

Robert Adams: the Real Founder of English East India Company's Supremacy in Malabar

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Abstract: *The Malabar Coast was famous for its spices particularly pepper, hence got considerable importance throughout the ages. In the age of mercantilism, European Companies searched for the suitable trade centers in Malabar Coast. There were fighting's among the European Companies for their domination of pepper trade in Malabar. After a long search in late 17th century English Company selected Tellicherry as their trade center. It was well known for the production good quality enormous quantity of pepper that had been in great demand in world markets. In the 18th century, Tellicherry became one of the most considerable and foremost English Company's settlements of India. The first Chief in Tellicherry factory was Robert Adams. He constructed a powerful platform for English Company in Malabar. There were a number of treatises that deal in the East India Company's political and economic relations in Malabar, but those works neglected the role of Robert Adams in the establishment of East India Company's supremacy in Malabar. This study enquires the significance of Robert Adams in the development of English Company's settlement of Tellicherry. It also aims at how the establishment of Tellicherry factory led to the supremacy of English all over the Malabar region later.*

Keywords: *English Company, Factory, Fortification, Robert Adams, Tellicherry.*

I. Introduction

European Companies competed with each other for setting up their factories in the East with its opening by Vasco-Da-Gama in 1498. A factory is a trading settlement established by European Company from where they were able to procure required merchandise. The system of factory was first introduced by the Portuguese which derived from the system of 'Fundak' of the Arab and the 'Fondaco' of the Italians which referred to a business house of a commercial establishment having facilities for accommodation of people, sale as well as marketing of goods. Above all, it was a warehouse for storing goods of the merchants (Malekandathil, 2006: 2). The important factories had a council known as 'factors', which included Chief, Linguist, Senior Merchant, junior merchant, Chaplain and Writer. The chief was the head of factors and always depended up on Council and Presidencies.

After the long search for a suitable trade centre, the English East India Company selected Tellicherry in Malabar Coast as their factory in the late 17th century when it was an insignificant place. It showed good chance for growing due to the availability of productive hinterlands. Since this seaport city shows an amazing progress due to the utilisation of hinterland wealth and political tactics of Company's authorities. In the beginning, Tellicherry was under Surat Council along with other factories at Carwar, Calicut and Angengo. Later these minor factories were transfer to Bombay Presidency.^[1] The Chief of English Company had enormous power. His programs and policies entirely affected the Companies future developments in those regions. The Tellicherry factory was opened in 1682, when the seat of the Company was situated at Calicut along with other European Companies such as the French and the Dutch. In the beginning of 18th century, Tellicherry obtained independent position and the English East Company appointed Robert Adams as its Chief. He was the first permanent Chief, and he had major credit of prominence of Tellicherry. Later Company received permission for fortification of factory from the Kolathiri Raja. This was the political victory of Robert Adams who tried to make the political equation of later years of Malabar to his own account. As the head of Company's factory, he had control over other minor factories of Malabar like Calicut, Ponnany, Bepoor and Valapatanam. He remained as the Chief of the Tellicherry factory from 1703 to 10th March 1728.

II. Selection of Tellicherry

The fortune of Tellicherrey begins with the arrival of French East India Company. In the beginning of 1670 one French Physician Mr. Dillon sailed from Surat with the orders to remove the French factory at Balipattanam to Tellicherry.^[2] Dellon mentioned that "we being seated at Batiapatan, in place where we wanted all manner of conveniency, by reason of its distance from the sea side as soon as the two ships called the Mary,

