

REPORT
ON THE
SWINGING FESTIVAL
AND THE CREMONT OF
WALKING THROUGH FIRE



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SELECTIONS
FROM
THE RECORDS
OF
THE MADRAS GOVERNMENT.

Published by Authority.

No. VII.

REPORTS

ON THE

12/11/16
1854
SWINGING FESTIVAL,

AND THE CEREMONY OF

WALKING THROUGH FIRE.

MADRAS:

PRINTED BY H. SMITH, AT THE FORT ST. GEORGE GAZETTE PRESS.

1854.

XIV
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Public Department.

No. 173.

EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF CONSULTATION.

Dated 18th February, 1854.

Read the following letters :—

From the Chief Magistrate and Superintendent of Police.

From the Magistrates of Ganjam, North Arcot, Salem, Cuddapah, Trichinopoly, Vizagapatam, Tanjore, Tinnevely, Coimbatore, Rajahmundry, Guntoor, Malabar, Nellore, South Arcot, Musulipatam, Madura, Bellary, Canara and Chingleput, and the Agent to the Governor at Kurnool.

1. From the reports now before the Government from the different Magistrates in this Presidency, it appears that the Swinging Festival is on the whole less frequently observed now than formerly. In some few districts the practice is as prevalent as ever; in the majority, however, it may be considered on the decline, while in none can it be called general,—further it does not seem to be in any way connected with the religion of the observers, but to be performed in fulfilment of vows.

2. There can be no doubt that the Government would be fully justified in authoritatively putting down a practice, so revolting in its nature and so injurious in its effects on those who witness it. The Right Honorable the Governor in Council is however led to hope, from the reports now before him, that it may be greatly checked, if not entirely abolished by the influence of the Magistrates, aided, as their efforts would doubtless be, by the example and endeavours of the higher and more educated classes of the Native community.

3. The introduction of the practice in any place where it does not now obtain might with propriety be prohibited. For this purpose it would perhaps be better to instruct the village officers in such cases to give timely information to the Magistrate than to issue any general notice to the people.

4. In some cases it would appear that the observance has led to loss of life; this, would of course justify the interference of the Ma-



செப்பனிருபவர் பெயர் H-யூக்

செப்பனிருவதற்காக எடுத்தகட்டாக
கொள்ளப்பட்ட நாள் 1993

செப்பனிரு முடித்த நாள் 1993

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gistracy, and, in future, any occurrence of this nature should lead to the prohibition of the ceremony at the village where it happened.

5. The best method of discouraging this objectionable practice must be left to the discretion of the different Magistrates, but the Right Honorable the Governor in Council feels confident that if it be properly explained that the object of Government is not to interfere with any religious observance of its subjects but to abolish a cruel and revolting practice, the efforts of the Magistracy will be willingly seconded by the influence of the great mass of the community, and, more particularly, of the wealthy and intelligent classes who do not seem even now, to countenance or support the Swinging ceremony.

(True Extract)

H. C. MONTGOMERY,
Chief Secretary.

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF TRICHINOPOLY.

SIR,

Para 1. I do myself the honor to acknowledge receipt of Extract from the Minutes of Consultation, No. 861, Public Department, dated the 12th instant, on the subject of the Hindu Cheddle or Swinging Festival.

2. This is an Annual Festival celebrated chiefly by the lower castes of Hindoos, such as the Pullars, Pullies and Pariahs, though many of the Soodrahs of all denominations will attend to witness the performance. In this District the Festival takes place in about ten villages. But the most attractive is at the village of Allitory in the Conaud Talook, and at Beermanaikempolliam within the suburbs of Trichinopoly itself.

3. The Police never, to my knowledge, have interfered either for preventing or discouraging the celebration. They are always present to keep order and suppress disturbance, as well as to prevent robbery of jewels and such like from the persons of bystanders.

4. From all I can learn the Festival does not draw so many people as heretofore, and certainly the votaries or those that swing are fewer.

I have, &c. &c.

J. BIRD,
Magistrate.

19th September, 1853.

Madras, 22d September, 1853.

FROM THE CHIEF MAGISTRATE AND
SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE.

SIR,

With reference to the Extract from the Minutes of Consultation,* I have the honor to state for the information of the Right Honorable the Governor in Council that the Chedul Feast used to be performed annually at the Presidency in the following places, viz. Royapettah, Teroovataswarapettah, Chintadrepettah, Pareanettoo Esplanade, Choolay Cosapettah, Dhurmaraja Covil, Choolay and Royapooram.

This festival has been stopped by the Police at various times at all the places named except Royapooram and Choolay Cosapettah, on the ground that they were a nuisance and offensive to passengers on public thoroughfares, which are common to all,—further, that it was no religious ceremony for the Hindoo, but a spectacle disgusting to a large portion of a numerous population composed of many creeds. Parties interested complained of the interference on the part of the Police against Mamool and threatened proceedings in the Supreme Court, &c., and in some instances petitioned Government, but the Police remained firm, and the festival has been stopped.

At Royapooram after much discussion the parties removed the scene to a place on the sea shore some distance North from all houses and roads and there it has not been interfered with as yet.

Three years ago the parties at Choolay Cosapettah were called upon to desist, because it was within view of a public road, on which occasion they moved to some remote fields near Thawker's Choultry and there it would not have been disturbed; but this year they removed back to Choolay Cosapettah, in breach of the tacit understanding and therefore it will be stopped altogether in future.

Many other ceremonies, such as Pucka Chedul or side piercing, &c., which are performed principally by the lower castes, are much less frequent than formerly, which I attribute in a great degree to the practice adopted of objecting to Sunday, as the day for performance, unless it can be shewn that the particular festival, ceremony or whatever it may be, falls on that day by their Calendar. Sunday is a day generally

* Public Department, dated 12th September, 1853, No. 861.

selected for all such noisy proceedings, because the lower classes have not to attend to their work, and thus the crowd is swelled.

I have, &c. &c.

E. F. ELLIOT,

*Chief Magistrate and
Superintendent of Police.*

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF GANJAM.

SIR,

With reference to the Extract Minutes of Consultation, dated 12th September, 1853, No. 861, I beg to report that the Swinging Festival called Soodaloo or Soollco is generally observed within this jurisdiction—that no measures are adopted by the Police for preventing or discouraging its celebration and that the observance does not appear to be less frequent or attractive than formerly.

I have, &c. &c.

A. P. ONSLOW,

22d September, 1853.

Magistrate.

FROM THE ACTING MAGISTRATE OF NORTH ARCOT.

SIR,

Para. 1. In reply to an Extract from the Minutes of Consultation under date the 12th ultimo, No. 861, desiring me to report whether the Hindu Swinging Festival, known by the names of Churkh Poojah, Soodaloo or Cheddal, is still generally observed within the limit of my jurisdiction, whether measures are ever adopted by the Police for preventing or discouraging the celebration of this festival, and whether the observance of it is less frequent and less attractive than formerly; I have the honor to report that this festival is still observed in some parts of this district, that no measures have ever been adopted by the Police for preventing, or discouraging it, and that from what I learn, from the reports of the Native Authorities of the district, I believe that the observance of it is certainly less frequent, and we may consequently infer, less attractive, than in former times.

2. I forward enclosed a Tabular Memorandum exhibiting the various places, villages, &c. in this District, in which this festival has

been, and is still, celebrated, with remarks showing the intervals at which it has usually been observed.

3. I have issued instructions to the several Heads of Police of this District to use their best endeavours to discourage, as far as lies in their power, the observance of this festival; and if I may be permitted to offer an opinion on the subject, I should say that this barbarous and revolting ceremony might easily and advantageously be entirely suppressed by direct order of Government.

I have, &c. &c.

R. M. BINNING,

4th October, 1853.

