

CHAPTER XIX

PLACES OF INTEREST

BIRMITRAPUR Birmitrapur is an industrial town situated in 22°23' N. and 84° 44' E. It is in the north of Panposh subdivisor. A branch railway line connects this place with Rourkela. By road it is 40 km. (25 miles) from Rourkela. The town has grown because of the extensive occurrence of limestone deposits around the place which is the largest in Asia. The open-cut limestone quarry here is said to be the largest in India. The town is named after Birmitra Pratap Sekhar Deo, a former Ruler of Gangpur. The old name of the place was Raipura¹.

The Bisra Stone and Lime Company Ltd., which owns limestone and dolomite quarries at Birmitrapur² provides educational, medical and recreational facilities to its employees and workers. The employees are provided with quarters on easy terms. The company has their headquarters office here. The town is a market place for nearby population. Except for the colony of the Stone and Lime Company the town has grown in a clumsy manner and is bifurcated by the railway line. The civic affairs are managed by a Notified Area Council. The town contains four churches, a mosque, and the temples of Jagannath, Guptesvar Siva, Ranisati and Samaleswari. There is a police station, a hospital, a veterinary dispensary, a H. E. school, a cinema house, and an Inspection Bungalow. Population in 1971 was 28,063.

BISRA Bisra, a village and railway station on the Howrah-Bombay section of the South-Eastern Railway, is situated in 22° 15' N. and 84° 59' E. It is 18 km. (11 miles) from Rourkela by road. Formerly it was an important business and industrial centre.

Though the first mention of the occurrence of limestone and dolomite in the ex-Gangpur State (present Sundargarh and Panposh subdivisions) was made by the eminent geologist V. Ball in 1877, large-scale quarrying for limestone and dolomite commenced from about 1910 near Bisra railway station. The Bisra Stone and Lime Co., Ltd., with their headquarters at Bisra, had constructed large lime kilns here and the lime manufactured by them became well known in Calcutta market as *Bisra Lime*. About 1922, the company closed down their operations

¹. The Explorer, August, 1965—p. 19.

². Bisra Stone & Lime Co. started quarrying for limestone at Birmitrapur about the year 1917. The managing agents of this firm are M/s Bird & Co., Private Ltd., Calcutta. Ibid.p. 20.

here and shifted their activities to Raipura (subsequently known as Birmitrapur) where limestone and dolomite were found in enormous quantities¹. The busiest part of the village called Bisra town has grown at a distance from old Bisra village. Headquarters of a police station and a Community Development Block, the place has a hospital, a High English school, an Inspection Bungalow and some small industrial units.

Near Bisra (at Khuramanjan Nala), Abhoy Singh, who had joined hands with Surendra Sai against the British was murdered in 1856 by the Zamindar of Nagra with the help of the Bhuiyan headman while he was at prayer. Abhoya Singh was the younger brother of Maharaja Arjun Singh of Porahat².

In 1971, the population of the place was 1,178.

Situated in 21° 49' N. and 84° 57' E., Bonaigarh is the headquarters of **BONAIGARH** Bonai subdivision and is on the river Brahmani, 72 km. (45 miles) south of Rourkela. It was also the capital of Bonai ex-State. Bonai derives its name from its forests, i.e., *Bon* or *Bana* (ବନ) as they are called in Oriya³. The river surrounds it on the north and the east. It is no more than a populous village. For the want of a bridge across the Brahmani, Bonaigarh is not easily communicable during the rains. A ferry is of course maintained.

The ex-Ruler's palace stands at the end of a wide road with rows of houses on either side. Important temples of the place are that of Radhakrushna, Baneswara, Kumari, Hanuman and Jagannath. Kumari (Durga) is the family deity of the ex-Ruler. Bonaigarh's memorable festival is the Chaita Parva in which, despite its tribal origin, all castes, high and low, participate. The festival takes place in April. Chhau dance is a special feature of the occasion.

