

MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

DEPARTMENT.

G.O. No.	115	Press Mis.
Dated	11-1-1868	1868

Not to be folded or roughly handled

Proceedings of the Madras Government, Public Department,
11th August 1869.

Read the following papers :—

No. 65. From the Sanitary Commissioner for Madras, to the Chief Secretary to Government, Fort Saint George ; dated Madras, 2nd August 1869, No. 2723.

I have the honour, with reference to the Proceedings and Order of Government, No. 994, of the 17th ultimo, to transmit copy of a letter I have addressed to the Prêsidant of the Municipal Commission upon the subject of the necessity for adopting measures to insure more accurate registration of births and deaths.

From the Sanitary Commissioner for Madras, to the President of the Municipal Commission, Madras ; dated Madras, 2nd August 1869, No. 2722.

I have the honour to address you with reference to the Order of Government, No. 994, of the 17th July 1869, upon the Vital Statistics in Madras for the 1st quarter of the current year, drawn up by my late Secretary, Dr. Montgomery, and especially with reference to the remark made by him regarding the unsatisfactory working of the Department of registration of births and deaths under clauses 218 to 224 of Act IX. of 1867.

2. Dr. Montgomery did not communicate to me the steps he contemplated taking in the matter, nor the measures he intended proposing to remedy the existing faulty system ; but having given the subject due consideration, I have to suggest certain measures for your consideration.

3. That the system has failed ; that the Act is largely evaded, both in registration of births and deaths, and more especially in the registration of births, is patent.

4. The total number of births registered since the system was introduced amounts to 5842 or 12.98 per mille upon the population ; being 12.63 per mille less than the deaths ; and as Dr. Montgomery justly remarked, if correct, points to a speedy extinction of the population of this city. In regard to deaths you are aware that, before registration under the Act was introduced, they were reported by Mortuary Conicopillies entertained by the Municipality, and who obtained their information from grave-diggers and others employed either in burying or burning in the different grave-yards or burning-grounds. On the entertainment of Registrars under the Act, it was considered advisable to retain, for a time, the services of the Conicopillies as a means of assistance and check upon the Registrars, and they are still so entertained.

5. During the fifteen months, from April 1868 to June of the present year inclusive, no less than 7242 deaths have been reported by Conicopillies which have escaped registration by the Registrars.

6. It is alleged, I am aware, that the Conicopillies acted in a spirit of jealousy of, and opposition to, the Registrars, under the belief that, on the latter getting into good working order, they would be dismissed ; and this allegation is held to be supported by the fact that in the instance in which I brought to your notice that eleven deaths in a given day had been reported by them, which had not been registered, on prosecution of the parties, a conviction was obtained only in two cases, upon, I believe, the admission of the parties themselves.

7. I would, however, remark that it is not within the Conicopillies' power to give that proof of deaths necessary to support a prosecution in a Court of Law. They have no personal knowledge of the burial or cremation of any corpse ; but obtain their information, by report only, from grave-diggers and other functionaries employed in carrying out the last rites of sepulture or cremation.

The burial and burning grounds are so numerous that it is quite out of their power to do more than simply visit them, and get the best information they can; and I am disposed to think, and I know the late Dr. Montgomery was of the same opinion, that their reports are reliable, although they may fail to afford that proof necessary to prosecution before the police.

8. In support of the belief that the Conicopillies' returns are reliable, I may state that the numbers reported by them closely approximate to those recorded, prior to the entertainment of Registrars, and before the influences alleged now to actuate the Conicopillies were in operation.

9. In the margin, I give a table showing the deaths for a number of years past, compared	
1860.....	13,498
1861.....	13,370
1862.....	14,731
1863.....	11,858
1864.....	10,409
1865.....	11,216
1866.....	13,881
1867.....	12,245
Mean.....	12,651
1868.....	12,202

with those for the year 1868. If from the number of deaths in the latter year we deduct the numbers recorded by the Conicopillies, the figures are 4,583; but as these are only for the months from April to December, we must add the deaths recorded in January, February, and March, which bring the number up to 7725, or much below those of any previous year; while if the excess recorded by the Conicopillies' returns are added, the figures approximate to those representing the deaths of former years.

