CHAPTER - IV
BLACK TOWN AND ITS CASTE DISPUTES

Thomas Bowrey in his description of Madras writes, “I have heard it reported and can well give credit thereto, that there are noe less than forty thousand of them, vizt, men, women and children that live under St. George’s flagge, and pay customs for all sorts of goods they buy and sell within the compasse or command of our Guns.”¹

This description of Bowrey pertains to the Black Town in Madras which came under the British enclave and its administration. P.A. Roche has divided Madras into three distinct zones. First the White Town as discussed in the previous chapter was meant strictly for the Europeans. Second was the Orthogenetic-Indigenous zone. These were the new villages which was acquired and integrated to the city of Madras. These areas were acquired mostly towards the end of seventeenth century. Third was the Grafted zone or the Black town which was created through a process of selection and assignment. This zone lay sandwiched between the white zones and the orthogenetic zone. The native settlement which was grafted consisted of native officials and functionaries whose presence facilitated the organization of British commercial ventures.²

¹ Bowrey visited Madras in 1669. He left for England in 1687. He left a record of his travel account called 'The Countries round the Bay of Bengal'. Six Richard Temple ed., The Countries round the Bay of Bengal, Hakluyt Society, 1905, p. 3-52.
Milton Singer defines the native officials as 'the 'new social type who standing astride the boundaries of cultural encounter mediated between alien cultural influences to the natives and interpreted indigenous culture to the foreigners'.

Thomas Bowrey informs us that the natives of the Black Town referred to as gentiles were primarily the gentues (Telugus) and the Mallabars (Tamils).

This seems to stand as testimony to the fact that the Black Town was also referred to variously as the Gentu Town and as Mallabar Town.

A number of European travelers vizt, Bowrey, Havart, Dominique Navaratte, Dampier, Fryer, Salmon, Lockeyer, Hamilton who visited Madras at various points of time have recorded their experiences in the form of travel accounts. All these accounts throw light on the physical

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4 Bowrey, the Countries round..., p. 3-52.
5 Love I, pp. 385, 388.
6 Love, I, 422, 432.
8 Daniel Havart, a Dutch visited Madras around 1670. His account is known as Op-en Ondergang Van Coromandel, 1693.
9 Dominic Navaratte, a Spanish Priest, travelled from 1646 to 1672, visited Madras around 1670...
10 Captain William Dampier, an English was in Madras in 1690. His account is called A New Voyage Round the World, 1697.
11 Dr. John Fryer, a French Surgeon Reached Fort St. George in 1673. In 1697 he published his experience as A New Account of East India and Persia.
12 Thomas Salmon, an English is listed in the Company Records of 1699 as Writer of the English Company in Madras. His description of Madras comes from Modern History.
13 Charles Lockeyer, an English reached Madras in 1702 and served as an Assistant to the Accountant for a year and half after which he resigned from service to undertake voyages. His experiences are published as An Account of the Trade in India, containing Rules for good government in trade, Price Courants and Tables published in 1711.
14 Alexander Hamilton being the commander and owner of a number of ships was a frequent visitor to Madras. He occurs in the records in 1707, 1711 and 1719. His narrative of Madras is collected in a New Account of the East Indies Published in 1727.
features of the town providing ample evidence about the presence of European Quarters called the White Town and that of the Natives, known as the Black Town.

From Bowrey’s descriptions of Black Town to Alexander Hamilton’s of the same one can visualize the change in terms of constitution of population, the extent of the town, the defences, the governance of the town and so on, all pointing to the fact that the control of Black Town had gradually changed hands from that of the local merchants to the English governor. Bowreys accounts of 1670 talks of the Gentues as the chief inhabitants of Black Town. William Puckle’s\textsuperscript{15} enquiry of 1676 looks into the complaints of the English residents of the Black Town regarding the rent\textsuperscript{16} clearly suggesting the presence of English population, who due to the scarcity of space took residence in Black Town. Salmon’s account pertaining to the last decades of the seventeenth century and Hamilton’s account of early eighteenth century noted the presence of Gentues, Muslims, Indian Christian, Armenians and Portuguese in the Black Town. This also reflects on the rapid increase in the population of the town. Bowrey’s estimates of the Black Town population stands at 40,000 in 1670.\textsuperscript{17} Hamilton noted that the total population of Madras (White and Black Town) was 80,000 in 1718 of which roughly 400 to 500 were European.\textsuperscript{18} He also

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writes about the construction of a wall for the same which indicates the
growing concern of the English for defending their space which now
included the Black Town as well.

The administration of this town was in the hands of the native
officials,\textsuperscript{19} who were given a freehand in their area. The first attempt to
usurp the control on it, came in the form of a rent roll and imposition of Quit
Rent in the inhabitants of the Black town. The second attempt came with the
formation of Joint Stock Company whereby the single power centre of the
Chief Merchant was thwarted. (The Chief Merchant exercised enormous
economic and social control over the inhabitants). Third was the Wall Tax
Assessment of 1707 which was imposed on the caste heads inspite of their
unwillingness and resistance to it. The coercion came in the form of
mobilization of the inhabitants by manipulating the caste heads.

Srinivasachari mentions three principal Indian officials of the
settlement.\textsuperscript{20} (1) The headman, known as Adhikari who had to maintain
order and to collect the revenue and exercised magisterial functions, (2) the
accountant or Kannakkupillai, who assisted the Adhikari (3) the Pedda
Nayak or chief watchman who was responsible for the policing of the town
and bringing the offenders to the book. The English records note them as the
Adigar,\textsuperscript{21} the conicopoly\textsuperscript{22} and the Peddanaigue\textsuperscript{23} assisted by Talliers\textsuperscript{24} or

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{19} P.A. Roche..., p. 395.
\textsuperscript{21} derived from Tamil Adhikari, one having authority
\textsuperscript{22} from Kanakka, writing, account and pillar, child person.
\textsuperscript{23} the senior-naik
\textsuperscript{24} from Tamil Talaiyari, a watchman
\end{flushright}
constables respectively. In the first decade of the establishment of Madras, (1644-48) Kanappa, a Brahmin was appointed as the Adigar with the claim that his father held same position in the Company’s service in 1614 in other factories of the English. He was replaced by Captain Martin and John Leigh. Sir Edward Winter reverted to the old plan of appointing natives as Adigar and placed Timmanna and Kasi Viranna jointly on the post. The first reference of the Town Conicopoly in the records appear in the caste dispute of 1652 in the charges and counter charges between the two groups of Brahmins. Raga Pattan held the office of Conicopoly at this time. The function of the Town Conicopoly entailed the collection of taxes and custom duty from the Black Town.