and the Strong, had set sail in order to their return into France, we made our applications to Prince Onitri, to assign us another more commodious place for our habitations, which having soon been granted by the means of some presents, he himself settled us in a place called Taticbery, being part of his own estate, situate about four Leagues to the south of Batiapatan, and two of Cananore” (Dellon, 1698: 117-118; Orme, 1745: 174). In 1672, the French traveler Abee Carre visited Tellicherry, he wrote that “in 1670 the French launch a factory at Balipattanam and Darmapattanam the next year they established another settlement at Tellicherry” (Carre, 1948: 707; Kaul, 1979: 289-290; Bruce, 1810: 487). The French couldn't make it as a good trade centre. In April 1682, Chase and Mitchell, the two English factors at Dharmapattanam heard that the French at Tellicherry had ‘fled with bagg and baggage’ on their ship President, leaving their factory at that place unoccupied. The two factors immediately went to the Prince to whom the house and ground belonged and got him to allow them to occupy the premises subject to the approval of the Surat Council.^[3] Chase and his colleagues said they would save money over the factory because they could get pepper in greater quantities and cheaper than at Calicut.^[4] John Child encouraged Chase to stay on and continue negotiations with the Prince for a constant supply of pepper.^[5] Chase reply promised to Child to get as much pepper, cardamoms, and cinnamon, as they could at the cheapest price possible.^[6] In May 1683 Chase wrote to Surat “that one thousand Candy of pepper and cardamoms, might be obtained at this port, superior in quality to those of Calicut”.^[7]

In 1683 John Child and his Council decided to keep the Tellicherry provisionally, at any rate so long as Bantam remained in the hands of the Dutch. He informed the Company that the pepper it provided was better than that obtained at Calicut and the custom duties were lower (Fawcett, 1954: 406). In 1684, John Child opinioned the place had proved advantageous to the Company as a centre for the supply of excellent pepper as well as of cardamoms (Rajendran, 1979: 36; Fawcett, 1954: 415). At the same instant, Court of Directors of East India Company were also pleased on selection of Tellicherry. They appeared to have encouraged John Child and other Company authorities in India to secure new trading privileges from the native rulers of Malabar. Again, in 1685 the Directors had suggested improvements for the factory at Tellicherry (Bruce, 1810: 528). The selection of Tellicherry was a suitable alternative for the English for their misplaced factories of Spice Islands in Indonesia. The preference of Tellicherry had turned out beneficial for the English and, later it became one of the major English trade centers of in western coast of India. Francis Buchanan stated that “the Europeans usually purchase about five-eighths of all the pepper that was produced in Malabar” (Buchanan, 1988: 530-531). Tellicherry had a wide range of hinterland extended to Canara in north, Coorge in east, and Ponnany in south. The areas Billipattanam(Valapattanam) Kottayam and Randattara secured to English East India Company's largest share of trade of pepper. The English Company had other two pepper trade centers, namely Angengo and Onore. But these centers always faced disturbance due to the internal political problems of those regions. Therefore English Company more depended on Tellicherry.

III. Appointment of Robert Adams

In 1703 the Court of Directors of East India Company appointed one energetic man and the successor of Thomas Penning, Robert Adams as the Chief of Company's factories of Malabar Coast (Fawcett, 1954: 364). At the same instance, Alexander Orme the brother-in-law of Adams, was appointed the Chief in Anjengo.^[8] Their great energy and initiative strengthened the English position in Malabar. The Company superiors had aims to establish a permanent trade centre at Malabar. This task was taken up by Robert Adams. Jacob Canter Visscher wrote that, “Mr. Adams, the head of the English in this place, was brought up there from a child, and having from his youth, traded with the people of Malabar, he acquired familiarity with their language which gained for him much influence among them. In consequence of this advantage, he was chosen by the English as their Governor”(Visscher, 1862: 22, Menon, 1983: 356). K. K. N. Kurup wrote in his History of Tellicherry Factory that, “Over thirty years he had been in Malabar Coast as a ‘country trader’, servant of the English Company and finally had risen to be the Chief. He was forceful individual, more a political adventurer than a commercial agent”(Kurup, 1985: 47). He was a good administrator, who constantly took steps to improve the commerce between the rulers of Malabar and the East India Company. As far as his political relations were concerned, he maintained good relations with the local political powers such as Kolathunadu, Kottayam, Kadathanad, Zamorin, Cannanore and other local political powers of Malabar. Therefore, he received good reputations from the local Rajas of Malabar.

