

CHAPTER XVIII.

PAL LAHARA STATE.

THE State of Pál Laharā lies between 21° 9' and 21° 41' N., and 85° 0' and 85° 24' E., with an area of 452 square miles. It is bounded on the north by the Bonai State ; on the east by the Keonjhar State ; on the south by the Tálcher State ; and on the west by the Bámra State. The east and north of the State are occupied by hills. A magnificent hill, Malayagiri (3,895 feet), one of the loftiest peaks in the States of Orissa, towers above the lesser ranges. The State is for the most part a region of wild hill ranges densely covered with forest in which *sál* (*Shorea robusta*) abounds. The *sál* forests are the finest in Orissa, but are, from the nature of the country, very inaccessible : towards the south on the Tálcher border there is a certain extent of open country dispersed with smaller hill ranges. The high hills to the north form the central portion of the mass of tangled hill ranges, which stretch into the Bonai and Keonjhar States. There are no rivers in the State, but numerous hill streams which frequently come down in heavy spate sweeping away the hamlets perched on their banks. The distinguishing feature of the country is the Malayagiri peak ; the ascent is made from the south-western side and a rough hill-path has been made : the ascent is steep and prolonged, but presents no real difficulty to the transport of goods by hand. The path winds up over bold spurs with magnificent views of the plains of the Tálcher and Dhenkánāl States in the distance, and two ranges are climbed before the final ascent is reached. The actual summit is a narrow plateau nowhere more than half a mile wide and in parts less. It is formed by a depression on the top of the hill and is about half a mile long ; at either end rise up two bold peaks of bare rock : the western peak is the actual summit of Malayagiri and rises almost precipitously : on its western and northern fronts it is quite inaccessible and falls away in a sheer precipice of many hundred feet : below to the west stretches out a fine range of hills running westwards in two parallel ridges with a valley between them, the level of the valley being about 1,500 feet : seen from above the range gives the

PHYSICAL
ASPECTS.

appearance of a vast trough clad with dense forest : to the north-east the whole range of Malayagiri falls away precipitously : for a distance of nearly half a mile the hill on the south-western side slopes away fairly gradually and on this side would afford suitable sites for building but the area is limited : there is a spring near the top of the hill on the south-western side and a small reservoir has been constructed. The Chief has erected a small bungalow on the summit. The average rainfall for the six years from 1902-03 to 1907-08 was 60·07 inches. The headquarters of the State are at Pāl Laharā.

HISTORY. This State is alleged to have been founded by Santosh Pāl of Dharānagar, some time before the 18th century. The original limits of the State cannot be accurately given. During the 18th century the State appears to have attained its largest limits, consisting of 198 villages, 131 of which were subsequently forcibly taken possession of by the Keonjhar, Tālcher and Dhenkānāl Rājās, leaving under its sway only 67 villages, which now comprise an area of 452 square miles.

No Chief of Pāl Laharā is said to have obtained any *farmān* or *sanad* from the Mughals or Marāthās. The Chiefs of this State were formerly styled zamindārs. The late Chief received from Government the personal title of Rājā Bahādūr, in recognition of the services he rendered in suppressing the Bhuiyā rebellion in Keonjhar in 1867-68 A.D. In 1874 A.D. he was vested with the hereditary title of Rājā. No Madalā Pānji or any family history of the Rāj family is available ; tradition, however, runs that Santosh Pāl was the founder of the present ruling family. He is said to have belonged to the Paumar Rājputs of Dharānagar. He went to Purī on pilgrimage with a body of followers, and while returning home was selected by the Savars, Khonds, Malhārs, and Jhorās as their Chief. He settled at Laharā and subdued the aboriginal tribes who were then contending among themselves for supremacy. He was called Pāl because the Savars concealed him under a heap of straw (*pāla*) while fighting with his followers, who were all defeated and put to death. From the official enquiries that were made during the settlement of the dispute that arose between the Mahārājā of Keonjhar and the zamindār of Pāl Laharā regarding the supremacy of the former, it was stated that 52 generations had already held sway in Pāl Laharā up to A.D. 1778. During that year the Chief, Muni Pāl, died without male issue. After his death the management of the State remained for about 47 years in the exclusive hands of his mother, Anna Pūrnā, and of his illegitimate brother Nanda Pāl.

