

CHAPTER IX.

Economic, social and other conditions in Mysore about the period of the new Maharaja's assumption of power.

Reference has already been made to the disastrous effects produced by the great famine of 1876-77. A test census was taken on the 19th January 1878 throughout all the villages comprised in one hobli in each of the 51 taluks out of a total number of 68, no census being taken in 17 taluks where the famine had not been severely felt. The area in which the census was thus taken represented 8 per cent of the whole country. The average population of a hobli before the famine was about 8000 persons. In the hoblies in which this partial census was taken the total population as taken in 1878 amounted to 2,94,126 persons as compared with 4,12,934 who were reckoned at the census of 1871, thereby showing a loss of population equal to 28.77 per cent in the areas where the census was taken. It was found that 15.1 per cent of the people had died, that 7.9 per cent had emigrated and that the remainder 5.77 were not accounted for. C. A. Elliot, the Famine Commissioner, calculated that the total loss of population in the whole State amounted to 10,50,000, while Gordon set it at 7 lakhs and the loss in property was estimated at Rs. 10 crores. In any case the mortality from famine in Mysore was deplorably great. Lord Cranbrooke, the Secretary of State, at the time expressed the opinion that it was necessary to investigate how far the melancholy sacrifice of life which had taken place was due to causes which could at the time have been rendered less severe or how far such causes could be counteracted in any future similar visitation. Lord Lytton who, it will be remembered, visited Mysore in 1877 wrote a memorandum in November 1878 and the following extract from this memorandum summarises the disastrous effects of this famine.

“The beginning of the recent calamity was the partial failure of the rains in 1875. The rainfall was from one-third to two-thirds of the average. Much of the food crop was lost; but the stocks of food in Mysore have always been large; and this failure caused only temporary or occasional distress, for the price of food did not

rise to double the ordinary rates. In the year 1876 the rainfall again was short; barely a third of the ordinary harvest was reaped; matters were aggravated by the fact that crops had failed in the adjacent districts of Madras and Bombay; and by the middle of December 1876 famine had begun. From December till March matters grew worse; 500 tons of food (enough to support 900,000 people) were imported daily by railway; yet the price of food ranged during those months at 13 to 15 lbs a rupee; that is to say, at four to five times the ordinary rates. In the months of April and May 1877 the usual spring showers came and hope revived. But as the month of June wore on and as July came, it was apparent that the early rains were going to fail again, and for the third year in succession. Panic and mortality spread among the people; famine increased in the land; and it was not until the bountiful rains of September and October 1877 that the pressure of famine began to abate. During the eight months of extreme famine no crops were reaped; the price of food ranged from 3 to 6 times the ordinary rates, and for the common people there were no means of earning wages outside the relief works. Even in 1877-78 though some relief was felt, the yield of the harvest was less than half the food-crop of an ordinary year. From November 1877 till the present time of writing (November 1878) the price of food has ranged at nearly three times the rate of ordinary years."

The second regular census was taken on the 17th February 1881 and the area of the State at this census was regarded to be 24,723 square miles based upon the measurements of the Revenue Survey then in progress. The total population in 1881 numbered 41,86,000 giving a density of 169 per square mile. In 1841 the population was calculated at 30½ lakhs and in 1851 at a little over 34½ lakhs. In 1860 it was about 38½ lakhs. These estimates were more or less based on the Khaneshumari or village accounts, according to which only an enumeration of families was made. The rate of increase based on these estimates for 29 years was thus 1.16 per cent per annum. The total population in 1871 according to the first regular census was 50,55,412 speaking six different languages—Kanada, Telugu, Tamil, Hindusthani, Marathi and English in the descending order of minority. During the rule of

Haidar Ali and Tippu Sultan which lasted from 1761 to 1799 unceasing warfare not only kept the country in continual turmoil but also led to a great intermingling of various classes in the population. A strong Mahratta element had been introduced into the northern and eastern parts of the present Mysore State by Shahji the father of Sivaji who governed that part of the country on behalf of the Bijapur Kings. Next followed the Mughal Government of Sira. Subsequently, even after the Mysore Rajas had established their power, large tracts in the centre of the country were pledged to the Mahrattas to buy off their repeated invasions. During the last wars of Mysore with the British vast hordes of Lambanias also known as Brinjaries accompanied the march of the latter for the supply of grain, while considerable numbers of Tamil camp followers and traders attended on their footsteps for service and trade and many of these settled in the State. The Telugu-speaking people were mostly the descendants of those who came to the country during the days of the Vijayanagar rule. Taking the normal increase that should have occurred if there had been no famine at only 1 per cent instead of at 1.16 per cent per annum, the population of 1881 showed a decrease of 8,69,224 being a diminution of 17.19 per cent on the previous census largely attributable to the disastrous effects of the famine of 1876-77.

