

Public Letter to Fort St George: 23.1.1805
(Extract)

38

16. The ~~xxxxxxx~~ Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, who support the protestant mission on the Coromandel coast have communicated to us an extract of advices from their missionaries, in which it is stated that the native converts to christianity in the district of Tinnevelly had been exposed to very severe persecutions from their heathen neighbours and from some of the native officers employed in the collections. This account we do not understand to have been transmitted in the (p 6) nature of a complaint to be prosecuted here, but to have made part of the details which are usually given by the missionaries; still less was it intended to reflect on the European servants of the Company, because it adds, that on a representation of the native christians to the collector, he interposed his authority to stop the injustice and malevolence exercised towards them. Mr Lushington now in England who was then collector, and appears to have maintained just sentiments against persecution on the score of any religion existing under the Company's Government, tho, he ascribes the animosity towards those who became christians partly to other causes, also asserts, that he issued positive ~~injunctions~~ injunctions not to disturb them on account of the faith they had embraced. But the Society, alarmed, lest similar instances of (p 7) persecution should hereafter occur, have expressed a hope that we will give orders which may prevent every thing of this kind, and protect the persons, and the labours of their missionaries in the discharge of the important duties with which they are entrusted. Satisfied that there has been no intention in our Government to act otherwise, we think it requisite only to state, that as we have never countenanced any species or degree of religious intolerance in the countries subject to our authority, and Mahomedans, Parsees, Hindoos in all their varying sects, have been permitted to follow their separate persuasions without molestation, so it can be no question that all who profess the christian faith, whether of European, Armenian or Indian race, should enjoy the like privilege and protection. Therefore officers of every rank (p 8) Europeans and natives employed in the administration of our affairs, should conform to themselves to these general principles from which any deviation past or future must excite our disapprobation; and whilst, these officers are careful to secure the obedience and the revenue due to Government, they should be the defenders of every subject against injurious treatment on a religious account. With regard also to the missionaries, so long as they conduct themselves in a prudent and upright manner, as they appear hitherto to have done, we cannot doubt that their persons and office will be duly respected.

Political Letter to Fort St George: 29.5.1807
(Extract)

15. Among the effects which we have to lament as resulting from these injudicious orders respecting the dress of the native troops, and the introduction of the turban, are the suspicions generated in the minds of the sepoys of ~~our~~ intention on the part of /an our Government to compel them to become christians. In the whole course of our administration of the Indian territories it has been our known and declared principle to maintain a perfect toleration of the various religious systems which prevailed in it, to protect the followers of each in the unperturbed enjoyment of their several opinions and usages, and neither (p 10) to interfere with them ourselves, nor to suffer them to be molested by others. Holding this principle still, as we had lately occasion to state to you in our Public Letter of the 23rd January 1805, and never having had the least reason to believe that it was not strictly followed up by our Governments abroad, it has been to us both a matter of surprise and of great concern to find that a contrary idea has obtained any footing among the native troops, and we have been solicitous to discover the commencement and progress of so injurious a notion.

38.2

To the Sitting Magistrate, the Town Major, Superintendent of Police and Mr F.W. Ellis Esq
Gentlemen,

1. I am directed to acquaint you, that the hon'ble the Governor in council has been pleased to appoint you, a committee to enquire into and report, the causes of the existing differences between the contending parriars and puller casts.
2. These caste disputes have been so frequently reiterated and their respective pretensions are now so well established, (p 15) that it is presumed there will be little difficulty in tracing and adjusting the cause of difference. You will however avail yourselves of the information derivable from the heads of the respective parties, who should be held responsible for the maintenance of peace, and for the discovery of the offenders.
3. After the actual circumstances of the dispute shall have been ascertained it would be right that you propose the form of some rule to be observed applicable to like cases, so as to prevent the recurrence of similar disturbances. I enclose for your information the copy of a proclamation which has been published on this occasion and (p 16) of a letter transmitted to the Superintendent of Police.

I have the honour to be,
Fert St George
20th May 1809

Your obedient servant
A. Falconar, chief secretary to
Government.

Committee to Government: 5.7.1809

In our report of the 31st May, we informed the hon'ble the Governor in council, that we had taken the preparatory measures to enable us to submit a code of regulations applicable to the several points in dispute, between the Right and Left Hand casts.

