

# THE MYSORE GAZETTEER

## VOLUME I

### DESCRIPTIVE

#### CHAPTER I

##### PHYSICAL ASPECTS

THE State of Mysore occupies a position physically well defined, in the South of India; and has been termed a rocky triangle, a not inapt description. It is a table-land, situated in the angle where the Eastern and Western Ghat ranges converge into the group of the Nilgiri Hills. West, south and east, therefore, it is enclosed by chains of mountains, on whose shoulders the plateau which constitutes the country rests. On the west, the boundary approaches at one part to within 10 miles of the sea, but in general preserves a distance of from 30 to 50 miles from the coast: on the east, the nearest point is not less than 120 miles. The southern extremity is 250 miles from Cape Comorin. The northern frontier is an exceedingly irregular line, ranging from 100 miles south of the river Krishna on the west to 150 on the east.

The country extends between the parallels of  $11^{\circ}36'$  and  $15^{\circ}2'$  north latitude, and between the meridians of  $74^{\circ}40'$  and  $78^{\circ}36'$  east longitude embracing an area of 29,474.82 square miles including the area of the Civil and Military Station, Bangalore, as determined by

the Surveyor-General of India from the survey on the one-inch scale. It is, therefore, nearly equal to Scotland, whose area is 30,405 square miles. The greatest length north and south is about 230 miles, east and west about 290.

**Boundaries.**

It is surrounded by the Madras Presidency on all sides, except on part of the west, where the Bombay Presidency northwards and Coorg southwards form the boundaries. The Madras Districts bordering on it are Bellary and Anantapur on the north; Cuddapah, North Arcot and Salem on the east; Coimbatore, Nilgiris and Malabar on the south; South Kanara on the west. The Bombay Districts of Dharwar on the north and North Kanara on the west complete the circle. Coorg intervenes between the adjacent parts of South Kanara and Malabar on the south-west.

**Elevation,  
etc.**

The general elevation rises from about 2,000 feet above the sea-level along the northern and southern frontiers to about 3,000 feet along the central water-parting, which separates the basin of the Krishna from that of the Cauvery and divides the country into two nearly equal parts. But the surface is far from preserving the even character, suggested by the designation of table-land. For the face of the country is everywhere undulating, much broken up by lines of rocky hills or lofty mountains and scored in all parts by *nalas* or deep ravines. There is probably not a square mile in the whole superficies absolutely flat or level, the slope of the ground ranging from 10 to 20 feet per mile in the more level portions, and as high as 60 to 80 feet elsewhere. The Bhimesvar valley in the Sagar Taluk, Shimoga District, is probably the lowest point in Mysore with an elevation of only 278 feet, Mulainagiri in the Bababudans in Kadur District with a height of 6,817 feet being the highest point.

The country is longitudinally intersected by single or aggregated chains of hills, running chiefly north and south, or in a direction nearly parallel to the two coasts. They lie at uncertain and unequal distances from each other, and accordingly form sometimes wide and sometimes narrow valleys. Isolated peaks of *massy* rock, termed by Europeans *droogs* (Sanskrit *dur-ga*, difficult of access, hill-fort,) rearing their heads to 4,000 or 5,000 feet above the level of the sea, stand forth like sentinels on every hand; mostly crowned with the remains of fortifications, whose position, with the advantage of an unfailing supply of water at the summit, rendered them well-nigh impregnable strongholds. Besides these, clusters or piles of naked rocks, composed of immense rounded boulders, are frequent; large fragments being often delicately poised, like loggans, upon some projecting point; appearing as if a touch would overturn them, and yet sometimes supporting a shrine or *mandapa*.

Hills and valleys.

The name "Mysore" is that of the capital, Maisur, for Mahishur (from *mahisha*, Sanskrit for 'buffalo,' reduced in Kanarese to *maisa*, and *uru*, Kanarese for 'town' or 'country,') which commemorates the destruction of Mahishasura, a minotaur or buffalo-headed monster, by Chamundi or Mahishasura Mardini, the form under which the consort of Siva is worshipped as the tutelary goddess of the ruling family. It forms the main part of the region called throughout Hindu literature Karnata or Karnataka, a term now wrongly applied to the districts below the Eastern Ghats.

Origin of name.