Bonaigarh contains a hospital, a sub-jail, Circuit House, a police station, usual subdivisional courts and office buildings, Tahsil Office, a college, a Boys' H. E. school, a Girl's H. E. school, an Elementary Training school, Subdivisional Office of Rural Engineering Organisation, Divisional Forest Office, and Block Development Office.

Population of the place in 1971 was 3,692.

Gangpurgarh, a village in Sundargarh police station, is situated in **GANGPUR-GARH** 20° 13' N. and 84° 5' E. It is on the right bank of the river Ib and is about 16km. (10 miles) to the north of Sundargarh. It was at one

¹. The Explorer, August 1965, p. 19.

². District Census Hand-book, Sundargarh (1961), p. 52.

³. W. G. Kelly—Final Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of the Bonai State (Orissa), 1913, p. 3.

time the seat of the ruler of the ex-State of Gangpur. From Masabira, the first capital of Gangpur, the seat of administration was removed to Gangpurgarh by Raja Gangadhar Sekhar Deo, where "he founded a new capital on the bank of the river Ib which was named after him as Gangadharpur, later on as Gangpurgarh. His kingdom was known as Gangpur after the headquarters town"¹. Again, early in the 19th century Raja Indra Sekhar Deo shifted his headquarters from Gangpurgarh to Raibogagarh. Gangpurgarh contains some relics indicative of its former importance. Population in 1971 was 1,152.

GHOGHAR

Ghohgar, a gorge on river Ib, is situated in 20° 19' N., and 84° 0'E. It is about 43 km. to the north of Sundargarh town. After rainy season when the water level of Ib comes down the river passes through a narrow stone bed extending over five kilometres. The beautiful gorge with its sylvan background is a popular picnic spot and attracts many visitors. There is a naturally formed *Siya Linga* of black granite at the site where a festival is observed on Sivaratri.

HATIBARI

Hatibari, a village in Bisra police station, is situated in 22° 24' N. and 84° 51' E. It is near the northern border of Panposh subdivision. It is 19 km. (about 12 miles) north-east of Kuarmunda and 33 km. (20 miles) from Rourkela, connected by road. It contains a police out-post, High English School and a Dispensary (Primary Health Centre). Tata Iron and Steel Co., have their limestone quarry and staff colony here. They have been quarrying limestone since 1946 and despatching it to their steel plant at Jamshedpur². The Hindustan Steel Ltd., have their limestone quarry at Purnapani, 3.2 km., east of Hatibari. Population was 1,070 in 1971.

HEMGIR

Hemgir, a large village with a police station, is situated in 21° 56' N and 83° 42' E. It is also spelt as Himgiri, Himgir, and Hemagiri. An important village in the western part of the district, it was the seat of a Zamindar. Nine kilometres to its south-east there is a railway station on the Howrah-Bombay line named after it. The village has a few large tanks to its south and west. The ex-Zamindari of Hemgir has extensive deposits of coal. The village is the headquarters of a Block Development Office and contains a Rest House, Subdivisional Office of Rural Health Organisation, Tahsil Office, a dispensary (Primary Health Centre), Police Station, Post Office, a Veterinary Hospital, a High English school and a Middle English school, and a Micro-wave Wireless Station belonging to the Government of India.

¹. District Census Hand-book, Sundargarh (1961), p. 7.

². The Explorer, August 1965, p. 23.

Junagarh and Manikmunda, which are places of historical importance, lie at a distance of about 3 km. to the north of Hemgir. They contain some ancient monuments, which have been discussed in Chapter II.

Jagatgarh, a small village in Sundargarh police station, is situated JAGATGARH in 22° 9' N., and 84° 5' E. It is on the left bank of the river Ib and is about 8 km. (5 miles) to the north-east of Sundargarh. During the 19th century it was a *Garh* (fort) under the Gangpur ex-State. Remnants of the old fort are still to be seen here. Raja Jagadev Sekhar Deo removed the capital from Nabarangpur, also called Laing (near Rajgangpur), to this place which was called after him as Jagatgarh ¹. For sometime in the fourth and fifth decades of the 19th century it was the capital of Gangpur. From Jagatgarh, the capital was removed to Suadih by Raja Janardan Sekhar Deo probably towards the middle of the 19th century ². The name *Suadih* was later changed to Sundargarh sometime during 1908—1910. The village has a temple dedicated to Samalai, the popular goddess of western Orissa. Population was 254 in 1971.