The earliest form of police could be seen in the establishment of the office of Pedda Naigue. This office finds its mention for the first time in the declaration of 1654 by the Weavers and painters of the Black Town. It does not seem to have been an innovation of the English but had existed in a similar form in the villages of Madraspatam before their advent. The duty of Pedda Naigue was to maintain the law and order in the Black with the assistance of a group of Talliyars or watchmen. In recognition of his duty he received remuneration from the company. The area designated as Peddanaikpeta had been assigned to the Pedda Naigue as remuneration for

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25 Roche... p.395; Love I p.127.
26 EFI, 1651-54, 4th April 1654, pp. 258-266.
27 EFI, 1651-54; pp. 236-242.
28 Earlier existed as the Potters village of Comarpetta
the fulfilment of his duties. The Cowle of 1656\textsuperscript{29} by the Agent Chamber mentions the privileges enjoyed by the Pedda Naigue. He was entitled to build a house, live in the town and use the services of fifty peons to perform his function. He was given eighteen rent free Paddy fields. The Cowle clearly indicated that the remuneration and duty went hand in hand. The real gain for the office of Pedda Naigue came with the Orders of the Langhorn in 1672\textsuperscript{30} whereby he decided to share the Company’s profit through duties and customs with the Chief Watchman. As result, the Pedda Naigue was now entitled to receive other petty dues.\textsuperscript{31} The Company taking into account the high income of the Peddanaigue decided to enhance the revenue of the town in 1686.\textsuperscript{32}

By the end of the seventeenth century the Peddanaigue’s office was marred by controversy owing to disputes related to succession.\textsuperscript{33} The dispute began in 1692 when both Timapa Naik\textsuperscript{34} and Angarappa Naik\textsuperscript{35} claimed the post of Peddanaigue. The squabble continued for seven years, when the Madras Council intervened and proposed a compromise whereby both Timapa and Angarappa would jointly hold the office with the help of a

\textsuperscript{29} D&C, 8\textsuperscript{th} November 1686, p. 96.

\textsuperscript{30} D&C, 18\textsuperscript{th} August 1672.

\textsuperscript{31} D&C, Public Consultations, 18\textsuperscript{th} August 1672, Love, I, p. 419. Order by Sir William Langhorn – ‘in Paddy Banksall the former allowance was – custome for the Gentu pagoda, for every heape of paddy, one measure; for Peddinagg the watchman, on every greate ox-load of paddy, ¾ measure; for small ox-load ¼ measure. ’The allowance of seaffish was: for every great nett, 5 ffish to the Honble Company, and to Peddinagg the watchman 10 fish. And on the ffish they catch with a hooke, on ffish for the Company, and one for Peddinagg the watchman...’

\textsuperscript{32} Despatches from England, 25\textsuperscript{th} June 1688, p. 133.

\textsuperscript{33} All the three offices of the Adigar, the Town Conicopoly and the Peddanaigue were hereditary.

\textsuperscript{34} Timapa was the son of the Pedda Venkatadri, Chief Merchant of the English Company.

\textsuperscript{35} Angarappa Naik was a poligar in Madras. His father was the Peddanaigue. Following his father’s death Angarappa laid claim for the office of Peddanaigue.
hundred peons each. The council agreed to pay forty pagodas to each one of them for the duty.\textsuperscript{36} This compromise was unacceptable to both and finally in 1699, the decision came in the favour of Angarappa. A cowle was granted to him proclaiming him as ‘Chief Talliar or Watchman of this place’.\textsuperscript{37} Three thousand Pagodas were given to him as arrears of the dues. Angarappa’s father held the office of Peddanaigue in the past which strengthened his claim form the same. Timapa had lost his credentials due to delay in contracting and procuring cloth for the English. The differences between Timapa and the Council reached its culmination that resulted in the flight of Timapa from Madras. In 1696 he was replaced by Cheka Serappa, a merchant of repute in the Joint Stock organisation.

The administration of the Black Town was entrusted to the Chief Merchant and other native officials. By the end of seventeenth century it became a part of the larger set up of the English enclave. The English intervention was however witnessed right from the first decade of the settlement of the enclave which came in the form of their arbitration in the caste disputes.

As Indian weavers and merchants migrated to the English enclave, their traditional social organization continued to exist in the same way in which it had been in their original settlements. Apart from the horizontal division of society there existed the vertical division of the Right hand and the Left hand in the seventeenth century. This was a significant factor in

\textsuperscript{36} D&C, 12\textsuperscript{th} August 1697, pp. 89-90.
\textsuperscript{37} D&C, 14\textsuperscript{th} April and 20\textsuperscript{th} 1699, pp. 33-36.
South India right from the early medieval times. This bifurcation often led to disputes among the castes, adversely affecting the economic activities of the English. The social problems among the native inhabitants of the English enclave in Madras were not only a creation of the English but something that existed as a reality from the pre-British period itself.\textsuperscript{38}

The East India Company for the consolidation of its territorial possession, required the knowledge of the existing social realities of the natives. This was necessary because in the seventeenth century the native merchants were the necessary concomitant in the trade. As we will discuss later, the Company’s intervention in the local disputes and the British agents acting as ‘little kings’ in the process was a much needed functional approach. Later in the colonial period the intervention on the part of British was viewed as a party of the policy of ‘divide and rule’.

The activities of the Company were not confined within the jurisdiction of their enclave but also touched the hinterland which brought them closer to the social existing reality. In the process they encountered a multi-tiered and complex structure of local authorities. Their economic activities depended upon the socio-economic milieu and thus the knowledge of the institution of caste assumed importance. In the sixteenth century the word ‘Casta’, from the Latin Castus, came to be used by European travellers as an ambiguous term for community, blood line or birth group\textsuperscript{39}. In this


period it appears in the Portuguese sources as a term for religious denomination to differentiate between Moor (Muslim) and Gentoo (Hindu). Later it acquired the connotation of Jati and Varna. According to Risley, caste was a real factor in Indian life, an 'elemental force like gravitation or molecular attraction' that gave order to the society and saved it from chaos.40

As early as the mid seventeenth century the English were pulled into the arbitration process in the conflict between the Right and Left castes. These conflicts were symbolic and ceremonial and were fought for 'honours.' Honours were privileges which could be as trivial as the sequence in which the offering should be made to a deity. An English officer in 1768 commented that "neither goods nor riches can be equivalent, to the preservation of their Rights and Privileges to which they believe themselves in Honour attached: Nothing equals in them this passion."41 This passion was evident in the dispute that occurred at Madras in 1652, at an early stage of the founding of the settlement.

It is of significance here to look back into the period before western penetration into India and the establishment of English enclave in South India. The temple acted as an arena for interaction and the local rulers emerged as 'little kings' for arbitration. Arjun Appadorai clarifies this position with regard to the early seventeenth century temples where 'Warrior kings bartered the control of agrarian resources gained by military

40 Risley......as cited in Susan Bayly..., p. 129.
powers for access to the re-distributive processes in the temples, which were controlled by sectarian leaders. Conversely, in their own struggles with each other, and their own local and regional efforts to consolidate their control over temples, sectarian leaders found the support of these warriors timely and profitable.\(^{42}\) To add to this Appadorai and Carol Brekenridge contend that worship was essentially a re-distributive process in which material resources flow into the temple and honours flow out\(^{43}\).