Mysore naturally divides itself into two separate regions, each of which has well-marked and distinctive features.

Natural divisions.

(a) *Malnād*.—The Malnād, literally hill country, lies to the west, and is confined to the tracts bordering or

resting on the Western Ghats. It is a land of magnificent hill and forest, presenting alterations of the most diversified and charming scenery. A fertile soil and perennial streams clothe the valleys with verdant cultivation. The sheltered hillsides are beautiful with waving woods, sometimes known as *Shōlas*, which give shade to numerous plantations of coffee. Higher up are swelling downs and grassy slopes, dotted over with park-like groups of trees. The *Kan* or evergreen forests, confined almost solely to the north-western parts of the Shimoga District, abound in rich soil and are exceedingly striking and distinctive in character and afford a striking contrast. Above all, the gigantic mountains rear their towering crests in every fantastic form of peak. Human dwellings are few and far between. A cottage here and there, picturesquely situated on the rising ground bordering the rice-fields, and hidden amid plantations of areca, palm and plantain, marks the homestead of a farmer and his family. Towns there are none, and villages of even a dozen houses are rare. The incessant rain of the monsoon months confines the people to their own farms. Hence each householder surrounds himself with all the needs, and succeeds in making himself to a great extent independent of the external world. The conditions of this isolated life are insupportable to immigrants from the plains.

(b) *Maidan*.—By far the greater portion of the State, or all to the east and north of a line from (say) Shikarpur to Periapatna, continued along the southern border to the Biligirirangan hills, belongs to the division of *Maidan*, *Bailshime*, or open country. Although much of the intermediate region partakes of the characteristics of both, the transition from the Malnād to the *Maidan* is in some places very marked. Dense forests, which shut in the view on every hand, give place to wide-spreading plains: the solitary farm to clustering villages and populous towns.

Man meets with man, the roads are covered with traffic and the mind feels relief in the sympathy of numbers.

The means of water-supply and the prevailing cultivation give the character to the various parts of the open country. The level plains of alluvial black soil, as in the north, growing cotton or millet; the districts irrigated by channels drawn from rivers, as in the south and west, displaying the bright hues of sugar-cane and rice-fields; the lands under tanks, filled with gardens of cocoanut and areca palms; the higher-lying undulating tracts of red soil, as in the east, yielding ragi and the common associated crops; the stony and wide-spreading pasture grounds, as in the central parts, covered with coarse grass and relieved by shady groves of trees. The aspect of the country changes with the seasons, and what in the dry and cold months, when the fields are lying fallow, appears a dreary and monotonous prospect, speedily assumes under the first operations of the plough the grateful hues of tillage; which, under the influence of seasonable rains, give place in succession to the bright verdure of the tender blade, the universal green of the growing crops, and the browner tints of the ripening grain. The scene meanwhile is full of life, with husbandmen, their families and cattle engaged in the labours of the field. These are prolonged in stacking and threshing until the cold season again sets in and the country once more assumes a parched and dusty aspect.

A general  
view of the  
open country.

The drainage of the country, with a slight exception, finds its way to the Bay of Bengal, and is divisible into three great river systems; that of the Tungabhadra on the north, the Cauvery on the south, the two Pennars and the Palar on the east. The only streams flowing to the Arabian Sea are those of certain taluks in the north-west, which, uniting in the Sharavati, hurl themselves

River  
systems.

down the Ghats in the magnificent falls of Gersoppa; and some minor streams of Nagar and Manjarabad, which flow into the Gargita and the Netravati. The course of each river will be found described in detail in another volume of this *Gazetteer*.