10. I will make this a little more clear in another form. In the nine months of the year 1868, the Registrars have recorded 4583 deaths which reduced to an annual rate will be represented by 6110. The Conicopillies returned 9060, or at the annual rate of 12,080. The latter figures are within 571 of the average of deaths for the eight years ending 1867, during which period the Conicopillies had not the inducement to falsify their returns, now alleged to be actuating them. The Registrars' returns are, on the other hand, so palpably short of the average as to be utterly unreliable. I think, therefore, that the Conicopillies' returns must be accepted as being as trustworthy as the imperfect system admits of.

11. It is manifest, if this conclusion is accepted, and I think it must be, that the law requiring every death to be registered, is largely evaded, and it becomes necessary to adopt some measures by which registration of every death may be insured.

12. This can only be done by bringing every burial and burning-ground under Municipal supervision and control; and by requiring, under a special bye-law, if necessary, that no corpse shall be interred or burnt without a certificate being presented by the relations or friends of the deceased, that the death has been duly registered.

13. To carry out this it will be necessary that the number of burial and burning-grounds shall be reduced within reasonable limits, and that a person (warder) shall be in charge of each with instructions and power to allow no corpse to be buried or burnt, without the production of a Registrar's certificate that the provisions of clause 223 of the Act has been complied with. Or authority might be given to the warder of the ground to enter the necessary information in a register kept for the purpose, when a Registrar's certificate is not produced. One or other of these measures of check and record might be adopted as appears most suited to meet caste scruples and prejudices.

14. From the returns of burial and burning-grounds, which you were good enough to transmit to me, I have prepared an abstract which is appended. There are no less than 157 used by the native community; and it is for the Commission to determine what number it may be necessary to close, and how it will be possible to bring those retained under control and supervision.

15. I am well-aware that the question is overlaid with very considerable difficulties; but unless registration of deaths is to be a farce, some measures must be devised to insure the provisions of the Act being complied with.

16. One very difficult question, and which also involves sanitary considerations of the greatest importance, is the disposal of first-born children on their decease. The custom is, as you are aware, to bury them upon the premises; often beneath the floor of the dwelling. This practice is beset with and founded upon so many superstitions that it will perhaps be difficult to interfere with it. The subject is one that requires consideration, but as burial in private, or in unauthorized ground, is forbidden by the Municipal Act, under heavy penalties, power manifestly exists to put a stop to the custom; and indeed one offender was prosecuted and fined.

17. Some remarks by Dr. Mair, Deputy Coroner of Madras, published in the Madras Journal of Medical Science in an article entitled "Statistics of unnatural deaths in Madras and other Presidencies," are so pertinent to these questions, and so deserving of attention, that I give them at length:—

"The difficulties which stand in the way of any interference with Hindoo burial or burning-grounds; with the interment of first-born children in private grounds, and with night funerals, though unquestionably great, owing to the deeply-rooted prejudice and antipathy of the native to any interference with long-established customs, are not more so than the difficulties which have been so effectually overcome, with reference to other long-standing customs; suttee and the swinging-festival for example believed to be closely identified with the Hindoo religion, and which formerly were the cause of many unnatural deaths occurring throughout India.

"The Municipal Acts now in operation almost everywhere throughout India, all constructed on the same model, confer powers sufficient to meet some of the difficulties referred to.

"Existing grave and burning-grounds can be closed, and other places set apart for the same purposes. Responsible persons ought to be placed in charge of these grounds, persons whose duty it should be not to permit any body to be buried or burned without a certificate from the District Registrar.

"With reference to Registrars, there is an omission in the Municipal Act of sufficient importance to call for remark. At present the Registrars of deaths, appointed under these Acts, record every death, and its cause, according to the information given them, and there their functions cease.

"A considerable number of deaths may thus be registered, respecting which no sufficient evidence of the cause of death is produced, and persons whose deaths are thus registered may be interred without any inquiry being made into the manner in which they came to their death."

"It is evident that such a system as this is fraught with danger to the public. It would be no difficult matter:—

(1.) To require that incomplete or irregular information regarding a death be sent to the Coroner or other similar officer, before registration.

(2.) That every Registrar be instructed not to register any death that has occurred from violence, or from other than natural causes, or even any death than has occurred suddenly without any known cause, until the case is referred to the Coroner and his decision given to the Registrar whether he will hold an inquest or not.

"Magistrates should have the power, not only to inflict a penalty for interring bodies in other than authorized burial-grounds, but also to compel the removal of bodies so interred.

"No dead body should be permitted to be buried or burned, except within specified hours, say between sunrise and sunset.