Acting Magistrate.

Memorandum showing the Talooks, or Zemindaries and Villages in which the Swinging Feast is celebrated and the intervals at which it is observed.

Name of Talooks or Zemindaries.	Villages.	Name of the Goddess in honor of whom the festival is celebrated.	Number of the Chakles or swinging Exaltation.	Remarks.
Trivulani.	Kampanapoor.	Yagavalaynam.	1	The celebration of the festival has been discontinued from the year Valundee corresponding with A.D. 1823. It is said that the inhabitants of the village contemplate reviving the ceremony in the current year.
Cavarypaul.	Zimney.	Nimundapalayam.	1	The festival is celebrated in the month of Avany every year.
Vellore.	Vengiooroom.	Anneyannam.	1	Is celebrated once every year.
Satghur.	Allancooroom.	"	2 Formerly.	Was celebrated formerly but has now been discontinued.
Aicut.	Goodanagarum.	"	1	Is celebrated once every year.
Tirany Division in Cavetnagar Zemindary.	Carumbeer.	"	1	do. once in the course of 10 years.
Naravannam do. in do.	Anandhar.	"	2 Formerly.	do. once every year.
Calavery Zemindary.	Kecupum.	"	1	Has been discontinued for the last 20 years.
	Kedagarum.	Kalagarannam.	1	Is celebrated every year.
	Thoreen.	Polackeyannam.	1	Is celebrated in the month of Avany every year.
	Ketupettah.	Vorogunkeyannam.	1	do. in Caragay do.
	Calasty.	"	1	do. do.
	Thoudamanadoc.	"	1	do. do.
	Evellor.	"	1	do. do.
	Cancherannec.	"	1	do. do.
	Valapilly.	"	1	do. do.
	Chentatilloo.	"	1	do. do.
	Elacoor.	"	1	do. do.
	Varatoo.	"	1	do. do.
	Akoorthoc.	"	1	do. do.
Arnee Jaghire.	Aticcom-yumpulloo.	Varoocandeyannam.	1 Formerly.	The festival in these villages is celebrated once in the course of three, four or five years.
	Tuckoor.	Uckoorannam.	1 Formerly.	Has been discontinued for the last 10 years.

North Arcot. Collectors Office, Chittoor, 4th October 1853.

R. M. RINNING, Acting Magistrate.

FROM THE ACTING MAGISTRATE OF SALEM.

SIR,

1. With reference to Extract from the Minutes of Consultation, dated the 12th ultimo, requiring me to report whether the Swinging Festival is still generally observed within my jurisdiction, whether measures are ever adopted by the Police for preventing or discouraging the celebration of this festival, and whether the observance of it is less frequent and less attractive than formerly; I have the honor to state that the festival is still observed throughout this district, and that so recently as June last, two men were killed during the celebration of the festival at the village of Berikee in the Unkoosgherry Pottiput in the Ossoor Talook, in consequence of the pole from which they were suspended having accidentally snapped.

2. No measures have been hitherto adopted for preventing or discouraging the celebration of the festival, nor can it be said that the observance of it is less frequent or attractive than formerly.

I have, &c. &c.

H. A. BRETT,

Acting Magistrate.

5th October, 1853.

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF CUDDAPAH.

SIR,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of an Extract from the Minutes of Consultation under date the 12th September, 1853, requesting that the Magistrates will report whether the Swinging Festival called in Telugu "Soodaloo" is still generally observed within their jurisdiction, and whether any measures have been adopted by the Police for preventing or discouraging the celebration of this festival. I have the honor to state that no measures whatever have hitherto been adopted by the Magistrate for its discouragement nor can it be said that the observance of it is less frequent and attractive. This festival is largely celebrated throughout the district of Cuddapah, the lower classes, having a high respect for it, would be unwilling to have it discontinued. Up to the present time the Magistrate has refrained from interfering as much as possible in the celebration of any of the Hindu Festivals—his endeavours have been confined to the prevention of breaches of the peace and the apprehension of thieves and cutpurses.

who may frequent the festivals where a large crowd is generally assembled.

I have, &c. &c.

M. MURKAY,

13th October, 1853.

Magistrate.

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF VIZAGAPATAM.

SIR,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of Extract from Minutes of Consultation, under date the 12th ultimo, No. 861, and to report, for the information of the Right Honorable the Governor in Council, that the Swinging Festival is generally observed in this district. Measures have not hitherto been adopted for preventing its celebration, but I entertain great hopes that I shall be able to suppress it in all, or nearly all the places within my jurisdiction where it has hitherto been customary.

I have, &c. &c.

A. ROBERTSON,

18th October, 1853.

Magistrate.

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF TANJORE.

SIR,

I have the honor to make the report called for in the Minutes of Consultation, No. 861, dated the 12th ultimo.

The Swinging Festival is known to have been practiced in former years in a hundred and twenty-five towns and villages in this Province—its practice has been of late years discontinued in forty-seven places, and still obtains occasionally in seventy-eight places.

No efforts have been made by the Police Authorities to prevent or discourage the celebration of the Festival, but there seems reason to believe, not only that it is less frequently celebrated, but also, that when celebrated, it is less attractive than formerly.

I have, &c. &c.

H. FORBES,

25th October, 1853.

Magistrate.

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF TINNEVELLY.

SIR,

With reference to Extract from the Minutes of Consultation under date the 12th September last, I have the honor to state for the information of Government that the Swinging Festival called in Tamil "Cheddle" is still observed in some of the villages in most of the Taluqs in this district, but the observance of the same is stated to be less frequent and less attractive than formerly. No measures are adopted by the Police for preventing or discouraging the celebration of the Festival.

I have, &c. &c.

C. J. BIRD,

1st November, 1853.

Magistrate.

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF COIMBATORE.

SIR,

1. Referring to Extract from the Minutes of Consultation, dated 12th September last, No. 861, I have the honor to state for the information of Government, that the Swinging Festival therein alluded to, is in partial observance, though less frequent than formerly; in a few places in this district, orders have now been issued for its entire discontinuance, and this prohibition will be strictly enforced.

2. I would beg leave to submit for the consideration of Government whether a similar festival celebrated annually both by Hindoos as well as Moosulmans, and more dangerous, though less disgusting than the "Swinging Feast," might not be also discontinued—the walking and running through fires, before Temples, or in public places. It will be found, on enquiry in every district, and is frequently attended with dangerous consequences, and even loss of life.

3. In reporting on this subject, I think it right to bring to the notice of Government a practice often causing bloodshed, and always a risk of serious disturbance and collision. I allude to the Mahomedan and Hindoo Festivals which occur, often simultaneously, at this season of the year. The two processions occasionally meet in the streets, and a public disturbance and often bloodshed, ensues. It would be very advisable, and easy, to restrict the two parties; (to any ceremonies or

exhibitions they liked), *within their own limits* and houses, but forbidding to parade the *public thoroughfares*—a single order of Government* would stop it in every district. I would engage to carry it out in my own, but of course the order should be *general*—these hurtful and often dangerous exhibitions are chiefly got up by the *lower* orders—the more respectable and intelligent of each class, Mahomedan and Hindu, would gladly see them stopped. The prohibition would be easy, and the benefit great.

4. I am induced to bring the subject to the notice of Government, from the fact of an affray having nearly taken place lately, between these two parties, at Ootacamund; and the yearly recurrence of the disturbance and danger.

I have, &c. &c.

E. B. THOMAS,

8th November, 1853.

Magistrate.

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF RAJAHMUNDRY.

SIR,

With reference to the Extract from the Minutes of Consultation, under date the 12th September last, I have the honor to report that the Swinging Festival (called Soodaloo) is generally observed within my jurisdiction, that no measures have ever been adopted by the Police for preventing or discouraging the celebration of this Festival and that the observance of it is not less frequent or less attractive than formerly.

