CHAPTER - V

VICISSITUDES OF THE OVERSEAS TRADE IN PONDICHERRY

In the early modern period, external trade of the Coromandel coast had brought a number of changes in the socio-economic set up of the region with the advent of the Portuguese, the Dutch and the English trading companies. It is considered as a powerful force in the urban growth of ports such as St. Thomas, Mylapore, Madras and Pulicat under the banner of these European Companies that conducted long distance trade with Asia and Europe. We shall examine how the external trade of Pondicherry contributed greatly to the emergence of the French on the Coromandel region. An attempt has been made in this chapter to see how far the long distance trade conducted by the French Company at Pondicherry flourished in the eighteenth century. This maritime trade of Pondicherry had two phases of development. The first was the overseas trade of Pondicherry with other Asian countries and the second was the overseas trade with Europe. The former was called by the French Commerce d'Inde en Inde and it comprised the trade beyond the Cape of Good Hope upto the Cape of Comarin. The latter comprised the trade in the seas of China and covered the countries in the West, the South and the South East Asia besides the countries in the Far East and the Indian Ocean Islands.
The French took an active part in the sea-borne trade of Pondicherry with other Asian countries. The reason why they entered in this trade was to enhance their trading capital which in turn would enable the Superior Council to buy Asian goods for European markets thus avoiding, to some extent, the drain of bullion from Europe and to balance their trade between India and Europe. Besides the Company, we find that the private merchants and employees of the Company also participated in this trade in their private capacities. Referring to the advantages of this overseas trade by the individual merchants, Dumas, the Governor of Pondicherry, stated in his letter to the Company at Paris on 1st October 1737 that private trade would make colonies lively and flourishing, it would increase the tax and revenues of the establishments which would serve as market places for the defective or substandard goods which could not find their place in the European markets. According to Dupleix the participation of private traders in the maritime trade of Pondicherry with other Asian countries did not hamper the Company's trade. The Company had in fact given up its monopoly in favour of the shipments by individuals, and allowed the private merchants to load one fourth of their cargo in the Company's ships bound for other Asian ports. In 1721, the sea-borne trade of Pondicherry with
other Asian countries was made open to individuals. However, the Company had been maintaining in Asia some trade centres for loading her ships bound for Europe. The voyage of the ships in the regular routine of trade with other Asian countries from Pondicherry was operated by the Company's ships in the period after the arrival of the Company's ships from Europe in June and before their departure in January next year. We shall now deal with the dynamics of this trade of Pondicherry with various parts of Asia.

Pondicherry - West Asia

The sea-borne trade of Pondicherry was constantly carried on by the French with the ports in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea regions. At the mouth of the Persian Gulf, Bandar Abbas became a trade centre for Coromandel textiles, where the French formerly had one lodge. The Company's merchant ships which were going to Persian Gulf used to anchor there occasionally and unloaded some merchandise for sale. This lodge utilised by the French was completely ruined in 1727. In 1738, the Company tried for its temporary establishment at Bandar Abbas with a view to developing the textile trade of Coromandel coast along with bedsheet trade of France. Subsequently, a factory was again established and agents were posted there. And so the
Superior Council at Pondicherry fitted out many ships to this port with a variety of textiles for sale. On return the ships transported dry fruits, pearls, amber, silver and horses from Persia including imported European luxury goods. This settlement was less significant in comparison with that of Basra which had not given the results expected by the Company. The trade in this centre was not very active. The Company was not even aware of the death of Bellcard and Beaumont who were employed there. Consequently, the Company withdrew their posts pending official abandonment of that trade centre in 1743. The affairs were managed by an ordinary employee known as Dupless. The abandonment of this trade centre did not mean that the French had given up their commercial activities which continued in the past.

