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of the

Forest Grievances Inquiry Committee

Part II

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PART II-A

List of Grievances brought forward District by District

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LIST OF GRIEVANCES BROUGHT FORWARD DISTRICT BY DISTRICT

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East Khandesh District

I—Grazing and Grass

(a) Complaints regarding these are more numerous than any others received. The system of closure recently introduced in the Scrub Forests came in for a good deal of criticism, not so much on account of the additional closure involved as on account of the extra grazing fees payable to the purchasing contractors. Under this system, instead of three-fourths of the whole area being open during the whole year to grazing on payment of a fee of annas four per animal, half the whole area is now so open. In the other half the grass is sold to contractors and the area is closed to grazing for eight and three months with and without cutting of grass respectively; for the grazing in this half the contractor charges fees up to a maximum of Re. 1 per head.

(b) Some petitions are received asking for grazing at the rate of annas 2 per head, the rate charged up till about three years ago; and some people ask for free grazing.

(c) Exemption from payment is asked for all cows and for calves up to 1½ years old; for cattle passing through the Khandesh forests on their way to graze in Holkar territory; and for cart bullocks of people going into the forests to collect grass.

(d) Some complaints are received that the grazing area in certain places is not sufficient, and the suggestion is made that the District and not the Taluka should be the grazing unit. It was said that at Edalabad the number of cattle now was very much less than it was 25 or 30 years ago.

(e) It is requested that villagers near the boundary of two talukas should be allowed to graze their cattle in both talukas.

(f) Some people urge that there should be no distinction between village and non-village cattle, or between agricultural and non-agricultural cattle, as it is desirable to encourage cattle-breeding in the District.

(g) Closed forest is not fenced as a rule, and paths passing through closed forest along which cattle have to pass on their way to grazing and water are not fenced: these should be fenced, to prevent cattle from straying into closed forest.

(h) It is asked that no forest should be closed within a mile of any village, to prevent the hardship of cattle accidentally straying into the neighbouring forest being impounded. It is pointed out that when a few cattle out of a herd stray into closed forest the whole herd is often impounded. In cases where cattle are impounded it is complained that the owners have to pay not only pound fees but in addition compensation of Re. 1 and sometimes even Rs. 2 per animal to the Forest

Department. It is suggested that instead of compensation being levied so much per head of cattle a *panchnama* should be made at the place where the trespass occurred and compensation levied according to the damage done to the forest.

(i) In forest villages fees should be charged only on such cattle as actually graze in the forests, and not on all the cattle of the village, as is the practice at present.

(j) Where cattle camps are established during the rainy season it is the custom for the Forest Department to charge "hut fees" on the huts built by the herdsmen and "chula fees" to cover the cost of fuel used by them. It is requested that these fees should be abolished, or, if not abolished, charged at a fixed rate per hut and per chula, and not at a fixed rate per occupant of the hut.

(k) Complaints are received regarding the lack of water facilities in forest, which prevent the cattle from making full use of the available grazing.

(l) As regards grass, the commonest complaint received is regarding the sale of grass in the scrub jungle Sub-Blocks and Kurans to contractors without any restriction on the price which the contractors may charge to the public. It is said that in normal years the contractors charge Rs. 2, Rs. 3, Rs. 5 per cartload, and in a year of scarcity like the present the price goes up to Rs. 10 and even higher. It is requested that grass be sold on permits at annas 4 or annas 8 per cartload or that a maximum rate chargeable by the contractors be fixed; the maximum rate suggested varies from annas 4 to Rs. 3 per cartload, and annas 2 to annas 4 per headload.

(m) Other suggestions made are that the Kurans should be sold to the villagers themselves; or to agricultural Associations; or to Taluka Local Boards.

(n) In the Satpudas, where people have to go long distances for grass, it is requested that the period of the permits, should be lengthened, and that permits should be made available for any of the forests in the Satpudas.

II—Anjan leaves

These are used as fodder especially in times of scarcity. Monthly permits are issued at the rate of Rs. 3-8-0 per headload and Rs. 28 per cartload, under which the holders are allowed to remove leaves in headloads or cartloads for the period of one month. It is requested that leaves should be allowed free, or that the rate of fees should be reduced.

III—Fuel and Thorns

It is a common complaint that villagers have now to purchase fuel from coupe contractors instead of being able to get it on permit as was formerly the case. It is said that the contractors charge Rs. 3 or 4 per cartload for fuel in their coupes; the Forest Department should issue

permits at annas 8 per cartload, and not at Re. 1 or Rs. 2 as is now the case where there are no coupe contractors. Some people even ask to be allowed to take fuel free of charge.

Similarly the contractors in the scrub jungle area sell thorns at high rates; either the Forest Department should charge nominal rates or should limit the price which may be charged by the contractors.

IV—Fires

(a) Many requests are received that the system of communal punishment on account of fires should be stopped; that the responsibility of forest villagers for the protection of the forests should cease, and that, instead of punishing villagers for not helping, a system of rewards in the way of concessions to persons who help in protection should be instituted.

(b) It is suggested that the distinction between forest and non-forest villages be abolished, as forest villagers are frequently punished for not helping and seldom get the benefit of the concessions nominally allowed to them.