Regarding the civil condition of the population in 1881, 11,55,674 males and 7,57,563 females were single; 8,02,297 males and 8,14,607 females were married; and 1,27,871 males and 5,28,176 females were widowed.

The sale by public auction of women accused of adultery was very frequent even in the earlier days of the British Commission and it was only by a proclamation issued in 1834 that this odious practice by which the Government derived a revenue under the head of Samayachar was completely prohibited. Among Brahmins and Vaisyas females were not sold but expelled from their caste and branded on the arm as prostitutes. They then paid to the contractor an annual sum as long as they lived and when they died, all their property became his. Females of other Hindu castes were

sold by the contractor unless some relative stepped forward to satisfy his demand.

Taking the occupations of the people, the regular commercial classes numbered 45,366 males and 10,142 females; agricultural class numbered 10,08,826 males and 5,99,809 females or a little over 16 lakhs; industrial class 1,28,926 males and 46,034 females; professional class 90,452 males and 4948 females. Among the professional classes those engaged in Government Service numbered 65,015.

There were under instruction in 1881 only 1.63 of the total population. The number of illiterates formed 94.18 per cent of the total population. Only one boy out of 5 of school-going age and one girl out of 100 of the same were under instruction.

Of the total area of land 12,177 square miles were regarded as uncultivable, 5491 square miles as cultivable and 7055 square miles were under cultivation. The amount of payments to Government whether as land revenue or quit-rent was Rs. 68,11,568. In addition, wet lands were charged also with an irrigation cess of one anna per rupee of the land assessment. The total amount of local rates and cess paid on land was Rs. 5,62,558 and was appropriated towards district roads, rural education and other local requirements. House and other taxes were levied in all municipalities. The average incidence of amount of payments per acre of revenue-paying cultivated area was Re. 1-11-3, while that of local rates and cesses per acre of cultivated land was 1 anna 11 pies. The average incidence of rent paid per cultivated acre was Re. 1-8-1.

The exact yield from the land wet or dry cannot be accurately calculated. In 1881, however, it was regarded that an average estimate of 2 Candies per acre (1 Candi being equal to 160 seers) for dry and 3 Candies for wet land was considered not far from the actual produce in a good year. The seed grains came to 8 seers per acre for dry and 25 seers for wet land and the wastage was reckoned at 5 per cent, leaving a residum available for domestic or other purposes. The consumption per head of a labouring adult when well off was generally about 1 seer or 2 lbs a day and rather

above it than below. Taking women, children and infants together along with adult males, the average consumption was about $1\frac{1}{2}$ lbs a day. The usual rate of consumption per head per annum was $1\frac{1}{2}$ Candies or 480 lbs.

The coffee plantations offered employment to a great number of labourers in coffee-picking which lasted from November to the end of February, when almost all the coolies returned to their villages to observe the Ugadi feast or new year in their own homes only a few remaining in the coffee districts, though a good number returned in April when there was work to be done in hoeing and weeding the planted ground or clearing for fresh plantation. The eastern parts of Hassan and of Mysore were the tracts in which emigration was most common. Tumkur and the western parts of Bangalore also supplied some labour, but none went from Kolar or the east of Bangalore and hardly any from Chitaldrug. These coolies totalling about $1\frac{1}{2}$ lakhs were employed annually in Coorg, Manjarabad, Koppa and Nilgiri plantations. The wages generally given were 4 annas per man and 2 annas 8 pies per woman per day.

Upto the time of the famine there were in the interior of the Malnad labourers called Huttalu and Kondalu with many of the respectable ryots. But after the famine, they almost ceased to exist. Their masters finding it difficult to maintain themselves during the famine did not attempt to prevent these labourers from leaving their service.

The number of towns and villages returned in 1881 was 17,655 which when compared with the 19,630 returned in 1871 showed a diminution of 1975 or 10 per cent.

Mysore the Dynastic capital and Bangalore the chief seat of Government were the only two places in telegraphic communication in 1881 except railway stations on the lines from Bangalore to Mysore and from Bangalore to Jalarpet. From Bangalore, however, telegraphic lines ran through north to Bellary and west via Mercara to Mangalore and Cannanore without intermediate stations. Messages could be wired from Bangalore to all parts of India and the world. In the interior of the country good roads

intersected almost every part and means of communication as compared with the past had become easy.

As regards trade in ordinary years, salt, piece-goods and metals were brought to Bangalore by rail and distributed by country-carts all over the State, ragi, rice, coffee, cocoanut and arecanut being exported in return. The food supply was usually in excess of the local consumption. The ordinary load of a cart was more than $\frac{1}{2}$ a ton and the ordinary day's march 18 to 20 miles.