

(1) Number of pages 22
(2) Date of repair 9-2-72
(3) Initials of the Referencer _____

TAMIL NADU ARCHIVES

GOVERNMENT OF TAMIL NADU

Revenue DEPARTMENT

G.O. No.
B.P. No.

576

Press
Mis.

Dated

9. 2. 1877 197

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REVENUE DEPARTMENT,
FORT ST. GEORGE,
9th February 1877.

No. 576.

No. 249.

To

THE SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA,

DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE,
AGRICULTURAL AND COMMERCE.

Land Revenue, No. 7.

From Government of India, dated 26th January 1877.
The Government of India, dated 2nd February 1877.

SIR,—Referring to the telegrams marginally noted, arising out of a representation to the Government of India by Sir Richard Temple on the subject of remissions of land revenue which are being made in respect of the present Famine, I am directed by His

Grace the Governor in Council to submit the following additional observations.

2. During the existence of the heavy assessments which prevailed in this Presidency down to the time of Lord Harris' Government, and before the introduction of the Revenue Settlement now in progress, and which has already taken effect in five districts and in considerable portion of four others—remissions were large and numerous, administered under a complicated system, and forming part of the annual and ordinary Jammabandi. Under the revised assessment, it was anticipated that the necessity for making them would cease, *except under rare and special circumstances*. A district once settled—the following are the sole rules on the subject, viz.:—

(1.) *Wet Land*.—Full remission when the land is left waste, or the crop totally lost owing either to deficiency or excess of water.

(2.) *Dry Land*.—None; except in very exceptional circumstances of distress, and under the express sanction of the Board of Revenue in each case.

In regard to unsettled districts, the 2nd Rule applies to them also: but to wet lands in unsettled districts, *partial* loss of crops entitles the occupant to partial remission; the additional concession in favor of unsettled districts in this respect being based on the fact that the rates there are often high and unequal; and no allowance was made, in fixing them, for vicissitudes of season.

3. Taking the accounts of the Fasli year ending 30th June 1875, it appears that the remissions under the first head came to Rs. 2,70,000 only, and were caused principally by disastrous floods in Nellore; and that those under the second head amounted to one lakh. Sundry small remissions of a miscellaneous character brought up the total to $4\frac{3}{4}$ lakhs, being about $\frac{3}{4}$ per cent. on the total assessment of Ryotwari holdings of Rs. 3,88,46,315. Such were the results of the system in an ordinary year.

4. With regard to the proposal to saddle the ryot with the sum that would now, under customary law, be remitted—the assessment on a crop which was never grown—as a debt to be paid by him in the following year—the Governor in Council is entirely opposed to the suggestion.

In the first place, as respects wet land, it is obvious that the Government is under an implied covenant to supply the necessary irrigation. In making the settlement, which proceeds in all cases on the basis of sharing the crop between the Government and the ryot, a certain allowance is made to the ryot for ordinary vicissitudes of season; and this being so the full assessment is exacted even in bad years where the loss of crop is partial only: but where the water to be supplied fails altogether, the attempt at such exaction would be universally resisted as at variance with the bargain and a grave injustice.

2ndly. As regards dry lands, although from the nature of the case, there is no similar implied covenant here, the objections to the policy of exacting the full assessment in a season like the present are manifold—

(a.) The Madras ryot is very heavily taxed; 5 Rupees per acre for wet (single crop) and 1 Rupee per acre for dry being his average assessment. Moreover, under other terminable settlements, the whole of the waste land is given up by Government for the term of the thirty years—and under the Zeminadari settlement it is given up in perpetuity, in addition to the percentage for the Zemindar's commission. But in Madras, not only is every acre of waste liable to its full quota of tax, as soon as brought under cultivation, but there is no allowance whatever for fallow, or for land in a ryots' occupation which is *bona fide* set apart by him for the pasturage of his cattle. For instance, during the Fasli year last reported on, as much as 2,134,110 acres with an average assessment of 15 Annas, left waste by the ryots of this Presidency out of their holdings chiefly for the purpose last mentioned, was fully charged against them, and fully collected.

