

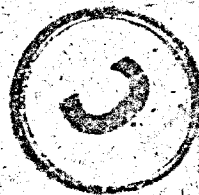
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Report on the canvery Project

1903

by

H. A. MOSS



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REPORT

ON THE

CAUVERY PROJECT.

1903.

BY

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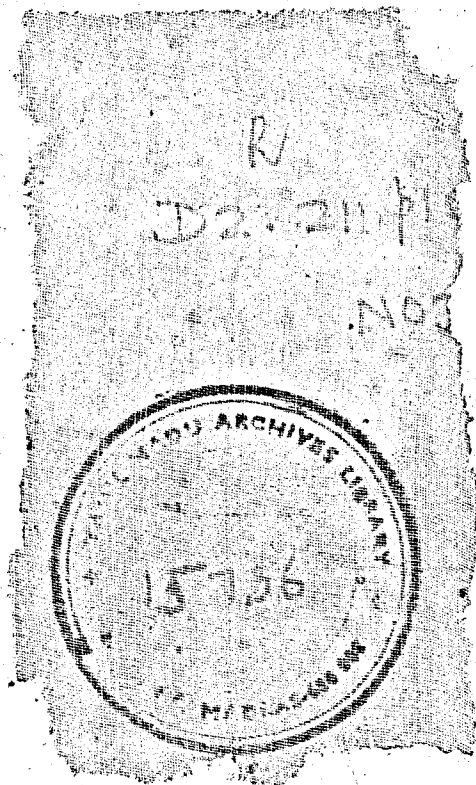
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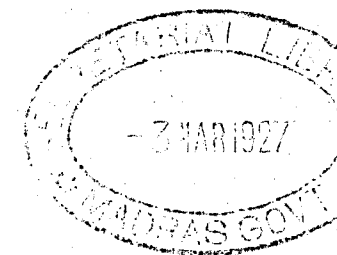
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CAUVERY PROJECT—REPORT.

GEOGRAPHY OF CAUVERY RIVER AND DELTA.

Geography of Cauvery and its delta.—The district of Tanjore is about 3,650 square miles in extent and lies between $9^{\circ}50'$ — $11^{\circ}25'$ north latitude and $78^{\circ}55'$ — $79^{\circ}55'$ east longitude. It is bounded on the north by the Trichinopoly and South Arcot districts, on the west by the Trichinopoly and Madura districts and on the east and south by the Bay of Bengal and Palk Strait. The area enclosed forms roughly a four-sided figure, the extreme breadth being 70 miles and the length 115 miles. The coast line is 150 miles long.

In physical character the district naturally divides itself into two parts: (1) the northern portion comprising the delta of the Cauvery and its branches, and (2) the southern or higher tract which lies outside the influence of the river.

The delta consists of a gently sloping alluvial plain extending from a point 10 miles west of Trichinopoly to the sea. The non-deltaic portion is also chiefly formed of alluvial soil, but it is situated generally on a higher level.

The river Cauvery rises near Mercara in Coorg and drains a considerable area of the Western Ghats where there is a very heavy rainfall in the south-west monsoon. This monsoon gives the greater part of the water to the river and occasions the highest floods.

Sources and amount of water-supply.—The portion of the catchment area fed by the south-west monsoon is 16,850 square miles and the maximum discharge from it is on an average about 157,000 cubic feet per second and may be expected usually in the months of July or August.

After leaving Mysore the Cauvery begins to come within the influence of the north-east monsoon, and before entering the delta receives a good supply from it towards the end of the year.

The portion of the catchment area subject to the north-east monsoon is 10,900 square miles and an average maximum discharge of 98,000 cubic feet per second may be expected from it in October.

The average total yearly discharge of the Cauvery at the head of the delta (upper anicut) is 450,000 millions of cubic feet, the drainage area here being 27,705 square miles. Of the total discharge 270,000 millions of cubic feet is supplied by the south-west monsoon and 180,000 millions by the north-east monsoon.