We understand that these disputes are now renewed, and that they arise primarily principally from the causes noticed in the 8th paragraph of our former report, namely, the assumption of certain marks of distinction by the Left Hand casts in the burial of their dead, to which they are not generally considered to be entitled. (p 42)

Under these circumstances we beg leave to recommend, as the best mode of repressing the disturbances, that the Left Hand casts be restricted to the use of an unornamented bier, and peremptorily forbidden to assume any marks of distinction whatever in their funeral ceremonies, until the enquiries of the committee shall have ascertained the privileges, to which, from the custom of Madras they are entitled, and the final orders of Government be given on their report,

(R.Barclay, William Sanders, F.W.Ellis)

Government to Committee: 5.7.1809

I am directed to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of this date and to inform you, that, for the means therein stated, the hon'ble the Governor in council approves your suggestion of restricting the Left Hand casts to the use of an unornamented bier, and interdicting them from the assumption of any marks of distinction in their funeral ceremonies, until the privileges to which, from the custom of Madras, they may be entitled, shall have been ascertained and sanctioned by the authority of Government.

(A. Falconar, chief secretary)

IOR: Board's Collections: Vol 347: No 8114: 43 pages

Public Letter from Fort St George: 6.2.1810
(Extract)

Gens 19.5.
1809

142. We request the attention of your hon'ble court to the measures which we found judged it proper to adopt in consequence of certain dissensions attended with bloodshed and proceeding to very dangerous extremities, between the members of the Right and Left Hand castes at this place. These dissensions having arisen from the adoption of certain funeral rites on the part of the Left Hand Castes to which the Right Hand Castes deemed themselves exclusively entitled, we issued a proclamation, in which we ~~expressly~~ made known that the parties should severally be protected in the performance of their established ceremonies although neither would be suffered to interfere with the customs and privileges of the other, and that the heads of castes would be held strictly answerable for the quiet and peaceable conduct of their respective adherents until the cause of the difference could be ascertained and adjudged.

Gens 19.5.
1809

143. (p 2) For this last purpose we appointed a committee consisting off the Town Major, the sitting magistrate, the superintendent of police, and Mr F.W.Ellis, to whom we gave directions that after having obtained the necessary information on the subject, they should lay down a rule applicable to like cases, by which the recurrence of such disturbances might be prevented.

Gens 7.7.
1809

144. The committee reported satisfactorily on the cause of the dissensions which were occasioned by the assumption of certain marks of distinction by the Left Hand castes in the burial of their dead to which they were not generally considered to be entitled, and therefore recommended that these castes should be required to lay aside such marks of distinction, until the committee should be enabled to decide upon the accustomed privileges of the respective disputants. We approved of this suggestion and gave orders for its being adopted.

Public Letter to Fort St George: 28.10.1812
(Extract)

22. However we may lament the strange and unaccountable superstitions of which prevail among numerous castes of the Braminical persuasion, yet policy requires that the parties should be protected in the performance of their established ceremonies; we therefore highly approve the proclamation you issued on the 19th May 1809 which holds forth that protection, but which at the same time prescribes that the heads of castes shall be held accountable for the quiet and peaceable conduct of their respective adherents.

23. And as we find from the letter of the committee appointed by you to enquire into this unpleasant subject under date the 5th July 1809 that the Left Hand castes had assumed certain marks of distinction in their funeral ceremonies, to which they did not appear entitled and which seems to have caused the serious dissensions in question (p 8) we approve of your having ~~interdicted~~ interdicted them from the observance of them until they should be duly sanctioned by the authority of your Government.

IOR: Board's Collections: Vol 380: No 9587

The dispute was principally between the Fullers, belonging to the Left Hand grouping and the Pariahs, belonging to the Right Hand. The full report of the committee is given in this volume pp 13-328. Decision of Government is on pp 329-31.

383

Acceptance of Tippee's Hukum Namah in Caste Disputes in Mysore: 7.10. 1806.

Defendants Side
Right Hand Cast

The heads of the Right Hand cast to deliver to the magistrate a hukum namah of the late Tippee Sultaun.

Eleven old customs continued and confirmed by the late Tippee Sultaun.