A line drawn east from Ballalrayan-durga to Nandidurga (Nandy-droog) and thence south to Anekal, with one from Devarayadurga north to Pavagada will indicate approximately the watershed separating the three main river-basins. From the north of this ridge flow the Tunga and the Bhadra, rising in the Western Ghats and uniting in the Tungabhadra, which, with its tributary the Hagari or Vedavati, joins the Krishna beyond the limits of Mysore between Kurnool and Srisaila. From the south of the line, the Hemavati (with its affluent the Yegachi), the Lokapavani, Shimsha and Arkavati flow into the Cauvery, which, rising in Coorg and taking a south-easterly course through the country, receives also on the right bank the Lakshmantirtha, the Gundal, the Kabbani and the Honnu Hole before quitting the territory. From the east of the line, in the immediate neighbourhood of Nandidurga, spring three main streams, forming a system which Lassen has designated "die Tripotamie des Dekhans," namely, Pennar, the Uttara Pinakini or Northern Pennar (with its tributaries the Chitravati and Papaghni), which discharges into the sea at Nellore; Ponnaiyar, the Dakshina Pinakini or Southern Pennar (Tamil *Ponniar* or *Poun-ar* and Telugu *Pennair*), which ends its course at Cuddalore; and between them the Palar, whose mouth is at Sadras. A continuation of the east and west line through Nandidurga to Sunnakal will mark the water-parting between the first and the other two; which, again, are divided by a line passing from Jangamkote to Bowringpet and the Betarayan hills.

More accurately described, the axial line or "great divide" which forms as it were the backbone of the country, starts from the north of Ballalrayandurga and runs east-by-north to near Aldur. Thence it makes a bend, first, northwards up to the western extremity of the Bababudan range and then south-east, passing between Belur and Halebid, down to Sige Gudda in the north of the Hassan taluk. From this point it strikes across the map in an east-north-east direction, rounding the southern extremities of the Harnhalli and Hagalvadi hills, up to near Koratagere, where it encounters the great meridional chain of mountains. Following the range south, past Devarayadurga to near Dodbele, it resumes an east-north-easterly course to Nandidurga and continues the same to the frontier near Sunnakal. Geographically it lies between the parallels of  $13^{\circ} 10'$  and  $13^{\circ} 25'$ .

The axial line

A line projected north from the west of Koratagere up through Pavagada to the frontier, and one south from Nandidurga by Bangalore to Anekal, mark pretty nearly the limits of the respective river basins in the transverse direction. This water-parting falls between the meridians of  $77^{\circ} 10'$  and  $77^{\circ} 30'$ .

Limits of the river basins.

The basin of the Sharavati, which runs to Honavar on the Kanara coast, occupies the west of the Shimoga District. It may be defined by a line drawn from Kodachadri south-east to Kavaledurga, thence north-east by Humcha to Masarur, and west-north-west by Anantapur and Ikkeri to Talguppa. The streams between Kodachadri, Kavaledurga and the Agumbi ghat westwards, run down to Coondapoor; and those of western Manjarabad, to Mangalore.

The following statement contains an estimate of the total length, within the State, of the main rivers with their principal tributaries; and the total area of the

Total length of the main rivers.

catchment basin under each river-system within the same limits :—

River system	Total length of Rivers	Total area of Basins
	Miles	Square Miles
Tungabhadra ... ..	611	11,031
Cauvery ... ..	646	9,486
N. Pennar ... ..	167	2,280
S. Pennar ... ..	32	1,541
Palar ... ..	47	1,036
Sharavati and West Coast rivers ...	103	1,881

Navigation on  
the rivers.

Owing to either rocky or shallow beds, none of the Mysore rivers is navigable, but bamboo floats and occasionally dry timber floats are carried down the Tunga, the Bhadra, and the Kabbani in the rainy season when they are in floods and offer a smooth water surface free from projecting rocks and other obstacles. Most of the streams are fordable during the dry months, or can be crossed by rude bridges formed of logs or stones thrown across from boulder to boulder. During floods, and when freshes come down, traffic over the streams is often suspended until the water subsides. But throughout the rainy season they are generally crossed at the appointed ferries by rafts, basket boats, canoes, or ferry boats. Men also sometimes get over supporting themselves on either earthen pots or dry gourds. From the following statement in Buchanan, it appears that Haidar attempted to establish navigation on the Tunga :—

“From Mangalore Haidar brought to Shimoga many carpenters, and built a number of lighters of about eight tons burthen. They are strong and flat bottomed; but, as the greater part of them have been allowed to remain on the bank where they were built, I doubt not that they were found very useless. The attempt is, however, no impeachment on the sagacity of Haidar, who, having been educated in a place remote from every kind of navigation, could have no idea of what boats could perform nor of what obstacles would prevent



their utility. To attempt dragging anything up such a torrent as the Tunga would be vain ; but, after having seen the boats, and known that some of them have been actually navigated down the river, I have no doubt of its being practicable to carry down floats ; and on these perhaps many bulky articles of commerce might be transported."

