

**REPORT ON PAST  
FAMINES IN THE NORTH-  
WESTERN PROVINCES**

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Report on Past Famines in the North-Western Provinces by C. E. R. Girdlestone

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**C. E. R. GIRDLESTONE**

**REPORT ON PAST  
FAMINES IN THE NORTH-  
WESTERN PROVINCES**



REPORT



ON

PAST FAMINES

IN THE

NORTH-WESTERN PROVINCES.

BY

C. E. R. GIRDLESTONE,

*On Special Duty.*



Allahabad:

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1868.

FROM

C. E. R. GIRDLESTONE, Esquire,  
*On Special Duty,*

To

R. SIMSON, Esquire,  
*Secretary to Government, N.-W. P.*

ALLAHABAD, MAY 26TH, 1868.

SIR,

I beg to forward the Report on Past Famines in the North-Western Provinces, which I was deputed to compile by letter from your office, No. 231, dated January 16th, 1868.

I have the honour to be,

SIR,

Your obedient Servant,

C. E. R. GIRDLESTONE.

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# REPORT ON PAST FAMINES

OF THE

## NORTH-WESTERN PROVINCES.

### INTRODUCTION.

**1. Plan of the Report.**—In collecting materials for the following report, I have taken it for granted that the Government of India wishes to have as comprehensive an account of past famines in the North-Western Provinces of India as the available sources of information will admit of. The letter from the Home Office which enjoins the compilation leaves a wide margin for discretion, and neither the Local Government nor the Sudder Board of Revenue, under whose immediate control I was placed, issued any special orders at the outset. Being left to my own devices, I took such steps as seemed most likely to secure a useful report, and endeavoured to collect round me everything which would throw light on the subject. In process of time the Sudder Board raised the question whether it was desirable to push the investigation so far. Under these circumstances, it became necessary to ask for definite instructions. I therefore related in a short note the system which I had been pursuing, and received the Lieutenant-Governor's\* permission to continue the work in the same manner as before. The truth is, it became clear to me at an early stage that, owing to the Mutiny, the information which the local annals could afford would be very imperfect. It seemed advisable, therefore, to supply the missing links in the chain of evidence by referring to the files of old newspapers, historical writings, books of travel, irrigation and settlement reports, and the like. By this means I hope to give some idea of the famines that occurred under native rule; to determine with tolerable accuracy the tract of those that have happened during the period of British administration, and to show what caused them; to test the degree of suffering on each occasion; to bring to notice the various precautions and remedies adopted at different times; and to decide what measures will be most effectual in neutralizing the effect of drought hereafter. Enquiry proves that the materials do not now exist for a complete report; but, at any rate, I trust that this narrative may be of more interest than it could have been if the sphere of my researches had been more circumscribed.

**2. Sources of Information.**—The list in Appendix I. shows the various authors and documents that I have consulted. In addition to the sources indicated, I only know of three others whence I was likely to derive information,—namely, the Asiatic Society, the *Englishman*, and the *Indian Daily News*. In answer to my application, the Secretary of the Asiatic Society and the Editor of the *Englishman* regretted that they could trace nothing in their libraries which would be of use to me. The Editor of the *Indian Daily News*, in whose office I have reason to believe the files of the defunct *Bengal Harkaru* are now deposited, has so far vouchsafed no reply, though I have written to him twice. By some unaccountable delay the whole of the papers promised by the Record Commission have not yet arrived. It is possible that what remain to be seen may contain further particulars of famines subsequent to 1823, though I am rather inclined to think they will do no more than confirm facts which I have already elicited from other quarters. At any rate, when they have been read through, I hope to intimate the result in a supplementary letter. As all other available means had been exhausted, it seemed hardly worth while to retard the

\* Mr. Drummond.