I have, &c. &c.

T. PRENDERGAST,

9th November, 1853.

Magistrate.

FROM THE AGENT TO THE GOVERNOR AT KURNOOL.

SIR,

With reference to the Extract from Minutes of Consultation, under date the 12th September 1853, I have the honor to state that the

* As now in England.

Swinging Festival called Soodaloo in Telooogo is only celebrated in a few villages in this District. No measures are ever adopted by the Police for preventing or discouraging the celebration of the festival, and the observance of it appears to be less frequent, than under the late administration.

I have, &c. &c.

T. CONWAY,

16th November, 1853.

Agent to the Governor.

FROM THE ACTING MAGISTRATE OF GUNTOOR.

SIR,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of an Extract from the Minutes of Consultation, under date the 12th September last, calling for information on the subject of the Swinging Festival.

2. In reply I beg to state that the Festival in question is still observed in about forty villages in this District. The officers of Police have not hitherto considered themselves authorized to do more on such occasions than preserve the peace. In several places at which the Festival used to be celebrated it is not now observed and, except in the vicinity of the larger towns, the spectacle seems to have little attraction beyond the immediate neighbourhood of the village in which it is exhibited. I do not think much difficulty would be experienced in putting a stop to the practice altogether, should Government be pleased to authorize the adoption of measures to that end.

I have, &c. &c.

A. PURVIS,

29th November, 1853.

Acting Magistrate.

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF MALABAR.

SIR,

In reference to Extract from Minutes of Consultation, under date the 12th September last, I beg to intimate that the Swinging Festival is unknown in Malabar.

I have, &c. &c.

H. V. CONOLLY,

12th December, 1853.

Magistrate.

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF NELLORE.

SIR,

1. Gaulupooseedy, i.e. A man hung to the end of a cross-beam fixed on a post by the skin, &c. of his back with Iron hooks.

2. Gumpaseedy, i.e. A man sitting in a basket or on a plank hung to the end of the cross-beam of ditto.

3. Pacaseedy, i.e. Iron Hooks fixed in the sides of a man who has to walk round a Pagoda.

4. Tallaseedy, i.e. A man hung to a Post by a rope tied to his waist.

1. With reference to an Extract from the Minutes of Consultation, under date the 12th September last, I have the honor to state that the Swinging Festivals of the descriptions noted in the margin, are at present observed in 119 Villages of this District, once a year in some, in others at intervals of from 2 to 30 years. No measures have ever been adopted by the Police for preventing or discouraging the celebration of this Festival. The observance of it is however somewhat less frequent and less attractive than formerly, in proof of which it has been postponed in 22 Villages for periods varying from 10 to 80 years, owing to disinclination and inability on the part of the Villagers to celebrate the Festival; and to a man having died by the falling of the Post during its celebration in the Village of Raupoor about 30 years ago.

2. The time required to procure correct returns from the different Talooks and Villages is the cause of the delay that has occurred in answering this reference.

I have, &c. &c.

F. B. ELTON,

14th December, 1853.

Magistrate.

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF SOUTH ARCOT.

SIR,

In acknowledging Extract from Minutes of Consultation, dated 12th September last, I have the honor to state that the Swinging Festival is observed only in a few places in this Collectorate, and appears to have neither declined nor increased in attraction. It has hitherto been celebrated without any interference on the part of the Police, because it has not led to complaints nor does it seem attended with danger of life or real injury to the parties who allow themselves to be swung and who are voluntary agents, generally acting under a religious vow. In consequence also of the importance attached to the feast by the lower orders, who form the largest portion of the population, it has seemed advisable

for the authorities to limit themselves to a moral discouragement and trust to the effects of time and the spread of knowledge instead of taking any active measures for its suppression.

I have, &c. &c.

E. MALTBY,

17th December, 1853.

Magistrate.

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF MASULIPATAM.

SIR,

Para 1. I have the honor in obedience to the instructions contained in Minutes of Consultation, under date 12th September 1853, No. 861, to convey the information required in regard to the Swinging Festival called in this district "Silloo" &c.

2. Reports have been obtained from the 15 Heads of District Police, from which it appears that the practice of swinging on the occasion of festivals prevails in several villages in each Talook throughout the district, with the exception of the four noted in the margin. No measures appear to have been adopted by the Magistracy or Police for preventing or discouraging it.

Gollapully.
Goodewadala.
Sullapully.
Deevy.

3. The reports state that the number of persons swinging has generally decreased, though apparently more from the want of funds to encourage and recompense performers, than from the exhibition being less attractive than formerly; and indeed in a few villages the practice has been newly introduced within the last 4 or 5 years. Goodoor, a large village 4 miles from Masulipatam, is an instance. In this there had been no swinging for several years, but the good old custom was reintroduced a few years since by an old Pensioned Hindu Subadar. It appeared that his father's sister performed Sutte 70 or 80 years since; that a temple was erected to her memory on the spot of her immolation, and that in commemoration of the event a Swinging Festival was annually held. This had ceased utterly for many years until the return of the old Subadar, when out of respect to the memory of his relative, he restored the temple and re-established the Swinging Festival at his own expence. This is the only village in the Masulipatam Talook at which swinging by hooks passed through the back is practised, and it is very probable that were his payments withdrawn, there would be no exhibi-

tois. In many other places the festival appears to have been fixed in commemoration of some death by Suttee.

4. Swinging is not practised exclusively at any particular festival. It takes place generally at those held about the full moons, from December to May, and forms part of the attractions and shows of the processions on such occasions. In these cases the Vetties or Pariahs of the village are the performers, and receive from 1 to 2—3 or 4 Rupees from a general fund subscribed by the villagers or granted for the purpose by some public spirited individual. In one report it is mentioned that on the party who had been accustomed to pay the swingers having left, the villagers afraid lest a discontinuance of the practice should be productive of calamity have taken to swinging sheep and pumkins, which latter appears a much more reasonable exhibition of devotion.

5. In case of famine, cholera or other calamity, a swinging exhibition takes place for the purpose of propitiating the deity, and at the same time a slaughter of animals consisting of goats, sheep, pigs, fowls, or if there be any parties sufficiently wealthy, of male buffaloes, takes place. It is also practised in expiation of vows; but if the parties are of the higher castes and can afford it, they usually swing by low caste proxies, to whom they pay a sum of from 1 to 4 Rupees. No mention is made in any of the reports of fatal accidents ever having occurred. If any of the poles or ropes gave way, the consequences might be serious both to the swinger and to some of the crowd below, but if the tackle hold good, the performance does not appear from the general account of the parties who submit to the operation, to be as severe as might be supposed.

6. The number of villages in which swinging is reported to take place in this district is only 48 out of upwards of 1500 of which the district consists. In the instance of one village alone, that of Weyoor is there any authentic record of the number of swingers. This is the principal village in the most productive portion of the Weyoor or Noozed Zemindary; and as a tax has been annually levied from most of the performers at these festivals, accounts exist for 38 of the 47 years which have elapsed since fusly 1216. The subjoined statement exhibits the number of performers, the tax, the highest and lowest year of each of 3 series of 10 years and during the last 8, also the average of each series and the gradual decrease. Half of the tax of those who pay, goes to

the Zemindar, the other half to the village servants. It is supposed that in no other village are there so many performers as in Weyoor.