- 1st The marriage pandal of the Parriar cast shall be supported by twelve pillars that of the Chucklars by eleven.
- 2nd The marriage procession shall only parade through the streets inhabited by their respective castes.
- 3rd The Parriars shall wear a tuft of flowers on the right side and the Chucklers one on the left side of the head.
- 4th The Parriars shall have a canopy over the bier the Chucklers shall not.
- 5th The Parriars in their marriage processions shall make use of a light coloured horse and (p 1461) the Chucklers a dark bay horse.
- 6th The Parriars shall make use of torches in the day time the Chucklers shall not.
- 7th The Parriars shall make use of a cheury made of cow's hair, the Chucklers shall not.
- 8th The Parriars shall wear a bracelet of bells on the right leg, the Chucklers shall wear one on the left.
- 9th The Parriars at the celebrations of their marriages shall make use of the musicians of their own cast and the Chucklers must do the same.

Dated the 1221 year from the birth of Mahomed A.D. 1783.

Questions to the Kaje Kabeebulah

- Q Do you know any thing of this hukum namah ?
- A Yes. It is authentic and was written by order of the late Tippee Sultaun.
- Q Only the Parriar and Chuckler caste are mentioned by name in it? Pray was it meant to extend to all castes?
- A It was meant to extend to all of the Right and Left (p 1462) Hand castes commonly called Yellaghee and Bellaghee.
- Q What was the cause of these regulations being framed by the late Tippee Sultaun?
- A Frequent quarrels between the Right and Left Hand castes, particularly about the seven customs which the late Sultaun abolished.

Opinion

It appears by the late Tippee Sultaun's hukum namah and by an enquiry made into the customs of the castes that the Left Hand cast have no right to use the canopy at a funeral.

Judgement

The eleven customs contained in the hukum namah of the late Sultaun to be considered in force with reference to the pleasure of the Right Hon'ble the Governor in council for whose approval and confirmation this decree is to be submitted as it concerns the religious rights and customs of the inhabitants.

Seringapatam
7th October 1806.
(p 1463) Confirmed

John Hilly Symons, Judge.

IOR: P/244/11; Madras Public Consultations: 6.3.1812
Included in the report of the committee on Right and Left Hand caste.

38.4

'Proposed Rule' by Committee on Right and Left Hand Casts: 6.3.1812PROPOSED RULEBurials

(p 1508) The left hand cast in the Black Town of Madras and its environs, without any exception in future, shall not use Panchacalasa or five Calasa or brass pots on the funeral bier.

Such of the casts of the Left Hand division, who consider it necessary, to perform certain ablutions by way of purifications at the cemetery, shall carry in their hands, with the funeral procession, as many Calasas or brass pots as they please, empty or full of water.

Flags

The Right and Left Hand casts having mutually agreed to use in all their processions, the St George's flag and Government having been pleased to consent to and confirm this agreement, only the St George's flag shall be carried or used in processions or at festivals on all occasions.

Streets

As the houses of the inhabitants of Chintadypettah and Begemporepettah are (p 1509) intermixed, and in villages within the jurisdiction of Madras so situated, all processions shall pass indiscriminately through all the streets.

The inhabitants of the Black Town of Madras, shall continue as they are at present occupying separate quarters of the town, in conformity to the arrangement made and sanctioned by Government in the year 1652 and 1707.

A small lane from Tomboo Chitty Street through Coral Merchant Street to Calaishevara pagoda shall be neutral.

The Right and Left Hand casts in the Black Town of Madras shall perform their ceremonies weddings &c, in and carry their dead bodies through their own streets.

To contribute to general convenience all streets shall be common to all casts on private business, and they may use all kinds of conveyances.

Festivals

Such festivals as have been kept by an order of Government shall not be renewed but by a special order from the same authority.

IOR: P/244/11: Madras Public Consultations: 6.3.1812

Note: The use of St George's flag was determined by the Madras British authorities in January 1717. The decision was:

"That whereas great numbers of these small pagodas have been clandestinely built, without the knowledge or permission of the Government, and were are daily begun upon, which (serve) to raising of disputes among the casts, none shall be built hence forward without the permission of the Governour and council.

"That no colours for the future shall be used at any fe(asts) in Madras but the English commonly known by the name of St George's colours, with a white field and a red cross."

There was a violation of this order two years later in Feb 1719 and the person concerned was then ordered to be put in the pillory and afterwards expelled from Madras.

Public Letter from Fort St George: 17.10.1812
(Extract)

133. At our meeting on the 22nd of May we considered of the necessity of adopting some final resolution with regard to the reports of the committee appointed to investigate the differences and disputes between the Right and Left Hand Castes as stated in our general letter dated 6th February 1810 and to the numerous petitions which had been received on that subject.

