

II

Coorg

Coorg is coffee country, famous for its rainforests and spices.

MIDWAY between Mysore and the coastal town of Mangalore sits a piece of heaven that must have drifted from the kingdom of god. This land of rolling hills is inhabited by a proud race of martial men, beautiful women and wild creatures.

drifted from
been carried along
gently by air

Coorg, or Kodagu, the smallest district of Karnataka, is home to evergreen rainforests, spices and coffee plantations. Evergreen rainforests cover thirty per cent of this district. During the monsoons, it pours enough to keep many visitors away. The season of joy commences from September and continues till March. The weather is perfect, with

martial
having to do with
war

some showers thrown in for good measure. The air breathes of invigorating coffee. Coffee estates and colonial bungalows stand tucked under tree canopies in prime corners.

canopies
roof-like coverings
that form shelters

prime
here, best

The fiercely independent people of Coorg are possibly of Greek or Arabic descent. As one story goes, a part of Alexander's army moved south along the coast and settled here when return became impractical. These people married amongst the locals and their culture is apparent in the martial traditions, marriage and religious rites, which are distinct from the Hindu mainstream. The theory of Arab origin draws support from the long, black coat

mainstream
a tradition which
most people follow

First Flight

90



Traditional Coorgi dress

with an embroidered waist-belt worn by the Kodavus. Known as *kuppia*, it resembles the *kuffia* worn by the Arabs and the Kurds.

Coorgi homes have a tradition of hospitality, and they are more than willing to recount numerous tales of valour related to their sons and fathers. The Coorg Regiment is one of the most decorated in the Indian Army, and the first Chief of the Indian Army, General Cariappa, was a Coorgi. Even now, Kodavus are the only people in India permitted to carry firearms without a licence.

The river, Kaveri, obtains its water from the hills and forests of Coorg. Mahaseer — a large freshwater fish — abound in these waters. Kingfishers dive for their catch, while squirrels and langurs drop partially eaten fruit for the mischief of enjoying the splash and the ripple effect in the clear water. Elephants enjoy being bathed and scrubbed in the river by their mahouts.

The most laidback individuals become converts to the life of high-energy adventure with river rafting, canoeing, rappelling, rock climbing and mountain

tales of valour

stories of courage and bravery, usually in war

most decorated

having received the maximum number of awards for bravery in war

laidback

relaxed; not in a hurry

rafting

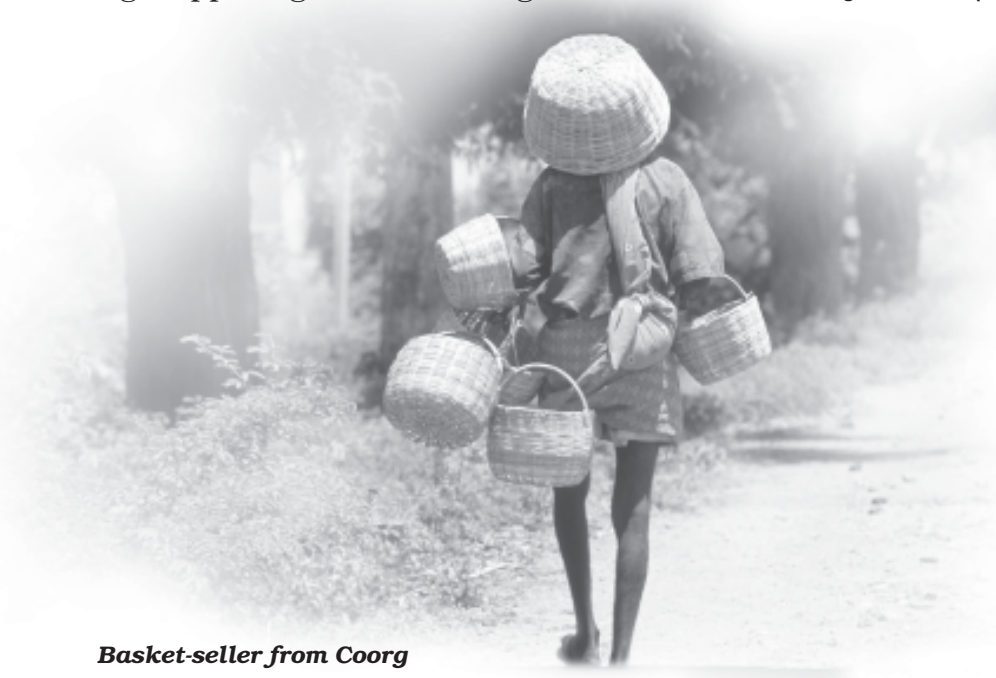
travelling in a river in a raft (a floating platform made by tying planks together)

canoeing

travelling in a river in a canoe (a large, narrow boat)

rappelling

going down a cliff by sliding down a rope



Basket-seller from Coorg



biking. Numerous walking trails in this region are a favourite with trekkers.

trails

paths created by walking

Birds, bees and butterflies are there to give you company. Macaques, Malabar squirrels, langurs and slender loris keep a watchful eye from the tree canopy. I do, however, prefer to step aside for wild elephants.