Description of the delta.—The head of the Cauvery delta is 10 miles west of Trichinopoly. Here the river bifurcates into two large branches, of which the northern takes the name of Coleroon while the southern retains that of Cauvery. For the sake of distinction the main river is sometimes known as the *Agunda* (wide) Cauvery.

The Coleroon is really the main channel of river and carries the bulk of the flood water to the sea. It flows in an easterly direction along the northern boundary of the Tanjore district and enters the sea at Devikotta.

The Cauvery or southern branch is utilized as the main channel for the supply of irrigation water to the fields of the delta. It divides and subdivides into innumerable branches which form a network of distributaries all over the delta. Some ultimately find their way into the sea while others are lost in the wide expanse of rice fields. The one which retains the name of Cauvery throughout enters the sea, reduced to an insignificant stream, at Cauveripatam about 8 miles north of Tranquebar.

The whole surface of the delta is a vast stretch of rice fields interspersed with topes or clumps of cocoanut and other fruit trees.

Ancient irrigation.—The alluvial soil of this part of the country is very fertile and, with sufficient water, yields abundant crops of rice. Irrigation from the Cauvery and its branches has been practised from very ancient times. There are many old native works existing and still in use for damming up water in the various river channels and turning it on to the neighbouring land. Many or most of the channels themselves too seem to be of artificial origin, and the character of the works remaining shows that, under some of the old native rulers, the irrigation system of the country must have received considerable attention.

Defects and deterioration of old irrigation.—From want of proper control over the water distribution and floods, however, the system in use must have been defective from the first. Then, for more than a century before the advent of British rule, the irrigation works had been entirely neglected owing to the disturbed state of the country, and when the East India Company took over the Tanjore district in 1801, the system of irrigation in the delta was rapidly deteriorating, the channels were silting up and the land being left uncultivated for want of water-supply.

First improvements.—Great efforts were made by the first district officers to remedy this condition of affairs. For many years these were mainly directed towards trying to remove the sand deposits in the Cauvery which formed the principal obstruction to the water-supply by providing a number of sluices and outlets at suitable places into the Coleroon which, for about 20 miles, flows parallel to, and at a short distance from the Cauvery. But it was not until 1836 when the upper anicut was built across the head of the Coleroon by Sir Arthur Cotton that this difficulty of water-supply was finally overcome. The supply, indeed, became during floods more than ample and threatened, through its very overabundance, to become a source of danger, causing serious erosions to the bed and banks of the Cauvery, till it was curtailed by a regulating dam built across the head of the Cauvery in 1845.

When the upper anicut was built another large dam (called the *lower anicut*) was also built across the Coleroon, 70 miles lower down, to remedy the loss to the irrigation channels of South Arcot (which take off here) occasioned by the diminished supply in the Coleroon owing to the construction of the upper anicut.

Since the upper anicut was built many other works have been carried out with the object of improving the irrigation of the delta. These consist chiefly of large regulators across the heads of the main channels and have been of great service in controlling floods and apportioning the water-supply. The minor distribution, however, has been left in the hands of the people and is still very defective.

Latest improvements.—The question of main distribution and flood control has of late received great attention. Several new regulators of a more modern and powerful type have been built and others are in the course of erection. The upper anicut has been cut down and rebuilt as an open dam with 55 vents, 40 feet wide, fitted with lifting gates which allow a much freer passage for flood water while enabling an extra 2 feet of depth to be turned into the Cauvery when the river is low. The lower anicut has also been converted into an open dam with 60 iron gates, each measuring 34 feet $\times$ 6 feet and it too is now capable of heading up 2 feet more of water when necessary. When all these works are completed the control over the water of the river and its branches will be very effective.

The drainage of the delta which at present is far from satisfactory is also receiving consideration.

Increased prosperity and increased assessment.—Owing to the steady and continuous improvement of the irrigation of the Cauvery delta in past years the land has risen in value and the returns from cultivation have greatly increased and at the last revenue settlement of the Tanjore district in 1893-94, it was found possible to raise the assessment on the lands supplied by the Cauvery by as much as 32 per cent. on the average. The fact however remains that both the drainage of and the supply to the delta are capable of much improvement; the former question is now being seriously taken up; the latter can only be dealt with satisfactorily by means of storage, the scheme for which is embodied in this report.