134. The extremities to which these disputes had been carried previously to the appointment of the committee seemed to render it a point of great importance to conclude an amicable arrangement between the contending parties, and, if practicable, to ascertain in how far the pretensions advanced by either of them were supported by the tenets of their religion or the usage which had formerly prevailed. The public peace has fortunately been restored and preserved during (p 4) the last two years but no ulterior advantage appears to have resulted from the measures which it was deemed expedient to adopt. The committee have not succeeded in effecting a reconciliation between the opposite castes, neither are they themselves unanimous in the opinion they have formed with respect to the decision which, according to justice and expediency ought to be passed on the matter in dispute.

135. Had the information which the committee obtained and the opinion which they formed founded upon it, been of a satisfactory and convincing nature, it might have been proper for the Government to communicate their report to the judges of the supreme court, in order that some rule with regard to the respective privileges of the Right and Left Hand castes might have been established and promulgated. But, with the defective and contradictory testimony of the witnesses examined by the committee, and with the discordant sentiments of its members before us, it did (p 5) not seem practicable to interfere further to any good purpose; and the respective rights of the parties accused of exercising, and of those who complained that they suffered oppression, could therefore be determined only by the usual process of judicial investigation. It will continue to be the duty of the magistrates to preserve the public peace, but the different castes, who consider themselves aggrieved, must seek redress in the supreme court of judicature.

136. These sentiments we communicated to the magistrates for their information and guidance.

IGR: Board's Collections: Vol 380: No 9587

The report of the committee is entered on the Public Consultations dated 6.3. 1812 (P/244/11) pp 1428-1729. Its arrangement is as follows:

- pp 1428-1510 Report (49 paras with interspersed quotations from documents received, interviews etc)
 - pp 1511-41 Minute of Mr Ellis dated 20.8.1810 (32 paras)
 - pp 1541-64 Minute of Supdt Police, J.H.Symons, dated 21.8.1810
 - pp 1564-71 Later petitions (perhaps sent by Govt to committee)
 - pp 1572-1679 Committee to Government on petitions
 - pp 1679-1709 Summary
 - pp 1710-29 Second Minute by Mr Ellis.
- Report considered on 22.5.1812 as indicated above.

38.5

F.W. Ellis Minute on Right and Left Hand Castes: 20.8.1810
(Extract)

27. In the preceding paragraph I have treated the question according to its abstract merits; under the circumstances which at present exist, and considering the contumacious mode in which the Panjalattai have thought proper (to) assert their claim, it would not perhaps (be) consist(ent) with the due maintenance of public authority that they should wrest that from Government by irregular combination for which they ought to be indebted to its justice. At what time and under what conditions the concession should be made to them, if made at all, must remain for the determination of the hon'ble the Governor in council.

28. I might here dismiss the subject, but, as I observe that the report takes no notice of the origin of the Right and Left hand factions, and as the undue arrogation of the former proveke(d) the enquiry, I shall state what inscriptions, now existing, and information from other sources have enabled me to ascertain respecting them, which, if not the truth itself, will I believe, approximate to it. There are among the papers of the Committee (p 1536) fac-simile of two copper plate inscriptions, relating to the subject, one in Sanscrit and the other in Telligu, which were taken with the intention of placing them on the proceedings, but of which no translation has been made. These, though undoubtedly forgeries of a later period than the dates they bear, coincide with tradition and are probably true as to the principal facts they commemorate.

29. The dissensions (c) between the two factions cannot be traced at all to the ancient institutions of (the) country, (nor) are they noticed in any of the classical writings of India. What Sastram, what Puranam in Sanscrit, what Cappeyam, what Sadagam mentions them in Tamil? What treatise or law, either text book or commentary, adverts to them? They must be sought for at a period when the Sanscrit and the Tamil no longer possessed classical writers and long after the latest system of Law had been promulgated. The truth is that they commenced about the time, that the conquest of the country, now called the Sircars, by the Vidyanagra (p 1537) Rayer Crishna Deva, introduced the cast of Telaga Baljivar into the Tamil and Canara countries, and were originally occasioned by a dispute between this cast and the Smiths (d), as to the right of making and selling glass bangles, or, as tradition and the inscriptions mentioned in the preceding paragraph state it, whether the latter should be allowed to lift the cambli spread on the ground during the operation of fitting on the bangles, with their fingers or with their toes. The period of the introduction of the Baljavar was within the first quarter of the 16th century, for Crishna Deva Rayer had commenced the conquest of the Sircars by the taking of Udaya Giri in Salivahana Sacabdam 1434 (AD 1516) and he died in S: Sac 1444 (AD 1522).