IV. Fortification of Tellicherry Factory

The disintegrated political condition of Kolathnad helped the Europeans for their colonial ambitions. It had been so much ruined by internal dissensions and wars and now it was divided into number of local feudal territories under feudal rajas, belonging to the Kolathiri family. As the result of the invitation from Kolathiri raja the English officials visited a number of coastal spots in Kolathunad. Finally, in 1669 they obtained permission for establishing trade centre at Kottakkunnu on the banks of the river Balipattanam (Valapattanam) (Fawcett, 1954: 288). The English presence at Kolattunad was against the Dutch monopolistic ambition and they tried to

make the English quit the region. But their opposition to the English settlement in Kolattunad had been ineffective as the Prince of Kolattunad who had sole government of the country supported the English (Kurup, 1985: 41). The English Company's alliance with Raja led to the securing permission for fortification of Tellicherry. It was the sole effort and major contribution of Robert Adams. In the colonial period, European Company's factories were not safe without fortification. As other Europeans factories, Tellicherry had also to face stiff opposition from the local inhabitants. From the very beginning of establishment of factory, the English faced stiff opposition from the local population. Several members of the Kolathiri family and the neighboring chiefs resented the action of the Vadakkilamkur (Northern Regent) of Kolathiri Raja, the ruling Prince of Kolathiri in assigning the factory site to the English (Menon, 1972: 113). William Logan wrote that the factory site chosen by the English was "more for purpose of trade than with a view to securing that trade" (Logan, 1981: 394). In these circumstances, the English was forced to build a fort at Tellicherry.

As a result, Adams got permission from Vadakkilamkur (Northern Regent) to erect a fort at Tellicherry. They purchased land from Ponattil Poduval, Vallura Thangal and a street of weavers existed at the place (Logan, 1981: 395). Under the leadership of Robert Adams, they made an agreement with Northern Regent at Sreerama Swami Temple, Thiruvangadu on 20th August 1708. In the agreement Vadakkilamkur stated that, "the fort of Tellicherry has been built at the request and entreaties made by me as a friend. To acknowledge the love and friendship which the Company bears towards me and my palace, I give and take over the said fort with its limits to the Honorable Company, where no person shall demand, collect and plant. Our custom house will be obliged to give us what has been settled" (Acheson, 1864: 106, Logan, 1989: 2).^[9] The Zamorin of Calicut sponsored necessary materials of construction of fort, free of all duties. Robert Adams himself laid the foundation stone for the fort and he gave fort to East India Company. It was the English East India Company's earliest and the major fort in India. Robert Adams played a key role in getting permission for fortification of Tellicherry from the Vadakkilamkur Raja. N. Rajendran also wished to highlight the role of Adams. He wrote that, "The permission for building the fort was secured by the Company mainly due to the diplomatic skill of Robert Adams (Rajendran, 1979: 48). The fortification was of considerable benefit to the English that show their later victories in Malabar.

In the following years, he got trading privileges from each of the Rajas of Malabar. The support of English Company was inevitable to Rajas due to the quarrelling situation of Malabar. On 23 March 1722, Robert Adams got one royal writings from the Kolathiri Raja. According to the grant, the trade and farms within his land or predecessors territory from Canharotte down to the river Pudupatanam were all given to the English Company, save from the Dutch company and authorize the English Company to carry on their commerce. If any other European or any other stranger came to his country, the English Company could, in his name, punish, prevent and drive them away (Acheson, 1864: 108, Logan, 1989: 6).^[10] The Rajas of Kottayam, Kadathanad, and other local Rajas also signed peace treaties with English Company.

V. Battle of Kurungoth

During Adams' administration he controlled Rajas of Malabar on the basis of signed mutual agreements with the Rajas. But they faced some disturbance from one of the local Nair Chieftains known popularly as Kurungoth Nair. He was a local feudal lord of Kolathunad. He ruled the territories of Kurungoth; for that reason he was called as Kurungoth Nair. Even though the permission was granted by Vadakkilamkur, the territory falls within the areas of Kurungott Nair. Thus began the commencement of hostilities between the English and the Nair. At the same time, the French Company started a trade centre at Punnol with the blessings of Nair which was also included in Nair's territory. With the alliance of French East India Company with the Nair the situation of region became worse. This peculiar geographical location being sandwiched by two contesting European powers was crucial in determining its destiny. In 1704, Kurungoth Nair and one rival Kolathiri Princes of Udayamangalam branch attacked and destroyed the warehouse of the English East India Company situated between North of Mahe River and surrounding areas and it caused serious damages to English property. The disturbances from Kurungoth Nair continued in the later years.