		Number of Swingers.	Number not taxed.	Number taxed.	Amount of fees taken for each swinging at 2 Rupees each.
1st ten years.	Highest.....	313	19	294	588
	Lowest.....	52	10	42	84
	Average.....	149	14	135	270
2d ten years.	Highest.....	109	21	88	176
	Lowest.....	10	2	8	16
	Average.....	64	17	47	94
3d ten years.	Highest.....	71	9	62	124
	Lowest.....	22	8	14	28
	Average.....	46	7	39	78
Last 8 years.	Highest.....	58	7	51	102
	Lowest.....	22	2	20	40
	Average.....	37	4	33	66

7. On the present occasion it may be desirable that each Magistrate should express his opinion of the probable effect of these Swinging Festivals, if he has witnessed them. On one occasion in Canara I was present at a very extensive and attractive celebration, when the swinging was combined with a large slaughter of animals. The pole was erected in the close vicinity of a high heap of reeking heads which was constantly receiving additions. Visitors had come from all the villages in the neighbourhood. All the men, women and children were in holiday dresses;—hundreds of the latter of all ages were brought close to the heap of heads, and many who were somewhat frightened at first, became accustomed to it, and at last shewed intense excitement and enjoyment in witnessing the struggles of the dying animals or in hearing their shrieks. I can scarcely conceive any exhibition more calculated to brutalize the young mind, and I feel convinced that had there been no swinging to add to the attractions, in connection with which it appears that some animals are always publicly slaughtered, the sacrifice of animals in this disgusting and revolting manner would have been much less in extent.

I have, &c. &c.

T. D. LUSHINGTON,

20th December, 1853.

Magistrate.

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF MADURA.

SIR,

1. With reference to the Minutes of Consultation, dated 12th September last, No. 861, I have the honor to subjoin a Talookwar Statement shewing the number of villages in which the Swinging Festival takes place:

Talooks.	No. of Villages.	Talooks.	No. of Villages.	Talooks.	No. of Villages.
Madacolum.....	1	Tandicomboo....	0	Ramnad Zemindary.....	0
Tiroomungalum..	1	Iyempooly.....	1	Shevagunga Zemindary.....	1
Meyloor.....	1	Ramagherry.....	2		
Tenkurray.....	8	Nellacottah.....	1		

2. In two villages of the Ramagherry Talook there are Maniems for the purpose as shewn below.

Villages.	Extent of Maniem.				
	Land.		Assessment.		
	Caws.	A.	R.	A.	P.
Ammachuttrum,	0	7	3	4	0
Carbamalay,	0	3½	0	14	0

3. Although the Police have never attempted to stop these observances yet they are much on the decrease. The persons who swing are Poojarces of Kali Covils.

4. Besides the Cheddle, there is a practice called the Slagay which consists in fixing an iron trident into the side. This torture is endured by persons of low caste under vows made in sickness or misfortune. It also is on the decrease.

I have, &c. &c.

R. D. PARKER,

Magistrate.

22d December, 1853.

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF BELLARY.

SIR,

I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of Extract Minutes of Consultation, dated 12th September last, No. 161, in which the Magistrates are required to report whether the Swinging Festival called Cheddle and Soodaloo is still generally observed within their jurisdiction, whether measures are ever adopted by the Police for preventing or discouraging the celebration of this Festival and whether the observance of it is less frequent and less attractive than formerly.

In reply I have the honor to report that the Festival is observed in some Villages in this District, the celebration of it has never attracted much attention, and from the reports received it appears to be even less attractive than in former days; measures have not been adopted by the Police to prevent it. It might however without much difficulty be suppressed by authority.

I have, &c. &c.

C. PELLY,

Magistrate.

23d December, 1853.

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF CANARA.

SIR,

With reference to Extract from Minutes of Consultation, dated 12th September 1853, I have the honor to state that I circulated the question as to the prevalence of the Swinging Festival to the Division Officers of this District, and that from the information collected it would appear that the Festival is still frequently observed. No measures are ever adopted by the Police for preventing or discouraging the celebration of this Festival, but the report of Mr. Hall from the Balaghaut and of Mr. Silver with reference to the Cundapoor Talook speak of it as being less common and attractive than of old. Mr. Chamier's report states that it is no where observed in his division, including Mangalore, Bekul, and Pootoor. Mr. Hudleston states that in the Oodapee Talook it is no where observed, while in Barcoor it is observed in seven places.

2. Mr. Hall and Mr. Chamier both express their opinion that it could easily be suppressed by the Government. Mr. Chamier observes "It forms no part of the religious worship of the Hindoos, and is merely

the fulfilment of a vow made in time of extreme sickness. The practice of it moreover is confined to the most ignorant classes of the Native community." Mr. Hudleston also observes, "From enquiries that I have made at different times on the subject it appears that performance of the Poojah is not supposed to affect in any way the community or any of the individuals present at the feast other than the immediate performers."

3. I believe that an order for its suppression would be willingly acquiesced in by the people generally and enforced without difficulty.

I have, &c. &c.

F. N. MALTBY,

28th December, 1853.

Magistrate.

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF CHINGLEPUT.

SIR,

Para 1. Agreeably to the instructions conveyed in Extract from the Minutes of Consultation, under date 12th September last, I have the honor to report for the information of Government that the Swinging Festival referred to is not generally observed within this Magistracy, its celebration being performed in about 33 villages.

2. Although measures have not hitherto been adopted by the Police for preventing or discouraging this Festival openly observed and connected as it is with the religious feelings of the people, the practice seems of so barbarous and revolting a nature that I am of opinion the interference of Government in view to its suppression is desirable and justifiable, notwithstanding the dissatisfaction the measure may occasion in some localities where its observance is the more attractive.

I have, &c. &c.

J. H. COCHRANE,

30th December, 1853.

Magistrate.

Public Department.

No. 780.

EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF CONSULTATION,

Dated 1st August 1854.

Read the following letter.

No. 95.

FROM H. FORBES, Esq.

Magistrate of Tanjore.

SIR,

In the Minutes of Consultation, dated the 18th of February last, the Government expressed a hope that by the adoption of proper measures, the Magistrates would be able to induce the people to discontinue the Swinging Festival.

2. I have now the honor to inform the Government that the practice has been entirely abandoned throughout Tanjore, with the concurrence of every person heretofore connected with it.

3. Every individual manager of the 78 Pagodas where the practice hitherto prevailed, has appeared before me, and voluntarily given a written engagement to discontinue it, so that the cruel and revolting practice may, in this province, be considered as for ever at an end.

I have, &c.

(Signed) H. FORBES,

Magistrate.

Tanjore, Kodimurray. }
24th July 1854. }

RESOLUTION.

1. Ordered that the letter from the Magistrate of Tanjore reporting the judicious and successful measures he has adopted for the entire abandonment of the ceremony of the Swinging Festival throughout Tanjore, be printed and circulated to all Magistrates throughout this Presidency for their information and guidance.

(True extract and Copy.)

H. C. MONTGOMERY,

Chief Secretary.

Public Department.

No. 1271.

EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF CONSULTATION.

Dated 30th November, 1854.

Read the following letters:—

From the Chief Magistrate and Superintendent of Police.

From the Magistrates of Ganjam, North Arcot, Salem, Cuddapah, Trichinopoly, Vizagapatam, Tanjore, Tinnevely, Coimbatore, Rajahmundry, Guntoor, Malabar, Nellore, South Arcot, Masulipatam, Madura, Bellary, Canara and Chingleput, and the Agent to the Governor at Kurnool.

Para 1. The Right Honorable the Governor in Council perceives from the above Reports that the ceremony of walking through fire like the Swinging Festival is only of partial occurrence, and can scarcely be called a religious observance, being performed for the most part in fulfilment of vows voluntarily made.

2. The practice does not appear to be acceptable to the higher classes, and, on the whole, it is apparently falling into disuse, a result which must be accelerated by the increasing intelligence of the people.

3. The Right Honorable the Governor in Council does not consider that, under these circumstances, it is necessary for the Government to adopt any direct measures for the suppression of the practice but trusts that its discouragement in the manner suggested with regard to the Swinging Festival will suffice for its entire extinction.

