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GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU

DEPARTMENT

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Not to be folded or roughly handled

anarchy prevailed, and the position of the people was miserable in the extreme. In the Zemindar and Poligar countries the only limit to the exactions to which the ryots were subject was their ability to pay; the customary share of the produce belonging to Government was nominally half, but additional taxes were levied on various pretexts, reducing the share enjoyed by the ryots to one-fifth or one-sixth. "Such was the state of the country when the government thereof was assumed by the English: the condition of the agricultural classes, who formed the bulk of the population, is said to have been abject and demoralized to the last degree.

3. The next section is devoted to a description of these classes under British administration during the first half of the present century. Efforts were made on all sides to improve the position of the ryot, but frequently without success. The substitution of payment of Government dues in money for the former system of payment in kind, led to much inconvenience and hardship owing to the insufficiency of the currency to meet the increased "duty" thrown upon it by the change, and prices steadily fell. The period of 20 years from 1834 to 1854 was one of great agricultural depression on account of the low prices of grain, and, during the 30 years which preceded this period, progress was retarded by five successive famines. During the early years of the century metalled roads were unknown, and wheel-traffic, except for short distances, did not exist. Trade was hampered by want of communications and the means of transport and was confined to the narrowest local limits. The general improvement of communications throughout the country may be said to date from the report of the Public Works Commission issued in 1852.

4. The author then proceeds to review the principal facts bearing upon the condition of the agricultural classes from the middle of the century to the present time.

Section IV.

About the year 1854 the period of agricultural depression came to an end and a time of great prosperity began. The demand abroad for Indian commodities largely increased—the result of several causes, such as the discovery of gold in Australia and California, the Crimean war, and, above all, the Civil war in America which increased enormously the demand for Indian cotton. Exports, which in 1840–41 amounted to only 13½ millions sterling, rose in 1864–65 to 68 millions. Silver flowed into the country and large loans—especially for the construction of railways and other public works—were raised in England, of which it is calculated that about one-half was expended on wages in India. The result was that the currency was replenished and the prices of Indian produce rose to three times what they had been in the years immediately preceding 1850. During this period, moreover, many administrative reforms were introduced. The Police was organized upon a new footing; the Settlement Department was constituted for the purpose of alleviating the heavy burthens on land and of removing inequalities in assessments; the revenue and magisterial establishments were revised and village accounts were simplified; and, above all, an enormous impetus was given to the construction of public works, notably works of irrigation. With increased demand, the wages of labour rose in proportion to prices.

5. The period of high prices continued till about 1870, when a re-action took place. At this time several new and unfamiliar forms of taxation were resorted to, chiefly of a "local" character, and, while still suffering from the effects of falling prices, the country was visited by the terrible famine of 1876–78. The cost of this calamity, including revenue remitted, amounted to 8 millions sterling and the loss in population was nearly 4 millions.

6. Having reviewed the condition of the agricultural classes before and after the establishment of British power, the author proceeds*, by the help of statistics, to examine what progress has been made during the last 40 years, and he divides the subject into the following heads:—

- (a) population;
- (b) area of cultivation;
- (c) prices of produce;

- (d) improvement in the processes of production and in communications;
- (e) foreign and domestic trade;
- (f) taxation; and
- (g) the standard of living of the different classes of the population.