Kalunga, situated in 22° 12' N. and 84° 44' E., is a small village and KALUNGA railway station in Raghunathpali police station. The village is about 16 km. (10 miles) to the west of Rourkela beside the road leading to Rajgangpur. In 1928, Kalunga was made the headquarters of Nagra Zamindari which became a full-fledged subdivision under Gangpur ex-State. In 1944, the subdivisional headquarters shifted to Panposh from Kalunga. Bonaigarh is approached from here by a fair-weather road running on the west of the Brahmani. The village has a church and is a centre of the Roman Catholic Mission. The Mission, under the charge of a Bishop, runs a hospital, a milk distribution centre and a few educational institutions. There is a Rest House. Population in 1971 was 1,904.

The Utkal Machinery Ltd. is located at Kansbahal, which is also KANSBAHAL a railway station. Situated in 22°12'N. and 84°40'E., in Rajgangpur police station, it is on the Sundargarh-Rourkela road and is 14 km. east of Rajgangpur and about 24 km. west of Rourkela. The Utkal Machinery Ltd. is an Indo-German enterprise and it manufactures machine parts. It started production in October, 1962, with an

¹. District Census Hand-book, Sundargarh (1961)—p. 8.

². Indrabilas Mukherji—Final Report on the Land Revenue Settlement of the Gangpur State, 1929—1936, pp. 4-5.

employment potential of 1,400 persons¹. The company provides residential quarters for its employees inside the colony. For details about this factory, see Chapter V. Population in 1971 was 2,420.

KHANDA-
DHAR
WATERFALL

A perennial rivulet, called Korapani Nala, creates a remarkable waterfall known by the name Khandadhar², within a few kilometres of its origin. The fall lies in 21°45'N. and 85°7' E., in village Nandapani under Bonaigarh police station. It is 19 km. (12 miles) to the south-east of Bonaigarh and can be reached by a fair-weather road, the last 1.6 km. is, however, negotiable by foot. It is a pleasant spot amidst thick jungles and mountains ideal for lovers of nature. On reaching it, the weary visitor would soon forget the strain of the arduous journey. It is a hidden treasure of nature. The scene created by the glittering waters that trickle down the magnificent waterfall can best be enjoyed from the mountain-top. The 800 feet³ (244 metres) high waterfall is said to be the highest in Orissa. As the volume of water discharged is far too little, there is no prospect of its being harnessed for power. Goddess Kanta is a known deity of the tribals of the locality⁴. Nearby, there is a Rest House.

Population of Nandapani in 1971 was 143.

KUARMUNDA

Kuarmunda, the headquarters of Panposh Tahsil situated in 22°16'N and 84°46'E, is an important village in Birmitrapur police station. It is also a railway station on Rourkela Birmitrapur branch line and is 14 km., from Rourkela on Rourkela-Birmitrapur road. Situated close to Vedavyasa, the place stands on an elevated land with a moat-like shallow (partly cultivated and partly with standing water) encircling it. The village was the seat of a former Zamindar under the Gangpur ex-State. The village is also the headquarters of a Block Development Office and contains a dispensary (Primary Health Centre), a H. E. school, an Elementary Training school, an Inspection Bungalow, Tahsil Office, Forest Range Office, a Veterinary Dispensary, a Dairy Farm, and a Cold Storage Plant. There are a few temples including one dedicated to Radhakrushna.

Population in 1971 was 2,973.

LATHIKATA

Lathikata, a village and railway station in Raghunathpali police station of Panposh subdivision, is about 14 km. (9 miles) from Rourkela on the Rourkela-Bonai road. The place is known for the Refractory

¹. Directory of Industries in Orissa, 1967—pp. 2-3.

². Khanda (खण्ड) means sword, Dhar (धर) means edge.

