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GAZETTEER

OF THE

BOMBAY PRESIDENCY.

VOLUME XV-PART II

KANARA

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KANARA DISTRICT
(Present Uttara Kannada District)
Originally Printed in 1883

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Places of Interest.
GERSAPPA FALLS.

A path leads through shady woods to a point called the deep cleft where the waters of the Raja and the Roarer join and plunge into the pool below. Myriads of swallows and pigeons circle and flash through the air. And slowly as the sun mounts there shines from the dark depths of the chasm a lovely rainbow which, as the sun slopes westward, rises higher and higher till its brilliancy fades in the waning light of evening. From Watkin's Platform a path through the wood leads down a series of steep steps to the open hill side which slopes to the bed of the river. In the lower slopes the path is blocked by boulders, and all is moist, chill, and slippery from the ever-falling spray. From the edge of the pool is a fine general view of the falls, of the magnificent rugged chasm, and of the deep winding gorge through which in the course of ages the waters of the river have untiringly eaten their way.

There are two bungalows near the falls. One, which is masonry-built and tiled was designed in 1868 by Captain Cruickshank, of the Royal Engineers. It stands 1670 feet above the sea on the edge of the cliff overlooking the chasm and so close to the falls that the roar of the waters sometimes shakes its windows and doors. This bungalow is fully furnished and has room for three visitors. The other bungalow is a small building with mud walls and a tiled roof. It stands 1850 feet above the sea, 180 feet higher than Captain Cruickshank's bungalow, and further from the falls. It is chiefly intended for the use of district officers and has no furniture. Near the bungalows is good stabling for six horses.

Gersappa Ghat or the Gersappa Pass on the Honavar-Maisur frontier, also called the Malemani Pass, is in the Govardhangiri range of the Sahyadris eighteen miles east of Honavar. The villages of Kodkani, Kudgund, Malvilli, and Malemani lie at the head of the pass; and Gersappa, Larliga, Kudriga, and Magod at its foot. The pass is five miles long and less steep than either the Arvail or the Devimane passes. The road from Gersappa, twenty-seven miles to Talguppe in Maisur, runs across this pass and is fit for wheeled carriages. It is a provincial road and was opened in 1854 by the Madras Government at a cost of £7848 (Rs. 78,840).¹ Rice, gram, pulse, tamarind, and *ragi* come from Maisur to Gersappa and Honavar, while salt, coir rope, cocoanuts, oil, areca-nuts, and pepper go to Masur.

Gokarn or the Cow's Ear,² with in 1881 a population of 4207.

Before 1854 there was a footpath; and in 1854 the pass was improved and made broad enough for carts.

² The traditional origin of the name Cow's Ear is, that Brahma produced four sages with the object of entrusting to them the work of creation. The sages refused to create and Brahma had to produce Rudra or Shiv from his forehead to do the work. Rudra said that in his world there should be nothing perishable. So to meditate and devise an imperishable world he dived, and for ages remained under the water with which before the making of the world space was filled. Brahma, wearying of Shiv and his meditation on an imperishable world, himself moulded the earth and filed it with life. News of Brahma's world came to Shiv who, enraged at the infringement of his monopoly of creation, rose through the water and struck against the land. He was making ready to force his way through the land with his trident, when the earth,

is a famous place of pilgrimage, about ten miles north of Kumta. Gokarn has a travellers' bungalow, a police station, a vernacular school, and a municipality during the three months of January February and March, when it is crowded in connection with the great Mahashivratri fair at the temple of Mahabaleshvar. The municipality was started in 1870 and in 1881-82 had an income of £157 (Rs. 1570) and an expenditure of £96 (Rs. 960).

According to the Gokarn Mahatmya the boundaries of Gokarn are the Shalmarganga or the Gangavali on the north, the Aghneshini or Tadri on the south, Siddheshvar on the east, and the sea on the west. The municipal and the holy town of Gokarn are bounded on the north, east, and south by a semicircular range of low bare hillocks; it lies in an oblong plain open to the sea in form not unlike the ear of a cow. In a long stretch of cocoa palms broken by plots of rice-land. The main road runs between stone walls to the sea-shore near the great temple of Mahabaleshvar. On either side of the main road is a row of shops, most of them tiled and two-storied. The rest of the houses which are one-storied and have thatched roofs stand in gardens. The town has little or no trade except during the yearly fair in February when cattle, copper and brass vessels, clothes, jewelry, and provisions valued at £5000 to £10,000 (Rs. 50,000-Rs. 1,00,000) are sold. The temple of Mahabaleshvar is built of granite in the Dravidian style with a shrine and an outer hall. The shrine is thirty feet square and sixty feet high and has a domed roof ornamented with serpents, the figures of the gods who preside over the eight quarters of heaven, and the ten incarnations of Vishnu. Over the roof is a copper spire. The outer hall or *mandap* is sixty feet by thirty and has a square roof. The shrine is said to be the work of Vishvakarma,¹ and the copper spire and outer hall to have been added by a Tulav Brahman of Kundapur in South Kanara. There is an outer court or *chandreshala* of laterite with