Another major centre of trade in the Persian Gulf to consume the Coromandel textile was Basra. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the French Company made the settlement at Basra, develop the bedsheet trade of France and put up a Council there. The factors were supplied with provisions by the individual traders to start the trade of coffee of Bourbon with Persia. Later, textile and woollen trade emerged as important ones. The Company's merchant marines used to sail frequently from Pondicherry to
the port of Basra with various commercial goods. Fine muslins, chintzes, long cloth or guinea cloth, spun cotton and coarse cloth collected in the northern ports of Masulipatanam and Yanam were largely shipped to Basra for sale. Tobacco and indigo from hinterland, benzoin, gumlac, ahilwood, tin, rattan, spices, sandelwood imported from Burma, Thailand and Southeast Asian countries were loaded on board the ships bound for Basra. Besides, wheat, sugar, fine muslin and silk brought from Bengal were exported. Commerce in this centre was very active and prosperous, but the sale of textiles that were despatched from Pondicherry declined for some time due to political conditions in 1727. When a treaty between Turkish and Persian Kings was concluded in the year 1728, the Superior Council at Pondicherry hoped that the agents of the Company stationed at Basra would be able to stock and dispose of the goods expected to be received from Bengal and Coromandel coast. The goods for the return journey of the ships were less significant and came mostly from Persia. These were copper, tea, wheat, rose water, perfumes, silk, alum, dyeroots, dry fruits, dates, pearls, amber, zereswine and silver in large volumes. Besides, Persian horses were imported into Pondicherry for sale as well as for the use in the army. Coral from the Mediterranean was transshipped along with
Persian gold and silver coins. The French private merchants also took part in this trade and sent their goods collected from Bengal to this port through the Company's ships. Their business, however, was of less importance. By and large this trade was profitable for the Company.

In the Red Sea region, Mocha and Jiddah were the chief emporia of Coromandel textiles. At the mouth of the Red Sea, Mocha was very famous for its coffee which in fact came from its interior parts. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Company established a trading counter at Mocha and had direct trade relations with that port for the procurement of coffee. In 1726, however, the Company resolved to conduct this trade from Pondicherry and gave the injunction to la Feuillee, chief of the counter at Mocha to effect procurement every year to the tune of four hundred to five hundred thousand bales of coffee. Hence, the Superior Council continued to send sailing ships to Mocha with necessary funds and goods every year and developed the trade in textiles with that port. The main articles which were exported from Pondicherry to Mocha were cotton cloth, coarse blue cloth and piece goods. Besides, pepper and cinnamon obtained from Malabar coast and Southeast Asian countries were also found among the items of export. Moreover, iron metals, bedsheets and beer imported
from France were re-exported to Mocha. Coffee was a major item of imports from there. Besides red broad cloth from Mocha, horses, and Arabic gum was imported into Pondicherry.

The Company's ships frequently sailed to Mocha with various sorts of textiles and these goods were sold there to purchase coffee to be sent to France. The textiles trade of Coromandel was greatly profitable for the Company. The Company's old ship Pondichéry undertook her sea voyage to Mocha under the commandant Labourdonnais on 31st December 1727 with textiles worth 7000 pagodas invested by the Company and this ship returned from there on 2nd of August 1728 with 1,500 bales of coffee. This time the Company's investment of 7,000 pagodas had given a profit of 1,050 pagodas, that is to say a profit of fifteen per cent.

Next year the Company loaded textile goods worth 1,517 pagodas, and other goods costing 1,000 pagodas in ships bound for Mocha. In the return journey, the Company's merchants were able to collect goods worth 12,513 pagodas. In 1732, when the goods were short of expectation on the Coromandel coast on account of scarcity for cotton and rise in the price of grains, the French could not ensure full load of goods either towards Mocha or any other trade centre on return. It was, however, possible for them to fit out ships with goods from Chandranagore for sea voyage to Mocha.
The Company's trade expanded and was lucrative at Mocha where iron worth 3,00,000 pounds, and twenty to twenty-five bales of bedsheets of the Company were found every year for sale. But the trade in that centre was hampered in 1735, and in 1736 on account of exactions of the natives of that country, it declined for six years. In a letter of October 1736, the Company had intimated to the Superior Council its reasons for unwillingness to maintain a trade centre at Mocha to draw five hundred thousand bales of coffee every year. In 1738, trade came to be standstill at Mocha. The cloth sent to that centre remained unsold on account of the scarcity of dollars there. As a result, not even a single bale of cloth was shipped to Mocha. Next year, because of Maratha invasion of the Carnatic region, commerce had a setback for want of cereals and the Company found itself left with the shipment of coffee from Mocha. The freight cost therefore escalated. In fact, the shipments by the individuals from Pondicherry called on the port every year to load coffee for transportation to France.