The *teppa* or raft is formed of bamboos lashed together, and merely affords an unsteady footing, the water washing freely through. The *harigolu* or coracle is a circular basket of stout wicker-work, composed of interlaced bamboo laths and covered with buffalo hides. It is 8 or 10 feet in diameter, with sides 3 or 4 feet high. Herodotus notices, as one of the most remarkable things he had seen at Babylon, boats of a construction so exactly similar that the description of one would precisely answer for the other, with the single difference of substituting willow for bamboo. These boats carried the produce of Armenia, and "the parts above Assyria," down the Euphrates to Babylon ; and each boat along with its cargo carried a few asses for the purpose of conveying the returns by a shorter overland route. Boats of the description noticed by Herodotus, although apparently unknown in Greece at that period, were in after ages commonly used in Italy on the Po ; and in Britain in the time of Cæsar. Boats of the same materials but of different shape were until recently used in South Wales, and the north-west of Ireland ; in the former country they were named *corracle*, in the latter *corraigh*. A smaller kind of *harigolu*, which holds only two people, is used for crossing some jungle streams. The *doni* or canoe is a dug-out, or hollowed log pointed at the two ends. The *sangda* (cf. *Saggada* of the *Periplus*), or regular ferry boat, is formed of two canoes secured together, with a platform or deck fastened upon them, and has sides turning on hinges which, let down, form a gangway for loading and unloading. All these crafts are

Rafts and  
ferry boats.

propelled by a long bamboo pole, and are dependent for their course upon the currents. But paddles are sometimes used with the canoes and with rafts when the water is too deep to reach the bottom with a bamboo.

Irrigation  
from the  
rivers.

Though useless for purposes of navigation, the main streams, especially the Cauvery and its tributaries, support an extensive system of irrigation by means of channels drawn from immense dams, called *anicuts* (Kanarese *ane katte*, dam, dyke or embankment), which retain the upper waters at a high level and permit only the overflow to pass down stream. These works are of great antiquity, the large Talkad anicut, the lowest down on the Cauvery, having been constructed a thousand years ago; while the most recent, with a few exceptions, are not less than three centuries old. "The dreams which revealed to favoured mortals the plans of these ingenious works," says Wilks, "have each their appropriate legend, which is related with reverence and received with implicit belief." The channels or *kalves* thence drawn, meander over the adjoining tracts of country on either bank, following all the sinuosities of the ground, the total length running being upwards of 1,190 miles. The anicuts and channels will be found fully described under the respective rivers in another volume of this *Gazetteer*.

Tank system.

There are no natural lakes in Mysore, but the streams which gather from the hillsides and fertilize the valleys are, at every favourable point, embanked in such a manner as to form a series of chain of reservoirs, called tanks (Kanarese *Kere*), the outflow from one at a higher level supplying the next lower, and so on all down the course of the stream at a few miles apart. These tanks, varying in size from small ponds to extensive lakes, are dispersed throughout the country to the number of

38,080; and to such an extent has this principle of storing water been followed that it would now require some ingenuity to discover a site suitable for a new one without interfering with the supply of those already in existence. One of the largest tanks is Sulekere, 40 miles in circumference. Other large ones are the Ayyankere, Madaga-kere, Masur-Madaga-kere, Vyasa-samudra, Ramasagara, Moti Talab, etc., of which accounts will be found elsewhere (see another volume of this *Gazetteer*). Among large irrigational works of recent construction are the Vanivilasa-sagara in the Chitaldrug District and Krishnaraja-sagara in the Mysore District formed by damming the Vedavati and the Cauvery, respectively.

Spring-heads called *talpargis* form an important feature of the hydrography of the north-east. They extend throughout the border regions situated east of a line drawn from Koratagere to Hiriya and Molakalmuru. In the southern parts of this tract the springs may be tapped in the sandy soils at short distances apart, and the water rises close to the surface. Northward the supply is not so plentiful. In Pavagada a soft porous rock has to be cut through before reaching the water, and in the taluks of the Chitaldrug District hard strata of rock have sometimes to be perforated. When the water is obtained, it is either conducted by narrow channels to the fields, or a *kapile* well is constructed, from which the water is raised by bullocks.

Spring-heads  
(*Talpargis*).