The conflict was due to the unwillingness of the factory to pay the customs dues to the Kurugott Nair who depended heavily on it. Alexander Hamilton states that, "the occasion of the war, as I was informed, began about a trifle. The Nair that was lord of manor had a royalty, for every vessel that unladed at Tellicherry paid two Bales of Rice duty to him. There was another royalty of every tenth of fish that come to the market there, and both together did not amount to 20/ Sterling's per annum. The chief either appropriated these Royalties to his own, or the Company's use, and the Nair complained of the injustices, but had no redress. These little duties were the best part of the poor Nair's subsistence which made it the harder to bear, so his friends advised him to repeal force by force, and disturb the factory by what he could, which he accordingly did for 20 years"

(Hamilton, 1740: 97; Pinkerton, 1881: 371). But, Logan questioned the validity of Hamilton's view as the Company was so careful as to compensate the weavers and others; they would not have omitted to pay any dues to the Kurungott Nair. The English Company records state that every endeavour was made to arrange matters cordially with Kurungott Nair, and it was unsuccessful.

Therefore, in 1715 Robert Adams commenced war against Unnittiri and Kelappan, two local chiefs of Kurungoth Nadu. The Europeanized army of Adams suppressed the local army of Kurungoth Nair.^[11] The victory over these local enemies helped to maintain the superiority over the commercial politics of the region. English victory over Nair, forced him to an agreement with Adams on 29 September, 1719. According to the agreement Nair gave full right to the Company to collect pepper from Punnole and other places belonging to him. No duty need be paid for procured pepper. He also surrendered the Mailum hill to the Company and agreed that he would not plant any tree to replace those felled and destroyed within the territories of grant to the Company (Acheson, 1864: 107, Logan, 1989: 5-6).^[12] It was this victory of Robert Adams that permitted them to play a leading role in Malabar politics. It was the first war of English East India Company in India. Thus, Kurungoth Nair was the first Indian ruler who proclaimed war against the English. It was a stepping-stone for their future superiority on entire Malabar.

VI. Relations with Zamorin of Calicut

At the time of arrival of Europeans, Zamorin of Calicut was the strongest ruler of Malabar. In 1664, Zamorin permitted the English to construct a factory at Calicut and again in 1699, he allowed English reduction of duty on pepper. The English presence at Calicut leads to hostilities with the Dutch. The English and the Dutch were at war in Europe and the English left their trading centers of Indonesian Islands due to the presence of Dutch. Therefore, it clearly affected their relations in India too. The Dutch Company maintained good relations with Zamorin for long years so they had maintained a prosperous trading centre at Calicut. But, from the beginning of 18th century Zamorin was continuously struggling to remove the Dutch power from Calicut to Chettuvai that created tension between Zamorin and the Dutch. So Zamorin fully prepared himself to push out the Dutch and again sought the assistance of Robert Adams. But the English had yet not strengthened their position in Malabar due to the changes of the Company's Directors. In 1708 at the time of fortification of Tellicherry settlement Zamorin provided essential materials of construction, free of all duties. It led to successful completion of Tellicherry fort. The Company and Robert Adams continuously supported Zamorin in his wars against the Dutch. In return Zamorin wrote to Adams, "in consideration of the aid rendered at Calicut and money given to my servants, we promise that, the matter of the contract entered into by you and you to pay if any dispute be raised by any one in regard to the value of the articles they agreed to supply for money received, I will compel him to deliver the articles on return of the money, as may appear just, and subject him besides to an oath. If his hand comes out clean, he will be held innocent and you will have to pay him, as usual, the expenses he may incur" (Logan, 1983: 341). The alliance with Zamorin became the significant victory of English in Malabar.