In this process, there were conflicts involving the redistribution of honours which the temple could not solve and hence needed the arbitration of the king. David Rudner\(^{44}\) is of the opinion that it was not only the kings and sectarian leaders who participated in the temple politics but also the itinerant traders who used temple politics to enter into local politics, as is reflected in the eleventh century Palani manuscript. In the 1650s the English governors and agents played the role of ‘little kings’ – a role conforming to the local requirements. Madras represented a highly pluralistic and segmented polity that reflected social divisions within indigenous society, spatial complexity within the area and varying interests within the European community itself. Manifestation of this can be seen in the emergence of two trends. The clash of interest among the English agents due to the benefits they would incur through private trade. Hence, in the caste conflict of 1652-


in the Black Town we notice an underlying conflict between Henry Greenhill and Aaron Baker who supported various conflicting groups of Brahmin merchants who were the real power behind the Right Hand and the Left Hand castes. Also, the commercial interests of the indigenous merchants precipitated the social conflicts. Manifestations of these differences were visible in the frequent caste disputes.

4.1 Right Hand and Left Hand Castes

Inscriptions from the early eleventh century mention the Right-Left castes dividing South Indian society into two distinct halves. The Right Left castes seem to be symbolic and ceremonial division yet capable of dividing the society into two extremes. This division helped in classifying large number of localised and occupationally specific kin groupings over two over-arching and ritually opposed social categorises.

It is however clear from scattered references of the Right –Left division that the ‘Right’ group was dominated by rural landlords, who were ‘generalists’, their mainstay being agricultural production. The ‘Left’ group was dominated by artisans who were ‘specialists’, had a vocation and lived off by marketing their skills. Brahmins were members of neither division and considered to be above these divisions.

47 ibid., p.780.
Table 4.1: The list below gives a fair the idea about the dual classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Right Hand:</th>
<th>Left Hand</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traders</td>
<td>• Balija</td>
<td>• Beri Chetti</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Banajiga</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Komati</td>
<td>• Vaniyans (yoke two bullocks)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Vellan Chetti</td>
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<td>Weavers</td>
<td>• Jandra</td>
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<td>• Seniyan</td>
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<td>Artisans</td>
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<td>• Kammalan</td>
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<td>• Kawsali</td>
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<td>• Panchalas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leather workers</td>
<td>• Madiga or</td>
<td>• Chakkilyan or Madiga (males)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Chakkilyan</td>
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<td>(females)</td>
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<td>• Malaiman</td>
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<td>• Nattaman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Field Labourers and Soldiers</td>
<td>• Palli (female)</td>
<td>• Bedar</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Vedan or</td>
<td>• Palli (males)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vettuvan</td>
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Despite their differences, the two groups of castes presented a striking resemblance in terms of their rituals and ceremonies. Also, it appears that the Right and Left caste rituals were often similar depending upon the commonality of region. Apart from that, both groups were extremely rigid
about their religious practices,. Many of which had been continuing over centuries. Arjun Appadorai rightly points out,: that there is no single substantive meaning for the dual classification. The essence of classification lies in-first a formal structure which is ‘contrastive, contextual and paradigmatic’ and second, a formal function which is in its integration. This kind of classification that consists of both differentiation and integration leads us to the kind of problematic which is visualized in the number of caste conflicts that take place in seventeenth century Madras. The conflict seems to be a triangular case of assertion between the Right-Left castes and of the local Brahmin merchants, and above all manipulated by English officials who were themselves in a state of conflict with each other. Thus also evident in the caste conflict is the display of power at various levels of authority.

The Tamil Valangai and Idangai refer to the left and right hands of human body. In the Indian classical tradition, according to Manu, the body of Purusa, the Supreme man, is divided into four parts, hence the emergence of the four varnas. Brahmin, the highest in order born of the mouth of Purusa to teach the Vedas; Kshatriya, second in order born of hands to protect; Vaishya, the third in social order born of the thighs of Purusa, to produce wealth. Lastly, came Shudras, born out of the feet to perform services for the first three castes. The South Indian society seems to be different as there is

49 Valangai and Idangai for left and right hand castes are same in Telugu and Canarese as in Tamil.
50 Appadorai and Brenda Beck.
no clear cut distinction between that of Kshatriya and Vaishya whereas the status of Brahmins and Shudras seem to be firmly defined. The Right and Left castes further break away from the classical notion of the horizontal division of society. It is a vertical division and thus creates the problem of relative ranking within the Right-Left castes and also of the Right vis-à-vis Left and vice versa. As per the traditional cultural system, the left hand is synonymous with impurity whereas the right stands for positive, normative associations. Thus, the Right hand castes projected themselves as superior to their counterparts, complicating the relationship further.

Most of the disputes that occurred between the two groups were based on the issues that have been discussed above. The two disputes important for our period have been discussed below.

4.2 Caste Dispute of 1652

The dispute of 1652 began when the Governor Greenhill demarcated Muthialpeta on the Left side of the Town, and Peddanaikpeta on the Right. The Right caste was convinced that by this demarcation, more streets and social honours had been given to the Left than they deserved. Sheshadri Nayak and Koneri Chetti, Balija merchants belonging to the Right, claimed to have been insulted by the Beri Chettis of the Left. This started a riot in the city; “the whole caste with swords and clubs” attacked the Left side. The English Agent was convinced that the two merchants had started the trouble.

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51 Also in the Ardhnarishvara incarnation of Shiva the right side is male while the left is female
52 EFI 1651-54, pp. 238-239.
only to divert attention from the thousands of pagodas that they owed to the Company. Incidentally the two Brahmin were also directly involved in this dispute.53

This conflict overtly appears to be a caste dispute for rights and honours but underlying it were various other factors which acted as catalyst in igniting the caste wars. An analysis of these factors shows that this dispute was in reality a manifestation of other dissensions within the merchant groups who were pitted against each other for favours in business from the English at one level and at the other an English agent against another. There was a virtual scramble to exercise authority at every level: the English Agent over the Brahmins, the Brahmins over the merchants, the merchants over caste groups and finally the caste groups which fought for their own collective identity.

In the 1650s the English East India Company was not sure of its moves and was experimenting through its policy decisions to acquire a firm ground in the Indian coastal trade. In 1651, President Baker at Bantam was ordered to shift base to Fort St. George and to direct all trade from there. The obvious reason behind this move was to acquire some hold over the Indian coastal trade. The English were loosing interest in Bantam as well as other settlements in the Far East due to a general decline in trade in that region.

