the angles. On the top of the dome is a gold ball, with a weather cock above it, and all the window bars are made of solid brass".

THE RAJA'S SEAT.—The "Raja's Seat" is an elevated spot overlooking a vast green area. It commands a thrilling view. It is no wonder that this lovely spot should have been such a favourite place of recreation with the Rajas and be permanently associated with their names. Standing in the "mantapam", the visitor may see one of the finest and most fascinating views in all Coorg or anywhere in the south. Immediately below is an extensive valley, studded with paddy fields. The road to Mangalore, meandering its course down the hill, looks just like a curved ribbon lying in the valley. Beyond the valley stand in majestic silence the blue mountain peaks. One range of mountain towers above another, until in the distance the mountains meet the sky. The golden light of the setting sun rests on the scene, adding new grace and splendour to it.

BUILDINGS AND OTHER PLACES.—A little away to the west of the Parade Ground is the magnificent building of the Government First Grade College, built in 1953 and situated on a hillock in ideal surroundings.

Another stately building in Mercara, the Town Hall, was built in the year 1954, almost at the entrance to the town. It is built in the middle of the Coronation Garden which was opened in 1912. The Municipal Offices are located in a portion of this building. Public meetings and other functions are held here and for this purpose seating accommodation for about one thousand persons has been provided.

Other buildings worth mentioning in Mercara are the "*Sudarshana*", formerly called "Beauvoir", the former residence

of the Chief Commissioners of Coorg and now a guest house, the Central Co-operative Bank at the entrance to the town, the travellers' bungalow below the southern toll-gate, the Women and Children's Hospital to the right of the Mysore road near the toll-gate and the Cardamom Marketing Society building. The "*Sudarshana*" was built in 1912, but the other buildings were built more recently. A "mantapa" over the sacred *asthi* of Mahatma Gandhi was built in 1956 to the left of the road leading to the Raja's Seat.

Mercara owed its importance in the beginning entirely to its being the residence of the Rajas.

In 1817, there were only 300 houses in Mercara. Its prosperity began after the coming of the British and the opening of Coorg to outside trade and communication. It was constituted into a municipality in 1870, when it had a population of 8,146. The population of Mercara in 1951 was 10,117 and according to the census of 1961, it was 14,453. The Municipality has been divided into twelve wards for purposes of efficient administration.

Mercara is developing into an industrial and educational centre. There is a Government Central Workshop and a Government Press which cater to the requirements of Government work. Among the educational institutions in Mercara, mention may be made of the First Grade College, two co-educational high schools, a high school for girls, an Industrial Training Institute and the Government Co-operative Training Institute.

Mercara is a very pleasant place for the tourists during the months of October to May. The climate of Mercara ranges from cool to cold. The temperature varies from 55°F in December to nearly 90°F in April. The average rainfall in Mercara is 128.42 inches, the rainiest months being June, July and August. There are good all-weather motorable roads from Mercara to Mysore, Hassan, South Kanara and Malabar.

A Tourist Rest Home has been constructed at a cost of Rs. 1,80,000 on the Stewart Hill, close to the Raja's Seat. This hill got its name from Donald Stewart, a planter who had his bungalow on this hill.

The place is increasingly attracting tourists. As there is a fine road connecting Mangalore with Mysore through Mercara, people travel by buses in large numbers from South Kanara to Mysore and Bangalore, and *vice-versa via* Mercara.

Mugutgere.—A place about eight miles from Virajpet noted for its remarkable hill. The hill is steep with precipitous rocky

acclivity towards the west. There is a small temple on the top. A big festival is held here in October every year.

Mullur.—This place is four miles from Sanivarasanthe and was once noted for its Jain basadis. But at present the basadis are in a dilapidated condition. The Gangas and Changalvas gave importance to this place.

Murkal.—This place in Virajpet taluk is reached from Mattigodu and Banavara, and is close to the Heggadadevanakote taluk of Mysore district. The place is noted for its saw mill, run by the State Government as a major industrial enterprise since 1954. A furniture factory is also functioning as an adjunct since 1955.

Murnad.—This is a place south of Mercara where a weekly shandy is held every Thursday attended by a good number of people from the surrounding villages.

Nagarhole.—The Nagarhole game sanctuary was constituted in July 1955, and extends over 111 square miles of reserved forests in the eastern region of the district. The game sanctuary comprises three forest ranges namely, Nagarhole, Kalhalla and Tithimathi. It adjoins the State forests along its eastern and south-eastern boundaries, and a portion of Wynad forests of Kerala State, in the south. The vegetation in the sanctuary is of a tropical, moist, and deciduous type. There are also large areas (nearly 12,000 acres) of teak plantations within the sanctuary, the oldest plantation being the 1868 teak plantation at Karmad.