4. He observes that in the Collectorate of Bellary many of the persons hitherto engaged in this ceremony have agreed to discontinue it.

5. Ordered that the Reports received be printed and circulated for general information.

(True Extract)

H. C. MONTGOMERY,

Chief Secretary.

FROM THE CHIEF MAGISTRATE AND
SUPERINTENDENT OF POLICE.

SIR,

With reference to the Extract from the Minutes of Consultation, I have the honor to report for the information of the Right Honorable the Governor in Council, that the Narcooppoo Teroonaul, or Fire Feast, is still performed in 16 Pagodas, within the Jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, generally in the month of Audee, or July. It is less frequent now than formerly. It is observed, with one or two exceptions, at a particular class of Pagoda named after Dharmarajah. Out of these 16 places,—seven are in the villages north of Black Town,—five in the villages west of Black Town, and four in the Town itself.

Since the receipt of the letter from the Government, I have had opportunity to converse with the assembled Wardens of the said Pagodas, and they admit that the ceremony is in no way connected with their religious faith, but they plead the usage of their ancestors for the continuation of the performance of this silly, but certainly not dangerous practice,—for I am not aware that there is a single accident arising from it on record. The observance is confined to the lowest order of the people, and the same individuals exhibit annually like any other class of Jugglers; though there are some few who go through the supposed ordeal in fulfilment of vows.

This ceremony has been discouraged by the Police, in as much that the people are no longer allowed to perform it in streets or thoroughfares, but only within the enclosures of the Pagodas. From my last interview with the Wardens, I expect that several of them will cease to celebrate the feast altogether, perhaps, by substituting some other observance.

I have, &c. &c.

E. F. ELLIOT,

Chief Magistrate and
Superintendent of Police.

Madras, 16th June, 1854.

FROM THE ACTING MAGISTRATE OF GANJAM.

SIR,

I have the honor to submit the following report called for in para 2 Extract Minutes of Consultation, No. 187, dated the 24th February

* Public Department, dated 25th February 1854, No. 187.

last, respecting the ceremony of walking and running through fires in this District. The Poobaconda head of Police reports that some of the lower caste observe this practice in honor of the village goddess at several villages, the days on which this rite should come off, are the 8th March and 15th October, but at times no regard is paid to these particular days.

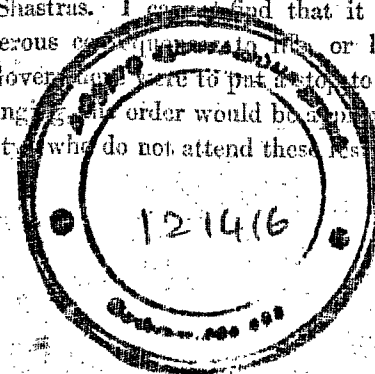
2. In Ganjam the practise obtained in four villages. It was celebrated at Komeri in March, but the leader has grown old and the villagers will not supply funds, and it has been in abeyance for some ten years. In Kundrapolem near Munsoorcottah it has existed for 100 years, but was not observed last year for want of funds. In Ganjam there are two pagodas to each of which 2 Rupees per mensem are paid, at these the ceremony used to be performed, but has fallen into disuse. It was introduced into Madoopoorum about three years ago but has been given up.

3. In Mohery it is observed in several villages in March, in most of them biennially, the Mahomedans, also during the Mohurram, are in the habit of walking through the fire.

4. In Parlai Kennedy it exists in the village of Narainpoorn, where it has been celebrated for ages, the custom has also been observed in some other villages, but in these, it has taken the form of a vow and is performed once and no more.

5. It has been customary in Chicacole to perform this ceremony immediately after the swinging festival, the same parties performing in both. The Mahomedans also during the Mohurram are in the habit of passing through the fire.

6. In the Talook of Wadada Sommeepettah and Sooradah the practise formerly obtained, but has fallen into disuse. It is not practised in the remaining Talooks. This ceremony is confined solely to the lower classes of the people, is performed in honor of the tutelary goddess of the village, or to avert some expected evil from the village, or from the performer. It is reported by all to be much on the decline, and is nowhere ordered by the Shastras. I cannot find that it has ever been attended with any dangerous consequences to life or limb; but feel pretty confident that if Government were to put a stop to it, and to the disgusting practise of swinging, the order would be approved of by the great mass of native society who do not attend these festivals; but per-



haps the better way would be not to run the risk of exciting any ill-feeling, even among the lower classes, and merely to issue an order forbidding its introduction into any village, where it does not now exist. As the best check under existing circumstances, I have issued orders that before either swinging, or passing through the fire, the actors shall appear before the nearest Police officer, and satisfy him, that they are voluntary agents in the business, and further have warned those taking part in these festivals, that in the event of death ensuing, they will be liable to punishment for homicide.

I have, &c. &c.

W. KNOX,

Acting Magistrate.

17th June, 1854.

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF NORTH ARCOT.

SIR,

I have the honor to acknowledge an Extract from the Minutes of Consultation of Government dated 24th February 1854, calling for information on certain points connected with the practice of walking through fire on certain occasions. I have made enquiries on the points indicated, in the various divisions of this District, and I beg to report the result.

2. There are four Talooks in which the practice is unknown; viz. Santgadah, Vencataherricotah, Chendragherry and Tripitty. In all the other Talooks, as well as in the Zemindaries of Calastry, Cavetnuggur and Congoendy, and the Jaghere of Arnee, it obtains to a greater or less degree. On the whole there are about a hundred villages throughout the District in which the ceremony is known and may be said to be practised. But in several it is stated to have been intermitted for thirty years, and in general it is observed not every year or at any set times, but only occasionally, when the people of the village or neighbourhood subscribe to raise the necessary funds, being from 100 to 200 Rupees, or when an individual incurs the charge in fulfilment of a vow.

3. The absence of definite information as to the times of observance either now or at any former time, prevents my replying with precision to the question whether this festival is celebrated more or less frequently now than formerly; but the impression conveyed by the whole tone of the reports received, is that it is certainly less frequent.

Indeed in very many cases this is plainly stated, and the reason assigned is, that the people are now too poor to meet the expense. But though apparently the practice has certainly declined in frequency, an unwillingness is generally expressed by the people questioned by the several Talook officers, to abandon it entirely. I should add however that these parties are mostly the monigars of the villages where the ceremony has taken place, who may well be supposed adverse to the cessation of an observance which gives importance to their villages, as well as profit to it and themselves. These people can hardly be taken to express the sentiments of the public generally.

4. This observance is not connected with the Hindoo Religion by being prescribed in any religious books; but it must be regarded as a religious observance, inasmuch as it is always associated with the worship of the deity styled Durmaroysawmy by the Tamil people and Veerbudra Sawmy by the Teloozoo. The festival is celebrated as usual for a variable number of days from ten to as many as eighteen, with dancing, singing, procession of the idol, &c.; and on the last day the fire-walking, if there be any, takes place. A shallow pit of half a foot deep and several yards broad and long, is filled with firewood fully ignited, and those who are engaged in the ceremony walk across it. The only classes who take any part in these proceedings are some of the Soodra castes, and for the most those of the least consideration and of the least range of intelligence. The Bramins have no concern with them; nor have many of the most respectable Soodra castes.

5. With respect to accidents, it is declared by all that personal injury has never been known to be sustained by any persons in this fire-walking. I am not sure if this declaration is intended to include even the least injury; but it seems fair to infer from it that the ordeal is not so fearful in reality as the description would imply.