The Dutch by then had a flourishing trade on the eastern coast of India and were the main rivals to the English. The English settlement of Madras was under constant threat from the Dutch. The apprehension of English is evident in the letter from Director Lawrence Pit, written from Geldria to governor general Jan Maetsuyker at Batavia. "It seems that English think that their Fort St. George may be attacked by us. At least.... they have began fortifying the castle. They have raised a Bastion close to the sea from which they can fire at our ships, and where theirs can safely lie at anchor. The Nabob has quietly allowed this to be done..."\textsuperscript{54} This became a concern for the Dutch whose settlement of Pulicat was within a short distance from Madras. The fortification of Fort St. George and the preparations by the English further aggravated the concern. This was expressed in a letter from Batavia to the headquarters in Amsterdam. "President Baker has fortified the fortress St. George at Madraspatam............ and made a kind of Bastion towards the sea flanked with a dozen cannons. The English greatly fear an attack on their Fortress, but the time is not yet ripe..."\textsuperscript{55}

This apprehension on the part of the Dutch proved to be true when we come across the letter from the Company to the President and Council at Fort St. George about the fund for fortification and the reasons for the same. The cost of the work would be defrayed by the money raised from the inhabitants of the town. The letter notes that "As our conditions are at

\textsuperscript{54} Hague Record, 3\textsuperscript{rd} September, 1653; Love, Vestiges, I, p.116.
\textsuperscript{55} ibid. p.1.
present, both in respect of the troubles with you in your divided kingdoms, seconded by the difference which is happened between us and the Holanders we are not displeased that you have finished the Fort, and hope you have made it soe defensible that our estate and your persons may be therein secured..........” 56 Thus the Company not only approved of the fortifications of Madras but also took certain measures at this point to strengthen the Fort St. George Council itself. To achieve this the Agency at Madras was made the headquarter of the President and Bantam was reduced to an Agency. Aaron Baker took residence in Madras as President and Henry Greenhill as the Agent. The fact that Baker had superseded Greenhill became the root of the rivalry between the two.

That Aaron Baker was made the President is confirmed by the letter of appreciation for his service by the Agent and Council of Bantam to Fort St. George. It notes that, “And now wee have noe less cause to grieve as you to rejoice; wee for the absence of such a President, and you to bee glad that your Sometime despicable and regarded place, as you term it, is at last thought by the Company worthy of soe much honour as a Presidency and such a President, whome wee wish, and likewise all of you, as much happiness as to our selves, with the good success of our Master’s affairs in all their undertakings..........” 57

The appreciation for Baker did not last long, owing to the dissensions in the Council with Henry Greenhill pitted against him. Thus Baker’s period

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56 EFI, 1651-54, pp.174-75.
57 EFI 1651-54, 25th September 1652, pp. 132-133.
in office was marked by turmoil within the Council, externally by the Dutch war and at the local level by the caste rivalry between the Right Hand and Left Hand castes.

The Right Hand Caste conferred upon themselves special privileges at marriages and other ceremonies claiming superiority over the Left Hand caste. By this time both the Right and the Left castes had separate streets in which they lived. The bone of contention concerned the new streets in the rapidly growing town, which both of them tried to pass through during a wedding or funeral procession. When the issue grew out of proportion and rioting began, President Baker issued a declaration/award confirming the position of each.

The award in the caste dispute of 1652 laid down important guidelines and demarcations binding the two caste groups to norms concerning the location of their dwellings and the streets they would use. The award is as follows:

“"In Fort St. George belonging to the Rt. Honble English Company, before the Honble. President Baker, Agent Greenhill and Mr. Gurney, were present Connaree Chittee and Sheshadreenaigue, Inhabitants of Chinnapatam. There having of late been several Differences and Disputes between the Casts about their streets, which this day is settled; and in case it be not observed by each Cast in regard to their weddings and Burialls, the first breaker of it shall forfeit a thousand dollars."
The Right Hand Cast are to reside in the particular streets appointed for 'em, where are to live or come none of the Left Hand Cast, Where are to be none of the Right Hand Cast.

The Right Hand Cast are to reside in the particular streets appointed for 'em, where are to live or come none of the Left Hand Cast; and the same with the Left Hand Cast, where are to be none of the Right Hand Cast.

The Great Street from the Fort, as far as Jaggapan Chittees Garden, and all the streets to the Westward of that street, are allotted to the Right Hand Cast; and the Great Street from Mr. Potters reaching to Mary Carjuns old Pagodas, with the new street (being two streets) are allotted to the Left Hand Cast.

The markets street opposite to the Choultry as far as the Qomittees Shops is appointed to the Right Hand Cast, and as farr as the Chittees shops in the same street to the Left Hand Cast, where either Cast may pass with their wedding or Burialls; but if either of the Casts act contrary to this Agreement shall pay one thousand Dollars.

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58 The Great Street from before the Fort. The West face of Cogan and Day's fort, which contained its principal gate, was regarded as the front. References to Thomas Pitt's map will show that the street mentioned in the north and south road on which the Choultry gate was afterwards built. Whether Tiyagappa Chetti's garden was at the north end of the Town near the burying ground, or whether it was situated further north in the suburb of Muthialpeta, is uncertain.

59 The Great Street from Mr. Porters is identified as 'Middle Gate Street,' running north through the town. Mr. Porter was engaged on voyages between Madras and Pagu.

60 Mally Carjuns Old Pagoda. According to M.R. Reg. Rangachari the name Mallikarjunar is supplied to a temple commonly called Mallikesvarar, which is situated at the north end of Muthialpeta between Tambu Chetti and Linga Chetti Street.

61 The Market Street was the east and west thorough fare separating the European quarters from the native quarters of the Town. In Pitt's map appears as 'The Buzar or Market.'

62 Quomitees or Komatis- Right Hand Caste.
The Patnawarrs and Cariallwarrs\textsuperscript{63} are to pass with their weddings and Burialls from the back side of Mr. Porters House to the middle of the Quarter Porters House, and soe proceed to the Portuguez Church.\textsuperscript{64} They may likewise go thro the great street.

Before the Fort is free for all.\textsuperscript{65}

‘Sheshadree Chittee, or mediator to each Cast, his servants nor the Companys servants and painters cannot pass these streets.\textsuperscript{66}

This award dated 5\textsuperscript{th} November 1652 set the norm for town planning and social urbanism for the next fifty years or so and became the reference point for a subsequent enactment.

This letter of settlement came to light only half a century later, when in 1707 caste dispute, Governor Thomas Pitt recorded them and used as a guide to settle the dispute. According to the consultation of October 1707, Pitt produced in Council “a Paper in the Gentue Language signed by President Baker, Agent Greenhill and Mr. Gourly, dated in the year 1652, for composing the differences amongst the Right and Left Hand Castes.”\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{63} Patnawarrs and Cariallwarrs. According to Thurston these terms apply to Madras fishermen. The Patnawarrs from pattan- varu, town dwellers, are catamaran men. The Cariallwarrs from karai-varun coast people, are also sea fishermen.

\textsuperscript{64} The Portuguez Church of St. Andrew stood within 50 yards of the north-west bastion of the Fort.

\textsuperscript{65} In General the award pertained to the allotment of the eastern half of the native town to the Left Hand, and Western half to the Right Hand, the Choultry Street being the line of demarcation.

\textsuperscript{66} D&C, 30\textsuperscript{th} October 1707, pp. 75-76.