The sanctuary is situated at a distance of 38 miles from Virajpet, and is close to Heggadadevanakote taluk of Mysore district. It is accessible by a good all-weather motorable road from Tithimathi which branches off from the Mysore-Virajpet road. The sanctuary is also accessible by road from Heggadadevanakote in Mysore district, through Murkal in Coorg. There is a forest lodge here. The sanctuary affords an excellent opportunity to the visitors to see wild animals of all kinds, from the majestic elephant and the graceful spotted deer to the wily jackal, moving about in their natural surroundings unmindful of intruders.

Most of the South Indian species of animals are represented in this game sanctuary. Wild elephant, bison, spotted deer, sambur, barking deer, wild pig and sloth-bear are commonly met with. Spotted deer and sambur are particularly in abundance. Tigers and panthers are also occasionally seen. The elephant camps of the Forest Department, particularly the Hebballa

elephant camp, on the banks of the Lakshmanathirtha river, are another attraction to the visitors.

The sanctuary has motorable roads and rest houses at frequent intervals, which enable the tourists to visit every corner of the sanctuary without difficulty. There are convenient rest-houses at Nagarhole, Kalhalla, Murkal and Tithimathi. For a good view of the animals in the sanctuary, it will be particularly convenient to the visitors to go on elephant back—the Forest Department hires out elephants for this purpose—early in the morning or in the evening, when it is possible to watch the animals, undisturbed, from a near distance.

Under the Second Five-Year Plan, a sum of rupees one lakh was provided for the improvement of the game sanctuary. This amount was utilised mainly for providing more amenities to the visitors, such as improvement to the rest-house, laying out roads to the interior of the sanctuary, maintenance of a motor van for the visitors to go round the sanctuary and provision of other facilities.

Even within a short period after the sanctuary was constituted, a change for the better was noticeable in the fauna. The population of many of the species of animals, particularly those of the deer tribe, has increased appreciably. The game sanctuary has become a pleasant spot of recreation not only for the people of Coorg, but also for those from outside.

The Nalkeri forest region in the confines of which this sanctuary is situated, affords variegated faunistic pattern in the post-monsoon months of the year.

Nalknad.—The principal country palace of the Coorg Rajas, built by Doddavirarajendra in 1792 is in Yevakapadi village of Nalknad. It is situated close to Tadiandamol, the highest peak in Coorg. The building itself is a very ordinary structure of two storeys. The lower portion was formerly used as the Nad cutcherry, and the upper one was kept for the accommodation of European visitors. In front of the palace is an elegant little "mantapa", erected in 1796 on the occasion of the celebration of the Raja's marriage with Mahadevammaji. The place is situated on a precipitous ridge and is not easily accessible; the Rajas did not want their seclusion being subjected to interference. When they resided here, it was difficult for any one to approach the building. At present, a bee-keeping centre is located in this palace.

Nanjarajapatna.—This was once the headquarters of the old Nanjarajapatna taluk. Since the formation of the Somwarpet taluk, this place has lost much of its importance. The town was the

last resting place of Nanjunda or Nanjaraja, the exiled king of Periyapatna. There is a temple here dedicated to Nanjundeshwara.

Napoklu.—A village situated near the right bank of the Cauvery, 14 miles south-west of Mercara. The place is noted for its rich paddy fields and cardamom plantations.

Pollibetta.—A place in Ammathinad, six miles from Siddapur in Virajpet taluk. The Consolidated Coffee Estates Ltd., a venture of the coffee-producers, has its head-office here. The place is telephonically linked with Mercara. The Consolidated Coffee Estates Ltd., has a network of estates all over the district. The only co-operative institution for orange-growers in the district is also situated here.

Ponnampet.—A busy market place, once in the old Kiggatnad taluk, it is now included in the Virajpet taluk as the *nad* headquarters of the same name. Though the ordinary market for the taluk is at Gonikoppal, the chief centre for paddy trade is Ponnampet. The traders in paddy are mostly Moplahs who come from Malabar to transact business. These Moplahs also advance money to the raiyats from early June, but more usually in October-November. This is redeemed during the harvest time, the actual redemption being done at the cultivator's door. Ponnampet is full of petty traders who sell their paddy stock to large traders from Malabar

As this is a paddy-growing centre, an agricultural farm was started in 1931 with an extent of 21.66 acres of wet land. Originally, this farm was located in Virajpet, but as it was felt that it would be more suitable to have it in Ponnampet, the location of the farm was shifted to this place.