Trade in coffee brought considerable income to the Superior Council. It is worthwhile to note that in 1740 the Superior Council freighted the ship le Maure to the
merchants Courbezatre, Denis and Dumond for making purchases up to six hundred thousand pounds of coffee for the Company on the basis of five per cent commission to be shared among them for which it supplied ten thousand piasters. This ship left for Mocha in October 1741 and returned on 14th August of the next year with 3,00,000 pounds of coffee for the Company, the freight of which cost them 1,200 pagodas. This shipment gave a profit of fourteen per cent to the Council. The Company's ship Danae on her way back in 1755 brought 2,700 bales of coffee and this trip alone gave a profit of nineteen per cent. To procure coffee from Mocha, the Superior Council frequently sent necessary funds to its agents stationed there through the supercargoes of the ships bound to Jiddah. Besides coffee, red Mocha broad cloth were imported from Mocha to Pondicherry. It seems that Mocha broad cloths were sold in the Indian markets better than those of the French and yielded good profit to the Superior Council. In addition to this, the Superior Council imported cloth of various values from Mocha. These were damaged at times by worms. After the deliberations of the Superior Council on 30th March of 1727, these cloths were sold by auction and the Council thought that it was more convenient to sell them at auction than to store them as that might bring heavy loss to the Company. The private merchants and the Governor of Pondicherry conducted
trade with Mocha. They sent significant quantities of coarse blue cloth on the Company's ships to that port for their private trade. They also engaged the Dutch ships on hire basis for transportation of their goods. In 1756, trade at Mocha declined and the shipowners and charters of the ships were paid in pepper because of the shortage of funds. At the same time not even a single ship was sent there to obtain anything else as it was difficult to trade because of the war between the French and the English in Europe. On the whole the Company made great profit in its trade with Mocha.

Jiddah was another trading counter for the French. The merchant ships of the Company sailing from Pondicherry with various kinds of textiles to Mocha often visited Jiddah after unloading a part of cargoes there. Cotton fabrics of various kinds, pepper and cinnamon collected from Malabar coast were the major items of export from Pondicherry. In September 1750, the Superior Council sent about 700 bales of cloth through the ship Bonvoyage to Jiddah for sale. Sugarcandies brought from Bengal were exported along with other goods. One hundred and fifty candies of sugar of Bengal were transported to Jiddah in 1750. Besides, bedsheets, iron, other metals and beer brought from France were re-exported to Jiddah for sale. Trade was prosperous
and active at Jiddah. But in 1738, it declined and one half of the goods taken to that port remained unsold and the merchant by name Dupati was left in charge of the remainder for sale. Coffee was the main item of imports from Jiddah. The Superior Council took keen interest in the import of coffee from there on a large scale to be exported to Europe. Thus in 1750, the Superior Council made a request to Glainvelle, in charge of the administration of the trade centre at Jiddah to supply a full load of coffee to one of the Company's ships bound to Pondicherry on the basis of five per cent commission and three per cent freight charges. Besides, Arab horses were chiefly imported from Jiddah. These were not only sold to merchants, but were also employed in the army. The reason why south India always depends on imported horses was the poor quality of indigenous breeds. Private merchants of the Company also took part in this trade. Those who owned ships sent their ships to this port with goods. They also loaded considerable quantities of goods on board the Company's ships in their personal account to Jiddah. It is said that the ship by name Chandranagore which belonged to Dupleix, plied between Pondicherry and Jiddah touching the port of Mocha with various goods. Thus trade with Jiddah was also very profitable for the Company.
Pondicherry - South Asia

The maritime trade of Pondicherry was extended to the countries of Burma and Siam in South Asia. Pegu was an important port-town in Burma. The French obtained a small area from the King of Pegu where they had put up a kind of lodge for buying timber and for constructing and repairing boats. The voyage to Pegu was mainly for constructing and docking the ships because Pegu had deep rivers. Abundant supply of teak wood made Pegu a favourite resort not only for the repair of old ships, but also for construction of new ones. The Company's sailing ships from Pondicherry frequently sailed to this port carrying textiles of Coromandel coast. They carried necessary funds to purchase various sorts of commodities at Pegu. In 1728, the ship by name Saint Reine took full load of textiles worth 5,741 pagodas and 100 marcs of piasters to Pegu. The merchants who traded with this port used to sell their old ships and buy new ones. Budois, a French private merchant is said to have sold his ship by name Saint Reine after docking at Pegu and bought a new ship of 300 tonnage by name Nouveau Saint Pierre there for his trade. Some individual merchants of the Company also jointly bought a new ship built up by a person named Dornire at Pegu for 4,000 pagodas and named it as union for their partnership trade.
From Pegu, rice was chiefly imported into Pondicherry to avoid the scarcity of food grains at the time of famine. Teak wood was brought by the Company's vessels in large quantities for constructing buildings at Pondicherry. It was also carried to Nagapattinam. Besides tea, banoils and other required items necessary for navigation were taken to Pondicherry. The French conducted trade in animals in this route. War animals such as elephants and horses were imported into Pondicherry from Pegu. In January 1741, one of the Company's ships brought four horses from Pegu. The English records point out that in 1752 the French obtained permission from the King of Pegu to establish a factory there and hoisted their flag. The import of rice was hindered for some time as there was great scarcity of provisions at Pegu in January 1755. In 1756, when there was a fight between the King of Pegu and the Burmese, the French sent sepoys, powder and guns to Pegu to support the King and to seize some territory there. In this fight, the King was defeated and put to death without cruelty. This disaster brought about the ruin of the French settlement there.

