

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Judicial DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No. 958

Press
~~Mis.~~

109-110
Dated

13-6-1867

4/4

Not to be folded or roughly handled

13th June 1867.

No. 109. Read the following letter from the Officiating Under Secretary to the Government of India, to the Chief Secretary to Government, Fort Saint George; dated Simla, 23rd May 1867, No. 573.

Home Department.

I am directed to forward the accompanying copy of a report* by the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces on a Memorial submitted by certain inhabitants of Rajahmundry, complaining of the

stoppage of the religious fair annually held at Budrachellum, and to request that, under the orders of the Madras Government, it may be forwarded to the Collector of Rajahmundry for communication to the Memorialists, with an expression of the entire concurrence of the Governor General in Council in the views expressed, and in the course pursued by the Chief Commissioner.

A copy of the Memorial is also forwarded.

To

HIS LORDSHIP THE GOVERNOR GENERAL IN COUNCIL OF INDIA,
CALCUTTA.

The very humble Petition of the undersigned inhabitants in the Zillah of Rajahmundry, or Godavery District of Madras Presidency.

MOST RESPECTFULLY SHEWETH,

That your very humble petitioners have, with most profound sorrow, noticed a publication, to be continued in three issues in the *District Gazette*, printed by the Collector, and at the order or persuasion of the Commissioner, Nagpore, warning all persons against resorting on a pilgrimage† to Budrachellum in the Nagpore Province; whither, from time immemorial, myriads of

Hindoos have been in the habit of visiting annually a portion to celebrate a time-honored festival, and the majority, from purely religious motives, to fulfil the vows they have made to a shrine, from which they have experienced many benefits, and which they reverence as highly as Christians, Jews, and Mahomedans do theirs in Jerusalem, Mecca, Rome, Loretto, &c.

2. That during the Mogul dynasty, and under the sway of rulers, who bore the most deadly antagonism to Hindooism, there would hardly be found one Monarch whose bigotry or spirit of persecution had advanced to such an extent as to equal that which has appeared to actuate the Collector and Commissioner of the present day, but many (whether from political or any other purpose it matters little) who tolerated and encouraged, if they did not exactly aid and abet, the Hindoos in worshipping after the fashion of their ancestors; and while your petitioners have placed implicit reliance on the promise made by our present rulers, the British, that they would never interfere with our religious feelings or prejudices; while we have known that an earnest of that promise has been assured to us in the instance of Government schools, where the Bible is, to such as we are, a sealed book, by special order, we rest in the hope that things only need be brought to light, before those who have the power to help us, to obtain the privileges we have enjoyed time out of mind, and which we see no just cause or reason to be debarred the right to, during the peaceful and happy reign of Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria. God bless and preserve her.

3. That the reasons assigned for the prohibition of the pilgrimage appear too weak to stand the test of argument or disputation, inasmuch as it has been asserted that the main motive for the publication in question has been to save the workmen in the W. G. Annicut from contamination by returning pilgrims, who are believed to carry or bring along with them the infection of cholera, or any other disease that may break out among the vast number returning from Budrachellum.

*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Judicial Department,
13th June 1867.*

4. That your petitioners think it hardly worthwhile to enter into a refutation of the aforesaid argument, that cholera and other epidemics originate principally from a large concourse of people assembling unanimously with one pure object, viz., to worship the Maker of all in a spot that has been believed by tradition to have been the scene of many miraculous cures, &c.; for while it can be proved on the one hand that large and populous towns have escaped the ravages of cholera, small-pox, &c., &c., it can on the other be maintained that villages and localities, thinly populated, have had cause to deprecate the disastrous effects of the epidemic, a most palpable proof that some other cause, rather than the assemblage of a vast multitude, gives rise to distempers so much dreaded.

5. That whereas the prohibition referred to does in no small degree hurt the religious feelings of Hindoos, we earnestly pray that your Supreme Government will see the necessity, if not the justice, of interfering before the adoption of a measure which, if carried out, must necessarily be in direct violation and opposition to the promises that have been assured to us at the very dawn of British rule in India, with regard to the religious feelings and prejudices of the Hindoos; and begging your Supreme Government will take into consideration the fact of other nations and persuasions placing as strong belief as we poor Hindoos in the efficacy of pilgrimages, we beg that you will not deny us that privilege which we have enjoyed time out of mind, and order the cancelling of a publication which appears to have been put in circulation without your previous consultation, consent, or concurrence.

For this kind act of kindness, your petitioners, as in duty bound, shall ever pray.

14th March 1867.

(Signed) C. CHRISNASWAMY.
(„) M. GUNUNNAH,
(„) L. ANNAPAH,
(„) A. B. VENCAPPAH,
(„) C. H. GURRAJOO,
and others.

From the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner, to the Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department; dated Nagpore, 29th April 1867, No. ¹⁶⁰²/₁₃₄.

General.

I am directed to acknowledge receipt of Home Department Endorsement, No. 3590, dated 9th April 1867, forwarding for report a petition from certain inhabitants of the Godavery District, complaining of the stoppage of the religious fair annually held at Budrachellum.

2. In reply, I am directed to submit, for the information of the Government of India, that the petitioners would seem to have incorrectly interpreted the orders issued by the Chief Commissioner. The holding of a fair at Budrachellum during the cholera months has certainly been prohibited, but it was never intended that any Hindoo should be prevented from visiting the temple during that or any other time of the year.

3. After due inquiry, the Chief Commissioner decided, in the month of March 1866, that, in the interest of the public health, it was necessary to prevent the assembly at Budrachellum, during the spring season, of any concourse of merchants or pilgrims who should encamp for several days in a place where proper conservancy could not be maintained. It was never thought desirable to debar pilgrims or other religionists from visiting the temples during the month of April. Such people are at liberty to go and perform their acts of worship there, but they are not allowed to remain in large numbers together at Budrachellum for several days during the month of April, or during what is known in those parts as the cholera season.

4. The local authorities of Budrachellum, and especially the Public Works Department Officers, had brought to the notice of the Chief Commissioner that cholera broke out yearly at the Budrachellum fair, and that it spread along the roads on all sides, and also among the workmen on the Godavery river. The case seemed similar to that of the Mahadeo fair on the Puchmurree hills, the prohibition of which, as a sanitary precaution, was sanctioned in Foreign Secretary's letter to the Chief Commissioner's address, No. 2048, dated 13th October 1865.

*Proceedings of the Madras Government, Judicial Department,
13th June 1867.*

5. A similar petition to that* which is enclosed in your letter under reply was forwarded to the Chief Commissioner, and an answer thereto has been sent to the Memorialist in the sense of the foregoing paragraphs; and further, in order that there may be no possibility of the local authorities carrying out, with undue strictness, the orders of the Chief Commissioner, a copy of the Memorial has been sent to the Deputy Commissioner of the Upper Godavery District, and he has been instructed as to the scope of the orders issued in March 1866.

* (Re-submitted herewith).

No. 110. ORDER THEREON, 13th June 1867, No. 958.

Ordered that copies of the foregoing letter and its enclosure be sent to the Collector of the Godavery District, who will communicate to the Memorialists the report made on their Memorial by the Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces, and will inform them that the Governor in Council entirely concur in the Chief Commissioner's views.

(True Extract).

Chief Secretary.

To the Collector of the Godavery District.

Edw. J. Tulloch.

13 June 1867 N^o 958 - M_n

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To the Collr of the Godavery Dist. desps 20/6

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