

in 1904 with 8 taluks.⁴¹ 42 It is located between the north latitude of 15° 18' and 16° 50' and the east longitudes of 79° 10' and 80° 55'. It is bounded on the north by the district of Nalconda and Krishna, on the south by the district of Nellore and on the west by the district of Kurnool. The district derived its name from Guntur. Various etymological explanations are given for the name of the district. Some believe that the original village was situated on a gunta (pond) and hence it was called Guntur. Another explanation is that the village was on a kunta (a local unit for measuring land) and it came to be called as Kunta Uru or Gunturu. Yet another version associate the name of the place with the practice of the local kings or chiefs firing a gun to mark midday after which it came to be known as Gunduru or Gunturu. The name 'Guntur' is first found mentioned in an inscription relating to the reign of Amma I, a Chalukyan ruler during 920-927 A.D. according to which the place formed part of Kanderuvali Vishya. Another early inscription in which the name 'Gunturu' is prominently mentioned is the one dated 1147 A.D. on a pillar in 'mantapur' near the Malleswara temple on the hall at Vijayawada (Bezwada).⁴³

The present Guntur district in Andhra Pradesh is a rich and surplus district. But during the company times it was a dry and parched land. The only source for supply of water was river Krishna but it became dry in March and May. There was no major lake in the district and tanks were also not numerous. The district used to get rains from north and south west monsoons. Rain fell with the setting in of south west monsoon in June. In August, September and October greater quantity of rain fell. There were occasional showers in November⁴⁴.

The above description shows that the district was dependent on nature for production. Absence of irrigation facilities troubled the district with famine and flood. One major cause of the famine of 1833-34 was also failure of rainfall. The early rains of 1832 (from May to September) were deficient in Madras and the north east monsoon was almost wanting. Except Ganjam, in all Northern districts including Guntur there was failure of rain. In November 1832, Government began to take alarm. Precautionary

41 8 taluks (1) Tenali (2) Guntur (3) Sattanapalle (4) Palnad (5) Bappta (6) Norasanowpet (7) Vinukonda (8) Ongole.

42 *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, provincial series, Vol. I, New Delhi, 1985, p.328.

43 Robert Eric Frykenberg, *Guntur District 1788-1818*, Oxford, 1965, p.1.

44 *Gazetteer of South India, Guntur*, Madras, 1855, p.64.

measures were taken. Import duties were removed and interference with trade was forbidden. But Government insisted on economy to be practiced.⁴⁵

In February, 1500 people were being fed at the Monegar Choultry, in Madras and large number of paupers flocked to this institution from the northern districts and north Arcot. Groups of people were seen dying of starvation in the streets every day and the number of applicants for relief at the Monegar Choultry, were quite beyond the means of the institutions. Such large crowds of starving paupers had reached Madras that the outbreak of some serious epidemic was apprehended by the medical officers. A large number of people had emigrated from Guntur and Masulipatam to Nellore. In the first fortnight of April, no less than 166 deaths from starvation had taken place in one half of Guntur district. At the end of the month the matter had become so bad in Guntur that application was made for the importation on Government account of 19 grace of Tanjore rice at Rs.319/- per grace to be sold in Guntur. In June 33000 people were being fed and 7000 employed under the management of the committee of the Monegar Choultry and those paupers receiving relief in Madras who were natives of Northern districts were deported there in large number. The distress increased terribly in Guntur in this month. Rice had reached Rs. 421/- per grace and the Collector reported that out of a population of 5, 00,000 about 1, 00,000 persons would need to be fed or employed.⁴⁶

In August matters became much worse everywhere in the Presidency. Serious grain riots occurred in Madras but were fortunately quelled by the aid of troops without any loss of life. The distress was reported to be dreadful and the horrible spectacle of a mother devouring her dead infant was seen in the streets of the town. The collector of Masulipatam begged for rice on Government account but was refused as the Madras merchants were known to be throwing in grain. From Nellore most harrowing accounts were received. Though 10000 people were being fed in the town the roads were strewn with dead bodies. The Rajmundry district was in distress. The district officers were trying to feed the local people. Private persons were also cooperating them in their efforts. Together, they were feeding 5000 people since March but the expense became so heavy that they could no longer continue their effort. The assistance of the government was therefore requested which was granted.⁴⁷

45 *Report of Indian Famine Commission 1878*, London, 1880, Part III, pp.6-7.

46 R.A. Dalyell, *op cit.*, pp.35-37.

47 *Ibid.*, p.38.

