

Decem. 14/329

CS 36284

19 M

INDIGO COMMISSION.

18. We propose to show in a future portion of our Report, what degree of credit, in our opinion, is due to the widely different views held of this important question.

19. At this point we shall place before His Honor a concise account of the various systems, under which, from the evidence before us, indigo is cultivated on this side of India.

20. The indigo cultivation may be classified under two great heads, the *nij-abad* and the *ryotti*. The former or "own cultivation" may be likened in some respects, to a home farm, managed by the proprietor of an estate in England. It is carried on on lands of which the factory or Concern has acquired the tenant right, or the right of actual occupancy, by an establishment of ploughs, bullocks and servants, maintained at the planter's expense. Occasionally ploughs and bullocks are hired for the purpose, when the establishment kept up at the factory may not be sufficient. Here, too, we must state that in *nij* cultivation there is a marked distinction between "high lands" and *chur* or low lands, which we shall more clearly illustrate hereafter.

21. The *ryotti* cultivation, on the other hand, as the very name implies, is carried on by ryots on their own lands, under contract and by advances made by the planter, as will be hereafter explained. And the *ryotti*, again, is further divided into cultivation of two kinds, one carried on in villages or estates, of which the planter has acquired, temporarily or permanently, the rights of the zemindar or talookdar, and the other in villages belonging to other parties. These two kinds are familiarly known under the names of *ilaka* and *be-ilaka*.

22. The amount of *nij* cultivation varies in the different factories and Concerns, from a few beegahs to several thousands. In some cases, as will be found from an abstract of replies to a circular on the subject, there are 2,000 beegahs of *nij* to 10,000 or 12,000 of *ryotti* cultivation. In other factories, the amount of *nij* is two-thirds or even three-fourths of the whole. And, in a few rare instances, the whole area of the planter's cultivation is of this kind, and the system of cultivating by ryots and advances is, in such factories, not adopted at all.

23. In every instance of *nij* farms, however, it is indispensable that the planter should have acquired the actual occupancy of the soil on which he may sow his indigo. This can be done in several ways. He may take a temporary or a permanent lease of waste or unoccupied lands from the zemindar, or he may acquire the temporary or the permanent right in a zemindary, and then use the zemindar's *khass* or "own" lands, for this kind of cultivation; or he may rent, or purchase out-right, the *jote* or actual rights of the tenant from the tenant himself, as opportunities may occur. Often there is a trifling extent of land attached to the factory buildings, the occupancy and right in which was obtained very many years back when the factory was first set up, and the *nij* is carried on within this space, or on the bank of rivers not liable to inundation; or on the homesteads of ryots who have demised without heirs, or have abandoned their villages from some cause or other; or on the sides of tanks, which, being raised by the accumulation of the earth thrown up in digging the tank, are eminently fitted for this end. But the largest and best fields for these operations of the planter are *chur* lands, or lands formed by alluvial accretion, liable to inundation in the rainy season, and either regular islands in the centre of the river, or long, low reaches fronting its banks. Sometimes tracts of this land may be found to extend, even in Nuddea, to a mile and more in length; and on the great rivers in Northern and Eastern Bengal it is well known that the *churs* are, literally, of enormous size.

24. Where a good establishment of bullocks, ploughs and *Boona*, i. e., jungle or hill coolies brought from the districts of Bancoorah, Beerbhoom, or the South-West Frontier Agency, is maintained, there is no difficulty in finishing this kind of cultivation. The indigo sown on *churs* is generally sown in October. The land in many instances hardly requires preparation,

File 2000 R-1

18/2000
12/6/2000

18/2000 L.
14/6

File 1/2000 R-1

12/2/2000

but when the inundation subsides, the seed is scattered by the hand, on the moist, soft surface, and takes root, grows, and ripens with little or no additional care. The above is termed *chitani* or sprinkling. Where an establishment is not kept up, and ploughs are required for October sowings, they are hired from the ryots, at so many the rupee, according to the current rate in the district, and the necessity for hiring these ploughs forms almost the only source of quarrel, when the planter's cultivation is *nij*. But even this source of disputes arises very seldom when the sowings take place in October; at which period the ryot has gathered in his early rice, and can spare ploughs from the cultivation of the produce known as cold-weather crops. Disputes, may occur in the case of high lands, that is, lands, not liable to inundation from rivers, on which indigo is sown in spring; because, if the season be a late one the ryot may require his own ploughs to prepare his rice lands, and any undue compulsion exercised in the requirement of labour, is sure to lead to complaints.

25. But, with this single exception, the *nij* cultivation proceeds with perfect smoothness. There are no disputes about the land, except such as might occur with regard to boundaries, or particular pieces, in this country, quite independent of indigo. There can be no complaints of compulsory contracts, advance forced on ryots, minute and harassing supervision during the agricultural operations, and the like. The lands, the ploughs, and the bullocks belonging to the planter, or the latter being hired by him at fair rates, and paid for in cash, the *nij* cultivation, even where largest in extent, can proceed as quietly as does the cultivation of a kitchen garden belonging to any Government official in any station in India. In *nij* cultivation, too, the whole risk and all the charges fall on the planter.

26. This being the case, as will be clearly seen from the evidence, pages 22 and following, and pages 42 and 44, 57 and 58, and page 131 and following, it was natural for us to consider whether we could recommend planters having large *ryotti* cultivation, to abandon or convert it into *nij-abad*, and thus close the very source of all quarrels. But this plan, apparently so attractive, seems to us not feasible for the following reasons.

