



The Famine administration in Hyderabad Karnataka under the Nizams

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In the present paper an attempt is made to bring into the “The Famine Administration in Hyderabad Karnataka under the Nizams”.

Mir Qamar-ud-din Khan Siddiqi Bayofandi, the first Nizam of Hyderabad, He was also known as Chin Qilich Kamaruddin khan, Nizam-ul-Mulk, Asaf Jah, and Nizam-I, He began his career as a Favorite of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb, who promoted him to the rank of general. After the death of Aurangzeb, he refused to favor any of Aurangzeb's warring sons and thus remained neutral. Later Asaf Jah declared himself independence and established the Asaf Jahi dynasty in 1724. The following Kings were known as ‘Asaf Jahi Nizams, or Nizams of Hyderabad, and kept the title Nizam-ul-Mulk.¹

A famine is a widespread scarcity of food caused by several factors including war, natural disasters, crop failure, widespread poverty and government policies. Famine in Indian sub-continent is a chronicle feature. Agriculture in India is heavily dependent on a suitable climate. Rains in summer are important for the irrigation of crops. Lack of rainfall and droughts had lead to several famine in India.

These famines caused a widespread scarcity of food and were responsible for numerous deaths across the country. The most significant famine in list are the great Bengal famine of 1770 caused around 10 million deaths, Skull famine or Dojibara famine caused 11 million deaths approximately.²

No History of Hyderabad Karnataka would be complete without a mention of the innumerable famine and scarcities which haunted and harassed the people in the past two

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centuries. The districts of Aurangabad, Bhir, Gulbarga Osmanabad, Bidar and Raichur were more susceptible to crop failure and hence were recognized as a "Famine zone" by the Nizam's Government.³

The Famine administration in Nizam's Dominions was based on certain definite principles were evolved by the administrators in British India after the disastrous famine of 1865-66, which was known as the Orissa famine. This Famine has been regarded as the turning point in the history of Indian famines. A commission of enquiry presided over by Sir George Campbell was appointed by the Government of India.⁴

In 1702 much distress was caused by the failure of the crops owing to excessive rain fall. In 1713, during the viceroyalty of the first Nizam great distress prevailed throughout the Deccan.

In 1804 intense distress is stated in the Lingsugur, Raichur, Nagarkarnul, Aurangabad, Birh, Bidar and Parbhani districts. The talukdar in his report states that owing to a season of drought, the Kharif crop wholly failed and Ragi crop entirely perished that from sixty seers per rupee (its usual market value) it went up to eight seers and subsequently two and half seers per rupee. Some people emigrated to move favored districts but few villages were depopulated, It was not dangerous to human life. There was no records found what measures they were taken to relieve the distress.⁵ The talukdar of Raichur states that Ragi sold at about three seers per rupee and that in the course of this famine Dara Jah, A Jagirdar of that district distributed some Fifty Thousand rupees worth of Jowari among the distressed poor.

In Bidar districts the situation are nearly the same. The Killedar or officer incharge of the fort sold the government grain stocked there at six seers per rupee as a measure of relief and distributed half a seer of grain per diem among the poor and distressed. There were in that part comparatively few deaths from starvation and very little emigration.⁶

In 1813 A.D. Shorapur suffered from a pressure of prices, which lasted only a few months. Grain sold at Six Seers per rupee. Six years later (1819 A.D) the districts of Gulbarga, Lingsugur, Bir,Shorapur, Indur and Parbhani were devastated by another famine. In the Gulbarga agricultural operations were suspended. Jawari which usually sold at seventh seers per rupee went up as high as three seers.Grains and vegetables price were very high. A charity house was opened by the government where the better classes received one seer of jawari and two dubs per head per day while the lower classes received cooked food.⁷

In 1833 the most severe famines of this century occurred and like that of 1876-77 in the Madras and Bombay presidencies. The area of distress included the districts of Gulbarga,

Lingsugur, Nagarkarnul, Indur and Shorapur. The talukdar of Gulbarga describes the famine was occurred because a failure of the monsoon the wheat and jawari sold at very high price. Rice sold at six seers per rupee. All export of grain was stopped. The market prices were ruled by the local authorities and no great loss of life but the people suffered lack of food there conditions was very miserable so they immigrated into more favored districts. Many villages were depopulated, The loss of revenue in that districts alone amounted to about a lack of rupees and many years elapsed before the district recovered from the effect of this shock.⁸

In 1846 A.D. the grain was sold at fifteen seers per rupee being just double the usual price much sickness prevailed amongst the poor in those districts where the distress was most felt, Cattle dying in great numbers and in many places the fowls completely disappeared. After Eight years in 1854 A.D another famine brought on by drought prevailed in the districts of Gulbarga, Shorapur, Raichur, Nagar-Karnul, Indur and Hyderabad. The Talukdar of Gulbarga states that the Kharif crops failed owing to a very scanty fall of rain, jawari sold at eleven seers per rupee.⁹ In 1864 again the famine brought on the districts of Nagar-Karnul, Gulbarga, Indur, Shorapur, Raichur and Hyderabad. In Gulbarga district famine was not very severe. A slight famine also prevailed in the other districts.¹⁰