³. This height is given in the Topo (Map) Sheets of Sundargarh published in 1954 by the Survey of India. The height of the hill as given in the *District Census Hand-book*, Sundargarh 1961, p. 51 is nearly 1500 feet.

⁴. District Statistical Hand-book, Sundargarh, 1968—p. 6.

Plant. It is connected with Rourkela by road and by rail. The Orissa Industries Ltd¹, have a Refractory Plant here. The Plant was started in 1963. It manufactures fire-bricks and the monthly production is about 3,000 tonnes. It provides employment to about 700 persons. There is a small colony for the employees which contains a population of about 500. A Grama Panchayat, a Panchayat Samiti (Community Development Block) Office, and a Veterinary Dispensary are located here. There is a recreation club called *Orinds Recreation Club* and a Siva temple—both constructed by the Plant. The population of the place, as reported by the Plant in 1972, was about 4,000. But at 1971 Census, it had a population of 981.

Lefripara, a village and headquarters of a police station (in LEFRIPARA Sundargarh subdivision) is situated in 22°6'N. and 83°48'E., on the bank of a rivulet named Ichha, a tributary of the Ib. It is 27 km; (16 miles) west of Sundargarh and is connected by a fair-weather road. The village is also the headquarters of a Community Development Block. Lefripara area is reported to contain large deposits of dolomite². Population was 1,561 in 1971.

In a reserved forest about 20 km. from this place there is a rock shelter measuring 15.24 metres or 50 ft. called *Ushakothi* which contains primitive paintings. For details, see Chapter II.

Situated in 22°18' N. and 84°38' E., Mandira is known for the MANDIRA Dam across river Sankh constructed for the supply of water to Rourkela and other industrial units in the vicinity. It is called Mandira Dam Project and is about 32 km. (20 miles) from Rourkela, connected by road. The Dam has been built at a point where the river enters a gorge flanked by hills and presents a picturesque sight. The construction started in 1957 and was completed in 1959³. The length of the Dam is 445.008 metres (1460 ft.) and its depth is 19.8120 metres (65 ft.)⁴. Two Guest Houses have been built there for tourists and guests. The reservation authority is the Manager, Water Supply Plant, Hindustan Steel Ltd., Rourkela. A circular road connects the Guest Houses located at a considerable height with the main entrance where an officer issues

¹. The Orissa Industries Ltd., have their Registered. Office at Barang (Cuttack District).

². The Explorer, August 1965, p. 25.

³. District Census Hand-book, Sundargarh, 1961, p. 52.

⁴. Orissa Review, September 1970. But, according to 1961 Census, the length of the Dam is 1935 ft., height 90 ft., and the gross storage capacity is 264,000 acre feet (vide, District Census Hand-book, Sundargarh, 1961, p. 52).

permits for visitors to enter the Dam area. As a visitor stands on the terrace of the Guest House or moves about in the lovely garden nearby, he sees around a continuous chain of hills at a distance varying from 15 km. to 30 km. The cement factory at Rajgangpur is clearly visible on the left-hand horizon, as one stands facing the lake. The whole environment is highly refreshing. It is a nice place for holidaying. Taxicabs ply from Rourkela to the Dam area. Boating facilities in the lake may be available with prior arrangement with the Dam authorities.

PANPOSH

Situated in 22°13' N. and 84°48'E., Panposh is also locally called Uditnagar, named after Uditpratap Sekhar Deo, the late ruler of Gangpur ex-State. It lies on the road between Sundargarh and Rourkela and is also easily reached by railways. Being the headquarters of Panposh subdivision the State Government offices, viz., Subdivisional Office, Police Office, Courts, Sub-Jail, Commercial Tax Office, Employment Exchange, Regional Transport Office, Office of the District Inspector of Schools, etc. are situated here. The town has grown in importance on account of the Rourkela steel plant being set up in its vicinity. The confluence of the two rivers, Sankh and Koel, at nearby Vedavyasa is one of the beautiful spots in the district.

Population of the place in 1971 was 705. Now it forms a part of greater Rourkela agglomeration.