\textsuperscript{67} ibid.
This decision proved to be temporary. In January 1653 another riot broke out. President Baker, William Gurney, Edward Winter and John Leigh at Fort St. George wrote to the President and Council at Surat, 68

"Wee know not what spirit of factionous madness hath of Late possessed our owne people in general, but the like we assure you in all our lives wee never knew; yet knew the country round about, as well as this and all other towns in this Kingdome, are divided into 2 General Casts, namely the Belgewarras and the Berewars 69 who for many hundred years together have ever had a Quarrel one with the other who should bee the more honourable Cast and have a Presidency of the other." 70

The English had apprehended that the war was recurring at the instigation of a "Crew of Beggerly Villanes" 71 who owed the Company many thousand Pagodas which they were unable to pay. These scuffles were intended to divert the attention of the agents from the due. The cause and course of dispute was:

"The 24th past, upon a word speaking which was not worth the taking notice of, and that in our prescence, a Belgewar told a Berewar that he was not worth a Cash, to whome the Berewar replied again that if himself were not worth a Cash, the other was not worth 2 Cash. Upon this, the Belgewar runnes presently into the Towne, raiseth the whole Cast with Sword and Clubbs, who run into the Berewar Streets, and plunder their howses, and Cut

68 Love, Vestiges, pp. 120-21, EFI, 1651-54 pp. 155-56.
69 Thurston identifies 'Belgewarra' with Balija-varu, a Telugu trading caste, and 'Berewar' with Beri varu, an important section of the Chettis.
70 EFI, 1651-54 pp. 155-56, Love, Vestiges, pp. 120-21.
71 The Company's native merchants and friends.
off two mens heare of their heads, which is a far greater disgrace to them then if they had cut off their heads and left them dead in the place. Since when, all the persuasions we can use between these people cannot reconciles them. They have called in all the country round about of both casts to fight one against the other, and, corrupting the Towne Watch, have brought 4 or 5 hundred Armed men by Night; soe that tis not our ffeeble crew of 26 English Soldiers that we have is able to deale with them."72

Its not so much the conflict among the local inhabitants that troubled the Company as much as the fear of an attack by them upon the Company establishment and personnel. In the course of events, the role played by the Nawab was also negative from the Company’s point of view. The English managed to capture the two factional leaders involved in the turmoil an and put them in prison. The Nawab, acting upon the information of Brahmins directed them to release these troublemakers. The role of Brahmins in the dispute thus becomes significant. Agent Greenhill backed Sheshadri Nayak and other Right Hand merchants, whereas the Brahmins, Venkatappa and Kanappa were supported by President Baker. This was manifested in the charges and counter-charges that were made by the two parties against each other.

Baker wrote to Greenhill about how Sheshadri Nayak had instigated the riot, “Just as I was taking horse to come to you, the Chittees came and

72 EFI, 1651-54, pp.155-56.
brought mee word that Sesadra had brought 40 or 50 armed men into the towne to begin a new quarrel with them again...” In 1654, Baker wrote to Greenhill once again affirming the same, “You cannot but remember what a Broyle was made by Sesadra, the Bramons great Antagonist only upon and Idle word spoken to him by one of the Chittees...”

An uproar followed in which the Chettis’ street was plundered. The English had to use their armed strength of five hundred men to contain the riot. The result of this was the desertion of the town by the Chettis. Baker continues, “....menaces and threatening till they had even forced the Chittees and their Casts to leave the Towne; of all of which you were an eye witness. Which made mee to resolve with myself to lett the business of the streets to laye Dormant till the Chittes and the Casts shall be against retourned. And yett, I would not have you think that the deferring of the tyme is an acquitting of the Crime...”

After Baker left for England, the Right Hand faction petitioned to the Council, which throws further light on the dispute and the Brahmins’ role in it. The Council had deputed the Brahmins to allot the streets to the two caste groups. Allotments were made accordingly with the Brahmins assigning one street to each side. However, the Brahmins seem to have seen some potential here for igniting a dispute and subsequently allotted an additional street to the Left Hand castes. This offended the members of the Right Hand group,

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73 There is a discrepancy regarding this number. Baker had earlier numbered them as 400 or 500.
74 EFI, 1651-54, pp. 152-53.
75 O.C. No. 2467 in Love, Vestiges, I, p.121.
76 ibid.
which complained about the same in the petition. They also charged the President of granting an ‘unaccustomed height of honour’ to the Chettis, thus creating havoc in the town. The petition clearly charged the President, along with the Brahmins, for favouring the Left group. The same petition reminds the Council about Sheshadri Nayak, the mentor of the Left side, who they claimed owed large sums of money to the Company. It thus implied that the Council was protecting Nayak by disregarding the debt and also by defraying the expenses of his travels. Finally, the petitioners had another complaint. They felt that, “The President, rather than displease the left hand party, caused a man's wife to be buried at his doors and a second corpse to be burnt, which unto us is very heynious; and by all round about, by this occasion, this Towne is called the Towne without Government.”

It is clear from this petition that the local groups had come to accept the authority of the English and expected them act as arbitrators even in their own personal disputes. Thus within a decade of the establishment of the enclave, the English had managed to gain a position of authority at the local level.

The dissensions in Baker’s Council thus owed their origin to the disputes among the natives. The enmity between Sheshadri Nayak, the Company’s merchant and the Brahmins, Venkatappa and Kanappa, had originated much before the Company established itself in Madras. Nayak had been functioning as the Company’s merchant since Fort St. George was

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77 EFI, 1655-60, 30th June, 1656, p. 93.
78 ibid.
founded. Later on during Ivy’s administration in Madras, he lost his job to Venkatappa, a Brahmin due to his indebtedness to the Company. Further, Venkatappa’s brother Kanappa was nominated as the Peddanaik, that is the governor and magistrate of the Black Town. As the Agent, Greenhill sided with Shehadri Nayak, providing him and his associates with employment. On Baker’s arrival to Madras as President, the Brahmin’s complained to him about Greenhill and his dealings with the merchants for private trade. Baker now decided to side with the Brahmins. Thus he and Greenhill came to be at loggerheads with each other. Baker was charged with disregarding the Brahmin’s debts to the Company. He however saw this as an intrigue designed by Greenhill, John Leigh and Captain Martin\textsuperscript{79} to cause his deposition. He justified his position in a letter\textsuperscript{80} to the Company. In this he enumerated the various measures that he had taken for the establishment and development of the enclave. He also highlighted the fact that it was due to his connections with the influential local groups, like the Brahmins, that the Company’s interests had been furthered. He also clarifies in the letter, the complication regarding the money owed by the Brahmins to the Company. Thus he writes, “You know like wise how the Bramon Vancatee standeth charged with a great some of money in the Company’s bookes for the United Joint Stock, part of which, being monies which he gave out of provision of Goods for the Company, is owing by the painters of this Towne

\textsuperscript{79} John Leigh and Captain Martin were placed first and second respectively in the Choultry to oversee affairs for better administration.

\textsuperscript{80} EFI, 1655-60, 30\textsuperscript{th} June, 1656, p. 93.
to the value of about 800 pagodas...."\(^{81}\) In his letter Baker emphasises the importance of maintaining a good relationship with the local Brahmins for the commercial ventures of the Company and therefore covertly notes the need to overlook some of the charges against them.

