

VIEWS

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OF

THE AGRA TRADERS

AS SUBMITTED

THROUGH THEIR

TRADES ASSOCIATION, AGRA

TO

**THE COMMITTEE ON MUNICIPAL TAXATION
UNITED PROVINCES OF AGRA & OUDH,**

IN REGARD TO

QUESTIONS OF TAXATION ASKED.

AGRA CANTT.,

PRINTED BY P. KHAYALI RAM MANAGER DAMODAR PRINTING WORKS,

1909.

INTRODUCTION.

OCTROI is not an English word, nor is it in force in England at least under this name. It is a French term and represents a French method of levying duty on provisions, liquors &c., when entering French towns. It is chiefly confined to provisions, spirits, wines and similar articles in its native country. In India, Madras and Bengal are completely free from octroi taxation. Bombay has town duties on about half a dozen commodities. It is the Panjab and the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh that suffer under this form of tax. The tax was originally intended to be levied on a few articles of every day consumption within the town but as time elapsed and the needs of Municipalities expanded, considerable ingenuity was employed to strain its elasticity which has now come to a breaking point. The schedules of octroi rates of some of the Municipalities especially that of the Agra Municipality show to what extent this French tax has been strained. The evil is not all apparent on merely seeing the schedules; it reveals itself in its worst features when one takes trouble to find out what an immense number of articles is taxed under the cover of the schedule. The passion to tax every thing has been on the increase for years past, and were it not for the timely intervention of the Government crying halt, who knows to what temperature it would have gone up.

Sir Hewett, who seems to have been made for this Province has interested himself in this question and has openly condemned it as "involving incalculable hindrance to business and causing trouble and expense to the corporations themselves which are a patent abuse," and His Honor seems to be inclined to abolish it and thus to confer a boon upon the people of this province. Sir Antony MacDonald, formerly Lieutenant-Governor of these Provinces equally condemned the system as is amply evident from his speech delivered at Agra on 14th January 1899.

Respectable papers such as the Civil and Military Gazette, the Pioneer and others have now and then made adverse remarks on this form of taxation. Memorials from the Panjab Trades Association, Agra Trades Association and other institutions have openly decried the evil and have respectfully appealed to the Government in view of its abolition.

When H. H. the Lieutenant Governor of these Provinces remarks in his Provincial Administration Report for 1907-08 that the 'disadvantages of this system are obvious,' it is needless for us to expatiate further on its evils. The history of Indian commerce shows how it has been emancipated to its present position by high statesmen and noble and large-hearted Officers. Customs lines that cramped it were broken-down, insurmountable barriers that existed in the shape of dusty roads, and unapproachable by-paths had to be overcome and Railway lines introduced to bring it out of its incarcerated nooks into the broad day light of the wide world. The expansion of Indian imports

and exports to such immense proportions within the recent times volumes for the efforts, and constant endeavours made by general Government distinguished officers to liberate commerce. Octroi is a fetter cramps local trade to the narrowest areas and its severance is the only remedy that could now save it from being strangled.

We have dwelt at length on octroi in answering the accompanying questions and we hope that the Commission will be pleased to give it their favourable consideration.

We may also point out that the question of election of members which the Government has now taken up, really deserves to be fully thrashed out because under the existing election systems, most incompetent members have often times managed to enter the Board and it would be personal observation if we were to point out the instances.

We are always prepared to answer any further communication and give our humble help whenever the Commission so desire. The outlines of the schemes suggested by us in answering the questions can be developed to all their details if the Commission desire so and allow us further time to complete them.

<p>AGRA :</p> <p><i>Dated 2nd February 1909.</i></p>	}	<p>We respectfully beg to subscribe ourselves as</p> <p>Your honor's most obedient subjects</p> <p>Merchants and Traders of Agra.</p>
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