"None of these measures, if carried out, would seriously violate or offend the religious prejudices of the Hindoos, and there is little doubt that they may be enforced with little or no difficulty beyond that incidental to anything bearing the shape of an innovation. They might be the means of preventing some unnatural deaths, while they would bring to light others that, under present circumstances, pass unrecorded as such."

18. The measures necessary to be taken to enforce the correct registration of births and deaths resolve themselves into—

(1.) The closing of all burial-grounds which are objectionable, either on account of being already overcrowded or injurious to health; and the limitation of their numbers to the actual requirements of the community.

(2.) Similar limitation of burning-grounds.

(3.) Registration (if not already effected) of the same under Section 194 of Act IX. of 1867; and the enforcement of the penal clause of the said section in all cases of burial of corpses in other than authorized grounds.

(4.) That some responsible person be placed in charge of each and every burning or burial-ground, and that no corpse be burned or buried without a certificate from the District Registrar.

(5.) That when bodies may have been buried in other than authorized ground power be given to compel the removal of the corpse to a registered burial-ground.

(6.) That the penal clauses of Section 222 of the Act be rigidly enforced in all cases of non-registration of births.

19. I would also advise that the Registrars' offices should be in more accessible places and brought into more official relation with the Municipality, than they now are. It would be advantageous to locate them at the principal police tannahs of each district. There have been many complaints of the out-of-the-way places in which the Registrars now live and hold office. Their location near the police tannahs would tend to keep them also more under observation.

Burial and Burning-grounds in the different Divisions of the Municipality of Madras.

Locality.	Burial-grounds.	Burning-grounds.	Class of persons used by	Remarks as to overcrowding and necessity of closing.
Peperoyentah.	1	1	Chetties.....	Not overcrowded, not objectionable.
Liarpettah.	1	.....	Brahmins ...	Do. do.
Do. ...	19	3	Hindoos.....	Twenty not overcrowded, not objectionable; two not overcrowded, but would recommend being closed.
Do. ...	.....	1	Chetties.....	Overcrowded, should be closed.
Do. ...	1	1	Washermen.	Not overcrowded, not objectionable.
Do. ...	3	.....	Christians ...	Not overcrowded.
Moode....	1	.....	Mahomedans.	Not overcrowded, not objectionable.
Do. ...	1	.....	Jafferjies ...	Do. do.
Do. ...	1	.....	Chinamen ...	Do. do.
Do. ...	1	1	Hindoos.....	Do. do.
German's tah.	1	.....	Mahomedans.	Do. do.
Do. ...	6	2	Hindoos.....	Four not overcrowded, not objectionable; two not overcrowded, but would recommend being closed, and two not objectionable.
Do. ...	6	.....	Christians ...	Not overcrowded, not objectionable.
Pooram ...	1	1	Hindoos.....	Objectionable.
Okapettah	8	2	Do. ...	Six not overcrowded, not objectionable; one burning portion objectionable, two no objection.
Swalkum...	5	.....	Christians...	One situated in open ground, not objectionable, four amongst houses objectionable on sanitary grounds.
Do. ...	3	1	Hindoos.....	Situated in open ground, not objectionable.
Do. ...	1	.....	Mahomedans	Amongst houses, objectionable on sanitary grounds.
Do. ...	1	.....	Do. ...	Do. do.
Amboore ...	1	1	Hindoos ...	Not objectionable, being situated in open ground.
Do. ...	1	1	Christians...	One closed not in use, and one objectionable, being situated amongst houses.
Try... ..	2	.....	Hindoos ...	Near houses, objectionable on sanitary grounds.
Lay... ..	2	1	Do. ...	Not objectionable, situated in open ground.
Arapady...	1	1	Mahomedans	Closed, not in use.
Do.	1	.....	Hindoos.....	Near houses, objectionable on sanitary grounds.
Narsawmy vil.	1	1	Do. ...	Not objectionable, situated in open ground.
Gumbau-n.	1	1	Christians ...	Not objectionable.
Adadripet-t.	5	.....	Do. ...	Sufficient place more, but close to houses.
Licane.....	1	.....	Mahomedans	Three almost full and should be closed, one sufficient place more for the Carnatic family, four close to houses and road, should be closed, and two sufficient place more.
Do. ...	10	.....	Do. ...	One sufficient place more, but close to houses, and one place more for interment (family).
Loopaukum.	2	.....	Do. ...	

ABSTRACT of Burial and Burning-grounds in the different Divisions, &c.—(Concluded).