When the war broke out the native army of Zamorin was defeated and the strong Dutch were victorious. Accordingly, a treaty was concluded on the 10th of January 1710, therefore as war indemnity Zamorin had to give Chettuvai to the Dutch, where the Dutch were building a fort (Alexander, 1946: 32; Nair, 1977: 35). The victory of Dutch in Malabar affected the English ambitions in Malabar. Therefore, they were curious on affairs in Malabar. Robert Adams encouraged Zamorin to try preventing the Dutch fortification of Chettuvai and recovering it (Alexander, 1946: 34). Robert Adams helped Zamorin actively. Hence the Dutch held him answerable for the war. Robert Adams supplied Zamorin with money when he was in want of it. The English Company had advanced loans to Zamorin and that Adams lent Zamorin huge money on his own responsibility. The Dutchmen Jacob Cantor Visschers remarks that "being an enemy to our Company he insisted Zamorin to the late war, himself lending in order to promote it 100000 Rix Dollars, with which the prince defrayed the expenses of the war. We have no reason to doubt this story, since he even sent English officers to assist the Zamorin, to defend fort Paponette against our arms" (Visscher, 1862: 22, Menon, 1983: 13). This shows the later Tellicherry factory records on the huge debts to be paid by Zamorin.^[13]

But in the view of Alexander Hamilton it was the personal interest of Adams that protected Chettuvai and maintained good relation with Zamorin. He wrote that when the place came into Zamorins' hands, Adams organized a large and profitable trade in opium which was widely used in the region. Robert Adams, for an excellent personal profit, imported Bengal opium and sent it up-river on empty pepper boats of the Company. These immoral activities very seriously affected the stand of the Company in front of Zamorin and other powers (Hamilton, 1740: 99; Pinkerton, 1881: 372). One of the major fears was that many English Factors seemed to have carried on these types of private trade. The personal trade entirely affected the activities of the English Company's trade in all over India. The entire administration of the Company began its downfall due to the inefficiency of the officers, the corrupt practices and violation of rules and regulations of the Company.

The English Company authorities justified the policies of Robert Adams. One letter sent from Fort St. George to England shows that “for keep the Company’s rights, where he timely assisted he might stop the Dutch designs to engross the pepper trade on Malabar Coast like on Sumatra.”^[14] The English only, after testing the faithfulness of Zamorin’s attitude to the English, extended Company’s military support to the ruler when he was in need. In 1715 with the support of English Zamorin attacked the Dutch fort at Chettuvai. The fort of Chettuvai was destroyed on the order of Zamorin and the Dutch had the humiliation of seeing the English flag hoisted at Chettuvai. This was in accordance with a grant made by Zamorin allowing the English Chief to build a warehouse at Chettuvai and to engage in trade (Logan, 1989: 3).^[15] This time the Dutch authorities of Batavia gave all assistance to the Dutch in Malabar against the coalition of Zamorin and the English. The English Company records shows that the arrival of a strong military from Batavia to attack Zamorin and the seizure of several vessels under the English Company’s passes including one owned by Robert Adams. At last, in 1717 the Dutch captured Chettuvai and some other places without resistance (Rajendran, 1979: 53; Imperial Gazetteer, 1999: 57). In this time Adams was busy in war with Kurungott Nair and other local rulers of Kolathunad. As a result he could not check the Dutch penetration to Chettuvai. In 1720 Adams saw a inhuman activities of people in Calicut, it happened to be a day when the great national assembly of the Malabar was collected in the open air to deliberate on the affairs of the state. Therefore Adams declaring that the conduct of the natives of Calicut was cruel and inhuman, left Calicut and threatened to set the bazaar on fire. Cantor Visschers wrote Zamorin, who reaped so much profit from the English trade, managed to pacify him and to recall him to Calicut, but as the bad feeling of the natives towards the English still exists, he distrusts them and spends most of his time at Tellicherry (Visscher, 1862: 23).