RAJGANGPUR

Rajgangpur is an industrial town and trading centre in Sundargarh subdivision. Situated in 22°11'N. and 84°35'E., it is on the Howrah-Bombay Section of the South-Eastern Railway and on the Sundargarh-Rourkela road. It is 64 km. (40 miles) from Sundargarh and 43 km. (28 miles) from Rourkela.

Rajgangpur was first classified as a town in 1961 Census. The 26.16 sq. km. area now comprising the town contains the villages of Ranibandh, Liploi, Kumarkela, Bhatollo, Rajgangpur, and Jarmal. Kumarkela is the old section of the town. The railway station of Kumarkela was named Rajgangpur and the town is known by that name. The town is full of narrow lanes except for the colony of the Orissa Cement Ltd. The Orissa Cement Ltd., a Dalmia Enterprise, has a cement factory and a Refractory here. The civic affairs of the town are managed by a Notified Area Council. It is also the headquarters of a Community Development Block (Panchayat Samiti) and it contains a police station, an Inspection Bungalow, a H. E. school, a College, a good hospital, a cinema house, and a telephone exchange.

Rajgangpur is a centre of the Christian Missionaries. Here the German Evangelical Mission has been at work since 1899¹ and has its settlement. This is said to be the oldest mission functioning in the district. There is a good church at Ranibandh, which is the headquarters S. P. G., Christian Mission. Population of the town in 1971 was 21,876.

Rourkela, the modern steel town situated in 22°12'N., and 84°53'E., Rourkela is on the Howrah-Bombay Section of the South-Eastern Railway and is 413 km. (257 miles) from Howrah. It is well connected on all sides by well laid roads. It is 107 km. (67 miles) east of Sundargarh, the district headquarters town.

Prior to the opening of the railways, Rourkela was an obscure village. It assumed some importance when Birmitrapur branch line was laid from here. But its glory came with its selection as the site for the establishment (in 1955) of the first of the three² steel plants in public sector. The construction work started in October 1956³. Soon after the market and the township grew up. Area of the present town of Rourkela covers 95.31 sq. km. (36.80 sq. miles) and it is the biggest town in Orissa. Of this, the area of the steel township alone is 45.20 sq. km.

Rourkela has a good natural setting. Girdled by verdant hills and encircled by three rivers, the modern steel township at Rourkela exudes an air of friendliness and tranquillity. The hill range separates the township from the Plant providing a natural screen to cut off the smoke and din of the plant. Spread over an area of 45.20 square kilometres the township is divided into 20 sectors on both the sides of the beautiful two-way Ring Road. Facilities for education, marketing, recreation and medical care are amply provided. Out of the 20 Sectors 16 are completed and contain 18,000 residential quarters constructed for the employees of the Rourkela steel plant. The town has about 162 km. (100.5 miles) of black-topped and 29.78 km. (18.5 miles) of morrum roads. Area of the plant site is 33.38 sq. km.

The Rourkela steel plant has the distinction of being the first of the three Public Sector steel plants set up in India to meet the growing demands of steel and to set up a strong industrial base for our economy. With the adoption of the then newly developed L. D. (Linz Donawitz) Process at Rourkela, India joined the first few countries in the world to embark upon the commercial scale production of steel by the L. D. Process. Rourkela steel plant is the only Plant in the country operating on this process. It is the only steel plant which has a fertilizer

1. L. E. B. Cobden-Ramsay—Feudatory States of Orissa p, 178.

2. That is, Rourkela, Durgapur and Bhilai

3. *Rourkela*—a brochure of HSL.

complex attached to it to utilise nitrogen from its Oxygen Plant, hydrogen from the Coke Oven gas and limestone fines from its quarries to produce Calcium Ammonium Nitrate. It is one of the most modern steel plants incorporating latest technological developments. It has one of the world's most modern Hot Rolling Mill and Cold Rolling Mill complex. The present production capacity of the Plant per year is 1·8 million tonnes ingot steel¹. For more details about this Plant, see Chapter V.

The beautifully landscaped Indira Gandhi Park, which has a lovely lake, provides relaxation. The observation tower in the Park, animals at its Zoo, and the children's train around the lake are sources of enjoyment to children.