Anna Pūrnā died in A.D. 1815. Nanda Pāl acknowledged the supremacy of Keonjhar and remained in charge of the management of the State till he died in 1825. The people of Pāl Laharā after his death resisted the claims of Keonjhar, but being defeated, submitted a petition to Colonel Gilbert, the then Political Agent of the South-Western Frontier. Colonel Gilbert ordered the withdrawal of the Keonjhar force from Pāl Laharā, and allowed the people to select their own Chief. They chose one Baidya Nāth Pāl, one of the paternal uncles of the late Chief Muni Pāl, whose family has since held the *gadi* for three generations.

The titles of "Ganeswar Pāl" and "Muni Pāl" are assumed alternately by the successive Rājās of Pāl Laharā when succeeding to the *gadi*. The emblem of the State is a cobra.

The population increased from 19,700 in 1891 to 22,351 in 1901; it is distributed among 265 villages. The density is 49 persons to the square mile, or less than in any other of the Orissa States except Rairākhol and Bonai. Hindus number 20,770, Animists 1,540, and Muhammadans 41, the most numerous castes being Chasās (5,000) and Pāns (4,000). The leaf-wearing Juāngs are still met with in the outskirts of the Malayagiri range. They are extremely shy and retiring, but still wear their costumes of *asan* leaves in the more remote portions of this State and in some of the inaccessible recesses of the neighbouring hill ranges of Bonai and Keonjhar: the costume consists of a few leaves pinned together worn over the person by men and in the case of women an apron made of leaves is worn: no other covering is worn. The population is classified as follows:—Hindus—males, 10,134, females, 10,636, total of Hindus, 20,770 or 92·9 per cent. of the population of the State; proportion of males in total Hindus, 48·7 per cent. Musalmāns—males, 25, females, 16, total of Musalmāns 41 or 0·18 per cent. of the population; proportion of males in total Musalmāns 60·9 per cent. Christians—*nil*. Population of all denominations—males, 10,861, females, 11,490; proportion of males in total population, 48·5 per cent. The number of persons able to read and write is 518 or 2·3 per cent of the total population. Averages—Villages per square mile 0·58; persons per village 84; houses per square mile 11; houses per village 19·5; persons per house 4·3. Of the aboriginal tribes the Savars are the most numerous. The Bhuiyās inhabit the hills and high valley lands to the north which with the ranges stretching into Bonai and Keonjhar form their ancestral homes. The people are extremely backward, but contented, their demands are few and they live

THE
PEOPLE.

for preference very largely on forest fruits and roots. There are 265 villages in the State, but in none does the population amount to five hundred.

**PUBLIC
HEALTH.**

The nature of the country renders it very unhealthy to strangers who suffer severely from malaria. The inhabitants suffer to a certain extent from malaria, but not to such a degree as would be expected, from the dense jungle and heavy rainfall. The vital statistics for ten years from 1893 to 1902 show the average ratio of births per mille as 18·38 and deaths 10·42, but little reliance can be placed on them. There is a small dispensary at headquarters with an indoor ward in charge of a Civil Hospital Assistant : 3,690 patients were treated in 1907-08. Vaccination is in charge of a special Civil Hospital Assistant who also renders medical aid in the interior and attends to village sanitation : 1,164 children were vaccinated in 1907-08 ; of this number 655 were primary vaccinations and 509 re-vaccinations. The aboriginal and backward tribes are very averse to vaccination.

**AGRICUL-
TURE.**

Agriculture is of the crudest. The system most popular is to cut the light forest in the hill sides, burn it and raise a crop on it for one or two years and then abandon the site. The Juāngs, in especial, practise only this form of cultivation and, endeavours are being made by grants of seed and bullocks to induce them to settle down to regular cultivation. The cultivation of the plain country is very inferior and every tenant as far as possible practises *dāhi* cultivation as well. The coarse varieties of rice are grown and also millets. The total acreage of the State is 289,280 acres, of which 262,352 are forests, unculturable waste 4,297 ; the normal area under crops is 16,982 acres, of which 9,810 acres are under rice : oil-seeds are normally sown on 3,250 acres, of which 1,400 acres are under linseed and 1,250 under *tīl* (sesamum) ; 400 acres are normally under *māndiā* and 600 under maize.