6. I cannot learn that the Magistracy have ever interfered to check or discourage the practice of fire-walking, nor do I think that such interference is called for; certainly not in the way of prohibition. Though seeming very dreadful at first sight, the thing loses this appearance on closer examination. It appears to involve little or no personal pain, and no danger of more serious injury; and it seems to me proper to be classed less among brutal and inhuman practices than among idle and foolish. It appears to be certainly on the decline; in this District at least, and it can hardly fail to continue so as knowledge and enlight-

enment advance: especially, eschewed and discouraged as it is already, by the most intelligent and influential classes of the community.

I have, &c. &c.

J. D. BOURDILLON,

Magistrate.

14th April, 1854.

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF SALEM.

SIR,

Referring to the Extract from the Minutes of Consultation dated the 14th February last, calling for information on certain points relative to the ceremony of walking and running through fires; I have the honor to state that a custom of this kind obtains to a limited extent in this District. The Hindoos observe it on the last day of some of their Festivals, and it is not unusual during the Mohurram for Mahomedans, in fulfilment of a vow, to leap in and out of the pits in which they kindle bonfires opposite their Ashoor-khanas,* while the embers are still burning.

2. It would seem that the Hindoos do not follow this custom at the present day so frequently as they used to do formerly. It may be observed once in three or four years in a village, and then only by such persons as make a vow to that effect, either for the recovery of their health, or for the attainment of a particular desire.

3. On such occasions, the fire is made in a hole averaging from 4 to 5 yards in diameter, and one to two feet in depth. The people do not pass through the flame, but they wait till the wood has burnt down, and in preparing the fire they use whatever wood will form the longest burning tinders. The practise is traced to some legend connected with Dropadee, the wife of the "Puncha Pandavas," or the five brothers, whose story is related in the Mahabarut. The ceremony is practised by the Kshatriyas only and not by the Brahmins.

Accidents have as yet occurred from its observance, and no orders, either to prohibit or discourage it, have been issued at any time by the local authorities.

I have, &c. &c.

H. A. BRETT,

Magistrate.

31st May, 1854.

* Ten-day-houses.

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF CUDDAPAH.

SIR,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of the Extract from the Minutes of Consultation under date the 24th ultimo, wherein the Government wish for further information with regard to the ceremony of walking and running through fire, as referred to in the letter from the Collector of Coimbatore under date the 8th November, 1853.

This ceremony is not in practice throughout this District, but on rare occasions when devotees of the Lingabulja caste have taken upon themselves a vow to the deity, "Veerabhadraswamy" this ceremony is performed. From the information I have received it has, only upon very rare occasions, been practiced in the town of Royachoty. Throughout the district in general the ceremony is unknown.

I have, &c. &c.

M. MURRAY,

Magistrate.

30th March, 1854.

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF TRICHINOPOLY.

SIR,

Para 1. I do myself the honor to acknowledge receipt of Extract from the Minutes of Consultation No. 187, Public Department, under date the 24th February, requiring information concerning the ceremony of walking and running through fires performed by the Hindoos at certain Festivals. I proceed to answer the questions seriatim.

2. From the information I have received from the Police Officers of the different talooks it would appear, that with the exception of the Conund talook where it is stated to obtain more than formerly, the practice is gradually on the decline. In the talook of Vittocutty it does not obtain at all. Like the Cheddle festival this ceremony is chiefly celebrated by the lower castes.

3. It is prescribed by the religious books of the lower orders.

4. It would appear that no accident has ever occurred in this district from the performance of the ceremony.

5. Whether accidents are of frequent occurrence.

12/4/6

4. Whether the Magistracy have ever interfered with or discouraged the observance.
5. The Magistracy have never interfered, but in populous places where crowds are likely to assemble the police are ordered to attend to prevent disturbance.

I have, &c. &c.

J. BIRD,

Magistrate.

1st April, 1854.

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF VIZAGAPATAM.

SIR,

1. I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of Extract from the Minutes of Consultation under date the 24th February last, and to report that up to last year the practice of walking and running through fires was not uncommon in different parts of the Vizagapatam District during the festival at which the swinging ceremony was observed, but I am happy to be able to report that the measures which I adopted before the receipt of the final orders of Government proved effectual in preventing the occurrence of either of these dangerous ceremonies this year in any place under my authority.

2. I was assured on enquiry that the suppression of both practices would be agreeable to all respectable classes of natives throughout the District, and that they owed their observance only to vows uttered by the most ignorant or the impositions of the designing.

I have, &c. &c.

A. ROBERTSON,

Magistrate.

11th April, 1854.

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF TANJORE.

SIR,

I have the honor to afford the information required in an extract from the Minutes of Consultation dated the 24th February last.

The practice of passing through fire exists in Tanjore, but not to so great an extent as formerly—it is followed now in 415 places. A space of about five feet diameter is covered with small sticks of the tamarind tree which are lighted, and when the flame is exhausted and the smouldering charcoal alone remains, those who desire to perform the

ceremony run hastily over the fire, and stand in a trench of water previously prepared opposite the idol which is to be worshipped.

It does not appear that accidents at all frequently occur, and almost universally the people walk home without any difficulty—there is however on record one instance of a man having fallen in the middle of the fire, and been very seriously injured.

The practice is followed solely by the lowest castes, and is only so far a religious ceremony that persons suffering from sickness either in themselves or their relations, make a vow to pass through the fire if recovery should ensue. No efforts have been made by the police to put an end to the practice, but I am not of opinion that any difficulty would be experienced in now abolishing it.

I have, &c. &c.

H. FORBES,

Magistrate.

2d June, 1854.

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF TINNEVELLY.

SIR,

With reference to Extract from the Minutes of Consultation under date the 24th February last, I have the honor to state for the information of Government that the ceremony of walking and running through fires is observed in some of the villages in the talooks noted in the margin. The observance of the same is neither less nor more frequent than formerly. Though the ceremony is in no way connected with the religious faith of the natives, yet it is observed by certain persons in performance of their vows and has hitherto met with no discouragement from the authorities of the district.

Nellambalam,
Vellooaramun,
Sreevengadam,
Oattapadarum,
Tencuvey,
Brennadasum,
Sreevillypootoor,
and Shenkernarcovil.

During the celebration of the Mohurum feast in 1850, one Perea-malookun, a Mussulman by caste, fell accidentally into a fire pit prepared for the purpose abovementioned in the village of Malapallim in Nellambalam talook, and died three days afterwards. It was reported that the accident occurred from the individual abovenamed being under the influence of liquor at the time when he fell into the pit. The true

cause of his falling into the fire pit was not ascertained, but since the occurrence of the above accident the practice of lighting fires in pits during the Mohuram festival has been discontinued in that village.

I have, &c. &c.

C. J. BIRD,

Magistrate.

3d May, 1854.

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF COIMBATORE.

SIR,

In reply to Extract from the Minutes of Consultation dated 24th ultimo, I have the honor to state, for the information of Government, that the ceremony of walking and running through fires, therein alluded to, is frequent in this District. It has lately been discouraged; several accidents, nearly causing death, having happened. It is not really an object of religious faith, but only practised by the lower orders; and might, with the swinging and other like unnatural, unreasonable and dangerous practices, be easily abolished—indeed after the abolition of "Suttee," it is to be regretted that these minor evils and abuses, have so long been allowed to continue; the respectable portion of the native community would hail their abolition.

I have, &c. &c.

E. B. THOMAS,

Magistrate.

6th March, 1854.

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF RAJAHMUNDRY.

SIR,

With reference to the Extract from the Minutes of Consultation under date the 24th February last No. 187, I have the honor to inform you, that I have ascertained that the ceremony of walking and running through fires is not regularly or generally observed in this district. It is never performed as an exhibition but by persons who have made vows in time of sickness or other distress. No accidents have been known to result from it, and it does not appear that the Magistracy have ever discouraged or interfered with it. It is not less frequent now than formerly, the tradition being kept up by an occasional celebration and the pro-

jecting causes being such as to preclude the possibility of its ever being discontinued unless the authority of Government be interposed.