This place is famous for the Sri Ramakrishna Mission institutions which are doing very useful service to the people in and around the town. A hospital is also run by the mission in this place.

Ramaswami Kanive.—This place is on the way from Kudige to Konanur in Hassan district. The Ramaswami temple situated here is of ancient origin and noted for its sanctity. Vaishyas, Vokkaligas, Devangas and other Hindus come here to celebrate weddings. This place is as famous as the "Kengal Hanumantharayanagudi" on the Bangalore-Mysore road, for the celebration of marriages. It is considered that no special "muhurtham" is necessary to celebrate weddings at this place. The river Cauvery flows close to the temple and runs into a wide stretch. This is also a market centre. It was here that the British troops crossed the Cauvery when they invaded Coorg under General Fraser in 1834.

Sampaje.—A village on the foot hills of the Western Ghats towards the Puttur taluk of South Kanara district. The village has a forest lodge and is in the midst of thick evergreen jungle. The place assumed importance because of the Sampaje ghat road or, as it is familiarly called, the Mangalore road, constructed in 1837. It is also called "Fast's Ghat", so named in recognition of the professional skill of the young European engineer who unfortunately fell a victim to the jungle fever. This ghat road leading towards South Kanara was improved through the years and is now easily negotiable, though in the early years of its construction it was tortuous. The ascent from Sampaje to Mercara gives the motorist a thrilling and fascinating experience. Prior to the States' reorganisation, Sampaje had a prohibition check post and a toll-gate.

Sanivarasanthe.—A place situated 40 miles north of Mercara.

Sanivarasanthe, meaning "Saturday fair", indicates the character of the place. It was originally called "Hemmage". Its inhabitants are mostly weavers. The large weekly market as well as its favourable situation on the main road give the place its importance. Sanivarasanthe is noted for the cattle show held during Gudugalale jatra in February or March each year. This show attracts thousands of cattle from the neighbouring Hassan and Mysore districts.

The town which was constituted into a Notified area in the year 1954 has been upgraded into a town municipality in 1965. There is one Government middle school and one private high school here. There is also a Government Civil Hospital in this place.

Siddapur.—An important place affording easy means of communication with the eastern portion of the district and also with Mysore. Roads from here lead to Pollibetta and Virajpet through Ammathi (former Colepet). The area between Siddapur and Ammathi is called the "bamboo district" because of the luxuriant growth of bamboo all over. Every Sunday a market is held here, visited by labourers of the neighbouring coffee estates and raiyats from the neighbouring villages.

Sirangalli.—Three miles from this place is a lofty mountain towards the north of Mercara taluk. Amongst the many ridges that branch off from the Subramanya range of the ghats, the most remarkable is that which attains its greatest height in Kote-betta. From Mercara, this peak is only nine miles as the crow flies. Its elevation is 5,375 feet, and its base covers a very large extent of country. Its summit, which is divided into two peaks, one rather pointed—the Harangal-betta—and the other broad, forms a comparatively flat table-land, while its sides are clothed with forest;

innumerable cultivated valleys occupy the recesses. Close to the apex, there are two reservoirs of water, which retain a constant supply all the year round. Very near the summit, on a spacious platform, is a small Shiva temple built with rough granite slabs.

Soma Male.—A lofty mountain in Kadiyatnad. It is sacred to Male-tambiran, a form of god Ishwara. There is a temple dedicated to Male-tambiran in the middle of this hill.

Somwarpet.—Headquarters of the Somwarpet taluk, where a weekly market is held every Monday. This place is on the highway from Mercara to Hassan. In the old days, this place was an important centre in the Nanjarajapatna taluk. Around Somwarpet there are good coffee plantations, cardamom estates, paddy fields and orange orchards.

Srimangala.—This place is in Virajpet taluk and is the headquarters of the Srimanganad. Pilgrims going to Irupu pass through this place.

Suntikoppa.—This place is the headquarters of a *nad* of the same name, situated on the Mysore-Mercara road, eight miles from the district headquarters town. A weekly shandy is held here every Sunday, which is frequented by thousands of coffee estate labourers. The road towards Mercara as well as to Mysore is always full of traffic. A police outpost is located here. There is a wide stretch of bamboo forests around the place.

Tadiandamol.—The highest mountain in Coorg (5,724 feet) situated in the south-west of the district in Napoklunad in Mercara taluk. To reach the summit, one has to camp in Yevakapadi and trek one's way through dense jungle to the base of the mountain. The summit raises its gracefully shaped head over its majestic neighbours, behind the Nalknad palace.

