

4.4 THE NILGIRI HILLS - MR. JOHN SULLIVAN'S EXPLORATION.

In the year 1818 the history of the European occupation and colonization of the Nilagiris plateau had begun.

Early in 1818, two gentlemen on a few weeks leave visited the hills for 'shikar'; they ascended apparently by the old Devanaikenkota path by Tenad and Kil-Kotagiri, south of Rangasami's Peak, having slept a night enroute near some Irula villages; still existing. They proceeded to Kotagiri, and on their return to Coimbatore, having "surprised their friends by the account they gave of it, particularly of the extreme coldness of the climate," a party was formed, who set out to repeat the tour on the 2nd January 1819.

A long account of their tour, found in the letter to the Editor of the Government Gazette, dated 30th January 1819, is furnished below. Of this party Mr. John Sullivan, Collector of Coimbatore, appears to have been one, and it is to the energy and enthusiasm of this friend of the native that we owe the final colonization of the hills.

Mr. Sullivan is said to have ascended by a narrow hillpath used by Irulas, and pitched his tent in the sheltered valley of Dimhatti near Kotagiri. He soon returned to Coimbatore, but again ascended the hills in May in company with the celebrated naturalist Leschenault de la Tour, who was completely restored to health by a residence here of a few months.

With characteristic energy and consideration for the people, in his first letter to the Board of Revenue, dated 6th March 1819, requests that a rough survey of the lands may be made, as "the inhabitants are extremely anxious to have their lands measured, under an idea that they are paying more than they ought to do." He incidentally remarks that surveyors had been sent to this tract "commonly known by the name of Neilgherry Hills in 1800-01, but that "owing to the extreme inclemency of the climate" the surveyors were frightened, measured not an acre, and contented themselves with "making an estimate of the quantity and quality of the land, and fixing the old rates of teerwa upon it," which, he adds, were "extremely favourable to the ryots". Rupees 800 was the estimate for the work which was sanctioned.

Copy of letter dated 30th January 1819, to the Editor of the Government Gazette, published in the "Madras Courier" of the 23rd February 1819.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE GOVERNMENT GAZETTE.

Sir, -- You sometimes give your readers notices of the thermometer as it stands at Madras. They may perhaps be amused by a few observations of the same kind from a part of the country not more than 350 miles distant from the Presidency.

The low country Coimbatore is separated from Malabar and Wynaad by a mountainous region 30 miles in length and 16 in breadth and which contains about 500 square miles. It is divided into three naads or countries, the Paungnaad, the Todiernaad, and the Maiknaad.

The name given to the whole by the lowlanders is "Nilgerries" or the blue mountains; this name, however, properly belongs but to one part of the range, and is by the highlanders, peculiarly applied to a high peak, the "Rungasawmy Coil" or Nilgerry. Two gentlemen having visited this region early in last year, and having surprised their friends by the accounts they gave of it, particularly of the extreme coldness of the climate, a party was formed; who set out to repeat the tour on the 2nd of January.

They left Denaigencottah (which is about ten miles from the foot of the Guzzlehutty Pass, and two miles from the bottom of the Nilgerry Mountains) at 6 A.M. on the morning of the 2nd and after two days painful march, reached Dernaad, the first village in the Paungnaad, on the evening of the 3^d—distance about 16 miles.

Thermometer on the 2nd at 6 a.m. 57; at 8.71; at 11, 62; at 2 P.M. 68. On the 3rd, thermometer at 6 A.M., 52; at 8, 62; at 5 P.M., 50. 4th halted at Dernaad. Thermometer at 6 A.M., 44; at 8, 60; at 3 P.M., 64; at 6, 54; at 8, 48.....

On coming to the low country on the 16th, the thermometer for the greater part of the day stood at from 80 to 84.

The thermometer from which the above register was taken hung upon the tent ropes, close to which large fires were burning all the night. It did not give, therefore, the real temperature of the air, for when the mercury was above the freezing point, we had hard frost and ice a hundred yards from the tent. In Hindostan, when the thermometer sinks to the freezing point, the extremes of heat and cold are often felt in the same day; but we have no example, I believe, in this part of the globe, of a temperature so cool and so even for a continuance as that which is shown from the register of the thermometer given in the preceding part of this paper.

We could not ascertain the exact height of our situation in this mountainous region, but we considered ourselves to be at least three times as high as the highest part of Mysore; and if this calculation is correct, the elevation would be from 9 to 10,000 feet above the level of the sea. In looking over Mysore on one side and the low country of Coimbatore on the other, it was hard to distinguish the country above from the country below the ghauts; we were so much higher than both. The party were on their legs most part of the day, and generally walked ten or twelve miles up and down steep hills from 10 o'clock in the morning until sunset, without experiencing the least inconvenience from heat, often indeed seeking the sunshine as a relief from cold. With the exception of two slight ague fits there was no sickness amongst our followers, not withstanding the intense cold of the nights and mornings, and the little protection they had against it.

In every part of the high country we found raspberries, both red and white, and strawberries growing in the greatest luxuriance; we found also a fruit in shape resembling a medlar, but of much smaller size, and in taste not to be distinguished from the gooseberry; its interior arrangement is also the same. White roses, marrigolds, balsams were seen in abundance and in full flower; we found specimens also of cinnamon and black pepper, and a tree yielding a beautiful yellow dye. If the color should stand, as it promises to do, the discovery of this tree would be an important one. The country is inhabited by three classes of people, whose language, manners, and customs are entirely distinct, viz., Todevies, Koties and Bergies, The two first are considered the aborigines of the hills, and the Todevies to be superior caste to

the Koties. The Todevies are exclusively, herdsmen; they have no fixed habitation, but wander with their herds of buffaloes from pasture to pasture. Their huts are of a semi-circular form, strongly built with bamboos and mud, having a hole near the ground sufficiently large for their own ingress and for the egress of the smoke from their fires.

