

CHAPTER 3

DESCRIPTION OF PANCHGANI AS A HILL STATION

- 3.a - Historical Background
- 3.b - Geographical Location
- 3.c - Present Status of Panchgani as a Tourist Resort.
- 3.d - Environmental Aspect of Tourism at Panchgani hill station.

DESCRIPTION OF PANCHGANI AS A HILL STATION :

3.a : - Historical Background :

The first we hear of Panchgani in history comes from the memories of an officer on the staff of Sri. Charles Mallet, a resident of Poona. He came to Wai with Peshwas in Nov.2, 1791. He was not permitted to proceed to old Mahabaleshwar because of temples would have made impure. So he had to camp at Wai. Mahabaleshwar at that time was considered too sacred for the foot of a European to touch. Then with Peshwa, a small party of European climbed the hill who earned the credit of being the first to discover what is now known as Panchgani. That is how one of the party described Panchgani on Nov.2, 1791 as-

"The table hill S.W. of our encampment was an object that had long arrested our attention and Captain Hearne, Dr; Findlay and myself agreed to pass the day on the summit. The town of Waey and the soft flowing Krishna were at our feet; and we were at the same time well pleased for a survey of the different objects around. At the distance of about six kosse or twelve miles W.N.W. and on the level with the most elevated was Mahabaleshwar, at the head of the Krishna. The transverse hill on the slope of which the stream commences, terminated the view in that direction; the descent into the konkan beginning on the opposite or Western side.

" N.N.W. at a distance of about eight miles stands the hill fort of Kummulgun which is known as Lotus Castle and about six miles nearly due N. is Kundulgun. Again about N.E. distance three or four miles, we had Pandugun; and N.E. by E distance of twelve or fourteen miles, lay the Komauthy ghat. The town of Waey at our feet, lay nearly E. To the S.E. about twelve or fifteen miles stand the twin forts of Chundun - Wundun; formerly noticed on the journey from Dharwar. S.S.E. was the hill fort of Wyrandgun and beyond that; in nearly the same direction distant fifteen or sixteen miles appeared the important large fort of Satara.

" The village of Mahabaleshwar, at the source of Krishna, lay, as already intimated, on the eastern slope of the mountain and was barely visible when pointed out by one acquainted with the spot and one large pagoda was clearly distinguished through a telescope ".

" Although in itself a trifle, I could not omit to mention the pleasing surprise with which I discovered several patches of common ferns on different parts of the elevated spot on which we were enjoying the freshmen of the mountain breeze and the variegated landscape on every side; destitute however, of every vestige of that forest scenery so essential to the picturesque: the hill being entirely naked of wood. I could almost have compared by surprise at the sight of of a single fern

plant to that of Robinson Crusoe, when he discovered the print of a human foot on the strand. Mine, however, was the surprise of an indefinable pleasure that of poor Crusoe was one of terror and alarm".

There is no doubt whatever that this extract describes the discovery of Panchgani, although there does not seem to be any connection between this discovery and the subsequent decision to turn it into a hill station. As a definite settlement, it owes its existence to the enterprise of a retired European, Mr. John Chesson, who commenced farming there in 1854 as an experiment. Apparently, he had been good success in farming, later he wrote two books outlining all the advantages to be derived from living there.

These books were so appealing that by 1862, Mr. Chesson had been joined by two dozen other hill top pioneers, and six of them had erected for themselves substantial houses to stay at Panchgani.

The attention of the Governor, Sir Bartle Frere, was soon called to the well developing new settlement and in 1862, he took leadership in getting the government sanction as an annual grant of Rs.2,000 and at the same time he honoured the founder of the hill station by making him honorary Superintendent and Magistrate.

From that time onwards, Panchgani has grown very rapidly and today there are hundreds of well built and well furnished bungalows, Several hotels and all the amenities of modern life and popular English medium residential schools belonging to different educational institutions.

3.b : - Geographical Location of Panchgani : -

Panchgani is situated between Mahabaleshwar and Wai, only 19 kms; away from Mahabaleshwar. On the way to Mahabaleshwar from Poona, Panchgani is at a distance of 100 kms; in Mahabaleshwar taluka of Satara district in Maharashtra state. It is about 50 kms; from north west of Satara.