Tanjore rice crops.—There are 915,000 acres, or more than 75 per cent. of the total irrigable area of the Tanjore delta under rice cultivation. About 14 per cent. of this area produces two crops in the year.

There are several kinds of rice cultivated, of which the three most commonly grown are—

- (1) *Kar.*
(2) *Semba.*

- (3) *Pisanam.*

(1) Of the *kar* crop there are 12 varieties with periods of growth of from 4 to 6 months.

(2) The *semba* is usually grown as a second crop to the *kar* on double crop lands. There are 17 varieties of this with periods of growth of from 4 to 5 months.

(3) *Pisanam* is commonly grown where only a single crop is raised and of this there are 6 varieties with periods ranging from 5 to 7 months.

The time for rice cultivation is not uniform throughout the delta, but differs in various localities, being influenced by the local conditions of river-supply and rainfall.

Conditions of irrigation water-supply.—As will be seen from the map the Cauvery enters the delta at the narrow western corner or neck and its waters are distributed over an ever-widening expanse of country on their way to the sea. The volume available in the channels is consequently much reduced as they proceed eastwards and the porous nature of the soil tends to still further diminish the supply by absorbing large quantities of water.

This is especially the case when the first freshes come in June after the country and its water courses have been dry for many weeks. As is only to be expected, therefore, the land towards the west receives a much earlier and more abundant supply than that towards the east. The supply of the latter portion of the delta would indeed be very much deficient if it were not for the fact that the porous character of the soil already referred to, enables it to store up a considerable quantity of the river supply which afterwards drains out and is partly given back to the channels in the form of spring water for the benefit of the lower land. As we go east too the rainfall is heavier making up in a great measure for the diminished river supply.

System of rice cultivation.—Throughout the delta rice is invariably grown from transplanted seedlings. It is never sown in the fields on which it is grown. The seed is first sown thickly in seed-beds and after about 25 days the seedlings are transplanted into the liquid mud of the rice fields which have been prepared to receive them.

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Average Supply Diagram.

It will be best in remarking on the diagrams to deal first with that showing the average conditions for these ten years (1890 to 1899). The period under consideration is a good one for giving a fair idea of both the old and new conditions. It contains an average number of good and bad years. (One of the latter (1899) is the worst on record.

The existing average river-supply is shown by the full line in lake, but the total water-supply to the land including rain is shown by the full line in blue. The dotted lines in the same colours show the supply as it will be modified by the reservoir.

These curves show very well how the supply in the south-west monsoon comes mainly from the river and how the deficiency of river-supply is made good in the north-east monsoon by the rainfall. The dip in the curves in September indicates the uncertain period between the monsoons. A comparison of the curves of existing and modified river supply (full and dotted lines in lake) shows how the deficient supply from the river will be eliminated.

Comparing the curves of actual supply with those of the theoretically required water-supply (which also show areas requiring water), it will be seen that the supply begins to fall off in October while the cultivation reaches its maximum in November. Then in December the blue lines cut the vermilion curves and afterwards remain below them, from which it would appear that towards the end of the year the average water-supply is much less than the requirements. This failure of supply, however, is only apparent. The water stored in the porous soil of the delta during the south-west monsoon floods and more recent north-east monsoon rains begins to show itself and make up for the loss in river-supply. The ground is also well saturated, the air is damper and cooler, evaporation is less, and consequently the crops require less water at this time. The effect of these conditions cannot be shown on the diagrams, but they must be borne in mind when reading them. The green curves showing the minimum supply it is proposed to maintain give a better idea of the actual requirements as found by experience. It will be seen that it is proposed suddenly to drop the minimum supply from 14,000 to 4,250 cubic feet per second in the middle of October and to maintain it at that to the end of November.

Working under the proposed rules it is found that on the average 30,722 millions of cubic feet of water will remain in the reservoir at the end of November, and if the discharge of 4,250 cubic feet per second is kept up to the end of December there will yet remain 23,520 millions of cubic feet.