27. In highly populous districts, such as those of Baraset, Nuddea, and Jessore, which have mostly engaged our attention, the requisite extent of waste or unoccupied lands, is, literally, not to be had. The available *chur* lands are already taken up; and it is only such lands that are found of sufficient extent, in one connected piece, and that can be cultivated by the planter with his own extensive establishment, without his incurring a loss; or with the hired ploughs in October, without giving rise to complaints. *Nij* cultivation on high lands, adjacent to villages, might, no doubt, be increased to some extent. A vigilant and energetic planter, by watching opportunities, might purchase tenant rights or rent land here and there, and so gradually increase his own cultivation. But this would be a work of some time and expense, and even if the occupancy of the soil could be secured, to the extent of several thousand *beegahs*, another practical difficulty would occur. Supposing a planter to have obtained high lands, to the extent of 10,000 or 12,000 *beegahs*, they would be in detached, unconnected pieces, and such lands could not probably be sown in October, when it is not of such urgent necessity to complete the sowings within a short and given period. Such lands would be sown with advantage only in spring, and would be entirely dependent on the first suitable fall of rain. The produce and dye of plant sown in October is, we may remark, never equal to that sown in spring. The advantage of sowing in the former month is that the plant can be reaped in June, or even in May, before any inundation or heavy rains, which, it is well known, injure or destroy the plant. And though the produce of October plant be second rate it is a safe but small return. Now, what is familiarly known as "a sowing shower" rarely occurs in spring, before the end of March, or the beginning or middle of April, and when the ground is in a fit state for the reception of seed, it is very desirable that the whole of the sowings should

be completed in the next three or four days. A planter could scarcely move about his own establishment, however liberal, of servants and ploughs with sufficient rapidity from place to place, so as to attain this object over 10,000 or 12,000 beegahs. But, if the ryots will turn out, each with his own plough, on his own land, those sowings are easily got through within the specified time. Indeed, a larger extent of *ryotti* cultivation can be finished in this way in a very few days. The Mulnath Concern might be able to sow, in this way, more than 25,000 beegahs by two or three showers. It is curious to contrast Bengal Proper in this respect with other parts of India. In Tirhoot, the moisture is retained in the soil throughout the cold-weather until the arrival of spring, and it is usual to sow in March, though no rain has fallen. Indeed a shower of rain at sowing time, may be destruction to a Tirhoot planter. The ground cakes, and the young plant is killed. In the North-West Provinces, irrigation renders the planter independent of rain; and the spring sowings can be spread over even a longer period of time.

28. A cultivation of 10,000 or 12,000 beegahs would represent, we are credibly informed, a capital of upwards of two lacs of rupees, and an expenditure annually of more than 50,000 to 60,000 rupees.

29. Again, unless the planter should have a turn for agriculture, and should choose to sow other crops on his high lands, after the indigo had been cut, such as oats, barley, mustard, and linseed, the expense of *nij* cultivation, including rent, would fall on the indigo alone. If a ryot can cultivate the same crops, the expense is naturally shared by such crops, with the indigo.

30. In this view we are afraid that, however desirable, a new scale of *nij* cultivation to the extent of that enjoyed by Mr. A. Sawers at Culna in Burdwan, or Mr. W. G. Rose at Ramnuggur in Moorshedabad, is not now to be looked for. A *nij* farm might, no doubt, be set up on a large scale, in some of the Eastern districts, where much jungle or waste land is available, but in this case, though lands were to be had, labor would be scarce, and an equal difficulty, though of a different kind, would probably be experienced.

31. Arriving at these conclusions, we turn to consider the nature and peculiar features of *ryotti* cultivation; this being the system prevalent in most Concerns, or that under which the greater portion of indigo is grown for manufacture, and which system, we may say, is now called to the bar of public opinion, to stand its trial. In Bengal Proper the ryots, as before observed, are of two classes, those resident on estates held by the concern, and those who are not. The contracts, which all the ryots enter into, are either for one year, or vary from three to five or ten years. The advances, made in October and November, are invariably at the rate of two rupees a beegah, and for this sum, the ryot usually agrees to give lands suited for indigo, which lands would be marked off by the servants of the factory, to prepare them, to sow the indigo, weed it, and deliver the plant at the factory. The plant, when grown and delivered, is measured, and credit is given to the ryot at a rate which now ranges from 4 to 6 or 8 bundles for the rupee. The bundles are measured by a six-foot chain passed round the centre of the plant. An acknowledgment is given to the ryot at the time of measurement, or some few days afterwards, and at the close of the manufacturing season, in August or September, the accounts are drawn out, and in October the ryot attends at the factory for the adjustment of the same. To his debit are set down, the advances made to him at 2 rupees a beegah, the value of the stamp on which the contract is engrossed, usually two annas, the seed from 4 to 5 seers, which is usually charged for at four annas a beegah though it costs more than this sum to the planter; the expense of carting the plant, and, after the first year's engagement, the amount of any previous debt remaining uncleared. To his credit is placed the value of the bundles delivered by him; and a balance is thus struck. If he has *fazil* or excess to receive, he has it paid down; if otherwise, the debt remains against him, and he receives advances for the next season's operations, not at the full amount of the lands for which he has engaged, but with a deduction proportionate to his debt; for instance,