Panchgani derives it's name from the five hills around it. It's height from the sea level ranges upto 1334 meters and it is just 34 meters below Mahabaleshwar. After Mahabaleshwar, Panchgani is the most popular hill station among many.

Panchgani is located on the sub division of Western mountains or Sahyadri ghats namely ' Shambhu Mahadev '. It lies in the lap of a large extent of Table Land. The second largest pleateau of Asia continent popularly known as Table Land is on the eastern side of Panchgani. The northern part of Panchgani is located under deep Krishna valley.

Some say that Panchgani is to Mahabaleshwar what Conner to Ooty. The whole of northern and southern ridge of the mountain shows a beautiful scenery of Krishna valley, lush-green fields, terraces and picturesque dhom dam water flowing smoothly with silver shine. The fragrance of nature blushing amidst hill refreshes before us.

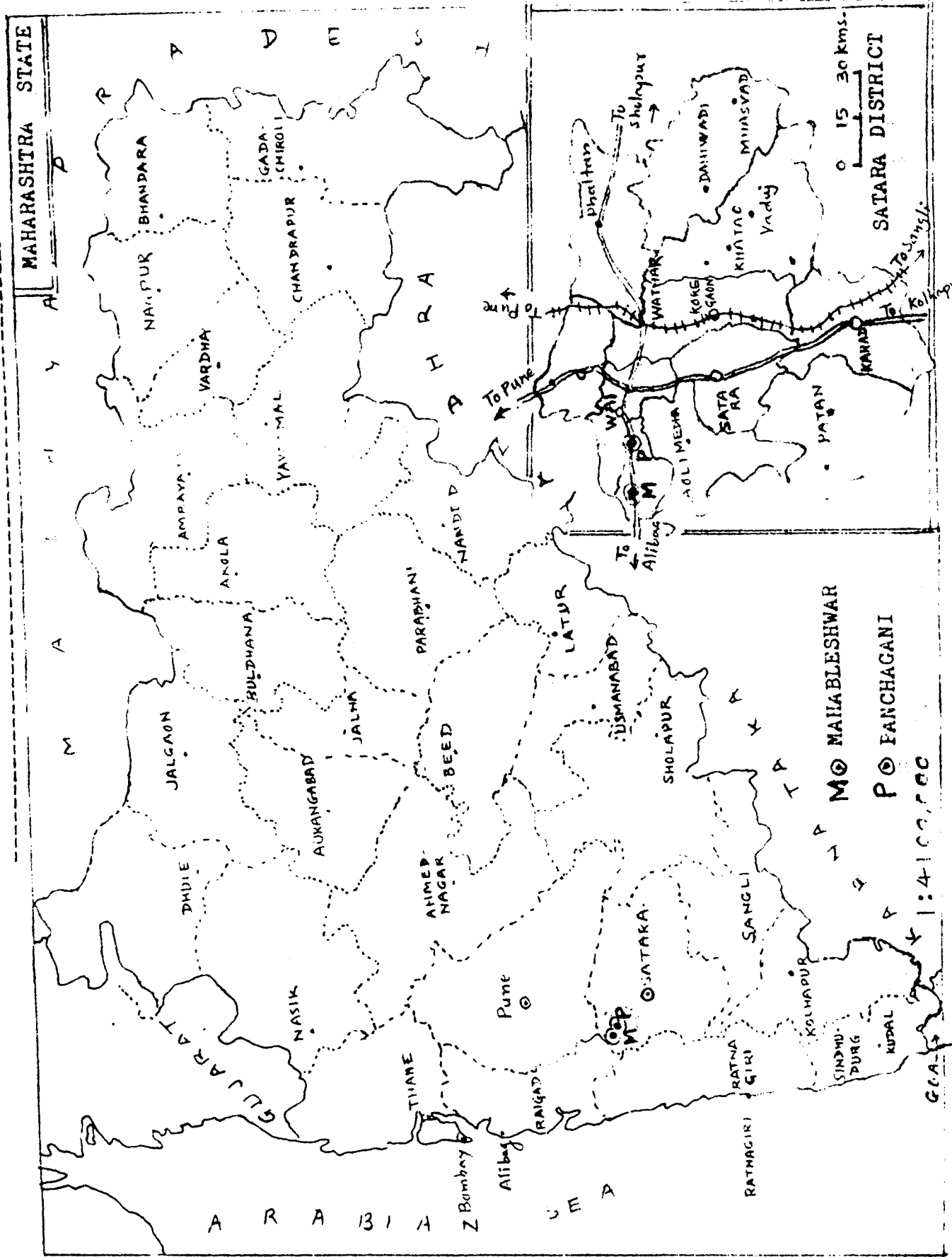
After a smooth drive from Poona, one has to climb a tortuous ghat all the way from Wai. Paddy fields butteressed by farm houses in the lap of a chain of Pleateau attract our eyes and glorious krishna valley unfold before us.