(b.) Let the extent and nature of their holdings be considered. The number of leases is 2,392,064: of these 38,825 only are above 100 Rupees, while upwards of one million and a quarter are below 10 Rupees. The average extent of a holding is 8 acres, and the average assessment payable is 15 Rupees, or thirty Shillings sterling. How are two million peasant proprietors of this kind to pay sixty Shillings apiece next year—after a season of unprecedented calamity which, in addition to other sufferings and losses, has brought about already the destruction of a great portion of their cattle—and will cause the loss of many more? So far from supposing it possible to collect the assessment from the great body of impoverished ryots, the Government anticipate having to make considerable advances for the assistance of cultivators in the purchase of agricultural stock and seed grain.

(c.) It is, at all events, impossible to inaugurate any new system *per saltum* or without full and sufficient notice: and where such notice is given, the ryot has at hand a procedure by which he can readily protect himself. By immemorial custom the Madras ryot is at liberty to readjust the extent of his holding within a certain day of each year, which day is selected with special reference to the monsoon on which his district principally depends for its rains. In Bellary, for instance, the south-west monsoon is looked for in the first week of June: and the ryot is allowed till the 15th of July to contract his holding. There can be no doubt that, if Bellary cultivators had foreseen that, however bad the coming season, they would, sooner or later, be called upon to pay the full assessment on their holdings—those holdings would, in the vast majority of cases, have been contracted and very many altogether relinquished. Nobody has anything to fear from competition, for his neighbours are as straitened as himself; and in his way

the Government would be a far greater loser in direct collection of revenue than it is at present; would have many hundreds of thousands more on Relief Works; and would lose for the common good the produce of the cultivation which is still carried on. Many a reputable ryot, who is now digging a well and toiling on as best he may with the help of the village money-lender, would immediately fall into the utter destitution which characterizes the great majority of his fellows: he will not try to help himself, if his possible failure is to be followed by the swift and inexorable demands of the State for the full assessment of his land: nor would any sane money-lender advance him a loan in such circumstances.

5. His Grace in Council trusts that in the foregoing remarks he has demonstrated the utter impossibility in part, and the inexpediency in all, of attempting to vary the usual undertaking and custom by substituting, suddenly and without notice, suspension for remission of revenue in specially disastrous season. He would however, point in conclusion to the large figures yielded by the land revenue of Madras—the highest in any part of India—and to its annually steady increase. He believes that its management is thoroughly well in hand by those to whom the system pursued has long been familiar: and that the wholesale innovation proposed had nothing to recommend it, except that it would retain apparently to the credit of Government, a claim which would never be realized. It is as incompatible, in his opinion, with justice to the ryot as with the prosperity of the general revenues of the Presidency:—not only the land revenue but that under every other head—Salt, Stamps, Abkari—rises or falls with the condition of the ryot, and of the vast agricultural and mercantile populations linked with his interests.

6. The people, it has been shown, can protect themselves by relinquishing their lands in bad years, and would certainly in self-defence do so, if the unusual course proposed by Sir Richard Temple were adopted. Such action on the part of the ryots would be alike injurious to themselves and to the State: and His Grace the Governor in Council trusts that valid reasons have been advanced for making no change in the ordinary practice, which has always been observed in this Presidency, of granting remission of the Government revenue on the occurrence of disastrous seasons.

7. A copy of this correspondence will be furnished for the information of the Secretary of State.

I have the honor to be,
Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

(Signed) D. F. CARMICHAEL,
Secretary to Government.

Exd. F. R. Bantlemen.

Agriculture (1877) General

Government of Fort St. George

Dated 9th February 1877. No. 576.
Received. Enclosures
6 spare copies
D. No. Progs.
L. No. No. 249

Submitting additional observations with reference to the representation made to the Government of India by Sir Richard Temple on the subject of remissions of land-revenue which are being made in the Madras Presidency in respect of the present famine.