VII. Relations with the French East India Company

Tellicherry and nearby areas were famous for its hinterland goods. The renowned Economic historian Ramesh Chandra Dutt wrote on this region in his Economic History of India that “Tellicherry, Mahe and Dharmapatanam formed a circle, the commerce of the circle was of great importance and principle of commerce was pepper, sandalwood, and cardamoms” (Dutt, 1976: 153-154). Due to reasons, the region witnessed commercial competition between colonial powers. Robert Adams tried to check the French control their and entry into the English commanding areas. The French left Tellicherry and went southward in search of a new trade center. The following years they had obtained number of offers from feudatories of Malabar for establishing a new trade centre. Alfred Martineau wrote that, in 1701 the French got permission from the Raja of Kadathanad for establishing Magazine at Mahe at the mouth of the river (Martineau, 1917: 17). In the following year, they were allowed to establishment a factory at Punnole, the territory was under the control of Kurungoth Nair (Lockter, 1711: 276; Martineau, 1917: 17). This disturbed the English as it was near to the Tellicherry settlement and was expected to affect the monopoly of English trade. Hence Adams initiated a policy of offers troubles against the French at Punnole. On 2 April 1721 Mollandin, the chief of French lodge at Calicut, signed a mutual agreement with Bayanore (Vazhunnar- the Raja of Kadathanad) (Martineau, 1917: 29-30). According to this agreement, the French got right of pepper monopoly in Kadathanad. But later the Vazhunnar turned against the French. In this context Adams, gave all encouragement and assistance to Vazhunnar to carry on his fight against the French. Therefore the French complained against the actions of Robert Adams to the English Company’s President at Fort St. George.^[16] In 1725, Vazhunnar attacked Mahe forcing the French to retire to Calicut with nearly a hundred Frenchmen wounded in action. But a small French squadron under command of Mahe de Pardeillon recaptured it (Malleon, 1868: 64). Consequently, the coast of Malabar became venue of competition for monopoly of trade. It badly affected the commercial ambition of English Company at Tellicherry.

There were a number of skirmishes in which the English and French troops were involved. The fighting in North Malabar was not approved of either by the British or by the French. At the same time both tried to keep peaceful co-existence in Malabar. Robert Adams and Tremisot, the French Chief at Mahe continually send friendship letters to each side. They exchanged news of political conditions, price of pepper and all other important matters. They invited each other in the time feast like Christmas and Easter occasions as per the Company records. One Letter of Tremiot invited Adams to participate their feast of Christmas in the evening of 24th December 1726.^[17] On 28 April 1728 a peace treaty was signed between both powers in which they undertook not to fight in India even if it was broke out in Europe (Logan, 1983: 358). Throughout his administration, Adams tried to keep good relations with French Factors.

VIII. Removal from the Power

The Superiors of Company appointed Robert Adams as President of Bombay Council. Later this order was cancelled because of the discontentment of Directors of English Company at London.^[18] It

was mainly because of his personal trade and the question of his Superior to recover the debts from Rajas of Malabar namely Zamorin, Chirakkal Raja, Mother Queen, Puniture Raja, Boyanore Raja, Ali Raja and others. The last years of Adams in Malabar were not fine because of his irresponsibility in recovering debts. The merchants had also huge amounts of credit from East India Company. Thus in 1725 Company sent John Braddyl as commissary to Tellicherry factory. On 20th November 1725 the Commissary of English Company met at Tellicherry decided to collect English Company's debts now outstanding as per both on Calicut and Tellicherry factory records. They enquired Mr. Adams, the chief of Tellicherry factory, why he had not made a further progress in recovering of these debts from Rajas and merchants of Malabar. They considered merchants debts included Chattoo Chetty put down as suspicious. Therefore appears little hopes of any satisfaction being made Company's masters from the aforesaid parties.^[19] Adams tried to explain his truthfulness in front of Company authorities. He cited the evidence of the letter from Bombay dated 11th October 1721 to prove that his superiors had approved of his policy of supporting the Prince. He continued no other motive than promoting and augmenting the credit of his masters.^[20] This time John Braddyl was appointed as new Chief of Tellicherry Factory. Among the debtors Zamorin was huge debt in East India Company. Hence two officers were sent to Calicut with Stephen Law to recover the loan from Zamorin. The decision of masters of Company affected morale and self-confidence of Robert Adams. Thus he decided to board a ship bound to Fort St. George with all his belongings, but was prevented by the remaining factors.