John Leigh’s reply to Baker came in the form of a personal letter rather than an official response through the Company. He seems to aware of the Company’s dealings. However Leigh feels constrained “to address the Company direct on the subject, to vindicate his own reputation and that of the friends who brought him into the service."\(^{82}\)

At this time, Henry Greenhill took the opportunity to write to Baker charging Kanappa\(^{83}\) of taking bribes from the people in the case of transporting boys and girls to Pulicat to be sold to Dutch brokers. Greenhill then in the following words, charges also Baker for the worsening town administration:

“...but this, as the rest, was all hushed up or slightly passed over; which encouraged him to domineer more and more in high language over the poore people; and at last, growing from words to blows, he drub’d one before the Choultry without Mr. Leighs knowledge or consent, on Authority I never understood him to be improved with all by the said consultation...”\(^{84}\)

Greenhill continued that it was the conspiracy of the Brahmins to defame

\(^{81}\) ibid.
\(^{82}\) EFI, 17\(^{th}\) February 1654, p. 230.
\(^{83}\) Kanappa was placed third in the Choultry after Leigh and Capt. Martin.
\(^{84}\) EFI, 1\(^{st}\) March, 1654, pp. 235-236.
him among the people. The allegation against him and his associates of an attempt to depose Baker, according to him, was baseless.

Baker finally narrated the sequence of events and causes in a letter written to the Company on 18 September 1654. He sent it to England on the ship, Love, for the Company to know “what fine dealings you have had from your servants hertofore in this place.”\(^{85}\) Also Baker charged Greenhill of forgery in the Company's accounts and the fact that the latter had used its money for all his private transactions. According to Baker, the cause of the indebtedness of the merchants and Brahmins was on account of the private goods that Greenhill had sold to them, and finding them unable to repay, reimbursed himself, principal and interest, out of the Company’s funds and transferred the debt to its account.\(^{86}\) A similar, allegation of indulgence in private trade with the Brahmins was also levelled against Gurney in the same letter.

The volley of accusations continued as Greenhill responded in another to Aaron Baker. An exasperated Greenhill wonders why the latter finds it necessary to protect the Brahmins over his fellow Englishman (meaning himself). He asks Baker to come out of the spell of the Brahmins, dubbing them as “villains capable of witchcraft, sorcery, spells...common in India.”\(^{87}\).

\(^{85}\) EFI, 18\(^{th}\) September 1654, pp. 292-293.
\(^{86}\) ibid.
\(^{87}\) EFI, 1\(^{st}\) January, 1655.
The Brahmins during their confinement drew up a list of fresh charges against Greenhill that was handed over to President Baker on 4th April 1654. The charges consisted of 118 articles; beginning from the administration of Ivy. The letter showed that Shashadri was responsible for most of the turbulence in the city. It also argued against the allegation that accused the Brahmins of having connived with the Nawabs.

In their declaration the Brahmins cite evidences where the merchants had created problems for the Company to the extent of cheating and stealing. Greenhill as the agent of the Company ignored these in order to gain favours from the merchants. He was accused of using the Company’s resources (Art-102), “The Agent used the Company’s Carpenters and Smiths Chayers and Cotts, and build his house receiving the Company’s wages.”88

In the declaration they also accused Mr. Leigh and Mr. Gurney of committing fraud with the Company. The Brahmins ended the declaration by acknowledging it as their duty to inform the Company of all that they knew.89

Greenhill’s reply to the declaration came in the form of charges by the painters and weavers of Madras levelled against the Brahmin brothers accusing them of committing frauds. These groups claimed that the Brahmins were the only people who were directly in touch with the Agents

88 EFI, 1651-54, Declaration of the Brahmins, pp. 258-266.
89 “.Wee acknowledge that since the Presidents first arrvall bee hath, by many Iyes and Inventions of this Townes people, never Injoyed one quiett howre, and News of Disturbances in Europe both fill him full of Disquiett; and by means the President forbade our coming to the Fort, have not till this time, only by William Winters hand, made a small information. Now, being called to it by our. Adversaries, have declared that wee know....” (EFI, April 4th, 1654; pp. 258-266, Love, Vestiges, I, pp.141-44.
on account of their being ‘Dubashes’. They were therefore in an advantageous over the weavers and painters. The latter thus lived under the fear that complaints would be made against them to the English authorities.

The events and accusation of this dispute superseded the caste issues. The caste questions were reduced to being just a smokescreen being used to cover up personal gains. The English agents wanted to assert their power by defending the merchants and Brahmans who were clashing for economic and social benefits. In the mid seventeenth century the relationship between the local magnates and the English agents are symbiotic in nature, collaborating at one level and contesting at another. Both functioned in a level playing field that eventually manifested itself in the growth of personal relationships that later became contentious.

4.3 Wall Tax Assessment Of 1706

By 1642, the White Town had been well fortified. The Black Town or the Native settlement was vulnerable to attacks by the Dutch and the surrounding regions. Thus there arose the need for fortification. However the idea of constructing a defence by permanently fortifying the Black Town, was only put forward by the Council by the mid 1680’s.

It is not very clear whether the fort wall had been constructed earlier or not because a letter dated 13th June 1706 to President Thomas Pitt from the Company servants reads, “....the Walls which we find so sunk, and

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90 Dubash, an interpreter attached to mercantile house as the broker transacting business with the natives, *Hobson-Jobson*. 
cracke’d, and beams which support the Terrass so rotten in the wall that ‘tis our opinions it will be in Vain to endeavour the reparation of it, and that it will be much less charge to the Hon’ble Company to demolish and rebuild it.”

While the Directors in London saw the need for a permanent fortification, they were not willing to bear the expenses for the same. They proposed that the expenses be defrayed by the local inhabitants themselves, “whether it please or displease them or anybody else.” The Directors noted that the local merchants would be granted all the privileges of being freemen within the Black Town but under no circumstances would the Company fund the fortification project. The *modus operandi* of the levy and collection was formulated later. The task was finally accomplished after two decades in the form of the Wall Tax Assessment of 1706. The Company instituted a Council on 4th December 1700 for the purpose of conducting a survey and report on this matter.

In order to gather funds for this purpose the Company decided to levy the Wall Tax through the caste heads. In August 1702, a paper in “Jentue Language (was) to bee delivered to the Chief of each Cast, who are for with order’d to summon their cast...and every man permitted to subscribe what he will give voluntary towards the aforementioned...” This letter carried a tone of compulsion whereby the residents were to be made to comply to the orders or else they would be punished. The money was to be deposited by

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91 D&C, 13th June, 1706, p. 49.
92 Despatches from England, 1681-86, 16th March 1684/5.
93 D&C, 3rd August, 1702, p. 65.
the residents with their respective caste heads. The caste heads however, did not pay much heed to this demand. Throughout 1703, 1704 and 1705, the Council held a number of meetings with the caste heads. These proved to be futile. Finally in 1706, the Company came down heavily on the matter and the Governor and Council proposed a caste-based assessment.

