

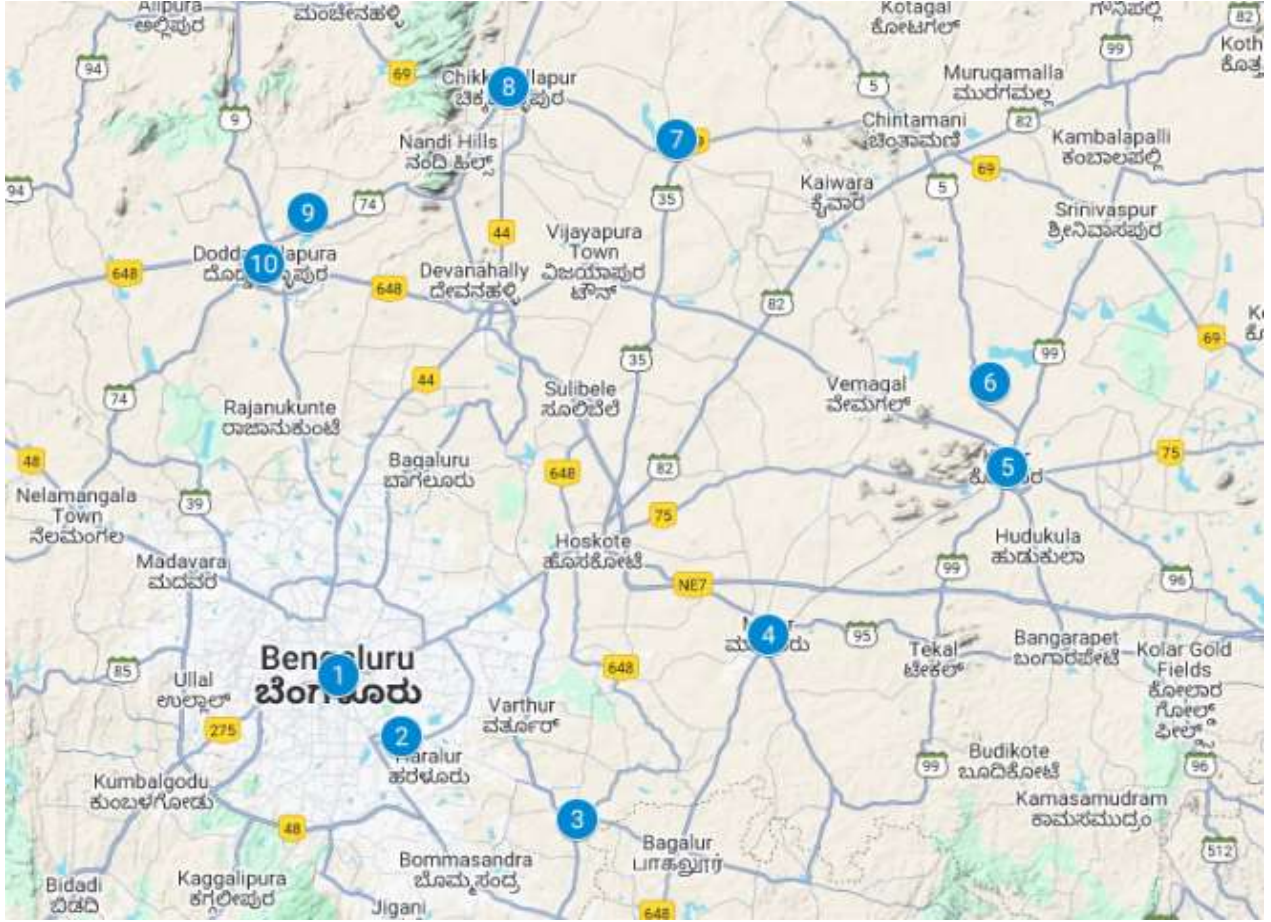


**200 YEARS LATER**  
**RETRACING FRANCIS BUCHANAN'S JOURNEY OF 1800-01**  
**THROUGH PARTS OF SOUTHERN INDIA**

**Chapter V: Journey from Bangalore to Doddaballapura**

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**BANGALORE, INDIA**



- 1.Bangalore
- 2.Agara
- 3.Sarjapura (Sirja-pura)
- 4.Malur(Walur)
- 5.Kolar (Colar)
- 6.Kallur(Calura)
- 7.Shidlaghatta (Silagutta)
- 8.Chikkaballapura (Chica Bala-pura)
- 9.Beedikere (Bhidi caray)
- 10.Doddaballapura (Doda Bala-pura)

## East of Bangalore

### Agara



*Agara Lake:*

Buchanan visited Agara in July 1800 during his journey towards Doddaballapura. He documented that Agara was a fortified village, surrounded by mango orchards, with its produce being sold in the Bangalore market. The village followed a system where harvested grains were shared among different classes, and charitable practices were an integral part of the community, as I have detailed in another chapter.