The city contains a stadium, called Ispat Stadium ; the 480 bedded Ispat General Hospital ; 4 Colleges, viz., the Regional Engineering College, the Science College, the Evening College, and the D. A. V. College for Women ; the Sushilavati Khosla D. A. V. Polytechnic for Women ; 8 H. E. schools (including 2 for girls) ; a number of clubs and cultural institutions ; (see Chapters XV and XVIII), 4 cinema houses ; an aerodrome ; and 19 market squares. For the accommodation of visitors, there are some guest houses and inspection bungalows, viz., the Rourkela House, the Ispat Guest House, Guest House (Sector 20), Guest House (Sector 4), the Hirakud Guest House at Uditnagar, Inspection Bungalow in Sector 3, Circuit House at Panposh, and Rest Shed at Uditnagar. There are also a few hotels. The State Government Offices are situated in Uditnagar area. Rourkela is the headquarters of the 4th Battalion of Orissa Military Police. The following Banks have opened their branches here—the Bank of Baroda, the Bank of India, the Central Bank of India, the Co-operative Urban Bank, the Punjab National Bank, the State Bank of India, the Union Bank of India, the United Bank of India and the United Commercial Bank. In the Industrial Estate set up by the Orissa Government there are 48 ancillary industrial units.

Population of Rourkela in 1971 was, 172,502.

SARAPGARH

Sarapgarh, a village in Lefripara police station, situated in 20°10'N. and 83°44'E., is 35 km. (22 miles) west of Sundargarh town. The place is sometimes identified by scholars with Sarabhapura, the headquarters of the ancient Sarabhapurias ruling family (c. 6th century A. D.). The first of the Sarabhapurias was one Sarabharaja after whom the dynasty and the capital were named. The association of this place with Sarabhapura family is yet to be corroborated by archaeological finds.

¹. *Rourkela*, a brochure of HSL.

Local people also call the village Sarapagarh (Sanskritised from Sarpagarh, i. e., the Snake-fort. According to Cobden-Ramsay, Sarapagarh "derives its name from a cave, said to be occupied by a snake family, which the rural population have for ages worshipped"¹). Sarapagarh was a Bhuiyan feudatory (Zamindari) of Gangpur ex-State.

Population in 1971 was 714.

Situated in Lefripara Community Development Block in Hemgir SARGIPALI Tahsil, Sargipali is 30 km. from Sundargarh town and is an important rural centre with a prosperous agricultural hinterland. The nearest railway station Jharsuguda (in Sambalpur district) is 54 km. from the place.

The Geological Survey of India have recently unearthed a vast deposit of lead, copper and zinc near the place. The State Government is proposing to develop these mines and a mining township is likely to grow up soon. The foundation stone of the Sargipali Lead Project was laid on the 21st November, 1972 in which the Union State Minister for Mines presided.

There are two H. E. schools and one Public Health Centre at the place, but no electricity.

Population in 1971 was 1,399.

Sundargarh is the headquarters town of the district, situated in SUNDARGARH 22°7' N. and 84°2' E., on the left bank of the river Ib. It is 35 km. (22 miles) north of Jharsuguda, which is the nearest rail-head on the Howrah-Bombay section of the South-Eastern Railway. The Sambalpur-Rourkela road also passes through Sundargarh.

About the middle of the 19th century, a village called Suadih was selected to be the capital of Gangpur ex-State for better communication facilities, and the old capital Jagatgarh was abandoned. Suadih was renamed as Sundargarh sometime during 1908-1910². After the merger of the States in 1948 it was selected as the headquarters of the newly formed district.

