INTRODUCTION

The development of Madras as a territorial enclave of the English Company served primarily the purpose of procuring the vast amounts of cotton cloth varieties from the Coromandel, which found extensive market in Europe. The geographical location of Madras was not very favourable for a trading settlement as there was no natural harbour. George Viscount Valentia, a visitor to Madras noted that, “it would probably have been difficult to find a worse place for a capital than that chosen for Madras, on the extreme point of a coast where the current is more rapid and where tremendous surf breaks, even in the finest weather. Ships were compelled to anchor offshore, while cargo and passengers were carried through the surf to the beach in small boats. Transfer from ships was far from easy in as a swell that often ran as high as 25 feet and loading at Madras became a memorable experience for travellers’. It was also reported that, ‘nothing is more terrible at Madras than the surf which... is not only alarming but dangerous... not withstanding carry, many lives are lost.’

Madras developed as one of the first Presidencies of the British in India. These colonial towns, with their forms and functions became a direct reflection of their foreign origins and as such it represented the microcosm of the larger colonial empire of which it was a product. There are some conceptual problems in arriving at a single definition of a colonial city.

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There are some characteristics of a colonial city which Balandier talks of in 'The Colonial Situation: A Theoretical Approach'. Firstly, it involves the economic and political domination of a foreign minority from one ethnic (or racial) and cultural set of origins over an indigenous majority from a different background. Second, this domination links radically different civilization into some form of relationship. Third, it places an industrialized society in contact with a pre-industrial society and fourth, the tension between the two societies result primarily from the 'subservient role to which the colonial people are subjected as instruments of colonial power.'

These characteristics are evident in the development of colonial port towns in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. In the seventeenth century however, these towns were more of settlements rather than colonies. But Madras being occupied by the English, in its first stage of development, evolved as a protocolonial town where both the indigenous factors and the foreign influence seems to have gained ground and a stride towards colonial system becomes evident. The development of a proto-colonial city can be viewed as a process of accommodation between local and colonial influences. The shape of this accommodation, varied widely according to particular European and Asian societies involved; but the continual interaction and frequent tensions inevitable in such a process created in most cities, a highly complex urban structure.

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The English first landed up at Masulipatnam in 1611 with the intention of establishing a trading network on the Eastern coast. On their arrival they entered into a conflict with the Dutch and thus had to leave. Later in the same year the English managed to convince the Golconda rulers for permission to trade. They did not acquire territory there but were permitted to build a factory or a trade house on the payment of custom. In Masulipatnam, the English started facing problems on account of exactions made by the Golconda rulers. In 1621, the English collaborated with the Dutch at Pulicat but later problems cropped up and the union had to be terminated. Around 1626, the English managed to obtain Armagaon, where a factory and a fort were erected. Later the English had to abandon Masulipatnam and Armagaon. The matter was reported to the Directors in England, who commissioned Francis Day, one of the members of the council at Masulipatnam to seek a hospitable spot. Francis Day set out to explore in 1637 and from Masulipatnam went as far as Pollecheere. The expedition was successful as it led to overtures from a Naik named Damarla Venkadri or Venkatapati whose territory covered the coastal land from Pulicat to San Thome (Portuguese Settlement).

The Naik was a Rajah, with his headquarters at Wandiwash. His brother Aiyappa was Naik of Poonamallee and attended to the affairs on the coast. Day obtained from them the grant of Madraspatam situated three

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3 Armagaon was thirty five miles northward of Pulicat.
4 Pollecheere, future French settlement of Pondichery.
5 Naik was called Vencatadri by English, Venkatappa by Dutch, Damarla was a name derived from a hamlet in Chingleput district; H.D. Love, *Vestiges of Old Madras, 1640-1800*, Published for the Government of India, London, 1913, vol., p. 13(n)
miles north of San Thome. He not only managed a grant of territory and privileges but also a license to build a fort and establish a settlement. Meanwhile there was a dispute in the agency owing to succession. Andrew Cogan was sent from England to take charge of the Agency at Golconda. The dispute was over Ivie's possession of the enclave. The confusion was sorted out and in 1639 Cogan took charge of the southern possessions. It was around this time that Francis Day delivered a report, along with the Naik's grant. "All your being here I acquainted you with many kind invitation and large priviledges by the Nague of Vincatadra, whose territories lyes between Pullacatt and Santomee, the only place for paintings so much desired at Southwards, and likewise great store of long cloth and morrees which is there procurable."  

Day also informed that by the permission of the Naik he visited the town, met the merchants and weavers, and also enquired about prices. He then drew a comparison with Armagaon, "... I needs not tell you that Armagaon is only Chargeable; the place affords nothing of itself, not soe much as a peace of whit cloth but comes from other places, as for merchants how miserable poore they are, by the Naigues Continuall forceings, there complying with us..." Day discusses the positive aspects of acquiring the place which includes not only the availability of cloth but also the merchants

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6 Paintings, Chintz, on which coloured designs was imprinted by Wood blocks or traced by hand.
7 Morrees, blue cotton cloth.
8 Letter from Francis Day dated 27th July 1639 delivered on 3rd September 1639; 27th July 1639-40.
9 ibid.
and weavers who could be utilized to manufacture good quality of cloth. Day also attached Naik’s grant, drafted by himself in the style of a farman. The letter gave an account of the privileges that came with the grant - “...we (the Naik) out of our spetiall love and favour to the English, doe grant unto the said captain... by virtue of this firman. Power to direct and order the building of a fort and Castle in or about Medraspatam, as they shall think convenient, the charges whereof, until fully and wholly finished, to be defrayed by us, but then to bee repaired when the English shall first make their entrance to take possession thereof. And to make more full expression of our affection to the English Nation, we doe confirm... full power and authority to govern and dispose of the Government of Medraspatam for the terme and space of two years.