On 16th April 1728 Adams with family went to Fort St. George without formerly delivering charge of the Tellicherry factory. The same day he wrote a letter to his successor John Braddyle that, "I have here enclosed the account of the treasury where you will find an exact balance of money entrusted to me. I should be induced to offer to you a thorough caution of that Prince Regent who will be always capable of influencing your affairs."^[21] The Kolathiri Raja and Prince Regent of Kolathunad were always kept friendship with English Company. A letter sent by the Prince Regent to the factory in 22nd April 1728, when Adams left the Company service reads, "Adams all his time transacting the Company's affairs with respect towards them, and with admirable discretion kept a good and amicable correspondence with the Kings and Princes hereabout; they treating each other with particular good will and respect. I cannot imagine what reason he had to leave this country without taking leave of me, and in a manner as if he had fled away, if this was done by order of the Company, little trust is to be put in them, when they disgrace a person of such a character."^[22] Adams kept good relations with Rajas of Malabar and other European Companies. He planted the English monopoly of pepper in the region on the basis of mutual agreements with Rajas and other European Companies. Adams had a significant role in growth of Tellicherry as a major trading centre.

IX. Tellicherry in Prominence

At the time of establishment of English factory at Tellicherry, it enjoyed the same status as other trading centers like Carwar, Ballipatanam, Calicut and Anjengo. But since the coming of Adams it became one of the major mercantile spot of the Eastern World. As a trading centre, it contributed much benefit to the English East India Company. Large numbers of European accounts were written on this trading mart. Maria Graham depicts Tellicherry as follows: "The situation of Tellicherry is very delightful; for it is backed by wooded hills, interspersed with valleys, and watered by a fine river; and, on account of its extreme healthiness, it is much resorted to by invalids" (Bingley, 1822: 191). The wealthy hinterlands were the main reason for the development of Tellicherry. The pepper, cardamom, sandalwood and other exported goods of Tellicherry hinterlands got considerable acceptance in foreign markets. Bartolomeo, a traveler of late 18th century, wrote: "A brisk trade is carried on at Tellicherry, and foreign ships take on board here pepper, various cotton articles, biti and teak wood, and other Malabar productions, which they transport to Bombay and thence to England" (Bartolomeo, 1800: 43). As result of the growing trade here was grown a beautiful city including large number of buildings.

The prominence of Tellicherry is mainly depended on powerful merchant community that lived in the city. With the presence of European Company large number of traders migrated from other regions to Tellicherry. The Chetties, Moors (Muslims) were major merchants groups at Tellicherry. In the first four decades of 18th century Chattoo Chetty was the principal English Company merchant at Tellicherry. The death of Chattoo Chetty in 1739 witnessed the emergence of the Bazaar Moor merchants there. Adams maintained a good relation with Chattoo Chetty and other merchants at Tellicherry. The factory records of East India Company stated that "Chattoo Chetty was our own merchant and honest friend of English East Indian Company in Malabar." Once Robert Adam acknowledges him as "a man of integrity and always favours our interest."^[23] On another occasion, Company superiors directed to chief of Tellicherry to collect and sent sufficient quantity of pepper, when company chief apply "observes to the Chattoo Chetty, who, Company think the safest and proper person for to see what quantity and at what price he will supply withal."^[24] After Chattoo Chetty's death his role was taken by bazaar merchants at

Tellicherry. Most of them were migrants from other medieval trade centres in north Malabar, mainly from Darmapatam (Dharmapattanam), Cannanore, Billipatam (Valapattanam) and Cotiote (Kottayam). It led to the growth of wealthy merchant classes at Tellicherry. The presence of European Company and merchants groups led to the formation of a new civilization and culture. Malte Brun wrote that "the seaport town of Tellicherry was long the chief English settlement on Malabar coast. The richest natives still reside here, and the inhabitants are far more civilized than in the rest of the province" (Brun, 1829: 205).

X. Conclusion

The period of Chief ship of Robert Adams was very significant era of English East India Company in Malabar. N. Rajendran remarks that, "Indeed his native friends did not forget him even when he was disgraced by the country. This bold adventurer is the founder of the English East India Company's influence in Malabar."^[25] His main contribution was securing the permission to build fort and under his own leadership completed the fortification. This fort remained the earliest and the strongest English Company's factory in western India. It also contributed the major share of pepper, which had earned good profit to the English Company. Thus the fort had been centre of English Company's political seat of Malabar till 1800, when English got political supremacy all over the Malabar. The other major contribution was prevention of other European expansion in Malabar. The Tellicherry settlement faced threats from Dutch Company settlement at Cannanore and Chettuvai and the French at Mahe. He also maintained cordial relations with local Rajas of Malabar with the signing of peace treaties with Zamorin, Kolathiri, Kadathanad and Kottayam. He forcefully defeated and disturbed local feudal Chief, Kurungoth Nair, till at last he signed peace treaty with Company. He kept good friendship with merchants of Tellicherry. It caused the good flow of hinterland goods to the Company's warehouses at Tellicherry. The administration of Robert Adams led to the establishment of English monopoly on pepper trade in Malabar which in later years grew up as political supremacy in all over the Malabar Coast. During the long period of his administration, he dedicated himself to the progressive development of the Company's power in Malabar particularly in Tellicherry.