Mergui was a famous port-town in Siam with which Pondicherry had busy trade relations through the sea.
Initially the Jesuit missionaries went to Mergui and tried to obtain the rights to open a factory from the King of Siam for the sake of the French Company. The Superior Council at Pondicherry fitted out ships every year to Mergui to bring chiefly teak wood for construction of buildings. Merchants were also sent by the Superior Council to buy provisions and other goods. Agents of the Company who were stationed there used to load cargoes of rice and other goods on board the ships bound to Pondicherry, where they unloaded the cargoes. They were also advised to buy and keep the wood on the river bed for the purpose of using fire wood and also to load the ships with rice bound for Pondicherry. The Company's ships plied between Pondicherry and Mergui transporting various goods to Pondicherry. In October 1733, the ship Eupiel sailed to Mergui for provisions of wood, rice and dry pitch of four to five tons. In July next year, the Council sent Chauvelin to secure a ship load of usual commodities of rice, paddy, wood of ten to twelve feet into 12/14 thumbs. The Council shipped cotton textiles of various kinds to Mergui for sale. Funds required for purchases were also sent every year. In September 1738, 15,000 piasters and forty lakhs of rupees were sent through the ship by name le Maurepa and in October of the same year, fifty thousand piasters were sent through the ship by name l'Apollon to buy rice, paddy and firewood. At the same
time De la Lettrie, the captain of this ship was entrusted with two white caps and twenty four buttons set on gold jewels worth 372 pagodas, meant for Fr. Aumont who had asked for them. The goods imported from Europe such as zereswine, fine powder and boxes of iron were transhipped to Mergui for sale. To avoid the scarcity of food grains the Council imported chiefly rice and paddy from Mergui. The development of brick industry necessitated the Superior Council to import fire wood for brick kiln of the Company. Besides, silver metals were chiefly imported for coining money. In December 1741, the ship Phantier which went to Mergui brought hundred chests of silver to Pondicherry. Tin, alum and raw cotton were imported to Pondicherry from Mergui for sale. Elephants were imported for employment in the army. Besides, ivory was brought to Pondicherry for sale which was used in making ornaments. Rice, Teakwood and silver were stable articles of imports from Mergui.

Tenasserim was a flourishing port in Siam, where the French Company maintained its trade links and fitted out many ships from Pondicherry. Cotton fabrics of various kinds produced on the Coromandel coast were shipped to this port for sale. The major items of imports from this port were rice and teak wood. It is said that in May 1738, the Company's ship St. Joseph which had been to Perak and this
port, brought with her a ship load of rice and teak wood collected from Mergui to Pondicherry to avoid the scarcity of food grains. Moreover, wheat, sugar, sugarcandy, lead, tutenague and planks were brought by the ships to Pondicherry. Sometimes, the ships used to take sands as ballast cargo from this port. Ivory was imported for making ornaments. The French conducted animal trade in this route. Several elephants were imported from Tenasserim. The native ship Lakshmana Prasad brought thirty elephants to Pondicherry in April 1745. In the same year, Nanak, a ship belonging to the King of Siam conveyed fifteen elephants from Tenasserim to Pondicherry. These were sold in the army camps. Metals were imported to Pondicherry for sale. Plenty of tin was imported from Tenasserim. In 1745, Nanak, King's vessel, brought eighty one and a half ingots of tin to Pondicherry together with some other goods. The muslim merchants of Coromandel ports carried their commodities from Coromandel ports to Tenasserim. In this traffic they were not allowed to freight any goods belonging to the English for which they had to execute a bond to the French in writing. Passports were issued to them. The French ships had to encounter the attacks of the English in this traffic. It is reported that in March 1760, the ship by name Harlem, while coming to Pondicherry was
fired by the English near Bommayapalayam and consequently it 65
lost the entire goods estimated about two lakhs of rupees.
The French Company had its close commercial ties with the
port of Kedah. The council at Pondicherry fitted out many
ships to this port. The main items of export were cotton
cloths such as blue cloth and chintz (printed with flowers)
which were chiefly exported from Pondicherry. In October
1742, the ship Marie Joseph carried 100 bales of chintz and
blue cloth besides 59 bales of cloth which belonged to the
Governor for his private trade. Tobacco and opium were
exported to Kadah where these were consumed by the local
people.