2. The ceremony is frequently attended with self inflicted stab-bings and woundings and the invocation to the deity is accompanied by threats of the same nature with those which are used when in the impotence of uncontrollable passion. One stab himself in order to involve his adversary in blood guiltiness. The mere fire treading is looked upon as the act of a desperado but when it is attended by wounding and effusion of blood the exhibition is eminently disgusting and alarming.

3. There is one class, viz., the "Lingadharloo," by whom the fire treading is regarded as an efficacious observance for recovering their sanctity if by any chance they lose their lingam, but even amongst them it is not considered as an essential ceremony.

4. I believe that if the Government declare it to be illegal the measure will be highly acceptable to the great body of the people.

5. A direct prohibition would in my opinion be preferable to a mere discouragement of the practice.

I have, &c. &c.

T. PRENDERGAST,

Magistrate.

9th June, 1854.

FROM THE ACTING MAGISTRATE OF GUNTOOR.

SIR,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of an Extract from the Minutes of Consultation under date the 24th February last, and in reply to state, that the ceremony alluded to by the Magistrate of Coimbatore, viz., the walking and running through fires, is observed in but one village in this district, and even there is not of very frequent occurrence or much thought of. The performance is gone through in pursuance of vows which, of one sort or other, are so commonly made by the Hindoos on any occasion of sickness among themselves or their families. No accident appears as yet to have taken place on these occasions, but the practice is one not unattended with danger, and I propose forbidding any such proceedings for the future.

I have, &c. &c.

A. PURVIS,

Acting Magistrate.

12th April, 1854.

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF MALABAR.

SIR,

I have only just received my last reply to the query circulated through all my district (in consequence of the Government orders of the 24th February last, No. 187) regarding the ceremony of walking and running through fires.

2. The ceremony though not practised throughout Malabar is by no means uncommon.

It varies in different talooks. In some the devotee merely jumps upon a flame produced by a handful or two of firewood—in other instances he walks or rolls on heated charcoal.

A general object is to avert disease whether public or private. In the former instance and sometimes in the latter the parties who are induced to come forward and expose themselves are of the lowest and most ignorant grade.

3. It is declared that no injury ever results to the devotees from the fire. He does not hear of injury it is true—the feelings of the people would induce them to conceal rather than publish it. But it stands to reason that it must occur to a greater or less degree at times and that there is always risk of its occurrence.

The best informed parties allow that the ceremony though of ancient date and looked on as efficacious by many, is not one to which the Hindoos are bound by the precepts of their religion.

4. I think it might be well put a stop to by authoritative injunctions as an inhuman and cruel practice.

I have, &c. &c.

H. V. CONOLLY,

12th June, 1854.

Magistrate.

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF NELLORE.

SIR,

1. I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of Extract from the Minutes of Consultation dated 24th February last, calling on me to report on the ceremony of walking and running through fires, and now beg to forward the information required.

2. The ceremony referred to is practised extensively in this district by the following classes, viz., Mussulmen, Fakeers, Brahmins, Comaties, &c. and Pulla and Arva Caupoos, &c., as described below.

1st. Mussulmen. During the Mohurram Feast the ceremony of running through fires is celebrated annually in 123 villages. This custom is not connected with their religious faith, but has been observed from past times as stated by the Nellore Town Cazeer. Persons also of other castes, with the exception of Brahmins, run through the fire during the Mohurram, in fulfilment of vows, or on escape from disasters. About seven years ago an accident occurred at Naidoopett when a man who went into the fire was burnt and died after two days. The local head of police so far interfered as to direct that some one should be answerable that no accident occurred last year, and the ceremony was not observed, and the Mussulmen of the place stated that they would not permit the ceremony in future; it has not otherwise been interfered with, or become less or more frequent than formerly.

2d. Mahomedan Fakeers. On the 7th or 16th day of the month Madur (Jamad-ul-aval) the Fakeers walk on and roll in fires at two places at Nellore. This custom does not appear to be enjoined by their religion but has been observed a long time in memory of their priest named Bundashaw Madar. No accident has occurred nor has its observance been interfered with, or become less or more frequent.

3d. Pulla and Arva Caupoos. These persons celebrate a feast at Nabobpettah a suburb of Nellore annually, and at two other places occasionally, when there are sufficient funds. On these occasions they run through fires which appears to be connected with their religion, being performed in worship of the deity named Durmarabzooloo, and they state that it is done according to a work called Augamashaster. Other caste persons also are said to run through these fires after the accomplishment of their wishes or vows. About six years ago two boys accidentally fell into the fire and died, upon which Mr. Smith, the Magistrate, ordered security to be taken every year from the principal persons interested, that they would be responsible that no accident should occur; but the ceremony has not otherwise been discouraged or interfered with by the Magistracy; it has however become less frequent than formerly.

4th. The ceremony of running through fire is also observed by

the classes noted in the margin* on the occasion of certain ceremonies,

* Bramins, Comattas, Gold Smiths, Junguns, and Soodra people of the Siva Sect.

as well as in connection with vows on account of delivery from sickness, and disaster, in 20 villages, but not every year. No accident has occurred in connection with this practice, nor has its observance been interfered with by the Magistracy. It is neither more nor less frequent than formerly.

3. In conclusion I beg to state, that the cause of delay in furnishing this report is owing to the information having to be collected from many different localities, and the delay on the part of some of the talook servants in furnishing the same.

I have, &c. &c.

F. B. ELTON,

10th June, 1854.

Magistrate.

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF SOUTH ARCOT.

SIR,

I have the honor to acknowledge Extract from Minutes of Consultation, dated 24th February last, and to state that the ceremony of walking and running through fires, prevails in this district among the Soodra classes at the festival of Dhurmah Rajah in whose name 489 Pagodas have been erected. It is also known though in a minor degree at two other festivals.

2. The last day of Dhurmah Rajah's annual feast derives its name from this ceremony which is popular among the poorer orders who regard it as a religious duty which is efficacious in averting evil and ensuring good. Almost all Soodra castes appear to practice it, but the individuals who actually walk through the fire are generally the poorer and least educated portion of the community. The ceremony ought rather to be described as walking over a wood-fire or ashes in a state of slumbering heat, than as walking through fire. The feet and legs are the only parts of the body liable to injury and as the fire pits are not broad, fatal accidents have been unknown and cases of serious injury have been extremely rare. At a single festival 50 or 100 persons sometimes follow each other over the fire.

3. The Magistracy has confined itself to preserving order at the festivals and preventing any compulsion being used to induce individuals

als to perform the ceremony. In some talooks the practice retains its popularity but in others is described to be on the decline, and as the wealthier and more educated part of the community do not join in it further than as occasional spectators, it may be expected gradually to disappear.

I have, &c. &c.

E. MALTBY,

17th May, 1854.

Magistrate.

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF MASULIPATAM.

SIR,

Para 1. With reference to the Extract from the Minutes of Consultation dated 24th February last, calling for a report as to how far the ceremony of walking or running through fires, prevails in this district; whether the custom is more or less frequent than formerly, in what way it is connected with the religious faith of the native population,—whether accidents are of frequent occurrence—and whether the Magistracy have, in any way, discouraged or interfered with the observance, I have the honor to report as follows.

2. By reports from the various Tahsildars, it appears, that, in only two* talooks out of the fifteen composing the district, the practice does not prevail. In the talooks of Tirwoor and Chullapully, a few Mussulmen only, appear to patronize it; whilst, in all the other talooks, the custom obtains more or less amongst both Musselmen and Hindoos. In four* talooks it is said to be less frequent than formerly—in the others, where it is practised, it remains stationary—in all it is said to be of great antiquity. No accident is reported to have been brought to the notice of the present heads of Police, nor to appear on their records—nor have the Magistracy, in any way discouraged or interfered with the observance.