At the end of this month, the price of salt to grain importers was reduced to Rs.15/- per 100 *maunds*. A bounty of Rs.20/- per grace was offered on all grain imported from Bengal, Malabor or Canara to any part on the east coast of Madras presidency before 15th November. In spite of all these to relieve the distress, people were still flocking towards Madras. In September upwards of 70000 people were fed at Monegar Choultry and the subordinate depots and 10000 employed in the neighbourhood. In view of removing some of the crowd of paupers from the Presidency town, it was then deemed advisable to employ them in gangs of 3000 for 4000 on the northern trunk road. They were subsisted and paid by government.⁴⁸

In September the distress continued to be severe. The number of immigration to Madras increased from the northern districts of Cuddapah, Bellary, Nellore, Masulipatam, North Arcot and in some degree from Rajmundry, South Arcot, Salem, Coimbatore and Trichinopaly a large number of people flocked into the town of Madras for food and employment. In May this number was 12000 which reached 80000 in September. The Madras Government looked into the matter seriously and instructed the collectors to prevent this emigration by giving employment to the affected people on works and if necessary provide gratuitous relief near their homes. Steps were also taken to depart wanderers to work in large parties of 3000 to 4000 in the Nellore Road.⁴⁹

The rains of 1833 were good & the famine rapidly subsided as soon as autumn harvest was got in. The import duties were resumed in February 1834. But the distress lingered in Guntur throughout the year. The relief works were kept open till the end of 1834. In June 1834 upwards of 10000 persons were still employed costing Rs.22000 per *mensem* and Rs.500/- a month were spent on distribution of food. The highest price reached was at Nellore where rice was sold in August 1833 at 7 *seers* the rupee, a rate which provoked a riot. In Madras in April rice fetched 10½ *seers* per rupee. The average price through the year was 14 *seers* per rupee in Guntur and 18 *seers* in Madras.⁵⁰

As to the loss of revenue caused by this famine the report of the Public Works Commission 1852 states that from 1832 to 1850-51, in 18 years there had been a loss of Rs.77,50,000 land revenue. The value of sheep and cattle that perished in the famine was estimated at 18 lakhs. The total

48 *Ibid.*, p.39.

49 *Report of Indian Famine Commission, op. cit.*, p.7.

50 *Ibid.*

loss caused by famine had been estimated to amount up to 2¼ sterling. The yearly collections from 1825-26 till 1832-33 has been shown below.⁵¹

1825 – 26	337,85,000
1826 – 27	326,96,000
1827 – 28	321,19,000
1828 – 29	311,07,900
1829 – 30	310,33,1000
1830 – 31	309,94,800
Average	313,13,900
1832 – 33	267,44,400
Decrease	45,69,500

The decrease in the land revenue due to famine was about 45½ lakhs of rupees and the injury done did not out last the year. In effect there was in 1832-33 a decrease of Rs.181000, in sea customs Rs.141000, in salt Rs.326000, in stamps RS.16000. When all these were added the total loss of income to the state amounted to about 52 lakhs of rupees.

Recovery from famine was slow. For two decades after the famine, people suffered the burden of the famine. Between 1832 and 1835 the population of the district decreased by nearly one half and more than 2/3 of the livestock were lost. The severity of the famine is marked from the description of Gordon Mackenzie who wrote,⁵² “about 150000 persons died of Guntur district alone. Hundreds die daily, literally of starvationand although a strong body of police are constantly employed in collecting the deadnumber of bodies are left to be devoured by dogs and vultures. Scoring wind and burning heat accompanied this terrible famine. This was followed by plague and cholera. A man in perfect health was hardly to be found anywhere.”

In addition to loss of income to the state which was more than half a crore, the later expended enormously in providing relief to the distressed during the famine of 1833-34. About 3 lakh rupees were spent on provincial depots. A lakh of rupees were spent in each of the district of Guntur and

51 *Ibid.*, p.8.

52 Gordon Mackenzie, *Manual of Kistna District*, Madras 1883, p.40.

Nellore, Rs.20, 000/- in Masulipatam and South Arcot and Rs.32000/- in Madras. Adding the expenditure on miscellaneous items the total expenditure came to about 2 crore rupees or 'two and a quarter millions sterling'.⁵³

Bellary Famine of 1854

In 1854, the Madras Presidency was again visited by famine but fortunately it was almost local and mostly confined to Bellary and in part to Anantapur district. So it was also known as Bellary Famine of 1854

Bellary was one of the northernmost districts of Madras Presidency. It has a glorious history. It was ruled by satavahanas, Kadambas, Chalukyas, Kalachuris, Sevunas and Hoysalas. Thereupon Vijayanagar rulers built the "City of Victory" on the bank of Tungabhadra river at Hampi in Hospet *Taluk*. The Bellary area was dominated by the Vijayanagar rulers till 1565 A.D. when it went to the hands of Adilshahi sultans of Bijapur. In 1678 A.D. it became subsidiary to Marathas under Shivaji. In 1685 A.D. the district came under the suzerainty of the Mughal Emperor Aurengzeb. In 1724 A.D.

it was included in the dominion of the *Nizam* of Hyderabad. In 1800 A.D. the *Nizam* Asaf Jaha II accepted subsidiary alliance. As a part of the agreement he ceded a large portion of the acquired territories including Bellary to the British which was added to Madras Presidency.⁵⁴

Naturally the district was divided into two sections- eastern and western. While the eastern section included the *taluks* of Rayadurg, Bellary, Allur and Adoni, the western section was made up of Hospet, Kudligi, Harpanahalli and Hadagalli *taluks*. The former section lied to the east of the ranges of the hills which surrounded Sandura and reached the highest point in the Coper mountain near Bellary. It was for the most part an open treeless plain slopping gradually down to Tungabhadra and then drained by the Hageri rising in Mysore. Near Adoni it's few rocky masses broke the level of the plain which provided a sheet of black cotton soil. The western section near Hospet contained rough, undulating light mixed stony soils but when sloped towards the north and drained by various minor sheaves into Tungabhadra along the bank, a strip of rich alluvium was found where perennial crops were raised⁵⁵.