Whatsoever goods or merchandise the English Company shall either Import or Export, for as much as concerns the dutys and customes of Medraspatam, they shall not only for the Prementioned two years in which they injoy the Government, but for ever after, be customs free. Yett if they shall transport or bring any commodities up into, or through my country then shall pay half the dutyes that other merchants pay... that whatsoever provisions the English shall buy in my country, either for their fort or ships, they shall not be liable to pay any custom or Dutyes for the same.” Other privileges constituted the rights their to minting without paying any duty.

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10 The firman granted to Francis Day by the Naigue Damarla Vincatadri, 22nd July/August 1639. EFI, 22nd July/August, 1639. Love, Vestiges, I, pp. 17-18.
They also promised on behalf of the merchants and weavers of honest dealing with the English.\textsuperscript{11}

The Masulipatnam Council accepted the grant but before moving out from Armagaon they had to clear a debt of 2000 Pagodas to the Naik of Armagaon. Arrangements were made to clear the debt, after which they started on a voyage to Madras to meet the Naik and make an ‘experimental investment’.\textsuperscript{12}

The privileges that the English were to get in Madras clearly explain their interest in the place. But why was the Naik so keen on their settlement? The reason for Naik’s keenness can be gleaned from the letter written from Masulipatnam to the Company - “…First, he (the Naik) desired his country may flourish and grow rich which he conceives it will by Drawing Merchants to him. Secondly he desire for his money good Horses from Persia. Thirdly, that yearly upon our shippes he may send a servant into the Bay of Bengalla, to buy him Hawks, Apes, Paratts and such like babbles; and that, when hee shall have occasion to send a vessel of his owne there, or to Persia, a man of course may proceed upon her. And lastly, the Fort, being made substantiall and strong, may bee able to defend his person on occasion, against his insulting neighbours.”\textsuperscript{13} Thus it is clear that the Naik was trying to create an ally for himself through this, which seemed to be a necessity in the fractured political scenario in the southern India.

\textsuperscript{11} ibid.
\textsuperscript{12} Love, Vestiges, I., p.20.
\textsuperscript{13} ibid., p.20-21.
The Damarla brothers were the Naiks of Venkatapati, the Raja of Chandragiri. After the Raja’s death he was succeeded by Sri Ranga Rayal in 1642 who after his defeat at the hands of the Golconda rulers became the last Hindu ruler of Vijayangar to have ruled in this region. Madras came under the rule of Sri Ranga Rayal who forged friendly relationship with the English. He granted them a Cowle\textsuperscript{14} or firman which not only confirmed the existing privileges but also conferred some additional privileges. The new privilege that the English managed from the Raja was that he readily agreed to “surrender the government and justice of the towne into your hands; and if any of your neighbours of Pundamolee shall injure you, wee promise you our ready assistance; and for what provisions shall be brought out of that country; wee will that no Junkan (toll) be taken thereon.”\textsuperscript{15}

The first authentic map of the town of Madras belongs to the period of governor Thomas Pitt dating circa 1710. This was followed by a more detailed map dating 1733 which gave a rough idea of the area covered by the grant and later acquisitions by the English. Madraspatam was situated in the province called Tondamandalam that comprised the area between Penner river of Nellore and the Pennar river of South Arcot, with it capital at Conjeveram (Kanchipuram). The province was divided into one to five nadus\textsuperscript{16} each. There were seventy nine nadus altogether. Nadus were further divided into Nattams which totalled to 1900 in the province. Madraspatam

\textsuperscript{14} Cowle a lease, or a grant in writing. The word is Kaul meaning ‘word, promise, agreement’ Also, as Cowle, Yule and Burnell (ed.), Hobson-Jobson, Rupa, New Delhi.

\textsuperscript{15} O.C., Nos 1696, 1697, October-November 1645, as cited in Love I, p. 68.

\textsuperscript{16} Nadus were analogous to Taluks of later days.
with its White Town and Black Town was the part of the Nayar nadu of a cottam named Puzhel or Puliel, the fort of which was situated in the village of Palli at the Redhills. The indigenous settlements were situated in the nadus of Ambattur, Agudi, Atur and Eghumur (Egmore). The other villages not within the boundary of Madraspatam were Tandore (North), Perambur (North-West), Vepery and Pursewaukum (West), Egmore and Nungambankam (South-West), and Triplicane (South). In the beginning of the eighteenth century these villages were brought into the ambit of Madras due to massive increase in the population of the town. In Triplicane and Puddupakam it was the Shrotriem system that was functional while Mirasi system functioned in other villages.

The name Chennaptam or Chinnapatnam has been attributed to Damarla Vekatappa’s father Chennapa Naik. It was Damarla Naik who when gave the grant to English desired to be named after his father. The name Chennapatam first occurred in 1652, when the term was used in communications with the natives. Love has made an indepth study of the endowment of Chennai Kesava Perumal temple in Madras, dated 1646 and came to the conclusion that the village called Madraspatam existed under the name prior to the settlement by Cogan and Day. After the founding of Fort

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18 *Shrotriem*, an assignment to a Brahman of land or revenue, which, however, conferred no right of interference with tenants who pay the prescribed rent.
19 *Mirasi*, right was the right to inheritance or hereditary possession or occupation of land, combined with certain privileges, such as preferential claim to waste land, to fees from members of the village community, and to succession to certain village offices.
20 Award of 5th November 1652 quoted in P.C. vols. xxxvii-xxxviii, 30th October, 1707 as in Love, Vestiges, I, p.84.
St. George, the new town around the Fort was commonly known to the natives as Chinnapatam. The reason for this could be either the Naik’s wish or because the site was originally called so. The place was given formal recognition by the Chandragiri Rajas in 1645 and by the Qutb Shahis in 1672.