Revenue Dep^{ty}
29 February 1877

To
The Secy to the Govt of India
Dep^{ty} of Rev. Agri. & Commerce

Sir,

Referring to the list:

grants marginally noted,
arising out of a representation
to the Govt of India by Sir
Richard Temple on the
subject of Remissions of land
revenue which are being made
in respect of the present
famine - I am directed by
His Grace the Governor in
Council to submit the
following additional observations

2. During

From Govt of India 26 Jan 77
To — Govt — 22 Feb 77

1/12

72

For Council
I have submitted
the following observations
for the Council

2.

During the existence of the heavy assessments which prevailed in this Presidency down to the time of Lord Harris's death, & before the introduction of the Revenue Settlement now in progress, and which has already taken effect in five districts & in considerable portion of four others - remissions were large & numerous, administered under a complicated system, & forming part of the annual & ordinary ^{the revised} Jamabandi. Under ^{used} a new & moderate assessment, it was anticipated that the necessity for making them would cease, except under rare & special circumstances.

A

A district once settled - the following are the sole rules on the subject, viz - ^{No 1}

(1) Wet land - Full remission when the land is left waste, or the crop totally lost owing either to deficiency or excess of water.

(2) Dry land - None; except in very exceptional circumstances of distress, & under the express sanction of the Board of Revenue in each case.

In regard to unsettled districts, the 2nd Rule applies to them also; but to wet lands in unsettled districts, partial loss of crops entitles the occupant to partial remission.

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the fact that the rates there
are often high & unequal;
& no allowance was made
in fixing them, for vicissitudes
of season.

Taking the accounts
of the Fasli year ending 30th
June 1875, it appears that
the remissions under the 1st
head came to Rs. 2,70,000
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in Vellore; & that those under
the 2nd head amounted to
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character brought up the
total to $4\frac{3}{4}$ lacs, being about $\frac{3}{4}$

per

per cent on the total assess-
ment of Ryotwari holdings.
Such
of Rs. 388,46,315. So much
were
for the results of the system
in an ordinary year. It will
be seen from the margin that
4. Debt regard to the
proposal to saddle the Ryot
with the sum that would
now, under customary law
- the payment on account of
be remitted, as a debt to be
paid by him in the following
year - the Governor in Council
is entirely opposed to the
suggestion.

In the first place, as
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obvious that the Govt is under
an implied covenant to
supply the necessary irriga-
tion. In making the

settlement

settlement, which proceeds in
all cases on the basis of
sharing the crop between
the Govt and the Ryot,
a certain allowance is made
to the Ryot for ordinary
vicissitudes of season; &
this being so the full
assessment is exacted even
in bad years where the crop
of crop is partial only: but
where the water to be supplied
fails altogether, the attempt
at such exaction would be

universally resisted as at
variance with the bargain in fact it would be looked upon as
grand & an outrage.

2^{ndly} As regards dry lands—
although from the nature of
the case, there is no similar
implied

implied covenant here; the
policy of exacting the full
assessment in a season like
the present is ^{not} manifest.

(14) The Madras Ryot is
very heavily taxed; 5 Rupees
^(high crop) per acre for wet and 1 Rupee
per acre for dry being his
average assessment. Under
the other terminable settle-
ments, moreover, the whole
of the waste land is given
up by Govt for the term
of the thirty years—^{and} while
under the Zamindari settle-
ment it is given up in
perpetuity, besides the per-
centage for the Zamindar's
commission. But in Madras,
not

not only every acre of waste
liable to its full quota of
tax, as soon as brought
under cultivation, but there
is no allowance whatever
for fallow, or for land in
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(B.) Let the extent &
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5
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38,825 only are above 100 Rupees.
While upwards of one million
& a quarter are below 10 Rs.
The average extent of a
holding is 8 acres, & the
average assessment payable
is 15 Rupees - or thirty shillings
sterling. How are two million
peasant proprietors of this
kind to pay sixty shillings
a piece next year - after a
season of unprecedented ca-
lamity which, in addition
to other sufferings and
losses, ^{with} has brought about
^{already} the destruction of a great
portion

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and which owing to the many more.

necessarily heavy loss by
deaths among the predial
classes, will have greatly
diminished the labour
power of the country. Is

far from supposing it
possible to collect the
assessment from the

great body of impoverished
ryots, the Govt. anticipate
having to make considerable

advances for the ^{the assistance} purchase of cultivators
of seed grain ^{in the purchase of} and
agricultural stock & seed grain.