Panchgani has the scenetic beauty, cool and exhiliating climate. The climate of Panchgani is salubrious, cool and comparatively dry. Climatically speaking, Panchgani has one great advantage over Mahabaleshwar is that former is unlike, the latter is comparatively habitable all the year round. The rainy season and winter is comparatively less than Mahabaleshwar.

The climate is very inviograting all the year round and health giving. It is as a sanitorium that it is known best. Panchgani is protected from harsh winds by a Table land on one side and high clifts descending into a valley on the other.

Panchgani town and it's region is fully surrounded with tall trees namely silver oak trees. Silver oak greenery has made the nature of Panchgani very beautiful and scenetic. The silver oak trees are denesely found only in the region of Panchgani. As such, the climate for silver ioak is very suitable in Panchgani.

MAP OF MAHARASHTRA AND PANCHAGANI IN MAHARASHTRA



Scale: 1:4,00,000

3.C : - Present Status of Panchgani as a Tourist Resort :

Panchgani is picturesque hill top town under the shade of Casurina and silver oak trees. Panchgani is a heaven for tourists. It is sometimes described as a 'Switzerland of India' or 'Kashmir of Maharashtra'. The soil, water and salubrious air makes Panchgani a good tourist spot. Tourists from all over India and a few abroad are also attracted to this tourist resort.

Panchgani has been very famous hill station in Satara district of Maharashtra due to it's natural beauty and other characteristics. We can not talk of Panchgani without English medium residential schools of an international character, thus it is also an international centre of education. The fragrance of nature brushing amidst hill attracts and refreshes the tourists. The dhom dam water shines in the deep valley. The climate of Panchgani is cool and fresh so it is an ideal place for recouping and invigorating one's health. It is also regarded as a health resort.

The best is to visit Panchgani in the month of October and November just after the Monsoon when the nature is at it's best. It has a pleasant bracing climate all the year round. Panchgani is always attractive, however the period between

November and May is preferred by the most of the tourists. There are fine places of interest and sight seeing around Panchgani. The people visit Panchgani not only for sight seeing but also for staying at hill station for rest purposes.

Panchgani is open for the tourists all the year round so there is flow of tourists remain all the year round. There seems to be more increasing flow of tourists visiting Panchgani. The tourists visiting Mahabaleshwar definetely visit Panchgani. Due to fresh climate and comparative less rains, the number of permanent residents are more than Mahabaleshwar. There are some beautiful attractions in Panchgani among which Table Land is the main attraction for the tourists.

Due to natural beauty and famous places of interest, Panchgani is one of the best tourist spot in India.

3.d :- Environmental Aspect of Tourism at the Panchgani hill Station.

Tourism attracts number of tourists from various places but it is seen that care is not taken for preserving the environment. Insufficient sanitation and garbage left over by the tourists lead to pollution hazards. Further, the peace of the hill station is disturbed. There is a need to have good balance between environment and tourism development.

Demands for tourism are as diverse as the resources. It is not easy to match the supply with demand. Tourism can create a pressure on local facilities but can affect the land scape and life style of the people.

Panchgani which is famous tourist centre is located in Western part of Deccan pleateau on the flat topped sumits of Sahyadri. The area of the place is moulded into typical basaltic topography. It has wet humid climatic area with slopes and narrow valleys covered by the forest.

Panchgani has an area of 6.16 Sq.Kms. While it's population is about 8,635 according to 1981 census. More and more houses, bungalows, hotels, holiday homes and rest houses

have been constructed by cutting trees. So the changing and deteriorating environmental conditions of the hill station are a matter of anxiety to all concerned.