Notes

- [1]. Their earlier factory at Surat, well-known for textiles production was under Mughal hands occasionally it faced attack from Maratha army so it had no safety. Therefore the company authority vacated it and chose Bombay. The British received this place as dowry from Portuguese, no other relevance of this place until then.
- [2]. A Voyage to the East Indies by Gabriel Dellon was one of the earliest French travel accounts on Malabar. Dellon was a French Catholic Physician, who sailed from France in March 1668 and reached India in 1669.
- [3]. Letter from Calicut to John Child, Records of Surat Factory, Dated on 28th August 1682, Vol.108, pp.146-147. (Fawcett, 1954: 395). Later Françoise Martin (1674 -1689) sent Andre Bourreau, to revive the Tellicherry factory and he stressed the importance of pepper (Furber, 1990: 114).
- [4]. Letter from Calicut to John Child, Dated on 28th August 1682, Vol.108, p.147. (Fawcett, 1954: 395).
- [5]. Surat Consultations, Records of Surat Factory, Dated on 26th September 1682. (Fawcett, 1954: 396).
- [6]. Letter from Calicut to John Child, Dated on 10th October 1682, Vol.108, p.191. (Fawcett, 1954: 397).
- [7]. Letter from the Agent at Calicut to the Presidency of Surat, Dated on 4th May 1683 (Bruce, 1810: 511).
- [8]. Alexander Orme was father of the renowned English historian Robert Orme. (Menon, 1983: 264).
- [9]. See for details, Acheson, Treaty No. XVII, 20th August 1708, p.106. (Acheson, 1864: 106); Logan, Part I, Treaty No. II, Dated on 20th August 1708. (Logan, 1989: 2).
- [10]. Logan, Part I, Treaty No. VIII, Dated on 23rd March 1722. (Logan, 1989: 6); Acheson, Treaty No. XIX, Dated on 23rd March 1722. (Acheson, 1864: 107-108).
- [11]. Clement Downing gives an account of quarrels between Kurungoth Nair and Company that, "Governor Adams had some quarrels with the Nayers of Tellicherry; but the Governor by his own regular conduct soon settled those disputes" (Downing, 1737: 23).
- [12]. See for details, Logan, Part I, Treaty No. II, Dated on 29th September 1719. (Logan, 1989: 5-6). Acheson, Treaty No. XVIII, Dated on 29th September 1719, (Acheson, 1864: 106-107)
- [13]. The early Tellicherry records also show the friendship and the support of the Company to Zamorin. Robert Adams supplied not only money but also war materials and allowed him to send provision to the stressed garrison at Chettuvai under cover of the English flag.
- [14]. Dispatches to England, Records of Fort St. George, Dated on 9th October, 1716, p.99.
- [15]. See for details, Logan, Part I, Treaty No. V, February 1715 (Logan, 1989: 3).
- [16]. Dispatches to England, Dated on 21st January 1724, p.93.
- [17]. Letters to Tellicherry, Vol.I, 1726-28, Letter from Tremisot to Robert Adams, Chief of Tellicherry, Dated on 24th December 1726, p.4.
- [18]. Letters to Tellicherry, Letter from Bombay Council to Tellicherry, Vol.I, Dated on 13th April 1726, p.11.
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- [22]. Tellicherry Consultations, Vol.III, 1727-28, Diary, Dated on 22nd April 1728, p.105.
- [23]. Tellicherry Consultations, Vol.II, 1726-27, Consultation, Dated on 6th June 1727, p.112.
- [24]. Tellicherry Consultations, Vol.V, 1731-32, Diary, Dated on 5th July 1732, p.66.
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