

THE DIAMONDS OF THE KRISHNA VALLEY

SIR C. V. RAMAN

THE river Krishna and its principal tributary the Tungabhadra flowing respectively in south-easterly and easterly directions enter the area shown in the geological maps as the Kurnool formations. Further on, they meet and join up near a place known appropriately as Sangameswaram. The united stream then flows eastwards through the area known geologically as the Cuddapah formations. The

takes a north-easterly direction in the endeavour to by-pass these obstacles and find a gap through which the waters can flow again southwards. After passing through this gap, the Krishna flows almost due south. It then widens out as it approaches Vijayawada and passing through another gap between high hills flows down into the alluvial plains beyond and then to the sea.

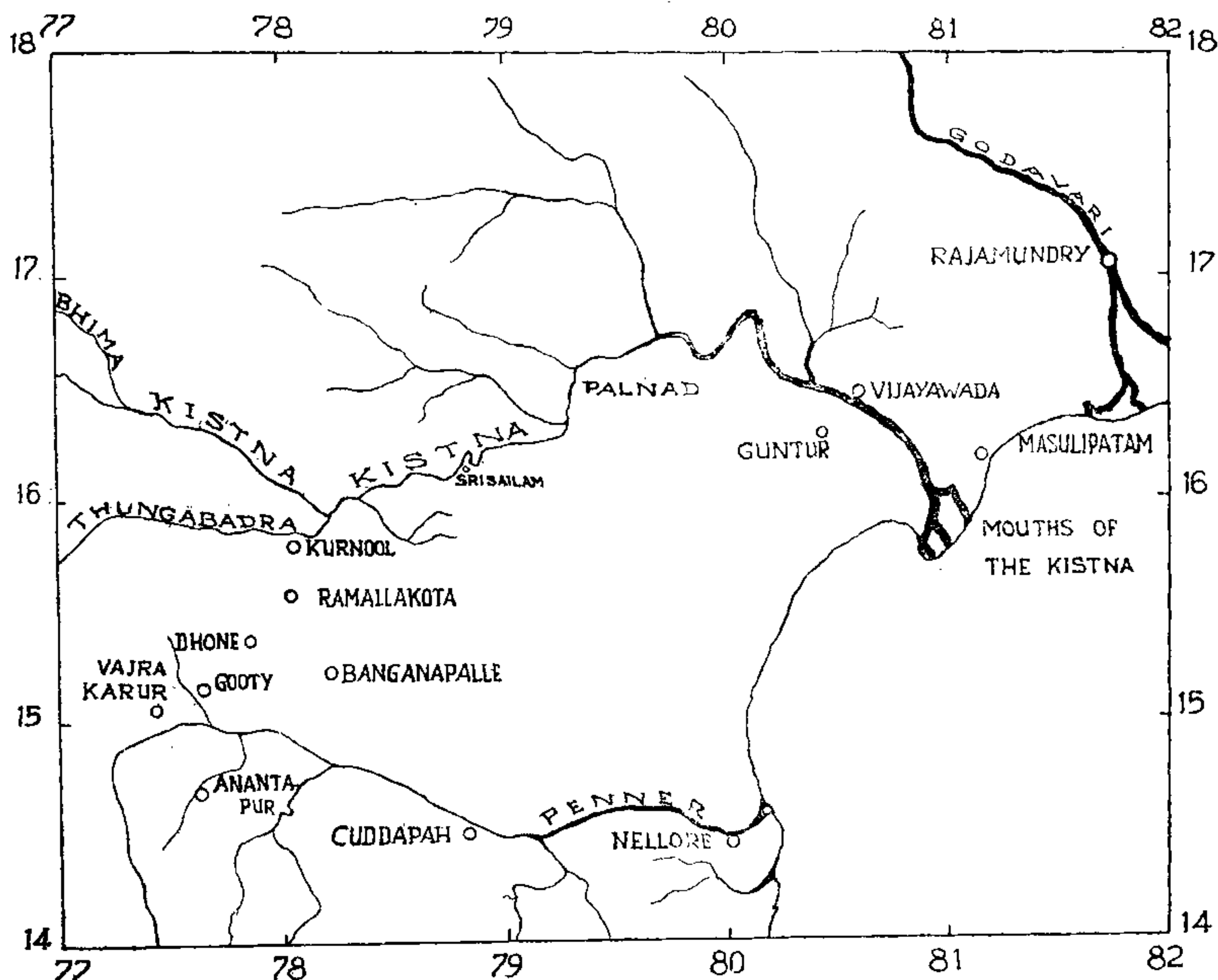


FIG. 1. The River Valleys of the Krishna and the Pennar.