(c) Instances are cited in which some people from a village gave help but in spite of this the whole village was punished by the enhancement of grazing fees. At Hingone 18 people went to put out a fire out of a population of 3,000 to 3,500; at Dahigaon 32 people out of a population of 1,000 or more; at Marud people also helped; but in all these cases no concessions were given and the whole village was punished.

(d) Lists of people who help to put out fires are drawn by the Round Guard; these should be drawn up by the Police Patil or countersigned by him.

(e) The work of clearing and burning fire-lines should be paid for on daily wages at market rates, and villagers should not be punished for not carrying out this work.

(f) The rules regarding the burning of rab in fields should be extended so as to include the burning of any rubbish in fields, under the same precautions.

V—Permits and Passes

(a) The system tried last year in Chopda Range of selling by auction the right of collecting fees on fuel, grass, bamboos, and minor produce comes in for some criticism and it is urged that the old system of the Forest Department selling such material on permits should be reverted to, as the contractors charge excessive rates.

(b) There is a general request that Village Officers should be authorised to issue transit passes for wood, thorns, etc., from malki lands.

VI—Miscellaneous.

(a) Requests are made that the following materials should be given free to agriculturists:—Wood for agricultural implements; wood for mending carts broken down in forest limits; earth, stones, grass, fuel.

(b) A suggestion is made that the Indian Forest Act should be provincialised, so that the Legislative Council should have control over its provisions.

VII—Complaints regarding individual villages

(a) The villagers of Talai, in Erandol Taluka, complain that the Collector some years ago gave out 36 acres of grazing land for cultivation, and that there is no grazing ground available for them now.

(b) The villagers of Kandari in Jalgaon Taluka complain that excessive compensation was levied on some of them for clearing out an old ditch or bund which served the purpose of preventing rain water from the hills from flooding their fields.

West Khandesh District

Many of the grievances brought forward in this District are similar to those of East Khandesh. They are summarised below, reference being made to the serial numbers of similar grievances in the East Khandesh Statement, and new grievances being briefly described.

I—Grazing and grass

See East Khandesh I b, c, d, e, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n.

(o) At Chintana, from which village people have this year to go very long distances for grass, they ask to be allowed to cut and take the grass before paying for the permit, as this would entail only one visit to the forest naka instead of two.

(p) At Chintana the people complain that there is great delay in the issue of grass permits; one man named Ananda Nagho alleges that a Brahmin clerk at Chadwel asked him to pay Rs. 2 for a permit for a cart-load of grass.

(q) The people of Chintana complain that they have to pay a grazing fee of annas 8 to the Forest Department, and annas 2 to the Revenue Department.

(r) There is a complaint from Nawapur that where formerly cattle were allowed to graze on Government waste lands on payment of one auna per acre many of these waste lands have been afforested and the people have now to pay annas 4 per head of cattle.

(s) From Nawapur it is requested that wide publicity be given to the fact that grass and reeds are allowed free to Bhils under the North Tapti Code.

(t) It is requested that no coupes except teak coupes be closed, and that the period of closure be reduced to five years.

(u) It is requested that closed forests should be opened during the hot weather, April to June.

(v) It is requested that grazing fees be recovered later in the monsoon than at present, and remitted altogether if the rains fail; also that the checking of the number of cattle after payment of fees should not be allowed to cause hardship to the people.

(w) Tilaris (Sheep graziers) ask to be allowed to graze their sheep all over the forest. On the other hand villagers ask that sheep be not allowed in forest, as they spoil the grazing for cattle.

(x) The system of giving rewards to forest subordinates out of the compensation levied in grazing cases should be abolished, as it leads to subordinates impounding whole herds of cattle when only a few of the herd have been trespassing.

II—Anjan Leaves

See East Khandesh II (a).

(b) In West Khandesh the rate charged varies, and at Laling it was found that it was Rs. 4 per headload per month with a maximum of Rs. 60 per cartload per month. Complaints are made that this is too high, and requests are made that daily or weekly permits should be issued. Anjan leaves should be given free in times of scarcity.

(c) Requests are made that Anjan trees in coupes should not be cut, with a view to preserving the supply of leaves.

III—Fuel and Thorns

See East Khandesh III (a).

(b) Some villagers request that coupes be sold to them instead of to contractors.

IV—Fires

No complaints have been received regarding communal punishment as in East Khandesh.

See East Khandesh IV (e) and (f).

(g) It is requested that people should not be expected to go to a greater distance than five miles to extinguish a fire.

V—Permits and Passes

See East Khandesh V (b).

(c) It is requested that village officers be empowered to issue permits and passes for fuel and thorns from forest.

(d) It is complained that in Nawapur Petha villagers cannot get passes to remove the fruits of Mahua trees growing on their lands; they are therefore forced to sell their fruits to the Government Mahua contractor at annas 2 per measure, whereas the market price is annas 7. It is requested that the village officers be empowered to issue passes for Mahua fruits.

VI—Miscellaneous

See East Khandesh VI (a).

(c) Many requests are received to give out forest land for cultivation. On the other hand many requests are received against doing this, as the grazing ground is already insufficient in many places, and the giving out of more forest land for cultivation would increase the hardship.

(d) Permission is asked to shoot wild animals which damage the crops. It is also requested that forest in Nawapur Petha be cleared to a distance from the fields, to lessen the damage from wild animals.

(e) It is requested that when material is attached in offence cases the cart should not be detained, as this causes loss and inconvenience to the owner of the cart.