I still recall a similar tradition in my mother's native place, where during festivals like Sankranti or Ugadi, the washermen would collect a lump sum of grains and money annually.

Buchanan also recorded details about the different classes residing in Agara, their customs, and occupations. Today, Agara has undergone a complete transformation—once a rural settlement with scattered vegetation and fortifications, it has now turned into a rapidly expanding suburban region. Agara Lake, which was once a vital water source, is now surrounded by modern infrastructure, corporate hubs, and dense urban sprawl. Over 230 years, the landscape has evolved from an agrarian outpost into a thriving metropolitan extension, showcasing the remarkable shift in Bangalore's history and demographics.





*Dommasandra, near Sarjapura, is home to a significant weaver community; A dyeing factory (synthetic) for silk and cotton, still using traditional wood as fuel; and Power loom factories, which are common in this region.*

In the early 1800s, Francis Buchanan visited Sarjapura, then a flourishing textile manufacturing town that relied heavily on Bangalore's market. He documented that the weavers of Sarjapura primarily belonged to the Devanga, Togata, and Shalya (likely Padmashali?) communities, producing fine-quality cloth. However, by his time, there was a noticeable shift in demand towards coarse fabrics.

Sarjapura's textiles were widely traded in markets across Srirangapatna, Sira, Chitradurga, Mangalore, Savanur, Gubbi, Tumkur, Magadi, Krishnagiri, and several other towns, highlighting its importance in the regional economy. Buchanan also noted the presence of fortified villages in the area and observed that the local agriculture mainly consisted of dry grain crops, reflecting the semi-arid nature of the region.

Today, Sarjapura has undergone a remarkable transformation. Once a thriving textile hub, it is now a hobli in Anekal taluk, part of Bengaluru Urban district, situated in the southeastern region of Bangalore. What was once a relatively deserted village has evolved into a key industrial and IT corridor, home to software parks, educational institutions, and modern infrastructure.

Alongside Attibele, Bommasandra, Chandapura, Electronic City, and Jigani, Sarjapura is now an integral part of the rapidly expanding Greater Bangalore metropolitan region.

Further, I continued my journey towards Kolar, crossing Malur, which I have already documented in Chapter I. Along the way, I passed through Vokkaleri, which Buchanan referred to as Vackaleer. It is a small village located between Malur and Kolar, and to its south stands Bili Betta (White Hill), covered in woody shrubs. At the summit of this hill, there is an Anjaneya Swamy temple, a significant place of worship for the locals.

### Kolar (Colar)



*View of Kolar Hill on the northern side of Kolar town.*





*Panoramic view of Kolar Hills from the backside, with agricultural fields featuring drip irrigation.*

On my way to Kolar town, I passed through a narrow valley flanked by bare rocky hills on both sides before reaching the city. Kolar is now the district headquarters of the Kolar district, located around 65 km from Bangalore, near the eastern border of Karnataka. It is an important historical and commercial center, well-connected by NH-75 (previously known as Old Madras Road), which has long served as a major route between Bangalore and Chennai.

The region's terrain is mostly level, but its landscape is dotted with rocky, barren hills, a distinctive feature of Kolar's geography that Buchanan also observed in the early 1800s.

Kolar is a historic town with a rich past dating back to the 4th century AD, as evidenced by inscriptions and references in the Karnataka Gazetteer. Throughout history, Kolar has been known by various names, including Kolahalapura, Kolhala, Kuvalala, and Kolala.

The town is home to several ancient temples, such as the Kolaramma Temple, built by the Cholas, and the Someshwara Temple, showcasing remarkable architecture. Interestingly, the Talakadu Ganga dynasty, which later ruled from Talakadu, originally hailed from Kolar, making it their early capital before expanding their reign.