Agriculture was the chief occupation of the people of Bellary district. About 70.49% of its people depended on agriculture. The chief crop grown

53 R.A. Dalyell, *op. cit.*, p.39.

54 www.Tamilnadu online.in/profile/Districts/Bellary.asp.

55 Charles Benson, *op. cit.*, p.125.

was *cholam* which covered about 40% of the area cultivated. Next to *cholam* was korra about 29% than *cumbu* 11% and lastly paddy 5% of the cultivated area. The principal industrial crop of the area was cotton which occupied 15% of the area cultivated but in Adoni and Raydurg it was only 2 to 3%.⁵⁶

The climate of Bellary was hot and dry. The average fall was smaller here than in any other part of the Madras Presidency. At Bellary and Raydurg owing to the interpretation of the Sandur hills the south west monsoon was light which was hardly 19 inches. This was less than in any of the adjoining British *taluks*. The district got little of the southwest monsoon as the Western *Ghats* were so close to it and it lied so far from the east coast that the north east monsoon had parted with most of its moisture before reaching it. Excluding Ramandrug there were three well marked zones of rainfall; Adoni in the east of the district got a moderate supply; Alur, Bellary and Rayadurg in the centre where the fall was smaller than in any tract in the Presidency; and the three western taluks had a slightly heavier but still light rainfall. From December to March the usual monthly fall was about one-eighth of an inch. In April and May a few showers occur. In June the southwest monsoon brought up some rain and blew with violence till August. Between June and September more than half the annual supply was received. October was second most rainy month, but by November the north east monsoon had died away. Marked deviation from the normal course were usuallu serious in their effect, even though the total supply was up to the normal.⁵⁷

Thus rainfall was scanty and uncertain. So crops had to depend on irrigation but it was not adequate. Only a small street of area was irrigated by Tungabhadra channels. A few minor tanks and channels chiefly in Rayadurg and Hospet protected the land from the failure of rainfall. The area irrigated by wells was too small and many of them failed to protect the crop against severe drought. The total area irrigated was about two percent of the cultivated areas.⁵⁸ Possessing an exceedingly light and uncertain rainfall, inadequate irrigation, Bellary where three-fourth of the people depended upon pastoral and agricultural persuits became liable to disastrous seasons.

56 *Ibid.*, p.127.

57 W. Francis, *Gazetteer of Bellary District*, Madras, 1904, p.125.

58 Charles Benson, *op. cit.*, p.132.

Bellary had hardly recovered from the damage to its irrigation works caused by the great storm of May 1851. In 1852 and in early part of 1853 the standing crops especially the cholam, the staple food of the people had been extensively injured by unseasonable rain. The rainfall in June and July 1853 on the other hand was scanty and the north east monsoon completely failed. The average fall in the district during that year was 9 ½ inches and in certain of the *taluks* it averaged only 6½ inches and in some cases as low as 3 ½ inches. The harvest failed and prices began to rise.⁵⁹ The scarcity extended to the Raichor Doab and the south part of the *Nizam's* dominions and there was an influx of starving people from there.⁶⁰

In January 1854, *cholam* was selling at 27 *seers* the rupee against an average in the ten year 1841-51 of about 58 *seers* and by June it had risen to 21 *seers* per rupee. It continued at that figure until September and in the northern *taluks*, which were the worst affected, it was even as high as 14 *seers*. The price in the northern *taluks* averaged Rs. 218/- per grace rose steadily from January to September ranging between Rs.240/- to Rs.252/-.⁶¹

The number of the people on relief works in the Ballery and Anantapur districts rose from 9,000 in January 1854 to 97,000 in July and was at one time as high as 1,00,600 or 8% of the entire population. The number of people on relief works in both the districts for the first week each month from January to September is given below.⁶²

January	—	8,766
February	—	16,017
March	—	22,279
April	—	48,299
May	—	71,862
June	—	93,092
July	—	97,554
August	—	77,768
September	—	65,869

In September, the expenditure on relief was so large and the prospect of its coming to an end seemed so uncertain, that the Government deputed Mr. Maltby, a member of the Board to relieve the Collector of huge burden and take relief measures for tackling the distress and adopt the best means

59 *Ibid.*, p.122.

60 *Report of Indian Famine Commission 1878*, London, Part III, 1880, p.26.

61 W. Francis, *op cit.*, p.125.

62 *Ibid.*