Table 4.2: The assessment by caste done in 1706 was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASTES</th>
<th>AMOUNT IN PAGODAS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chittee</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quomitty</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vellomwarr</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballejeewarr</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ganlewar (Oylemen)</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gellawanneewarr Cast (Shopkeepers of sugar and limes)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggamoodeewarr (Brickmakers)</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comsalawarr (Goldsmiths)</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guzaratts</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaicullawarr (Weavers)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charnomwarr (Conicoplyes)</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polliwarr</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sallawarr (Weavers)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoningeewarr (Chuliars)</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saccalawarr (Washermen)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gullawarr (Shepherds)</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chomboddeewarr (Fishermen)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyawarr (Bamboo Cooleys)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mongelewarr (Barbers)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vellambilla (Tonnapas)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connadu (Grass cutters)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jandru (Toddy people)</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waudewarr</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sattigurree (Andeechittee)</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comrawarr (Potmakers)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correalawarr (Muckquas)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Braminys</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pottanapwarr (Catamaran men)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: D & C., 1706, p.55.

As the list suggests, the English had made a selection of the twenty-eight caste groups that resided within the Black Town. The Portuguese and the Armenians of the town were also included in the assessment and were in fact the two biggest contributors to the fortification fund.\(^94\) The Caste heads were given some time to raise money in accordance with the list provided to them. The heads then enquired whether they would be exempted from other kinds of taxes hereafter. The Company reassured in this regard promising that no more taxes would be levied on this account.\(^95\) The Wall Tax seems to have been paid completely as the Consultation of 1706 notes

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\(^94\) The Portuguese were assessed at 3,300 pagodas while the Armenians had to pay 600.

\(^95\) D&C, 12th September 1706, p. 79.
that the inhabitants paid the last assessment that was a total of four hundred ninety two pagodas one fanam.\textsuperscript{96}

The immediate purpose of the assessment of 1706 was to raise funds for the wall. However, it also had other long-term implications, as the identification of castes by the English further sharpened their identities. Through this assessment the English seem to have recognized the caste groupings and the role of cast representatives in mobilising them. The local residents were called upon to act and respond not as citizens of Madras but as members of particular caste groups who resided in the town.\textsuperscript{97} This kind of collective caste identity is reflected in the disputes of 1652-53 when English enclave of Madras was at its formative stage. The similar crystallisation of identities can gleaned in the dispute of 1707, which took place half a century later.

4.4 The Dispute of 1707

At the commencement of the eighteenth century, the English Company and its system were well entrenched at Madras. The Company’s hold on the merchants had increased. The Wall Tax assessment of 1706 was of immense significance. Through the assessment the Company had become more pronounced in its actions. In the caste dispute of 1707, the English arbitration came in the form of the strict demarcation of space between the Right Left Caste sharpening the divide that had been created earlier.

\textsuperscript{96} D&C, 19\textsuperscript{th} December 1706, p. 106.
\textsuperscript{97} P. A. Roche, ‘Caste and British Merchant Government in Madras, 1639-1749,’ IESHR, vol. xii, no. 4, 1975, p.398.
The dispute of 1707 originated out of the difference over “an infringement by one caste of the alleged exclusive right of the other to the use of certain street in Peddanaikpetta.” The Governor ordered Mr. Raworth, the Paymaster and the Gunner to survey the Petta and suppress the dispute with the help of Serappa and Narayan for the Right Hand Caste and Kalavay Chetti and Venkata Chetti for Left. Mr. Raworth and the Gunner surveyed the streets and the buildings in the Petta and presented a ‘draught’ This showed that, “… Streets was chiefly inhabited by the Left hand cast being Bridge Gate Street, and that which, is commonly called Chief Peons Street, wherein lives but few of the Right Hand Cast; so as to preserve the Peace between the two aforesaid Caste for the future.” Accordingly the Governor ordered the few Right caste residents in the area to sell off their houses and shift to the Right areas and let the Left Castes have the right to take their wedding and festival processions into the street. The Paymaster was then instructed to put up four boundary stones with the order inscribed on them in English and Gentue. This was so that neither of the caste could feign ignorance.

On 14th August the Governor informed the Council that “on 12th night some disaffected persons to the Government had placed Papers on the Stones set up in the Patta(s) which stinted the Bounds of the Left hand

98 Love, Vestiges II, p.25.
99 D&C, 18th June 1700, p. 40.
100 Draught – a survey utilised for Thomas Pitt’s map of 1710.
102 ibid.
Cast…”103 These papers were written in ‘Mallabar language’ (Tamil). It was also inferred from the translation that some Europeans had been involved in it. This was evident to the English authorities from the fact that the natives would certain have been unfamiliar with some of the expressions used. The Governor announced a reward of 100 pagodas to anyone who brought him more information about this event. The heads of Right Hand caste were given a months time to find the culprit. A fine was to be imposed on them if they failed to do so.104

The Right Caste attempted to take a wedding procession in the forbidden street. Soldiers were sent and nineteen of the participants were arrested and lodged in the Choultry prison. Following this the members of the Right caste submitted a petition to the Governor that “upon the first settlement of the English in this place, the liberty was granted to your petitioners caste to have their streets and habitations from Tom Clarkes Gate and the Bridge Gate both within and without, (and to the Left) hand cast was granted from Mudd Point Gate both within and without the Black Town.”105 The same petition informed of further defiance by the Left castes. Its members on many occasions had complained falsely against the Right caste. The latter claimed that the street in question had traditionally been

103 D&C, 19th August, 1707, pp. 52-53.
104 D&C, 29th August 1707, pp. 57-58.
105 D&C, 19th August 1707, p. 52. With the French takeover of San Thome in 1662, there was an influx of natives to Madras, who took residence wherever they could, irrespective of caste distinctions. This intermingling of castes led to disputes. The then Governor, Langhorne (1672-78), ordered the separation according to the original division of 1652-53. The Right hand obeyed but some of the Left hand did not.
occupied by them which had now been allotted to the Left by the English.

In reaction to the Company's allotments of streets, many of the Right hand castes mainly the boatmen, washerwomen and fishermen fled to San Thome while the rest shut themselves up in their houses. This desertion had an immediate impact on the economic functioning of the Company. Governor Pitt, who was furious about this development, summoned the Council and charged one of the factors, Fraser, of siding with one of the castes. Fraser denied all the charges in the following words: "...with strange asseverations and execration but to the making or reading petition only a plain denyall." The Governor disregarded Fraser's defence and felt that the latter most certainly deserved to be punished. He felt that Fraser did not deserve the humiliation of the 'Rice and Water' treatment, as he had been a good and loyal servant to the Company. However in order to ensure that the other officials should not behave in the same manner, he decided to suspend Fraser. What is significant here is that by this time the English had been able to establish an authoritarian position for themselves in local matters. Yet at this stage there remained a chink in the armour of their authority – the local population was still a force to reckon with and could threaten their position in the proto-colonial structure.