Left to Right: 1. Colored aquatint by J. Wells after A. Allan, 1794; 2. The only mausoleum of Hyder Ali's father with other tombs inside the building, and the mosque on the right, modified and visible from the north side.

*"It was the birth-place of Hyder Aly, whose father lived and died in the town handsome mausoleum was erected for him by his son; and near it a mosque, and a college of Moullahs, or Musulman priests, with a proper establishment of musicians, were endowed to pray for the repose of his soul. The whole is kept up at the expense of the company."*

-Francis Buchanan, Chapter V



Left to Right: 1. The old mosque building visible from the north side; 2. Inside the mausoleum, are graves of Hyder Ali's relatives, with the left corner belonging to his grandfather, Mohammed Ali Khan.

Buchanan mentioned the mausoleum of Hyder Ali's father in Kolar. After Kolar was annexed to the Mughals, Hyder Ali's father became the Fouzdar (military governor) of the region under the Subedar of Sira. The Maqbara (tomb), located near the Clock Tower, houses the graves of Hyder Ali's father and his relatives.

Today, the site is surrounded by modern buildings and mosques, making it difficult to spot from the main road.





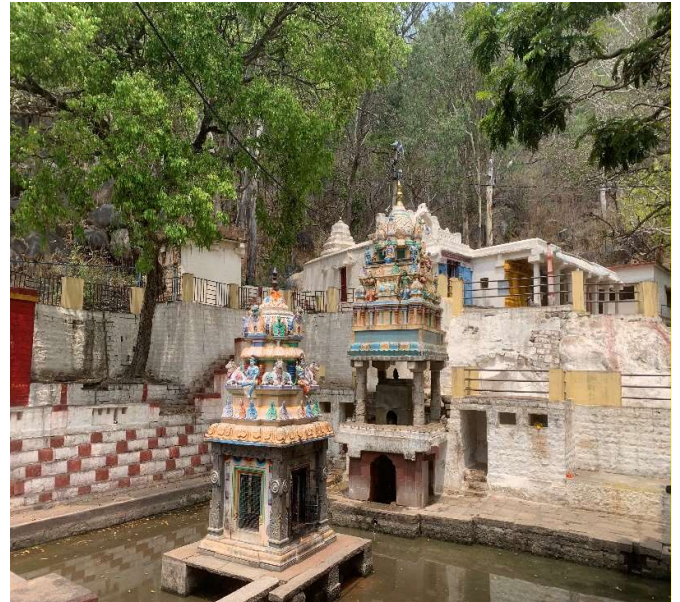
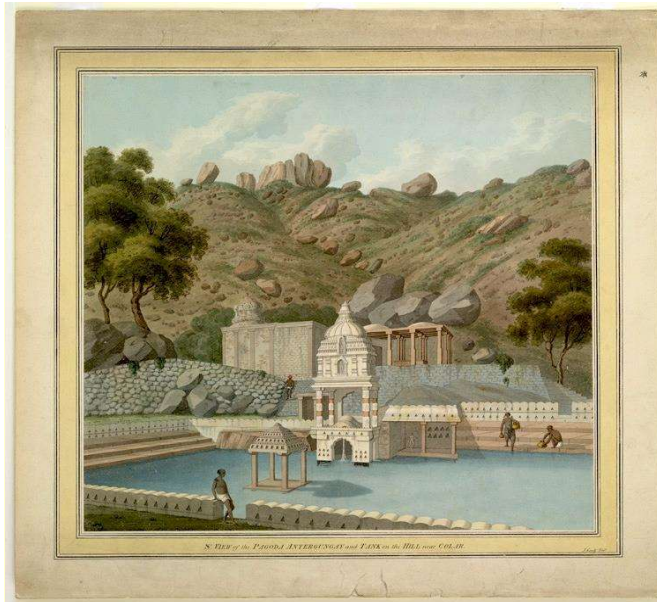
*A small Basavanna temple near the bus stand is identified as a Jangama Mutt of the Veerashaiva Lingayat tradition. It features a Gadduge (tomb) of an ascetic with a Basava (Nandi) stone placed on top as a mark of reverence.*

Just past the bus stand, I noticed a small temple dedicated to Basavanna. Upon inquiry, I learned from a temple caretaker that it is a Jangama Mutt, associated with a Veerashaiva Lingayat ascetic (sanyasi). The site features a Gadduge (tomb) of the ascetic, with a small Basava (Nandi) stone placed on top, signifying reverence.