The ascent to the mountain-top is tortuous, and two-thirds of the journey has to be achieved on horse-back. Though the topmost portion is rather difficult to ascend, the persevering climber is richly rewarded for his exertion when, in the cool bracing air, he stands on the narrow ledge of the giddy summit and gazes over the gloriously diversified highlands and lowlands. The panoramic vista towards the west is indescribably beautiful. On clear days, one can also see the coast line.

Talakaveri.—Talakaveri is the birth place of the sacred river, Cauvery. It is situated on the slopes of the Brahmagiri Hills, and can be reached by a motorable road from Bhagamandala, which is at a distance of about five miles. There are regular buses to Bhagamandala from Mercara. There are temples dedicated to Ishwara and Ganapathi at the source of the Cauvery.

The "Tula Sankramana" day (usually falling in the month of October) is regarded as the most auspicious day for visiting Talakaveri. There is a small square tank by the side of a fairly big tank in Talakaveri, which is the source of the river. Devout pilgrims believe that on the day of the "Tula Sankramana", at an auspicious moment, the holy Cauvery appears, and that her arrival is indicated by a sudden upsurge of the water in the pond.

The Cauvery jatra which begins on the Tula Sankramana day continues for one full month and is an event of great importance to the people of Coorg and the surrounding districts. The interesting description of the jatra, given in the Gazetteer of Coorg written about 90 years ago, may be reproduced here.

"About the middle of October, all Coorg prepares for the grand festival of Kaveri. The sun has gained the ascendancy over the monsoon clouds. A few passing showers only may still be expected. The rice valleys are clothed with rich paddy approaching maturity; the forests and grass hills are resplendent with the freshness and beauty of spring. Every Coorg house sends one or two representatives to Tala-kaveri. Also pilgrims from Malayalam, Tuluva and Mysore repair to the sacred place by thousands. The nearer the pilgrims approach the end of their journey, the more frequent and the more numerous are the festive caravans of men, women and children in holiday costume, who now rest in picturesque groups on the shady banks of streams, now proceed in gay defiles over the grassy hills.

"With the last ascent of a small elevation near the foot of the Tala-kaveri hill, the view of the upper basin of the Kaveri valley, which is rather wide and flanked by steep hills, suddenly bursts upon the view. The Bhagamandala temple with its copper roof is conspicuous in the middle of the valley and close to the Kaveri. A few rows of houses near it are changed into a busy mart. Thousands of people move to and fro, and the humming noise of the multitude sounds like the distant surf of the ocean. Hundreds are engaged in bathing in the sacred stream before they enter the temple, which forms a large square with an open centre, like a Coorg house. Along the road, pedlars are squatted behind their paltry wares, which are spread under a flimsy awning. Mendicant sanyasis, with hollow sounding conch and brass gong in hand, push, blowing and ringing, through the crowd. Hourly the multitude increases; new arrivals descend from all the neighbouring mountain pathways into the valley.

"Hundreds of people have already proceeded to reach the Kaveri source in order to build for themselves and their expected friends sheltering booths against the cold damp night air. A pathway leads over paddy-fields, through steep jungle, and

over rocky mountain ridges, to the sacred spot. As they ascend, they shout 'Narayana ! O, Narayana ! and the echo is taken up by succeeding caravans. Near the summit there is an overhanging rock, called "Bhima Kallu", which forms a sheltering abode for some sadhus during the festive season. The source of the river is enclosed by a stone basin, over which a small shrine of granite slabs is built. From this reservoir the pure water percolates into a tank of about 30 feet square, which by an outlet keeps the water to a level of $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet. On two sides, there are rough stone terraces scooped out of the hill side, and above the third terrace, on a dip of the hill, there is a small square temple dedicated to Ganapathi, with a few huts close by for the abode of the resident Brahmin pujaris.

"At the moment, as fixed by the astrologer, of the sun's entering into the sign of Libra, whether by day or by night, the pilgrim who is anxious to experience the full power of the sin-cleansing bath, must descend into the holy tank. With the approach of the hour, an ever-increasing multitude surround the tank, impatiently waiting for the propitious moment. Now the priest gives the sign, and the living throng, old and young, men and women, rush in wild confusion into the water, duck three times and drink as often of the water, and on emerging, offer a small gift to the priests, who sit near the shrine, receive the money and pour some pure water over the devotee's head. Before leaving, most of the pilgrims fill a hollow reed (wotte) with water from the sacred spring, and carry it home for the benefit of their relatives and for purifying their wells. The effectual bathing season lasts for a whole month, but with decreasing virtue. From 8,000 to 15,000 pilgrims may annually visit Talakaveri".