106 ibid.
107 D&C, 22nd August 1707, p. 54.
109 ibid.
Governor Pitt then summoned the heads of the twelve prominent castes and shut them in a room to resolve their dispute among themselves. They finally reached an agreement that the “Right hand Cast should live in the Patta commonly called the Peddeneagues Patta…That the Patta called Mootell Patta should be Inhabited by none but the Left hand Cast.” They also agreed that no wedding of either cast would take place in Peddanaikpetta. Neither of the castes would sell houses to anyone but those within their own caste. It was also decided that the boatmen, lascars and fishermen, who lived by the seaside would remain there. All the transfers of residence were to be completed by 1st June 1708. This agreement however did not satisfy the deserters, who refused to return.

On 29th August Pitt summoned “Surapau, Naira Verona, Sunca Rama and Andee Chittee of the Right Hand Cast, Collaway Chittee, Vinkettee Chittee, Petombee Chittee and Cornapau Chittee (of) the Left Hand Cast, …they swore to be true to the Company’s Interest,….and to lay aside all animosities between them relating to their casts, or any other dispute, and that they would use their utmost Interest to compose the present differences on that Account as also to stand by the Agreement made in the Consultation the 25th Instant…” The deserters were offered pardon. The contentious stones were surreptitiously removed, and the strikers wrote “a most saucy and impudent Letter,” from San Thome in which the Council were advised

111 ibid.
112 ibid.
to examine the records for the earliest allotment of streets and retain the traditional demarcations.\footnote{Love, Vestiges, II, p.27.}

On 14\textsuperscript{th} September, the Armenians, the Persians and the Pathans, who were also residents of Madras offered to mediate between the two castes. ‘Paupih Brahiminy’ and Narayan, the Mulla accompanied them to San Thome. They were stopped at the gate of the town. The mob crying out for ‘Chinne Captain’ (referring to Fraser) and demanding to know why he hadn’t come and “for nothing could be done towards their returns without him.”\footnote{D&C 16\textsuperscript{th} September 1707, pp. 62-63.} The heads of the Right hand caste tried their best to convince the deserters to return and later tried to intimidated them but with no avail. The Nawab’s representative who came to Mylapore to install a new tarafdar, confirmed Fraser’s role in the strike. The Council then ordered the Fraser’s arrest. He was then removed from the Fort to the Town and put under the charge of the Captain of the Guard.\footnote{ibid.}

Pitt granted a cowle to the Right Hand caste that gave them an unconditional pardon. They were promised all previous ‘Privileges according to Sallabad.’\footnote{Sallabad was the customary or prescriptive exactions of the native governments, and for native prescriptive claims in general, Hobson-Jobson.} The pardon from the English Goveror was carried by the Armenian and the Persian mediators accompanied by Dr. Lewis and Padre Michel Auge. The procession, along with deserters started for Madras but on nearing the Fort “they took disgust at something or other the uncertainty unknown to us and returned again to St. Thoma; the Parriars

\footnote{Sallabad was the customary or prescriptive exactions of the native governments, and for native prescriptive claims in general, Hobson-Jobson.}
surround the Inhabitants and forced them to goe with them.” 117 The Governor was now left with no option to bring them back forcibly. He took an immediate decision to launch an attack on the very next day and began the preparations for the same.

At this juncture the Peddanaik and some other inhabitants of the Black Town intervened. They convinced the Governor to defer the attack for some time. The Peddanaik, being a Right hand caste man, finally convinced the strikers to return to Madras with the assurance that all the stones should not be set up, and that “all shall be settled and goe according to the Sallabad”. 118

In meantime, the Left hand cast inhabitants of Chinapatam sent a petition to the Governor stating the reasons for the origin and purpose of the conflict. They claimed that they were the ones to have played major role in the Company’s trade and were the providers of maximum merchandise to the Company. They also asserted that it was the four castes of the Left hand faction that contributed half of the assessment levied for Town Wall. The remaining half was made by the Armenians, the Muslims, the Brahmins and the Gujaratis, who were parties that were indifferent to this caste dispute. Only a very petty amount that remained unpaid was made up by Right hand caste. The Left castes also claimed to have upheld the Company’s ‘umbrage and protection’ that they had enjoyed under it. 119 They then requested the

117 D&C, 23rd September, 1707, p. 65.
118 D&C, 2nd and 4th October, 1707, p. 69.
119 D&C, 6th November, 1707, p. 76.
Company to assign Peddanaikpeta to Right Hand Caste and Muthialpeta to the Left, thus helping them restore peace in the town.

As late as 1707, when the British seem to have been entrenched into the system, the caste heads were successful in manipulating the members of their groups. This is evident from the declaration made by the boatmen, who agreed to have joined the conspiracy on instigation of their leaders. There were several other categories among the two principle castes who were not very certain about their Right-Left identities. They could thus easily be manipulated by any of the influential heads. The weavers and oil-mongers for instance fall into this category. Complaints about these often came to the Company from those who were clear about their own caste status. The company Record notes. “Both casts complain against the Kicullawarr weavers and the Oylemen that they were very fickle in their Cast, that they were sometimes of one Cast, and sometimes of another, which gave trouble to both Casts. So desired the heads may be sent for, which accordingly was done when the weavers declared for the Left hand, and the Oyle men for the Right hand, which they were ordered to keep too, or be severely punished.”

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120 The declaration read as follows: “Whereas we, Pasquall and Joan, Heads of the Macquaws or Boatmen belonging to Madrass, did, by the instigation and ill advise of some designing people, desert our habitations and employs upon the late difference between the Right and Left hand Cast, but since returning to our duty we are well informed that, whereas we are Christians, we belong to neither; and now that the Governor and Council promising that we shall have their protection and all privileges as Christians, we solemnly promise that we will never hereafter adhere to any Casts of the Gentues, or desert our Employ upon any Account whatsoever but will for the future be constant and faithful to the Honourable Company and pay due obedience on all occasions to their Governour.” D&C, 2nd December, 1707, p. 84.

121 D&C, 15th January, 1708, p.5.
The Consultation of 15th January talks of reconciliation by the castes whereby five hundred houses were to be interchanged. The task was to be accomplished four bricklayers and four carpenters. This settlement was ratified later in June 1708 when the stones were set up in the streets to mark the caste boundaries. The final agreement about this arrangement was presented by the caste heads to the Governor whose signature and the Company seal was put on it. This document was translated and incorporated in the Consultation.122

In case of defiance of this order the punishment was fixed at a fine of twelve hundred pagodas. However this adjustment also proved temporary like the earlier ones. By 1717, another major clash took place. The entire eighteenth century was marked by clashes between the two castes. The role of the English as arbitrators in local-level social matters was becoming stronger.

122 The Consultation record,"This day the Heads of the Casts were again before us, when was produced four Papers signed by them, the purport thereof bring the settlement of their streets in the Peddeneagues Patta, which was now likewise signed by the Governor and Council, and the Company's Seal affixed thereto; one of the Papers delivered to each Cast, one to remain in the Pagoda, and the other in the secretaries office, Translate of which is as Entered after this consultation. So 'tis hoped that troublesome business is now over, and in such a manner fixed as to prevent the like villainy for the future." D&C, 21st June 1708, pp. 35-36.