*Entrance to the Antharagange sacred pond and the Kashi Vishwanatha Shiva Temple, Kolar*





Left to Right: 1. A watercolor painting of Antharagange by John Gantz, 1800; 2. The same spot today, with changes to the temple pond and the background now covered with eucalyptus trees.

*"There is a spring of water, which flows from the side of this hill in a small stream; and such a thing being here very uncommon, the Brahmins have conducted it along a gutter formed in the rock; and where it falls from thence, have, underground building, placed some stones, which the obliging imagination of natives conceives to resemble a cow's mouth. The place, as being holy, is much frequented; and a ruinous temple at some distance attracts to its annual feast about ten thousand pilgrims"*

- Francis Buchanan, Chapter V







*1 Few glimpses of Antharagange: Clockwise from Top Left—1. Kashi Vishwanatha Temple; 2. A natural spring emerging from a secret passage in the hill; 3. Background view of the temple; 4. Various trees, including Jacaranda, Dalbergia sissoo, and eucalyptus, with eucalyptus being the most dominant species.*

To the north, a chain of hills stretches across the landscape, with Antharagange standing out as a prominent site. Now a tourist attraction and religious center, it houses the ancient Kashi Vishwanatha Temple, located midway up the hill. Beside the temple is a Kalyani (sacred tank), where water continuously flows from the mouth of a Nandi (bull). Remarkably, this natural spring remains active even during the hottest summers, maintaining its sacred presence through the ages.

Buchanan documented the **agricultural produce** of this region, listing **rice, ragi, sugarcane, betel leaf, corlay (millet), hessaru (green gram), uddu (urad dal), huchellu (niger seeds), jola (sorghum), and tarakari (vegetables)** as the primary crops. He also recorded **various paddy varieties** cultivated in the area. However, in my journey through the **Kolar region**, I observed only a **few patches of paddy fields**. Due to **changing rainfall patterns** and **frequent droughts**, farmers have gradually shifted to alternative crops such as **vegetables, fruits, and other drought-resistant produce** to sustain their livelihood.







*Clockwise from Top Left: 1 to 3 - An agricultural implement documented by Buchanan as a wooden version in this region, now modified with metal and plastic pipes for seeding; 4 - An old plough (Guntay in Kannada) driven by oxen.*

Buchanan documented the **agricultural implements** used in the early 1800s, many of which are still in use today in some rural areas. During my journey near **Chikkaballapura**, I observed farmers using similar traditional tools such as **Garigi (a type of plow)**, **Negilu (plowshare)**, **Kunte (yoke)**, and **Halivay (seed drill)**. While modern machinery has largely replaced these implements, a few farmers continue to rely on them, preserving age-old agricultural practices passed down through generations.



*Left to Right: A remnant of a Yatam placed on an old well, now replaced with electric pumps. However, open wells remain a primary source of irrigation in this region.*

**The Old Mysore region, covering Tumkur (Madhugiri, Pavagada, Sira, Koratagere), Chitradurga (Hiriyur, Challakere), Chikkaballapura, and Kolar, is severely drought-prone and in urgent need of proper irrigation facilities. Although sometimes monsoons occasionally bring better rainfall, farmers frequently struggle due to erratic weather patterns and prolonged dry spells. During my journey, I met several farmers who expressed concerns over the continuous failure of monsoons for the past 10 years, possibly due to climate change. Interestingly, Buchanan also recorded similar grievances from farmers in the Sira region over 200 years ago, highlighting how water scarcity has remained a persistent challenge in these regions.**



**The adjacent Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh has effectively tackled dryland agriculture through well-planned irrigation systems, ensuring better water availability for both drinking and farming. A similar approach could greatly benefit the drought-prone districts of Karnataka. Historical records highlight the importance of irrigation as a solution for sustaining agriculture and livelihoods in these regions. The government needs to prioritize irrigation projects, ensuring water security and meeting the basic needs of the people, which remains a fundamental responsibility.**