It is evident that the average supply from the river is ample for a much larger area of irrigation than actually exists, and but for the precarious nature of the supply it would be larger.

The construction of even such a large reservoir as that now proposed will not greatly alter the distribution of the river-supply throughout the year. But it gives the necessary relief between the monsoons and at the end of the year when the natural supplies are little in excess of the requirements at the time and are apt to be very variable.

Besides steadying the supply at these uncertain periods, it leaves as a rule a good balance at the end of the year which may be carried forward and used to furnish the upper part of the delta with an early supply to increase the area of double crop there.

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The first of these is the
fact that the system is
not self-sufficient. It
requires a constant input
of energy from the sun.
The second is that the
system is not self-
regulating. It requires
constant monitoring and
adjustment by a central
authority. The third is
that the system is not
self-renewing. It requires
constant replacement of
its components. The fourth
is that the system is not
self-organizing. It requires
constant direction and
control by a central
authority. The fifth is
that the system is not
self-sustaining. It requires
constant input of resources
from the outside world.

One site suggested for the dam is at Sampalli, 7 miles further up the river than the one selected. This has been examined, but it has been found unsuitable chiefly on account of the much greater expense in construction which it would entail, though also because the rock does not seem to be quite so good as at the site chosen. The dam for the same capacity of reservoir would have to be quite as big as the one now proposed and, owing to its situation, its construction would be much more expensive. In addition to this about 20 miles would have to be added to the length of the side channels and that in ground where construction and maintenance would be most difficult and expensive.

Design of the Cauvery Dam.

The dam is designed of two sections. The centre portion, which is pierced by the sluices which pass the flood waters, is formed on the lines of the Nile dam at Assuan. At the flanks the dam assumes the ordinary form of masonry dams.

The drawings attached show the profiles of the two sections of the dam and the lines of resultant pressure both with the reservoir full and empty. The calculated maximum stresses in tons per square foot at various points are also given.

In designing the dam 8 tons per square foot has been taken as the limiting stress allowable with the reservoir full, but at some points the stress has been permitted to exceed this in the case of the reservoir empty. The risk, however, is not then so great and the portions of the dam where such excessive stress may come are built of exceptional strength. In no case does the stress reach $9\frac{1}{2}$ tons per square foot. With the reservoir full the maximum stresses are all well below the limit of 8 tons and that limit would not be reached even if the water topped the parapets of the dam.

The lines of resultant pressures both with the reservoir full and empty are also well within the middle third of the width at any point and would be so under the worst conditions.

It has been judged advisable to make the dam of this somewhat unusual strength for three reasons—

(1) The danger to the large population below if from any accident the vast body of water held up by the dam were suddenly let loose down the river.

(2) The great probability there is of the capacity of the reservoir having to be increased in the near future by raising the water-level.

(3) The fact that there is no surplus weir and that consequently the whole surplus discharge has to be passed through sluices. From inattention or accident to these, and a flood coming suddenly down with the reservoir full, a temporary raising of the high water-level might result. It is not anticipated that such would be at all likely to occur but it is considered advisable to take the precaution of providing against such an accident.

It will be observed that, on the section of the portion of the dam containing the sluices, two lines of resultant pressure are shown both for the reservoir full and empty. Those to the left have been calculated on the assumption that the whole weight of the dam comes into play and those to the right on the assumption that only the portion to the rear of the line XY is effective.

The latter method is based on the recommendation of the Committee reporting on the Nile dam.

It will be seen that ample margin is provided in the design against all possible contingencies.

In the calculations the general weight of concrete and masonry has been taken at 140 lb. per cubic foot. That is probably somewhat less than it will actually be.

The face of both sections of the dam is continuous with a uniform batter of 1 in 16. The change of section will be seen in the rear.

Construction—Cauvery Dam.

The trial pits dug along the proposed line of the dam show that good sound rock can be found everywhere for the foundation. But it is overlaid (except in the river bed) with from 20 to 30 feet of very hard red earth and to a certain extent with