The town extends around a large tank with a hillock nearby but in its busy part it has a clumsy growth. Its expanding market is fairly busy. The ex-Ruler's palace is an imposing building on an extensive

1. L. E. B. Cobden-Ramsay, Orissa Feudatory States, p. 179.

2. This date is worked out on the basis of some contemporary literatures vis-a-vis their dates of publication. In the *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, vol. XXIII (p. 113), published in 1908, the place is known as *Suadi*. But in L. E. B. Cobden-Ramsay's *Gazetteer of Orissa Feudatory States*, published in or about 1910, we find the place mentioned as *Sundargarh* which is the changed name of *Suadi* or *Suadih*. So it is very likely that the name has undergone the change sometime between 1908 and 1910.

area with a surrounding wall. Near the palace is the Durbar Hall built in 1917. The Collectorate and many other offices and courts are housed in a fine looking spacious red building called 'Katcheri'. This building, meant to accommodate the departments of the State, was opened in 1914 by the then Governor of Bihar and Orissa. The building when built was the largest of its kind in the Eastern States. Near about the 'Katcheri' are many other office buildings and official quarters. The town has a college and several schools. It contains a number of temples of which important are those dedicated to the deities Jagannath (below the hillock), Jagannath (inside palace compound), Vishnu, Radhakrishna and Samalei. Samalei is a very old deity who was probably offered human sacrifice during pre-British days¹. Affairs of all these temples are managed by the Commissioner of Religious Endowments. The town has a Circuit House, an Inspection Bungalow, and a Dharmasala (estd. in 1933).

Civic affairs of the town are managed by a Municipality. The town contains the usual District Offices of different Departments, and the District Headquarters Hospital.

Population of the town in 1971 was 17,244.

TENSA
TOWNSHIP,
TENSA

Tensa, situated in 21°51' N. and 85°9' E., is 96 km. from Rourkela on the south-east side. It is a hill resort with a township constructed by the Hindustan Steel, Ltd.

Population in 1971 was 3,465.

VEDAVYASA

Situated in 22°14' N. and 84°48' E., at the confluence of the rivers Sankh and Koel, Vedavyasa is one of the beauty spots of the district. Vedavyas is the name of a small hill on which there are three temples, two dedicated to Siva and one to Rama. In the temple of Rama, there are the images of Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra, besides the usual trio : Rama, Lakshman and Sita. The rivers Sankh and Koel meet here and the united stream flows south under the name of *Brahmani*. The place is about 5 km. from Panposh and about 13km. (8 miles) from Rourkela, communicable by road. The place with its natural charm and relative calmness is an ideal picnic spot. The place stands as an attraction for tourists, pilgrims, poets and sight-seers.

Vedavyasa is a *Tirtha* (a place of religious sanctity) and a dip in the holy water at the confluence of the two rivers is believed to wash away sins. The premier festival of the place is Sivaratri (held in

¹. L. E. B. Cobden—Ramsay writes, "It was admitted to Colonel Dalton that before the States came under British rule, a human sacrifice was offered every third year before the shrine of Kali at Sundargarh where the present Chief resides" (*Vide, Feudatory States of Orissa*—p. 178).

February–March) which is popularly called *Vedavyas mela*. A week-long concourse takes place on that occasion at the foot of the hill. During the fair, about 50,000 persons from far and near visit the place, the largest gathering is, of course, on Sivaratri day itself. As elsewhere, devotees of lord Siva keep themselves awake throughout the night. Sitting near the temple with earthen lamps they meditate till dawn when the priest of the temple signals the end of the night by raising a light (Maha Deepa) on the spire of the temple.

Devotees also flock to the two Siva temples (of Chandrasekhar and Balunkeswar) atop the hill on Mondays, for Monday is propitious for the worship of Siva.

Tradition associates river Brahmani with the scene of the amour of sage Parasara with the fisherman's daughter Matsyagandha, the offspring of which was the reputed Vyasadeva whose name the place bears. The ruins of a cave are pointed out by local people as the place where Vedavyasa lived and composed the great epic Mahabharata. The tradition has inspired many poets of Orissa to write beautiful poems about the sanctity and beauty of the place of which mention may be made of the poem 'Vedavyas' by poet Gangadhar Meher which gives a charming account of the natural beauty and the legends associated with the place.

The Vedic Ashram, established under the aegis of the Arya Samaj since 1957, is maintaining here one Ayurvedic Dispensary, and a school on the lines of Gurukula Ashram. There is an Inspection Bungalow at Vedavyasa.