**Buchanan documented poppy cultivation in the Kolar region, noting its use for both opium production and culinary seeds. However, in modern India, opium poppy cultivation is strictly regulated. Under Section 8 of the NDPS Act, 1985, its cultivation is prohibited except under a government-issued license. The Central Bureau of Narcotics (CBN) grants these licenses under Rule 8 of the NDPS Rules, 1985 for licit opium production. Today, poppy seeds (khus khus) are still used in Indian cuisine, but their cultivation remains under stringent control to prevent misuse.**



*Clockwise from Top Left—1 & 2: An old house of a Rajput family I met in Kolar; 3: Gowripete, a suburban area of Kolar where these Rajput families reside; 4: Interaction with Rajput community member Raja Singh—these Rajputs, originally from Ajmer (which he referred to as Agmire), primarily settled in Kolar and Sira.*



*“In this place are settled a kind of shoe-makers called Muchaveru; they are Rajputs, and in their families retain the Hindustani language, as having originally come from the country which the Musulmans call Agimere”.*

*-Francis Buchanan, Chapter V*

Buchanan documented a Rajput family residing in Kolar, tracing their arrival to the time of Kasim Khan, a general under Aurangzeb. He noted that these Rajputs, originally from **Ajmer** (which he referred to as Agmire), had primarily settled in Kolar and Sira.

Even today, some Rajput families continue to live in Kolar. During my visit, I met Raja Singh, a member of this community, who runs a wholesale pan ingredients business in Kolar Bazaar. Others from the community are engaged in various businesses and agriculture. Interestingly, they still speak a blend of Hindi and Deccani Urdu.

I also had the opportunity to visit a Rajput family in Gowripete, a settlement in the heart of Kolar city. We discussed their customs and traditions, many of which have been preserved over generations, reflecting their unique heritage in this historically significant town.



*Clockwise from Top Left—1, 2, 3: Colonial buildings in Kolar, now converted into government schools and offices; 4: An Ongole ox used by mendicants to collect alms, which I saw in Kolar.*



Today, Kolar has transformed into a bustling trading hub, with vibrant markets reflecting its growing commercial activity. Due to its proximity to Bangalore, the city has seen significant industrial development.

Nearby, the Narasapura and Vemgal industrial areas have attracted numerous MNCs and Indian companies, providing employment opportunities to locals and migrants alike. The rapid industrialization has reshaped the region, making Kolar not just a historical town but also an emerging economic center in Karnataka.



Many tree species line the roadside, including *Euphorbia grantii*, *Jacaranda*, *Delonix regia*, *Pongamia*, *Dalbergia sissoo*, Rain tree, *Ficus religiosa*, *Tamarindus indica*, and *Nerale mara* (Jamun).



A mango grove near Kallur with thriving mango plantations.

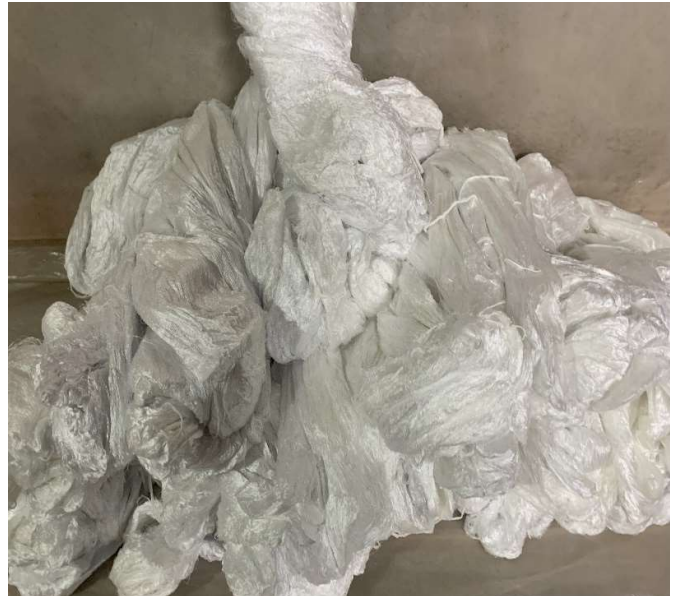


As I continued my journey towards Sidlaghatta, I passed through Kallur, which Buchanan referred to as Calura. Near this village, he documented a fine mango grove, and even today, I witnessed many mango plantations thriving in the region.

Since my visit was in late March, the mango trees were laden with tender mangoes—a significant sight, as this period marks the beginning of the Chandramana Ugadi festival, which signifies the New Year for communities following the Shalivahana Shaka calendar.