**RENTS,
WAGES
AND
PRICES.**

The assessment is light and the average rate for first, second and third class rice lands is Rs. 2-7-6, Rs. 2-1-4 and Re. 1-11-1, respectively per acre and for uplands, Re. 0-14-0 per acre. During the period from 1893 to 1902 the rate of daily wages has remained stationary and has averaged as follows : superior mason, six annas, common mason, four annas, superior carpenter, six annas, common carpenter, four annas, cooly, 2½ annas, superior blacksmith, six annas, common blacksmith, four annas. The price of rice, gram and salt during the same period has shown no tendency to rise and the rates have averaged 25½ seers, 33½ seers and 7½ seers respectively.

The only occupations followed are the cultivation of lac and rearing of tusser cocoons, the collection of wild honey, myrobalans and other forest produce by the jungle tribes. Trade in the real sense there is none : a certain amount of timber is sold and exported and traders barter for the jungle products with salt, tobacco and spices.

OCCUPATIONS,
MANUFACTURES
AND
TRADE.

There is a good road from the headquarters south to Sibpur in the Tālcher State and the same road continues on the north-east to the border of Keonjhar : this portion of the road and its continuation due west to the border of the Bāmra State was formerly the old Sambalpur-Midnapore road.

MEANS OF
COMMUNICATION.

There is a staging bungalow at the headquarters and at Kamār, an important village on the road to Tālcher. There is a post office at headquarters and the post travels *viā* Tālcher to Angul.

The last settlement was made under Government direction in 1905-06 during the period the State was under Court of Wards : special care was taken to enforce the prohibition against sale, mortgage or transfer of holdings and to guard against the lands of aboriginals being leased out by the village headmen to the more advanced class of cultivators ; long rent-free periods are granted to clearers of new cultivation. The land revenue demand is Rs. 21,237, and is collected without difficulty : the Bhuiyās pay a house tax of Re. 1 per house per annum : besides this they pay in kind one *khandi* (35 seers) of *birhi* per house per annum.

REVENUE
ADMINISTRATION.

As in the case of the other States of the group formerly known as the Tributary Mahāls of Orissa the *sanad* of 1908 regulates the relationship between the State and the British Government. The State has for some years been on account of minority under Government management and has only recently been restored to the Chief, who conducts the administration with the assistance of a *Diwān*. The Chief on succession is bound to pay *nazarāna* to the British Government. The State pays to the British Government a tribute of Rs. 267, and its annual revenue is about Rs. 38,000. The income of the State is very limited and its finances have to be very carefully administered. The State contains some of the finest *sāl* (*Shorea robusta*) forests in Orissa, and during the period of administration by Government a regular forest department was created under a qualified forest officer and detailed forest rules introduced : the forests were divided into reserved and protected and demarcation and survey has been practically completed. The finest range is that of Malayagiri. The forests yielded a revenue of Rs. 6,952 in 1907-08 and the

GENERAL
ADMINISTRATION.

FINANCES.

FORESTS.

Excise. revenue is expanding. The excise revenue amounted to Rs. 1,630
 Civil in 1907-08. Institutions of civil suits are very few and the suits
 justice. are of a petty nature; in 1907-08 the number of civil suits
 instituted was 22 only, of which 80.9 per cent were below the
 Crime. value of Rs. 50. Crime is exceedingly light: the number of
 Police. cases reported to the police in 1907-08 was 121. The police force
 consists of one Sub-Inspector, 4 Head-Constables and 14 con-
 Jail. stables. The jail has accommodation for 10 prisoners. The
 State possesses the necessary public buildings, but only the
 Public courts and offices are masonry. The State spent Rs. 2,647 on
 Works. account of public works in 1907-08.

EDUCA- The State maintains an Upper Primary school at the head-
 TION. quarters and 32 aided Lower Primary schools. The total number
 of pupils reading in schools in 1907-08 was 577. The Upper
 Primary school at headquarters is a commodious building with
 a hostel attached. The Government grant amounted in 1907-08
 to Rs. 360. Education is extremely backward and there is little
 or no demand for it by the people; under great difficulty parents
 are persuaded to send their boys to school and then constantly
 take them away to roam the forests.