From the gigantic head and shoulders, as it were, of the lofty Nilgiri group, which commands the southern frontier, are stretched forth like two arms, in a north-west and north-east direction, respectively, the Western and Eastern Ghat ranges, holding within their mighty embrace the mountain-locked plateau of Mysore. The hills of this table-land, though rarely in continuously

Mountain  
systems.

connected chains, arrange themselves into systems crossing the country longitudinally, in directions more or less parallel with the Eastern and Western Ghats according to their proximity to one or the other; and attaining their greatest elevation between 18 and 13½ degrees of north latitude, along the north of the watershed line dividing the Tungabhadra and Cauvery river systems.

The hill  
ranges of the  
table-land.

(a) The best defined of these, which may be styled the Closepet-Tumkur range, has a width of from 10 to 29 miles and runs between the meridians of 77 degrees and 77½ degrees from the Biligirirangan hills as their western limit, through Kankanhalli northwards up to Maddagiri, and on to the frontier by way of Pavagada and Nidigal.

(b) Close to this on its eastern side are the minor ranges of Nandidroog and Ambajidurga; the former, commencing near the hill of that name, stretches northwards by Gudibanda to Penukonda and the latter passes close by the town of Kolar and Bagepalli.

(c) Between the Closepet-Tumkur range and the Western Ghats are a series of longitudinal hill ranges having considerable intervals sometimes between its component parts.

Starting from near Mysore a long continuous chain of mostly smooth-looking hills, with a variable width of 2 to 14 miles, passes by Nagamangala and Chiknayakanhalli; and crossing the middle of the north of Kankuppa in a north-north-western direction.

(d) Further west a similar medial chain, including the loop of the Bababudans, commences from near Chikmagalur and runs north by Ajjampur, Ubrani, Basaapatna, Honnali and Male-bennur, along the right bank of the Tungabhadra, to the frontier where it crosses that river.

The Bababudan hills, having the shape of a horse-shoe, rise majestically like some Titanic bastion, as it were,

guarding the approaches to the Malnād, or the highland region, formed by the congeries of hills and mountains which intervene between the range and the Ghats on the west.

(e) Another well-pronounced range lies to the west of this along the meridian of about  $75\frac{1}{2}$  degrees from Ballalrayandurga up to beyond Shikarpur, passing by Koppa, Shankaragudda and Kumsi and ultimately coalescing with the previous range to the north of Honnali.

(f) Besides these in the table-land, there are a few other minor chains of hills, such as those of Hosdurga and Arsikere and some isolated hills like Chamundi, Bettadpur-betta and Gopalaswami-betta in the south.

Viewing the mountains as a whole, the Eastern and Western Ghat ranges might be compared to the antlers of a stag, the branching tynes being represented by the intermediate parallel chains starting from the north of the central watershed and more or less connected by cross ridges along their southern extremities. The chief peaks of the western system are loftier than those of the eastern. Except on the verge of the Western Ghats, all the mountains throughout the country, it is believed, present their steepest escarpment more or less eastwards. In the west, Mulainagiri, and in the east, Nandidroog, are the highest elevations, and they are almost on the same parallel or between  $13^{\circ} 23'$  and  $13^{\circ} 24'$ , immediately north of the central watershed. The loftiest points just south of that line are Ballalrayandurga in the west, and Sivaganga in the east, both situated between  $13^{\circ} 8'$  and  $13^{\circ} 10'$ .