Interestingly, the Tamils, Malayalis, and Tulu communities follow the Solar calendar, which results in their New Year falling approximately 15 days after Chandramana Ugadi, showcasing the diverse cultural traditions across the region.

### Shidlaghatta (Silagutta)



*Mulberry cultivation is extensive in Shidlaghatta, making it one of the major silk-producing centers in Karnataka; a silk fiber.*

Sidlaghatta is now a town located approximately 48 km from Kolar and 66 km from Bangalore. It is one of the major silk-producing centers in Karnataka.

When Buchanan visited the region, silk cultivation had not yet been introduced. However, today, I observed vast fields of mulberry cultivation, as mulberry leaves serve as the primary feed for silkworms. Many agrarian families are actively engaged in silk production, making it a thriving industry in the region.

Buchanan mentioned that the Morasu Vokkaligas were numerous in this region, and even today, they remain highly prevalent in Chintamani, Chikkaballapura, and Doddaballapura. They are primarily cultivators in these areas.

There are two distinct groups among them:

1. Telugu Morasu Vokkaligas many follow Vaishnavism
2. Kannada Morasu Vokkaligas, who worship Kalabhairava as their sect deity, with a temple dedicated to him at Seethabetta.

Buchanan also documented the presence of other prominent communities in the region, including Telugu Banajigas (likely Balijas), Reddy, Gollaru, Kurubaru, and others, who have historically engaged in trade, livestock rearing, and agriculture.

Buchanan documented the commercial activities in Shidlaghatta, mentioning that betel nut and black pepper were key trade items. Merchants from this region traveled to Codeal (Mangalore) and Nagara, carrying tobacco and handloom cloth produced locally.

At that time, raw silk was not produced in **Shidlaghatta**, so traders imported it from **Madras (Chennai)**, and the Madras merchants, in turn, imported it from **China** via the sea route. Silk was one of the most valuable imported commodities in this region.

However, the scenario has completely changed today—Shidlaghatta has now become one of the finest silk-producing centers in Karnataka, with local farmers cultivating mulberry and rearing silkworms, making it a major hub in the state's silk industry.

### Chikkaballapura (Chinna Balapuram or Chica Bala-pura)



*An old choultry (Chatra) for travelers on the main road, now in a dilapidated condition, Chikkaballapura.*

Chikkaballapura, formerly a taluk center, is now a district headquarters. The town has long been associated with the silk industry, with many farmers engaged in silkworm rearing and cocoon production.

Historically, both Chikkaballapura and Doddaballapura were famous for candy-sugar manufacturing. However, I found no traces of this industry today, nor did I see any significant sugarcane fields, likely due to the high water requirement despite the region having suitable soil.

Additionally, Chikkaballapura is well-known for its flower cultivation, with extensive farms growing Sevanti (Chrysanthemum) in multiple varieties, Marigold, Rose, Rubi, and other flowers, making it an important hub for floriculture in Karnataka.





*A glimpse of chrysanthemum (Sevanthi ) flower cultivation in Chikkaballapura, where bulbs are placed in the fields at night to provide artificial light can be used effectively to control their growth and flowering.*

I met a flower farmer in the region and discussed the scope of floriculture. He mentioned that during the festive season, earnings from flower cultivation range from ₹5 to ₹6 lakhs per acre in a single month.

Due to the high profitability, he completely shifted from food crops like paddy to flower cultivation, finding it more lucrative than paddy or coconut farming.

The flowers grown here are widely distributed across Karnataka, including the coastal regions, and even reach neighboring Andhra Pradesh, transported via buses and other means.





*In Chikkaballapura, numerous vineyards thrive due to the region's suitable soil and climate.*

In Chikkaballapura, I observed numerous vineyards, as the soil and climate in this region are highly suitable for grape cultivation. The grapes grown here are mainly used for fresh consumption, while some are sold to wine manufacturing companies.

Additionally, I came across several granite industries in the area. Upon inquiring at a granite cutting factory, I learned that they source raw materials both locally and from neighboring states. Nearby, I also witnessed a hill undergoing quarrying operations, indicating active granite extraction in the region.