The figures of the census of 1891 show that during the last decade the population of the Presidency increased by 4¼ millions or by 15·6 per cent.; and assuming—as seems reasonable—that no such famine as that of 1876–78 will recur within a century, the author calculates the normal increase of population under present conditions to be not much less than 1 per cent. per annum. That the bulk of the population is not devoid of the means of subsistence is the necessary inference from this high rate of increase. Upon the question whether the advance in area cultivated has been equal to the increase in population, the author finds, upon the data available, that since 1852 the increase in area cultivated has been 25, 41, and 138 per cent. of dry, wet, and well lands respectively, and that the increased production has been very considerable. In regard to prices, the conclusions arrived at are that from 1828 to 1853 prices rapidly declined until they were 25 per cent. below those which ruled in the early years of the century; that between 1853 and 1865 they rose till they were twice as high as at the beginning of the century; that from this level they declined by about 20 per cent. after 1870; and that the average prices of the five years previous to 1890 show a slight increase over those of the lustrum ending with 1874. The author gives some interesting statistics showing the vast improvements which have been made in communications and the effect produced thereby upon trade and prices, especially in the levelling of prices in times of local scarcity. By the development of communications the abolition of transit duties and of customs duties, trade, both internal and external, has advanced by enormous strides. In illustration of this statement the port of Tuticorin is cited. The value of the trade of this port has risen from 23 lakhs in 1830 to 232 lakhs in 1889–90. In regard to taxation the incidence (including land revenue) per head of the population has risen from Rs. 1-14-6 in 1852–53 to Rs. 2-10-8 in 1872–73 and Rs. 2-14-3 in 1889–90, i.e., by 51 per cent. since 1852; but of the increased revenue raised a large proportion has been laid out on works of public utility, such as communications, education, irrigation, and medical relief. In considering the standard of living, the author has roughly divided the population into four classes, viz., the agricultural classes, non-agricultural laborers, professional and mercantile classes, and artisans and small traders. He calculates that one-fifth of the ryotwari land revenue is contributed by agriculturalists who are primarily laborers, but who supplement wages by cultivating small holdings; about one-third is contributed by peasant proprietors, who, for the most part, till their own land; one-third by farmers who employ hired labour; and the remainder by the class who can afford to let their lands and generally do so. With a holding of 8 acres of ordinary dry land it is calculated that a ryot should be able to support his family, not indeed in luxury, but according to the standard of living which obtains among the ryot population. The average money value of the food of an adult laborer is estimated at Rs. 20 per annum and the remuneration of a permanent farm servant at twice the cost of his feeding and clothing expenses. So far as the non-agricultural class of laborers, is concerned, it admits of no question that their condition has greatly improved. With the development of trade the members of the mercantile and professional classes have largely increased and these are in a prosperous condition. The wages of artisans, in spite of the decline of some native handicrafts, have greatly risen, and the demand for luxuries, which are provided by the skill of the brass-smiths, goldsmiths, carpenters and masons, is increasing directly with the wealth of the country. In considering the standard of living, the author quotes the opinions of a number of gentlemen who have had exceptional opportunities of observation and concludes that there is ample evidence that the standard has risen. Tiled and terraced houses are rapidly taking the place of thatched roofs; metal utensils are largely superseding earthen vessels even among the lower classes; better and more clothes are worn, and considerable sums are now spent upon the education of their children by persons of small means; and although it is true that every one feels that his means are inadequate to satisfy his wants, it is not that his wealth has not increased, but that his wants have increased more rapidly still. That

make it strike deeper roots into society, so as to enable it to adjust its institutions to its needs as they arise, without weakening in any way the power of the Central Government to maintain a due balance between rival interests and creeds and for interfering effectually when there is danger of such balance being disturbed," and, referring to the change which has taken place in the feeling of the educated classes, who are now apt to complain that progress does not proceed fast enough, states his conviction that "the progress which has been made under the new régime during the short time it has been in force—fifty years is a brief interval in the life of a people—is little short of marvellous." With this conclusion His Excellency the Governor in Council fully concurs.

11. Having thus noticed the salient features of this valuable work and expressed his general concurrence with the conclusions arrived at by the author, His Excellency the Governor in Council desires to record his high appreciation of the very efficient manner in which Mr. Srinivasa Raghavaiyengar has accomplished a difficult and arduous task. That he has been able, without interruption of his duties as Inspector-General of Registration, to compile this volume and to collect the statistics comprised in the appendices is an indication not only of indefatigable industry but also of the keen interest with which he has pursued his investigations. Above all the thanks of Government are due to him for the valuable suggestions for improving the future administration of the Presidency with which the author concludes his interesting "Memorandum." The Government also notes with approval the valuable assistance afforded to the author by M.R.Ry. R. Swaminathaiyar and M.R.Ry. C. Sarvothama Row.

(True Extract.)

(Signed) E. GIBSON,
Ag. Secretary to Government.

To the Educational Department.
" the Board of Revenue (Land Revenue).
" the " (Separate Revenue).
" the " (Revenue Settlement, Land Records and Agriculture).
" the Local and Municipal Department.
" M.R.Ry. Diwan Bahadur S. Srinivasa Raghavaiyengar Avergal, C.I.E.
Copy to the Public Department.
" " Public Works Department.
" " Military Department.

No. 915A.

Copy to the Government of India, Revenue and Agricultural Department.

(Signed) E. GIBSON,
Ag. Secretary to Government.

Encl. S. J. Pereira.

200 Copies.

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"Memorandum on the Progress
of the Madras Presidency."

Passing orders on the work of Mr. S. Srinivasa Raghavaiyengar.

Ch. Secy. for Secy.
Comm. Secy. for Secy.