Divisions.	Locality.	Burial-grounds.	Burning-grounds.	Class of persons used by.	Remarks as to overcrowding and necessity of closing.
8	Triplicane.....	2	2	Hindoos.....	Very close to dwellings and public road, should be closed.
	Royapettah ...	1	.....	Mahomedans	Some more ground for interments.
	Tecroovettees-wernpettah.	1	.....	Do. ...	There are several family cemeteries in the burial-ground, and in a few of them there is some ground for interment, however all of them should be closed as they are close to dwellings.
	Kistnampettah.	46	.....	Do. ...	Two not full but close to houses, twenty almost full and full and should be closed, fifteen more place for interments, 1, a large piece of ground containing several family cemeteries many full recommended to be closed; 2, the front part is full and should be closed, but there is space at the rear which will be used, and six more place for interments in the pavements.
	Mylapore... ..	20	.....	Do. ...	Five almost full and should be closed, eleven more places for interments, three more places for interments but but close to houses and one not in use.
	Do. ...	2	1	Hindoos.....	Sufficient place more, but close to houses and one also to public road.
	Do. ...	10	.....	Christians ...	Sufficient place more for interments.
	Meer Saib's-pettah.	4	.....	Mahomedans	One sufficient place more, and three more place but close to houses and should be closed.
	Tenampettah...	1	.....	Do. ...	Sufficient place more, but close to houses and should be closed.
	Alwarpettah...	1	1	Hindoos.....	Objectionable on account of the same extending to houses in the neighbourhood.
	Royapettah ...	4	.....	Do. ...	Sufficient place more.
	Do. ...	5	.....	Mahomedans	Four sufficient place more, but close to houses, and one almost full and close to public road and Triplicane Dispensary.

No. 66. From the Sanitary Commissioner for Madras, to the Chief Secretary to Government, Fort Saint George; dated Madras, 6th August 1869, No. 2759.

In continuation of my letter, No. 2723, of the 2nd current, I have the honour to transmit, for the information of Government, copy* of a letter addressed to the

No. 2758, dated 6th August 1869.

President of the Municipal Commission, suggesting for his consideration the practicability of rendering the registration of births and deaths more accurate, by requiring all private medical practioners, Native doctors, Hakeems, and midwives to report all births and deaths occurring in their practice under the provisions of a special bye-law.

From the Sanitary Commissioner for Madras, to the President of the Municipal Commission, Madras; dated Madras, 6th August 1869, No. 2758.

In continuation of my letter, No. 2722, of the 2nd August 1869, I have the honour to submit, for your consideration, the desirability of enforcing registration in your office of the names of all private medical practitioners, whether qualified or unqualified, of all native doctors, hakeems or midwives, whether European, East Indian or native, and to require them under penalty to report to the Registrars of the district all births and deaths at which they may personally attend.

2. The Health Officer of Bombay recommends this measure in the second annual report, and if it can be enforced under a bye-law, it would certainly tend to more correct registration of births and deaths.

3. The census about to be taken might be made subservient to this end, lists of the class of practitioners referred to being prepared.

No. 67. ORDER THEREON 11th August 1869, No. 1116.

The Government desire to be informed of the steps which the Municipal Commissioners, Madras, propose taking with reference to the very useful remarks and suggestions of the Sanitary Commissioner, contained in his letter to their President of the 2nd instant, on the subject of securing a more accurate registration of births and deaths.

(True Extract).

Chief Secretary.

To the President of the Municipal Commission, Madras.
,, Sanitary Commissioner for Madras.

Exd. J. Wright.

Public Department.

PROCEEDINGS of the MADRAS GOVERNMENT.

Read the following letter from the

Sanitary Commissioner for Madras.

(Here Entered 22 August 1884, No. 2720)

Order thereon 11 August 1884, No. 1116.

The Government desire

to be informed of the steps which the

Municipal Commissioners, Madras,

propose taking, with reference to the

very useful remarks and suggestions of the Sanitary

Commissioner, contained in his

letter to their President of the 2nd Instance,

N. for ensuring more accurate registra-
tion of Births and Deaths.

W.D.

To the Pres^t Comm^r in C^o

Sanitary Comm^r, Madras

done & signed

Publi

Dated *Aug. 11.* } 186*9*, No. *1116*
Recd

Regulating the information
in regard to the steps which
the Munal. Councils,
Madras, propose taking,
with reference to the very
useful remarks & suggestion
of the Sanitary Council,
contained in his letter to
their Secy., on the subject
of securing a more effec-
tual regulation of birth, &c.