Mahabaleshvar Temple.

taking the form of a cow, begged the angry god, instead of killing her, to rise to the surface through her ear. Shiv passed through the cow's ear and came out on the Gokarn beach. In a garden opposite the temple of Tamrasuri, a small cavern called Rudra-yoni or Rudra's passage marks the place where Shiv stepped on the surface of the earth, and a shrine near it has a small granite figure of Shiv. When he stepped out of the cavern Shiv prepared to consume everything by the force of his wrath. Brahma, Vishnu, and the other gods, dismayed by his anger, came where he stood and promised that he should have the sole right to destroy, and in time might use his power, but that for the present Brahma should continue to create, and Vishnu to preserve. The promise of a universal final ruin pacified Shiv who turned his anger to a portion of the sandy coast, a little to the north-west of Rudra-yoni, a spot which has since been known as Rudra-bhumi or Rudra's land. As this spot could not contain all Shiv's anger he took from the gods and from all other living beings their strength or essence and made an animal of it; and from his own strength and the strength of Vishnu and Brahma he adorned the newly created animal with three horns. The enfeebled world of living beings complained to Vishnu, who referred them to Shiv, who pitied them and restored their strength. His own strength he housed in a *ling* and wore it round his neck; Vishnu's strength he housed in the *shaligram* stone; and Brahma's strength he placed in the holy lake of Pushkar near Ajmir.

¹ Vishvakarma was prevented from finishing the temple in one night by Ravan, who, annoyed by the success of Ganpati's device to deprive him of the *ling* of which an account is given on p. 290 note 1, became a cock and crow long before daybreak, when the divine architect had finished the body of the shrine and was going to begin the spire.

GERSAPPA PASS.

GOKARN.

a tiled roof built by the same Kundapur Brahman with the aid of a Lingayat king of Goa, who is said to have paid for bringing the stone from Talganmetta village about twelve miles north of Gokarn and liberally endowed the temple.

The *ling* in the shrine rises about two inches above the ground. Except that its top is somewhat flattened it is round and slightly tapering. It is said to be the *atma* or self-*ling* which, in his wrath with Brahma's world, Shiv made of his own essence and long wore on his neck.¹ The roots of the *ling* are said to reach the lower world. In the outer hall are images of Parvati and Ganpati with a granite bull in the middle of the hall. Upwards of a hundred lamps are always burning from funds set apart for the purpose by devotees. Every day there are offered to the *ling* 120 pounds (60 *shers*) of cooked rice, which is afterwards eaten by the temple-servants, *Agle* marmelos or *bel* leaves, and the *panchamrita*, milk, clarified butter, honey, curds, and sugar. Pilgrims perform the *panchamrita abhisheka* or the five nectar worship, paying the ministrant 1s. (8 *as.*) and the god 6d. (4 *as.*); or they perform the *ekadash rudra* the eleven *rudra*, in which they pay the priest and the god 2s. (Rs. 1); or the *laghu rudra*, the little *rudra*, in which they pay the priest and the god 10s (Rs. 5); or the *maha rudra*, the great *rudra*, in which