actual course of the river in these formations is very tortuous. The stream exhibits a conspicuous double bend in the vicinity of the famous shrine of Srisailam. Further on, it turns sharply northwards and its path lies outside the Cuddapah formations for a short length. But the river soon returns to the area of those formations and follows a course roughly parallel to their crescent-shaped outline. Towards the end of its course in the area, it curves round and then meets obstacles to its flow in the form of hills of considerable height and extension. As a result, the river

The distance between Sangameswaram and Vijayawada by a straight flight is 178 miles. But measured along the actual path of the river it is no less than 276 miles, the difference arising from the several deviations from a straight path already mentioned. In cutting its way through the Amrabad plateau composed of rocks of the Cuddapah system, the river passes through a great gorge about one hundred miles long.

The three rivers Godavari, Krishna and Pennar have built up in the course of ages an extensive coastal area of deposited material

extending all the way from Kakinada to Nellore. This area which is shown in the geological maps as a recent formation exhibits a curious feature in the shape of a tongue with lateral extensions protruding towards the interior behind Vijayawada and with the river Krishna flowing through it. This feature has evidently resulted as a consequence of the flow of the Krishna towards the sea being arrested by the presence of high ground in the shape of rock formations of the Khondalite series. It is in the material thus deposited by the river before it passes Vijayawada that the diamonds carried down by it were sought for and found in past years. The first volume of the *Journal of the Hyderabad Geological Survey* published in the year 1929 contains a compilation of all available information on the ancient diamond mines in the area. The maps appearing in this publication indicate the locations not far from the present course of the Krishna river where the diamonds were taken out. All of them were on the northern side of the river, viz., Partial, Atkur, Munnaluru, Mogaluru, Koduvat-kallu and Ustapalli, with one very significant exception, viz., Kollur. This last was on the right bank of the river where it takes a sharp turn to the north-east by reason of the presence of a range of hills blocking its flow eastwards. Kollur appears to have been a highly productive locality. It was visited by Tavernier who described the surface workings and stated that some 60,000 people were engaged in the mining operations at the time of his visit.

An intensive and prolonged exploration of any particular locality for diamonds might be expected to result in its ceasing to be productive, sooner or later. This is indeed the actual situation, and the fabulous wealth these mines produced is now only a memory. It is of course possible that several less promising locations were left unexplored, and it is also possible that methods of mining which go down to deeper levels might produce results. An inspection of the maps suggests that the course of the river Krishna above Vijayawada has shifted progressively southwards as the result of the deposition of the material which it brought down, and hence the exploration of areas further removed from its present course, and especially of the areas silted over by the streams flowing into it laterally might conceivably prove to be profitable. But the chief interest attaching to the subject of the diamonds found in the past in the Krishna valley

is in the problem of locating the original source of these diamonds and of exploiting these original sources to the fullest practicable extent.

The long and tortuous course pursued by the river between Sangameswaram and Vijayawada lies for the most part in what are recognised geologically as the upper Cuddapah formations, and only a small part of the same lies within the formations of lesser age known as the Kurnools. The actual facts of the case suggest that the diamonds deposited in the lower reaches of the river were a part (and naturally only a very small part) of the material scooped out by the flood waters from the floor and walls of the gorges excavated by them and deposited where the flow was arrested. Whether this action was confined to any particular stretch or stretches of the length of the river or whether it extended over the whole or a greater part of its entire course can only be surmised and must await determination by a careful examination of the exposed areas of the river gorges.

It should be emphasised that the Krishna valley lies much further north than the areas bounded on the west by Lattavaram and Guntakkal, and on the east by Dhone and Gooty and including especially the well-known locality of Vajrakarur, where there were diamond workings in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The geological maps show that the areas mentioned lie outside the Cuddapah formations, and there is therefore no reason for assuming that the circumstances which led to diamonds being found in these areas at or near the surface of the earth have any bearing on the problem of the original source of the diamonds found in the Krishna valley. Further, in view of the great age of the Cuddapah formations and the absence of any evidence of volcanic activity in the regions traversed by the Krishna river, there is nothing to suggest that the diamonds in the valley were thrown up and made accessible to erosion by the flow of the river by any such activity in the ages subsequent to the laying down of those formations.

The whole purpose of this article is to indicate that the history of diamonds in the Krishna valley need not be treated as a closed chapter having only a historic interest, and that on the other hand, it may well prove to be a subject of practical importance at the present time if pursued vigorously but with the necessary circumspection.