3. The custom obtains principally amongst certain classes of the followers of Shiva, and is sometimes observed in the precincts of his temples—sometimes at the houses of the performers. The object is generally to avert the wrath of Veerabuddroodou, a son of Shiva, who is looked upon as a household god; and to whose anger, family misfor-

tunes are frequently attributed. Sometimes the ceremony is in expiation of general vows. Sometimes it immediately precedes or succeeds a marriage and the performer is then probably a connection of either of the families.

4. The ceremony is, with slight variations, observed as follows. A shallow pit, varying from 9 to 36 cubits in length, is prepared and strewn with charcoal which is ignited. The devotee or devotees, (for several individuals frequently go through the performance together), proceed to the temple or spot fixed upon, with all the pomp and parade they can muster—they are excited by noisy music and the recitation of stanzas, descriptive of the attributes and miracles of the deity—religious enthusiasm is raised to its highest pitch by the time the spot is reached—and the devotees run or hop over the coals as quickly as possible. It is said by some that the feet and legs are often anointed with a preparation which prevents the embers from affecting them—sometimes the performers themselves or some of their followers by way of making the ceremony more attractive and imposing, pierce their eye-lids, tongues, the fleshy parts of their arms, &c., with narrow nails of about a span in length, to one or both ends of which, cotton wicks are attached and ignited. Thus decorated, they proceed to the spot and go on with the ceremony as above.

5. Amongst the Mahomedans the ceremony is sometimes observed at the Moharum, before the Astanum or Hall, where the Peirs are installed and exhibited—the additional performance, described in the latter part of the preceding paragraph, do not find favour among them:—in other respects, they proceed in the same manner as the Hindoos.

I have, &c. &c.

T. D. LUSHINGTON,

15th June, 1854.

Magistrate.

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF MADURA.

SIR,

1. With reference to the Minutes of Consultation dated 24th February 1854, No. 187, I have the honor to subjoin a Talookwar statement shewing the number of villages in which people pass through fires once in every year.

Talooks.	Number of Villages.	Talooks.	Number of Villages.
Madacolum, - - - - -	14	Iyempully, - - - - -	16
Tiroonungalum, - - - - -	4	Ratngherry, - - - - -	12
Meylore, - - - - -	9	Nellacottah, - - - - -	12
Tenkurray, - - - - -	16	Ramnad Zemindary, - - - - -	70
Tandicombo, - - - - -	7	Shevagungah, do. - - - - -	32

2. The ceremony is observed before several Mosques and a few Hindoo temples, for the general purposes of which institutions Maniems have been granted but not specifically for walking and running through fires. This act is performed in fulfilment of vows made in sickness and distress and the practice is on the decrease though the Police have never interfered.

3. No accidents are known to have happened.

I have, &c. &c.

R. D. PARKER,

30th June, 1854.

Magistrate.

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF BELLARY.

SIR,

With reference to the Extract Minutes of Consultation No. 187, dated 24th February last, calling upon the different Magistrates to report how far the dangerous ceremony of walking and running through fires prevails in their respective districts, &c., to which my attention is again called in your letter of 28th ultimo, I have the honor to state that this ceremony has been observed in 33 villages of this district. There seems to be no wish on the part of the people to continue this ceremony, and many of those who have engaged in it have appeared before me and executed written engagements agreeing to discontinue it.

altogether, and I expect those who have not yet come in, to do the same, which caused me to defer my reply.

2. I may here observe that similar engagements have been voluntarily given to discontinue the Swinging Festivals by those engaged in them—of which I sent a report in my letter of 23d December last.

I have, &c. &c.

C. PELLY,

8th November, 1854.

Magistrate.

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF CANARA.

SIR,

With reference to Extract from the Minutes of Consultation, dated 24th February 1854, I have the honor to state that I find from the reports which I have received from the talooks that a ceremony of the kind alluded to in those proceedings prevails extensively throughout this district. It appears to be practiced more especially by the Musselman population at the time of Mohorum. Among the Hindoos, it appears to be performed in expiation of vows made to various Sheitans or Devils. Among the Musselmans of the upper class, it is repudiated as being a foolish custom contrary to the precepts of the Koran, and what are the exact feelings of the class who practice it, I find it difficult to ascertain. It is said to be rather on the decline. Accidents of any serious consequence have not been known to result from it. It has not hitherto in any way attracted the attention of the Magistracy. I conclude that if any serious injury were to result on any occasion the parties aiding and abetting would under the present law be liable to punishment. I do not find reason to believe that any force or fraud is used to induce parties to submit to it and I therefore think that at present the direct interference of the authorities is not called for.

I have, &c. &c.

F. N. MALTBY,

8th June, 1854.

Magistrate.

FROM THE MAGISTRATE OF CHINGLEPUT.

SIR,

In acknowledging the receipt of Extract from the Minutes of Consultation, under date 24th ultimo, I have the honor to state, that the

practice of walking and running through fire, prevails in this district to the same extent and generally at the same places at which the "Swinging Festival" is celebrated as reported in my letter of the 30th December 1853, the observations therein recorded in respect to the suppression of this latter ceremony, are equally applicable to the one under notice.

This practice being observed only by the lower orders of the people (Hindoos) cannot be strictly considered as connected with their religious faith. It may be sufficient to state without entering into particulars of the mythological story, whence the ceremony may be said to have derived its origin—that in so far as concerns the reasons which induce parties to observe its performance, it is in no way applicable thereto, but is more analogous to the practice, of Hindoos of the lower order who in like manner for the performance of a vow subject themselves to various painful operations such as passing wires through their cheeks and tongue, &c.

Notwithstanding the absence of any recorded instances of the performance of the ceremony under notice, being attended with any serious consequences, I cannot divest myself of the idea that accidents not unfrequently do occur, and are suppressed by the people.

I have, &c. &c.

J. H. COCHRANE,

14th March, 1854.

Magistrate.

FROM THE AGENT TO THE GOVERNOR AT KURNOOL.

SIR,

With reference to the Extract from the Minutes of Consultation, under date the 24th February last, I have the honor to state, that the ceremony of walking and running through fires is not practiced in this district, at any of the Hindoo Festivals, but solely at the Mohorum, when both the Mahomedans, and Hindoos of the lower classes, unite in its performance.

2. It only prevails in particular villages in some of the talooks of the district, and it is said to be less frequent since the country came under our management.

3. The ceremony is not only not connected with the religious faith of the Mahomedans but is opposed to it, and it is likewise unconnected with the religious faith of the Hindoos. Accidents have never

been known to occur, and no occasion has arisen for the interference of the Magistracy.

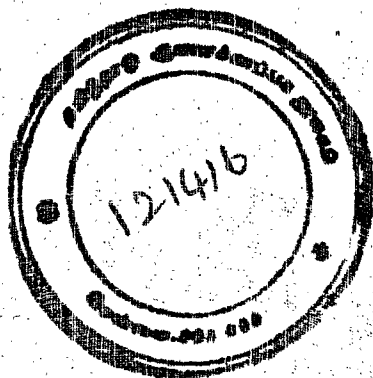
4. The ceremony does not appear to be a very hazardous one as performed by the people of this district. A pit is dug of no great breadth or depth, and a fire lighted within it. The persons who engage in the ceremony are those who have vowed to perform it, if successful in particular undertakings, or if they or any of their relatives should recover from any dangerous sickness. They form a circle round the pit, and commence walking slowly round it; as they get excited they move faster, and under the influence of the excitement, one or other of the party jump by turns into the pit, and out again on the other side with great alacrity, some taking the precaution to have their cloths well saturated before doing so.

I have, &c. &c.

T. CONWAY,

Agent to the Governor.

8th June, 1854.



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