*Pottery workshops of Sultanpete at the foothills of Nandi Hills, with a view from the northern side.*





*Left to Right: 1. A potter stands atop a heap of raw clay; 2. A raw clay tandoor prepares for its final transformation in the kiln.*







*Clockwise from Top Left: 1. A hill near Chikkaballapura with quarrying in the process; 2, 3 & 4. A glimpse of a nearby granite factory.*

Nearby Chikkaballapura, the Nandi Hills—also known as Nandidurga—is a famous hill station located at an altitude of 4,850 feet. Several rivers originate from this hill, including the North Palar, South Pennar, Chitravathi, Arkavathi, and Papaghni rivers.

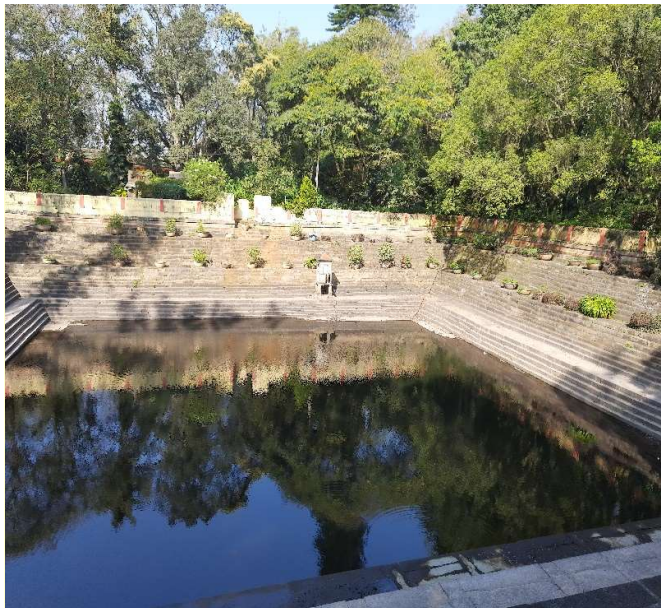
Historically, Nandi Hills has been significant since the Ganga and Chola periods, with many Jain inscriptions found in the region. At the northeastern base of the hill lies Nandi Grama, home to the Bhoga Nandeeshwara Temple, which was built in 806 AD by the Bana dynasty.

At the hilltop, there is a sacred water pool known as "Amrita Sarovara." Several ancient temples can also be found here. Tipu Sultan constructed a lodge atop the hill, which later became a British summer retreat due to its pleasant weather throughout the year. As per the Gazetteer, the first hilltop garden was established by Colonel Cupez, followed by Colonel Hill, Sir Mark Cubbon, and Captain Cunningham, who built a summer lodge. This lodge was later renamed "Gandhi Nilaya" after Mahatma Gandhi's visit and stay at Nandi Hills.





*View of Nandi Grama from Nandi Hills, with surrounding mountain valleys in the backdrop.*



*Left to Right: 1. At the hilltop, the sacred water pool is known as "Amrita Sarovara," Nandi Hilltop; 2. An old Tipu's Summer Lodge at the top of Nandi Hills.*



Due to its proximity to Bangalore, Nandi Hills attracts a large number of tourists, especially on weekends, making it a crowded destination.

The vegetation on the hill is characteristic of high-altitude forests. Inside the fort at the summit, several large trees have been planted, including exotic species like Eucalyptus, while the undergrowth consists of Coffee arabica along with native plant species.

The forest ecosystem plays a crucial role in cloud condensation, leading to a moist environment where trees remain covered in water each morning. This unique microclimate supports a variety of moist forest species, creating a habitat for diverse plant and animal life.

At the base of Nandi Hills, a protected forest area surrounds the region, harboring a variety of plant species.



*A farmer removing weeds from the cultivated fields using modern equipment, alongside a modern tilling attachment in these regions.*

Buchanan documented the extraction of lac from trees around Nandi Hills and Beedikeere by the Woddar (Woddaru) community. However, today, no traces of lac extraction remain in the forest. Given that lac cultivation does not negatively impact crops, there is significant potential to revive this practice if the government initiates development programs in this region.

Currently, lac cultivation is practiced on a small scale in regions like Sirsi and Hunsur (Mysore region). To promote and expand lac production, the government should provide training and awareness programs for local communities.

Buchanan also traveled to Doddaballapura via Beedikeere, which he referred to as Bhidicaray. Details about the Doddaballapura region have already been documented in Chapter VI.

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