Many of the men whom we saw measured above six feet they are robust and athletic, with a marked expression of countenance, Roman noses, and handsome features. The women, though much above the size of their sex below, have anything but a prepossessing appearance; their features are coarse and their mouths unusually wide, but, on the whole, they have much more of the European than the Asiatic cast of countenance. Their dress consists of a single cloth, which completely envelopes their persons, and effectually conceals any grace of figure that they may possess. Both men and women are fair-fairer, perhaps, than the fairest class of Mahomedans. The fairness of their complexions, and their singular expression of countenance, may have given rise to a report which has long been prevalent of the existence of a white race of inhabitants in this region. Men, women and children go bare headed and barefooted in all weathers. It is against the custom of their caste to wear either turban or sandal; they permit their hair and beards to grow without restraint....

The Koties in appearance have no resemblance whatever to the Todevies, and except that both classes go without covering head or foot, their manners and customs are as dissimilar. Their persons are more diminutive, their complexions darker, and their features much less expressive. They are cultivators and artisans as well as musicians and dancers. The discord or harmony of their pipe has a strong resemblance to the sounds produced from the Scotch bag-pipe, and the dance appeared to an amateur of the party to be either the original or a copy of the famed "quadrille."

The Bergies are the principal cultivators and landholders. They emigrated from the neighborhood of Mysore about 300 years ago, and obtained possession of their lands from the Todevies, to whom they continue to pay a few handfuls of grain from each field as an acknowledgment of the grant. The language of the Bergies is a dialect of the Canarese that of the Todevies and Koties is supposed to be dialect of the Tamil, but it is a singular fact that the Todevies cannot speak the language of the Koties, or the Koties that of the Todevies and that the language of both these classes is equally unintelligible to the Bergies.

The soil of this region is remarkably fertile and yields two crops in the year, of wheat, barley, peas, opium, garlic, mustard and various species of millets. We found the pea and poppies in full blossom notwithstanding the severity of the weather. The frost indeed appears to have no ill effect whatever on the vegetation. The valleys afford inexhaustible supplies of excellent water. It was impossible to move a quarter of a mile in any direction without crossing streams. Some of them are highly impregnated with iron, and one was found of a warmth much above the temperature of the outward air. These streams ran throughout the year and empty themselves into the Bovani river on the one side, and into the Moyar on the other, of the low country. There are no sheep here, though the climate, soil and pasture are admirably adapted for them, and there can be no doubt but that Merino sheep would thrive here as well as in the walks of their native country. Black cattle are numerous, and the breed has more substance and bone than the cattle below. The Todevies possess large herds of buffaloes of immense size, and live principally upon their produce. The domestic fowls are twice as large as those below, and excellent for the table. The sportsmen of the party remarked the game to be as large as game in Europe, particularly the hares, whose color is usually red. Wolves

were the only beasts of prey we saw, though the inhabitants spoke confidently of tigers being in the hills.

I have not troubled your readers or yourself with any description of the scenery of this singular and interesting country, although it was impossible to move in any direction without being struck with its extraordinary grandeur and magnificence. Every thing that a combination of mountains, valleys, wood and water can afford is to be seen here. Your readers will perhaps be surprised to learn that frosty legions are to be found at no very great distance from the Presidency, and within 11 degrees of the equator.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant.

30th January 1819. A SUBSCRIBER.

4.5 APPOINTING A COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE INTO THE SYSTEM OF INDIGENOUS MEDICINE AND CONSTITUTION OF A BOARD TO FORMULATE DEFINITE PROPOSALS.

As per G.O.NO.313, Local Self Government Department , dated 22.02.1924, the Madras Government constituted a Board to formulate definite proposals in connection with the recommendations of a Committee on Indigenous Medicine. The extracts are as below:

ORDER:

In connection with the recommendation of the Committee on the Indigenous Systems of Medicine, the Government have decided to constitute a Board which functions will be as follows:

- (1) To form a Committee of Practitioners of Indigenous system
- (2) To formulate detailed proposals or suggestions for a School or College of Indian Medicine to be started ..
- (3) To report whether in need of the starting of a Government School or College, scholarships may be given in certain institutions. The Board will for the present consist of the following gentlemen:-
 - 1) Khan Bahadur Muhammed Oosman Sahib Bahadur.
 - 2) M.R.Ry. K.G. Natesa Sastriyar Avl.
 - 3) Dr. K.Lakshmipathi, Principal, Madras Ayurvedic College.
 - 4) M.R.Ry. Pundit C.T. Arumugam Pillai Avl.
 - 5) Dr. K.Subrahmanya Ayyar
 - 6) Dr. U.Rama Rao, M.L.C.,
 - 7) Vaidyaratna K.Ramanatha
 - 8) Vaidyaratna R.Bharata Sastri Avl.
 - 9) Vaidyaratna T.R. Ethirajulu Nayudu Garu
 - 10) M.R.Ry. Pundit N.Duraiswami Ayyangar Avl., Secretary, Vidyapeet Ayurveda Mahamandalam.
 - 11) M.R.Ry. C.S. Murugesu Mudaliyar Avl.,
 - 12) Haji Hakim Sayyid Naglom Ashruff Sahib Bahadur.
 - 13) M.R.Ry. Rao Bahadur A.Krishnaswami Ayyar Avl., Madras, Principal, Mylapore Ayurvedic College.
 - 14) Dr. G. Srinivasamurti, B.A., B.L., H.B.C.M.,

Khan Bahadur Muhammed Oosman Sahib Bahadur will be Chairman..

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