Again the famine occurred in 1876-77 the districts affected in this year were a great portion of Lingsugur, A little less than half of East Raichur more than one third of Shorapur, one fourth of Gulbarga and Naldurg. Nagar-Karnul and Nalgundan were at first thought to be seriously affected. The whole of His Highness dominions suffered in the Shape of high prices of food and the influx of famine stricken people from affected regions. Relief works and poor houses were opened in all the famine occurred districts.¹¹

A few district relief works were opened on October 1876 but relief proper commenced on the 9th December 1876. The distress reached its highest point in the months of April and May and the relief measures were finally closed in the beginning of November 1877. In these years the public work Department took greatest in the carrying out of relief work in various part of the Dominions such as repair and depended the tanks constructed the roads and bridges etc.¹²

A more severe famine appeared Imminent in 1896 but fortunately averted by good rains in November which saved the standing rabi crops, Although there was no famine the distress was very severe in some parts, The whole of the districts of

Raichur, Lingsugur and part of Gulbarga, Osmanabad and Bhir Comprising an area of 10.278 Square miles with a Population of 11/2 millions were involved in distress. In July 1897 the affected area increased to 17.835 square miles with a population of 2.400.000 but a sufficient fall of rain in August averted famine. The total expenditure On relief war 73/4 lakhs.¹³

The government conducted the relief works consisted mainly the construction roads by the P.W.D, under the petty contract system, It was only in few minor a instances that relief works were carried out under the departmental system. The first relief work was started on the 19th November 1896 and the last work was closed on the 4th November 1897.

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The famine of 1900 was caused by a failure the south-west monsoon in 1899, The rain is expected to short intervals from June to the end of September. There was also usually some late rain brought up by the Some North-east monsoon in November but this was also seriously deficient. The average rainfall in the whole of the dominions in 1899 was only 15.49 inches or less than half the usual quantity. In the western and southern divisions the latter rains entirely failed in all parts the late rain was much below the average but still it was sufficient in the Raichur and Lingsugur districts.¹⁴

The famine area extended over the whole of the Aurangabad, Bir, Parbhani and Naldurg districts two and a half talukas of the Nander district, three talukas of the Bidar district and the one taluk of the Gulbarga district. The total area of this part of country was 23,007 square miles with a population, according to the census of 1891 3.573.651 population.¹⁵

The Bidar district had suffered in the taluks of Udgir, Rajura and Nilanga. The other Parts of this district were in fairly good Condition and there was no necessity for relief work in them.

The latest report from Gulbarga shows that the Rabi crop has largely failed especially in the Mahagaon taluk, where the people suffered lot of problems. Yadgir taluk in Raichur district relief works are necessary. The other talukas do not require relief works.¹⁶

According to the "Report on the famine Relief operations in His Highness the Nizam's Dominions -(1309 Fasli) 1899-1900, The Government adopted Gratuitous Relief and established poor houses in large centers, generally Tehsil towns and the head-quarters of districts. In these institutions cooked food was usually given but a number of persons preferred dry grain, which was given to them in doles daily and sometimes weekly. The Famine commissioner issued detailed instructions to the district officials regarding administration of gratuitous relief. A poor house in the vicinity of the Hominabad road was maintained at, cost of Rs.45 for a few days in the month of May. In June, the subadar of the Gulbarga division represented the necessity of opening a poorhouse at Gulbarga to relieve many poor persons, who had come into the town in search of charity.

A poor houses was opened in the Nilanga taluk, Bidar district

The public works Department was one of the most active branches of district administration during the time of famine. In the Bidar district, some useful work was done. The first work was the Udgir tank Was deepened and repaired n the Udgir taluk. The second work was the total length of the road from Bidur to Rajura is 70 miles, which only 30 miles from the Rajura end to a village called Mogha, five miles to the south -east of Udgir were undertaken of famine work.

The Hominabad road passes from Gulbarga to Hominabad and is 38 miles length, which 14 miles (from 8 to 21 miles) were undertaken during the famine and this was the only work in the Gulbarga district.¹⁷

The appointment of famine commissioner was created on the 4th October 1899. And his powers were defined in rules which received the sanction of His Excellency the Minister on the 20th December 1899. The famine commissioner was visiting those places where more distress was prevalent and studies the conditions of the ryots.

The District Engineers was in charge of district carried on their ordinary duties in addition to famine work. The District Engineer submitted his inspection report to the famine commissioner.

The First Talukdar of the district is the chief officer in charge of relief operations in his district. The Talukdar was asked to verify the statements made by some of the Tahsildars of their respective districts in the weekly season reports of starvation and the prevalence of severe distress. He directed them to take necessary relief measures and open poor houses and

submit proposals for further relief measures. In famine matters all officers were directly under the orders of the Famine Commissioner.¹⁸

Raichur, Gulbarga, Bidar and Lingsugur are the Districts which are generally the first to suffer from a failure of rains and more liable to famine than any other part of the state. The first indications of famine are a sharp rise in the price of grain.

If the crops fail in the neighboring districts or provinces. There is a sudden influx of immigrants in search of work. Sometimes sufficient grain is produced for the local needs, but if there be famine outside the country grain is largely exported, which resulted in high prices this was actually the case in 1899-1900.

The protective measures include the extension and maintenance of roads and the construction of wells. In times of famine food and rations are given to those able to work and poorhouses are established for the infirm and decrepit. Loan is advanced to the ryots to enable them to purchase cattle and cheap grain shops are opened for the relief of others.

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