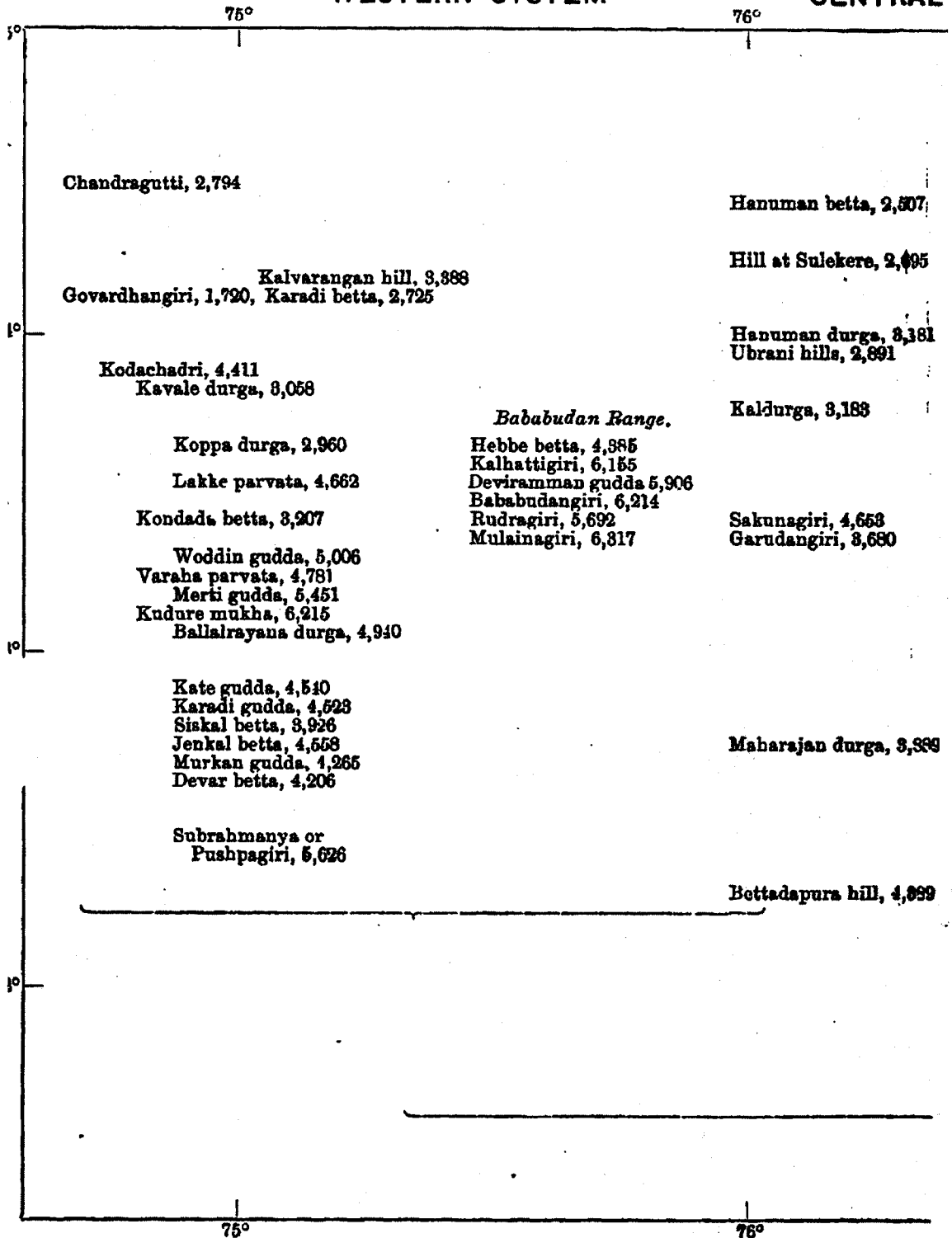
General view  
of the Eastern  
and Western  
Ghat ranges.

The table on the following page will serve to show the arrangement and altitude of the principal peaks in each system. The figures are mostly taken from the charts

Table showing the heights of the peaks in the two systems.

