
The author, born and brought up at KGF during the 1950s and 1960s, in the first part of the book traces the history since 1804 when Lieutenant John Warren of His Majesty’s 33rd regiment recorded the gold mining by natives at Urigaum village in the Asiatic Society journal. The first stakeholder was a retired Irish soldier Michael F. Lavelle in 1850 and subsequently the take over by John Taylor and Sons in 1852 when systematic prospecting and proving of the gold began. With the induction of migrant Tamil and Telugu labourers for underground works from neighbouring states mining colonies rose. Mining commenced with the first shaft at Marikuppam in December 1883. Subsequently, several shafts were sunk with development of over 1350 km of underground workings connecting the four main mines namely Champion Reefs (the second deepest mine of the world at 3.2 km), Marikuppam, Oorgaum and Nandydroog. KGF was connected by a new railway line from Bangarapet in 1896. With development of infrastructure and all amenities, including the first 700 KW hydroelectric power from Shivanasamudram, with the world’s longest (80 miles) power transmission line for electrification of the mines in 1902, KGF and Bangalore became the first city in India to have electricity. In 1903 filtered and piped water supply began to the mines and colony from the man made lake at Bethamangalam on the banks of Palar River. By the end of the 19th century, a sprawling British Township was landed in KGF, with elegant bungalows replete with huge gardens and green lawns, and many clubs with tennis and badminton courts, golf courses, dance halls, swimming baths, etc and came to be known as ‘Little England’. The colonial ambience comprising British, European and Anglo-Indian population remained so for about 50 years. The development of the well planned townships of Robertsonpet (1902) with a Victorian style town hall and Andersonpet (1904) catered to the increasing commercial and personal needs of the mining community living at KGF. With India’s independence, due to increasing depths, decreasing grades, trade unionism, and others led to M/s John Taylor and Sons handing over the reins to Government of India on 28th November, 1956. KGF celebrated its centenary in 1980, the then Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi attended the function. Increasing costs, Government policies and labour problems with numerous unions affiliated to different political parties, ultimately led to the closure of the mines in 2001 after 125 years of mining with a production of over 1000 tonnes of gold.
The second part of the book chronicles the birth of the Anglo-Indian community, the author’s childhood memories of growing up in KGF in the 1950s and 1960s including history of the famous Churches, school, St. Joseph’s convent and the First-grade College, the famous play grounds and others. The author needs to be complimented for providing succinctly a ‘wide spectrum account’ of the ‘day-to-day life’ at the KGF town with details of the parties, games, hawkers, vendors etc which could bring nostalgic memories in all the old KGF inmates, as also for others to know as how well life had been enjoyed in such an ambience for posterity. Her work should be an inspiration to erstwhile geologists and mining engineers of KGF to come up with an equally interesting account on the ‘geology and mining of this world class gold deposit’ – the story on ‘KGF’s Gold’ for posterity since it was the Mother of all metal mining in India.

Email: gsocind@gmail.com      P. Krishnamurthy