

(1) Number of pages 2
 (2) Date of repair 14.5.86.
 (3) Initials of the Referencer Van.

TAMIL NADU ARCHIVES

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU

Rem DEPARTMENT

G.O. No. 3124	Press.
B.P. No.	Mis.
Dated 4. 6. 1877 197.	

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GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.

PUBLIC DEPARTMENT.

25th May 1877, No. 727.

Sanitary.

Read the following paper:—

No. 92. *From Surgeon-Major W. R. CORNISH, F.R.C.S., Sanitary Commissioner for Madras, to the Officiating Chief Secretary to Government, dated Madras, 16th May 1877, No. 518.*

In some of my late reports to Government, in connection with famine matters, I have alluded to the circumstance that the registration of mortality, especially in the famine tracts, appears to be defective.

2. I am aware that in some districts, where the Village Curnams receive a share of the crops in lieu of salary, they have had no pay for many months, or even for one or two years, and that these officials and village messengers have in many cases gone off for employment on relief works, and, under these circumstances, it is easy to understand why village registration should be falling into arrears and inefficiently done. Nevertheless, the importance of attempting something like an accurate registration of mortality during this period of famine and distress is so great that I venture to solicit the aid of Government in calling the attention of district officials to the untrustworthy character of the registration.

3. The proportion of the sexes living at the time of the Census was very nearly equal, but generally the proportion of deaths of males is considerably in excess of the registration of female deaths. During the last two months the male deaths as registered exceeded the female by 26 per cent., thus showing that, whatever other omissions and defects there may be in village registration, there has been laxity in recording the deaths of females. For the five years ending 1875 the total registered deaths of males and females to population was, males 18.8 per mille, females 17.4 per mille, while in 1876 the male deaths registered equalled 24.7 per mille of population while the female registration showed only 21.9 per mille.

4. Probably Collectors and other district officials might be able to impress on Village Munsifs and Accountants that the registration of the birth and death of a female, or of a young child, is just as important to the State as the registration of deaths of male adults.

5. I notice also in the registration of famine districts that there is a tendency to put down every casualty occurring from looseness of the bowels to cholera. This, I imagine, cannot be remedied while the registration remains in the hands of village servants who are professionally unacquainted with the distinction between cholera and other fluxes from the bowels. But at the present time there is undoubtedly much mortality due to the diarrhoea of famine which is entered in the returns as cholera.

6. I infer that district officials in the distressed districts are alive to the importance of recording the mortality occurring in relief camps in the taluq monthly abstracts which are submitted to me. It may probably be necessary to issue instructions to Munsifs, &c., of villages in which these camps may be located to ensure the mortality occurring in them being duly registered. And, in regard to strangers whose bodies may be found exposed in villages, it is necessary that instructions should be issued to register the deaths in the villages where they actually occur. With all these precautions, however, I feel bound to state my opinion that the full measure of the calamity from which this Presidency is suffering will never be shown in the mortuary statistics.

No. 93.

ORDER THEREON, 25th May 1877, No. 727.

The Sanitary Commissioner's letter will be communicated to the Revenue (Famine) Department and, through the Revenue Board, to Collectors of districts, with reference to the Proceedings of Government, 27th April 1877, No. 595, paragraph 3.

2. The attention of all officers must be directed to this all-important index of the condition of the population at this time.

(True Extract.)



Offg. Chief Secretary.

To the Board of Revenue.

- " Revenue (Famine) Department.
- " Surgeon-General, Indian Medical Department.
- " Sanitary Commissioner.

Recd. 29/5/77

✓ No 3124 Nos. 92-93.