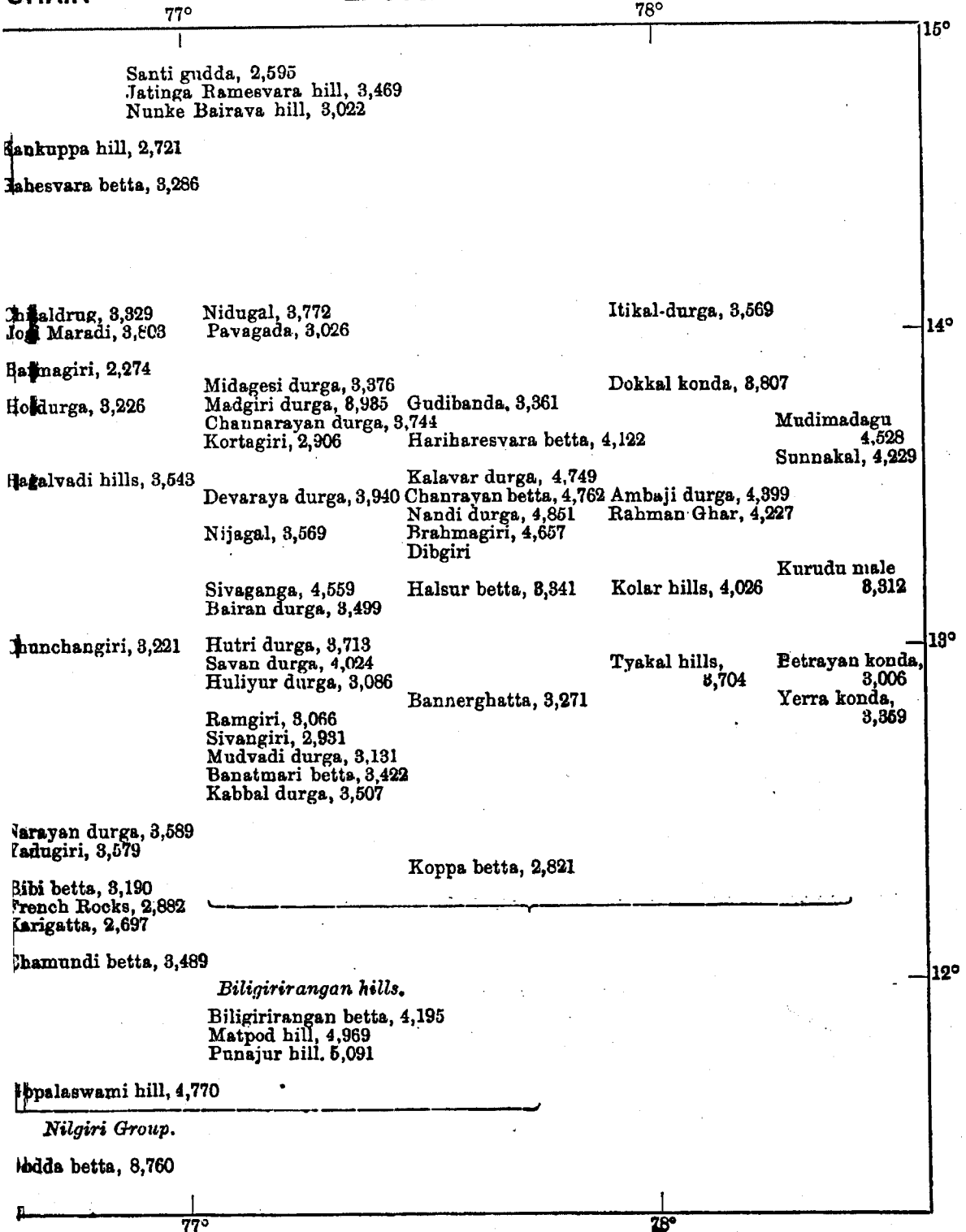
## WESTERN SYSTEM

## CENTRAL



## CHAIN

## EASTERN SYSTEM



of the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India, supplemented from those of the Topographical Survey. Furnished at the summit with springs which yield an unfailing supply of water, most of these heights seem formed by nature for secure retreats. Hence there are few of the more prominent ones that have not been surrounded or capped with fortifications, often carried in long lines, with a vast expenditure of labour, along all the spurs and projections of the *droog*, forming strongholds with good reason deemed impregnable before the time when British artillery was directed against their walls. A particular account of the most interesting fortifications will be found under each district.

Opinion  
regarding the  
physical  
geography of  
Mysore.

The following is Mr. R. D. Oldham's account regarding the physical geography of this part of India:—

"In the peninsular area the mountains are all remnants of large table-lands, out of which the valleys and low lands have been carved. The valleys, with a few local exceptions, are broad and open; the gradients of the rivers low, and the whole surface of the country presents the gently undulating aspect characteristic of an ancient land surface."

"The Anamalai, Palni and Travancore hills, south of the Palghat gap, and the Shevaroy and many other hill groups scattered over the Carnatic, may be remnants of a table-land once united to the Mysore plateau, but separated from it and from each other by ancient marine denudation. Except the peculiar form of the hills, there is but little in favour of this view, but on the other hand there is nothing to indicate that the hill groups of the Carnatic and Travancore are areas of special elevation."



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