After reaching the source of the Cauvery, many people, particularly the young and the able-bodied, climb up about 300 feet to the summit of the Brahmagiri peak where, it is said, the seven great sages meditated. A distinguished writer says about the scenery from Brahmagiri thus: "Standing on a bright November morning on the summit of the Brahmagiri near Talakaveri, the head or source of that river, the observer is filled with delight and admiration of the grand and picturesque view that opens out before him. As far as the eye can reach to the north-west and south-east, it beholds ridge after ridge of grassy or forest-clad hills, now gently sloping down in wavy lines, now bold and abrupt, raising their steep summits into the clear blue air. Kudremukha Betta, the far seen land-mark of the mariner, bursts into view from Canara. The Bettadapur and Chamundi Hills in Mysore, the Wynad mountains of Malabar, and even the range of the distant Nilgiris are clearly visible, while in the west at a distance of about 30 miles below the steep precipices of the ghats, the coast line of North Malabar and South Kanara, intersected by

broad, bright, serpentine rivers, and beyond, the dark blue Arabian Sea dotted with sailing craft fascinate the spectator”.

The great heroes of the “Mahabharatha”, the Pandavas, are said to have visited these regions during their exile. Reminiscent of the visit of these mighty men of a distant epoch, is a huge rock called “Bhima Kallu” (the stone of Bhima) seen on the way to Talakaveri from Bhagamandala. The place where the pilgrim gets his first view of Talakaveri is only three furlongs as one approaches the sacred spot, and is called “Salam Kallu”. Both while approaching the Talakaveri and while returning from there, the pilgrims salute Mother Cauvery from this spot. The name “Salam Kallu” which means “the place from which obeisance is made” to Cauvery, carries with it a story. Tippu, the ambitious ruler of Mysore in the eighteenth century, attacked Coorg repeatedly. It is said that at this place he was over-powered by the mystic powers of the goddess Cauvery, and he retreated after making obeisance to her.

Apart from its importance as a centre of pilgrimage, Talakaveri is an ideal place for a visit by any tourist, for its natural beauty.

Tomara.—Some seven miles from Virajpet towards the Kerala border is Tomara, noted for its fine waterfall. Though the waterfall is small, it gives a good effect, situated as it is in a thick jungle. The fall attains its maximum force during the monsoon months.

Virajpet.—A town situated 20 miles south of Mercara. It is the headquarters of the taluk of the same name. There are two motorable roads linking Mercara and Virajpet.

This flourishing town was founded by Dodda Virarajendra in 1792, in commemoration of the meeting which took place between himself and General Abercromby at this place, while the latter was advancing with the British forces from Bombay against Srirangapatna. The place was therefore formerly known as Virarajendrapet. The Christian population includes the Roman Catholic community of Konkans, who escaped from the persecution of Tippu, and to whom the Coorg Raja granted a settlement here. The trade of Virajpet with the western coast in coffee, rice, and cardamom makes it the most important commercial town in Coorg. A good motorable road connects it with Cannanore and Tellicherry on the west coast in Kerala.

It is prettily situated at the foot of the Maletambiran hill, on the top of which is a large squarely built temple. Every Wednesday there is a fair, which attracts a great concourse of people. Next to the public offices, the most conspicuous building

is the Roman Catholic Church. It was re-built in Gothic style, with a copper roof, under the direction of Father Guillon, who decorated the interior with paintings and statues of his own execution.

The civic needs of the town are being administered by a municipality since the year 1870. For purposes of efficient administration, it has been divided into fifteen wards. The Municipality maintains a primary school, a nursery school and a free reading room. The town hall at Virajpet was constructed in the year 1935 by the Municipal Council. There is a clock-tower in an elevated place in the central part of the town.

Watekolli.—A place situated in Virajpet taluk on the arterial highway to Cannanore through the Periambadi ghat. This is almost the border village near the Kerala frontier. The road from Virajpet to Cannanore and Tellicherry passes through Watekolli to Makut which is about a mile from Kutupole, a river that separates Mysore from Kerala in this part of the country. This is also called the "Cherrapunji of Coorg" as the rainfall here during the south-west monsoon reaches up to 400 inches. Watekolli is the heaviest rainfall area, next to Bhagamandala. This place was once in the Yedenalknad taluk.

Yevakapadi.—The Nalknad palace built by Doddavirarajendra Wodeyar in 1791 is situated in this village. There is a shrine dedicated to goddess Pannagalathamme. This deity is worshipped mostly by the Harijans. The annual festival held in April every year is attended by a large number of people.