¹ The following story is told of the self-*ling*: Kaikasi, the mother of Ravan the great foe of Ram and sovereign of Ceylon, told her son that she was anxious to worship 10,000,000 *lings*. Ravan, failing to collect so large a number in Ceylon, consulted some sages who told him that the merit of worshipping 10,000,000 *lings* could be attained offering an *Agle* marmelos or *bel* leaf every day to the *ling* made by Shiv of his own substance. Ravan began to perform austerities, and Shiv, pleased with his devotion, gave him the choice of a boon. Ravan at once asked for the *atma-ling* or self-*ling* which the god wore round his neck. Shiv granted the boon on condition that the *ling* should not be set on the ground until Ravan reached his capital. The news of this gift alarmed the gods because such was the power of the *ling* that if it was worshipped for three years in succession it gave the worshipper power equal to Mahadev. They went with Vishnu to Shiv who told them that the only way of dispossessing Ravan of the *ling* was to contrive to have it set on the ground before Ravan reached Ceylon. The gods arranged that Ganpati, the son of Shiv, disguised as a Brahman, should loiter at Gokarn, and with the help of Vishnu, outwit Ravan. The gods hid themselves at a short distance from the town of Gokarn, watching the issue of the stratagem. Ganpati going to the sea-shore saw Ravan coming with the *ling* in his hand. Ravan was a religious man who was always careful to say his morning and evening Prayers. When he reached Gokarn it was three in the afternoon, but to lead Ravan to suppose it was not yet Vishnu held his discus before the sun Ravan hurried to bathe and say his evening prayer. On his way he saw a young Brahman, the disguised Ganpati, in charge of a herd of cows. Ravan asked him to hold the *ling* while he said his prayers. Ganpati agreed unwillingly but on being pressed agreed on condition that if, after waiting and calling out his name three times, Ravan did not appear, he might be allowed to set the *ling* on the ground. Forgetting Shiv's instructions, Ravan gave the *ling* to Ganpati and walked to the sea. Not long after he had gone Ganpati called out his name three times so hurriedly that before Ravan could turn the *ling* was on the ground. Ravan tried to pick up the *ling* but its roots had passed deep into the earth, and as, in spite of his greatest efforts, he failed to move it Ravan called Mahabaleshvar or the Very Powerful god and fell in a faint. The gods laughed and Ganpati went forty paces behind the *ling* to hide himself. On recovering consciousness Ravan, beside himself with rage, flung the covering of the *ling* into the air. Part of it fell at Murdashvar, fifteen miles south of Honavar; another part at Gunvanti, five miles south of Honavar; a third at Dharashvar, five miles south of Kumta; and a fourth at Shezvad, about two miles south-east of Karwar. All four grew into *lings* called Murdashvar, Gunvanteshvar, Dharashvar, and Shezeshvar.

they pay the priest and the god £6 (Rs. 60); and the *ati rudra*, the greatest *rudra*, in which they pay the priest or the god £15 (Rs. 150).¹ Once in sixty years the ground round the *ling* is dug and the space filled with powdered gems and pearls the cost being met from the temple funds. This is called closing the eight quarters or *ashtaband*.

The temple is managed by trustees and an accountant who are subject to the control of a committee appointed by Government under Act XX. of 1863. The yearly income of the temple varies from £300 to £400 (Rs. 3000-Rs. 4000).² In honour of Mahabaleshvar a fair is held every year during the *Mahashivratra* holidays, from the tenth of the dark half of *Magh* to the second of the bright half *Falgun* (February-March), the thirteenth and fifteenth being the great days. The fair is attended by 15,000 to 20,000 pilgrims from all parts of the Deccan and religious beggars from Central India. They throng in large numbers from the thirteenth and begin to leave from the sixteenth. Of late years the number of pilgrims is said to have fallen. On the 14th of *Magh*, the day after the *Mahashivratra*, the pilgrims fast, and, bathing in the Koti pool and in the sea at the mouth of the Tamraparni rivulet,³ give money to Brahmans, and after worshipping Ganpati go to worship Mahabaleshvar. On the new-moon day, the third day after *Mahashivratra*, an image of Shiv about a foot long is mounted by Havig priests on a large and elaborately carved car which the people drag to some distance and again drag back to the temple.⁴ Every year before the fair care is taken that the place is kept clean, and a hospital assistant is sent every year from Karwar. The chief constable and the mandardar, or a sub-divisional magistrate of Kumta, camp at Gokarn during the fair days, and an additional guard of police is sent from Karwar.

Besides the great temple of Mahabaleshvar twenty smaller shrines, thirty *lings*, and thirty pools and holy bathing-places or *tirths* are held in special reverence by Smarts and Lingayats. Like Benares, Gaya, Pushkar in Rajasthan, Nasik-Trimbak, Somnath in Kathiawar, and other great holy places, Gokarn is said to have been visited by, or to have been the scene of the austerities of, various gods and pre-historic personages, especially Brahma, Shiv, Vishnu, Agastya, Ram, and Ravan. Almost all the smaller shrines, pools, and bathing-places are called after these and other deities and personages. Pilgrims visiting these various holy places are said to obtain freedom from the greatest of sins, to secure lasting merit for themselves, even to send their ancestors to heaven. Of the smaller shrines and *lings*, opposite the porch to the north, in the open space between the separate hall or *chandrashala* and the temple, is an oblong *ling* called

¹ The *Rudra* is a book of eight parts of hymns in praise of Rudra or Shiv which are recited while water is poured over the *ling*. According to the importance of the prayer made, or the deadliness of the sin to be washed away the book of hymns to Rudra is repeated eleven times - *ekadash rudra*, 121 times *laghu*, or the little *rudra*, 1331 times *maha* or the big *rudra*, or 14,641 times *ati* or the greatest *rudra*. Mr. P. B. Joshi.

² The details are, a Government cash grant of £79 2s (Rs. 791), and a second Government grant of £100 (Rs. 1000) from its share of the rents of land held by the temple-servants. The rest is from pilgrim gifts.

³ See below p. 295.

⁴ See Part I. pp. 122-123.