The climb to the Brahmagiri hills brings you into a panoramic view of the entire misty landscape of Coorg. A walk across the rope bridge leads to the sixty-four-acre island of Nisargadhama. Running into Buddhist monks from India's largest Tibetan settlement, at nearby Bylakuppe, is a bonus. The monks, in red, ochre and yellow robes, are amongst the many surprises that wait to be discovered by visitors searching for the heart and soul of India, right here in Coorg.

panoramic view

a view of a wide area of land

FACT FILE

How to Reach

Madikeri, the district headquarters, is the only gateway to Coorg. The misty hills, lush forests and coffee plantations will cast a spell on you. Find a resort, coffee estate or stay in a home for a truly Coorgi experience.

By Air: The nearest airports are Mangalore (135 km) and Bangalore (260 km). There are flights to Mangalore from Mumbai, and to Bangalore from Ahmedabad, Chennai, Delhi, Goa, Hyderabad, Kochi, Kolkata, Mumbai and Pune.

By Rail: The nearest railheads are at Mysore, Mangalore and Hassan.

By Road: There are two routes to Coorg from Bangalore. Both are almost the same distance (around 250-260 km). The route via Mysore is the most frequented one. The other route is via Neelamangal, Kunigal, Chanrayanapatna.

Thinking about the Text

1. Where is Coorg?
2. What is the story about the Kodavu people's descent?
3. What are some of the things you now know about
 - (i) the people of Coorg?
 - (ii) the main crop of Coorg?
 - (iii) the sports it offers to tourists?





- (iv) the animals you are likely to see in Coorg?
(v) its distance from Bangalore, and how to get there?
4. Here are six sentences with some words in italics. Find phrases from the text that have the same meaning. (Look in the paragraphs indicated)
- (i) During monsoons it rains so heavily *that tourists do not visit Coorg*. (para 2)
 - (ii) *Some people say that* Alexander's army moved south along the coast and settled there. (para 3)
 - (iii) The Coorg people *are always ready to tell* stories of their sons' and fathers' valour. (para 4)
 - (iv) *Even people who normally lead an easy and slow life get smitten by* the high-energy adventure sports of Coorg. (para 6)
 - (v) The theory of the Arab origin *is supported by* the long coat with embroidered waist-belt they wear. (para 3)
 - (vi) Macaques, Malabar squirrels *observe you carefully* from the tree canopy. (para 7)



Thinking about Language

Collocations

Certain words 'go together'. Such 'word friends' are called **collocations**. The collocation of a word is 'the company it keeps'.

For example, look at the paired sentences and phrases below. Which is a common collocation, and which one is odd? Strike out the odd sentence or phrase.

- (a) • 'How old are you?' (b) • a pleasant person
 - 'How young are you?' • a pleasant pillow
1. **Here are some nouns from the text.**

culture monks surprise experience weather tradition

Work with a partner and discuss which of the nouns can collocate with which of the adjectives given below. The first one has been done for you.

unique terrible unforgettable serious ancient wide sudden

- (i) culture: unique culture, ancient culture
- (ii) monks: _____
- (iii) surprise: _____
- (iv) experience: _____
- (v) weather: _____
- (vi) tradition _____





2. Complete the following phrases from the text. For each phrase, can you find at least one other word that would fit into the blank?

- (i) tales of _____ (ii) coastal _____
(iii) a piece of _____ (iv) evergreen _____
(v) _____ plantations (vi) _____ bridge
(vii) wild _____

You may add your own examples to this list.

III

Tea from Assam

Pranjol, a youngster from Assam, is Rajvir's classmate at school in Delhi. Pranjol's father is the manager of a tea-garden in Upper Assam and Pranjol has invited Rajvir to visit his home during the summer vacation.

"CHAI-GARAM... garam-chai," a vendor called out in a high-pitched voice.

He came up to their window and asked, "Chai, sa'ab?"

"Give us two cups," Pranjol said.

They sipped the steaming hot liquid. Almost everyone in their compartment was drinking tea too.

"Do you know that over eighty crore cups of tea are drunk every day throughout the world?" Rajvir said.

"Whew!" exclaimed Pranjol. "Tea really is very popular."

The train pulled out of the station. Pranjol buried his nose in his detective book again. Rajvir too was an ardent fan of detective stories, but at the moment he was keener on looking at the beautiful scenery.

It was green, green everywhere. Rajvir had never seen so much greenery before. Then the soft green paddy fields gave way to tea bushes.

It was a magnificent view. Against the backdrop of densely wooded hills a sea of tea bushes stretched as far as the eye could see. Dwarfing the tiny tea plants were tall sturdy shade-trees and amidst the orderly rows of bushes busily moved doll-like figures.