(C) It is, at all events,
impossible to inaugurate
any new system per saltum

or

or without full & sufficient
notice: & where such notice
is given, the Ryot has at
hand a procedure by which
he can readily protect
himself. By immemorial
custom the Madras Ryot is
at liberty to readjust the
extent of his holding within
a certain day of each year,
which ^{day} is selected with
special reference to the
monsoon on which his district
principally depends for its
rains. In Bellary, for
instance, the South West
monsoon is looked for in
the first week of June: &
the Ryot is allowed till the
15th

15th of July to contract
his holding. There can be
no manner of doubt that,
if the Bellary cultivators
had foreseen that, however
unprosperous the coming
season, they would, sooner
or later, be called upon
to pay the full assess-

ment on their holdings—
those holdings would, in the
vast majority of cases, have

been altogether relinquished.

Nobody has anything to fear

from competition, for his

neighbours are as straitened

as himself; & in this way

the Govt would be a far

greater loser than it is

at present; would have

many.

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many hundreds of thousands of
more on Relief works; and
would lose for the common
good the produce of the
cultivation which is still
carried on. Many a reputable
ryst, who is now digging a
well & toiling on as best
he may with the help of
the village money lender,
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into the utter destitution
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great majority of his fellows.
He will not try to help
himself, if his possible
failure is to be followed
by the swift & inexorable
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the ^{past} assessment of his land.
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money lender advance
him a loan in such
circumstances.

5. His Grace in
Council trusts that in the
foregoing remarks he
has demonstrated the
utter inadmissibility of
Sir Richard Temple's
proposal to substitute

impossibility in part, & the
improbability in all, of attempting
to vary the usual understanding
of custom by substituting, suddenly
without notice, the

suspension for remission
of revenue in ^{a specially disastrous} unfavorable
seasons. - He could
however point in conclusion

to

to the large figures yielded
by the Land Revenue
of Madras - the highest
in any part of India -
& to its annually steady
increase. - He believes
that its management is
thoroughly well in hand
by those to whom that
system pursued has long
been familiar - & that the
wholesale innovation pro-
posed has nothing to
recommend it & everything
to condemn it. It is as
incompatible, in his opinion,
with justice to the Ryot
as with the prosperity of
the

except that it would retain apparently
the spirit of Sir R. Temple's plan
would never be realized:

which, however the best, is long
like a millstone around
the neck of the struggling
Ryot.

the general revenues of
the Presidency:— not only
the land revenue but
that under every other
head — Salt, Stamps,
Abkari — rises or falls
with the condition of
the Ryot & the vast
agricultural ^{& mercantile} populations
linked with his interests.

6. The people, it has been shown,
can (if it comes to the worst)
protect themselves by relinquish-
ing their lands and would
certainly do so — ^{in self defence} the signifi-
cance of a combination
of his kind in a loyal,
peaceable & contented
section of the Indian Empire
is of serious political
importance —

6. A copy of his correspondence
will be furnished for the
inform. of H. M. Govt.

D.S. 4/2/77

if the currency coins proposed by Sir R. Temple were
adopted. Such action on the part of the Ryots will be alike injurious
to themselves & to the State: and it is from the Govt. that the Ryots
reasons have been advanced ~~against~~ for making no change in the ordinary
practice, which has always been observed in this Presidency, of granting
remission of the Govt. revenue on the occurrence of disastrous seasons.

performed

D.S. 4-2-77

in bad years,

I would not say this in a
private despatch — it looks
like minutes of the committee
B.C.

the Govt. is here as well
as in England

Remission of

V. Suspension

of Revenue.

To East India.

Sept of 1817

Care

246
Sept 9

256 - 4/2/7