(Marginal Notes in Original)

(c) These dissensions are in fact known only in the upper Carnatic and the seubah of Arcot. They are bounded on the north by the Pennar and on the south by the Cauveri, or if they occasionally break out in Negapatam or other towns beyond the latter river, they are fomented by foreigners.

(d) The dispute took place between the Balajevar of the Telugu nation and the Smiths of the Tamil and Canaranations. It should not have arisen therefore before the former emigrated from their native country. They never appear to have had any dispute with their own countrymen: The Telligu smiths, and there exists, consequently in the Sircars no such distinctions as Right and Left

IOR:P/244/11: Public Proceedings 6.3.1812:Complete Min 1511-41.

30. Since this period these dissensions have very materially changed with respect with respect to their objects and importance; while the smiths remained laboring artificers the Baljekar became the princes of the earth. The principal families among them obtained under the Vidyanagara Government the vice-royalty of provinces, (p 1538) and on the dissolution of this state, their descendants filled the independent thrones of Madura and Tanjore. Under the ancient Tamil Governments the whole country had been divided in Nads (districts) and placed under the general superintendence of an officer called the Nattan, who belonged always to one of the tribes of Vallalas or cultivators. After the Baljevans had arrived at the eminence above stated, the ancient Nads, in that part of the country (see) under the dominion of Bijapur, were called Desams and the office of Desayi, with an authority coextensive with that of Nattan, was created and given to this cast, which became thus immediately connected with the land, and succeeded, by imperceptible degrees, in making their feud, which, notwithstanding the change of circumstances, they obstinately maintained against the smiths and those who had sided with them, the cause of all who held the proprietary of the soil or were concerned in cultivation: so that now the Right hand cast ranges under its banners all the landed, the Left hand all (p 1539) the trading and manufacturing interest.

31. Thus then it would seem that the factions vulgarly called the Right and Left hand casts taking their origin from a frivolous dispute about a frivolous object, have from adventitious circumstances, among which the misintelligence of the foreign rulers, who in recent times have governed this part of India, has not been least operative, obtained a consideration to which they possess no just pretension. This faction, which cannot be traced to a period earlier than the resort of Europeans to this country, receives no sanction from antiquity, nor, like legal distinctions of cast, is it supported by the opinion that it has been established by divine ordinance. The Brahmans and Pandarams treat it with contempt, as the modern invention of worldly men, and even the principal persons of these casts engaged in it, who from expectation of popular favor or fear of popular odium, are often the loudest in assenting the puerile claims of either party, in reality consider it with no respect and often speak of it with (p 1540) marked reprobation.

(Marginal Notes in Original)

(see) contd:

hands. The final separation of the casts was arranged at Ganjivaram and in commemoration of it one division takes the right and the other the left of the chariot at the feast of the Yacambaraswarer pagoda at this place with their appropriate insignia.

NB: These dates are founded on records and inscriptions.

(see)

It is in this part of the country including a considerable portion of the upper Carnatic, and nearly the whole of the suba of Arcot, that the dissensions between the Right and Left hand casts prevail; Though they may occasionally have been carried into the neighboring districts. The Nattan and Desayi have by degrees lost all their original authority, except that which relates to questions of cast. And it is by them, therefore that this feud has been kept alive. Their interest, nay their official ~~interest~~ existence, is immediately connected with these disputes, for if they were to cease their importance would be gone, and their office be useless.

32. It is in truth the factions of the mob. It has been supported and it is now supported by that factious spirit which prevails among the populace of all nations, which consecrates a phantom or adopts a watch-word as the ever ready means of exciting tumult, when the temper of the day inclines them to riot or rebellion. The history of all times shew, however, that this phantom is no more permanent than the image of Nebuchanezzar, the command to fall and worship may be disobeyed with impunity and the once magic influence of the most popular and most powerful watch-word loses with time all its virtue. That such is the case at present with respect to the feud between these factions I have little hesitation in saying. Our Government will now find little difficulty in quelling it entirely, if they think proper so to do. Whether they use severe or gentle methods, and they may limit or modify it, in what manner they please, without (p 1541) risking any serious or lasting opposition to their ~~measures~~ measures, though at first they may be opposed by those whose interest or whose consequence they affect.

Madras
20th August 1810

F. W. Ellis
Member of the Cast Committee.