The port of Kedah acted as a halting point for
the ships bound to Cochinchina. The ships sailing to
Cochinchina used to touch this place to collect victuals for
sailors and to unload cargo of salt there. In 1755, the
ship Hermione bound for Cochinchina carried forty one garses
of salt from Pondicherry and unloaded there where salt was
in great demand. War animals were imported from Kedah.
Horses were mainly imported from this port. In 1748, two
horses escorted by the servants of Mudamiah from Karaikal
through Chidambaram came to Pondicherry, out of which one
was brought from Kedah. The King of Kedah took part in
this trade and his ship transported elephants to Porto Novo.
Ingot of gold was imported from Kedah to Coromandel ports. It was used for making gold coins. The Muslim merchants who owned ships, traded with this port and shipped Coromandel textiles to Kedah. It is recorded that Mamrez Khan of Mylapore and Miran Marakkayan of Porto Novo jointly traded with this port and sent considerable quantities of textiles from Pondicherry to Kedah. The ports of Siam coast attracted the Company's ships from Pondicherry. Cotton goods were sent there. Besides, guns and gun powder, shots and other war materials were exported for a battery to be built there. The Siam raja's ship by name Nanak conveyed passengers from Pondicherry to Siam. Siam supplied rice for local consumption. Ingots of gold were imported from Siam for coining money. War animals like elephants collected from Tenassirm and other ports were transported to Pondicherry and they were employed in the army.

Pondicherry - South East Asia

Pondicherry had a regular sea-borne trade with the ports of Achin, Malacca and Batavia in Indonesian Archipelago. Achin was an important port in Sumatra and the trade with that port was very regular. It appears that the first voyage of the French ships from Pondicherry to Achin commenced in 1726, following the permission given by the ruler of that country to the Council of Chandranagore.
The load ordinarily consisted of goods worth 100 to 1,500 pounds which would give a profit of 50,000 pounds for the Company. The Company's vessels frequently sailed to Achin with a variety of commodities from Pondicherry. Textiles such as stuff cotton cloth, blue piece goods, handkerchiefs and painted cloth called chintz collected from Porto Novo and other places were shipped on board the ships bound to Achin, where these goods were in great demand. Tobacco and opium brought from Bengal belonging to the Company as well as to individual merchants were exported. On 30th of August 1739, the ship by name Le Duc d'Orleans was loaded with twenty five boxes of opium at Pondicherry on account of the Company. This ship sailed through Porto Novo, where the captain of the ship De la Chenaye had to load a further consignment of thirty two boxes of opium. Salt was shipped to Achin together with tobacco and cotton cloths. Goods imported from Europe were reshipped to Achin.

On return, the ships brought back pepper, spices, kanja, benzoin, and rattan. In December of 1740, 700 packets of rattan were imported from Achin. Moreover, sugar, sugarcane, orange fruits, arecanuts, saltpetre and frankincense were brought to Pondicherry. In 1740, twenty sacks of saltpetre were imported from Achin for making gun powder. The development of gun powder industry made the
French import saltpetre from Achin. Arecanuts and frankincense fetched a handsome price. In January 1742, thirty candies of frankincense were imported. Tin was brought from Achin through Porto Novo and was sold at the rate of forty five pagodas per candy of 500 lbs in 1753. Sulphur, bars of copper and gold were imported from Achin, which were used for coining money. Silver was imported through Porto Novo for minting coin. In addition, war animals were imported into Pondicherry. Horses were the main imported items from Achin to Pondicherry, as there was a great demand in the army due to non-availability of strong indigenous horses. In 1740, the Company's ship *le Comte de Toulouse* brought two hundred and fifty horses from Achin. Similarly, in 1742 forty horses were imported. In January of 1756, the Company's vessel conveyed forty horses for the Company and ten to fifteen horses on officers' accounts together with other goods. The imported horses were sold in the army camp besides presents to the local rulers.

French privateers and native merchants also participated in the trade with Achin. The Jesuits also took a keen interest in the trade with Achin. It is reported that the Jesuits seized some goods belonging to the King of that country and brought to Pondicherry, where they sold
them. In this traffic, the Dutch ships were engaged in transporting commodities to Pondicherry on hire basis as well. The duration of the voyage through Yanam and Masulipatnam to Achin took about twenty five days. The merchant vessels of the Company were to encounter the attacks of enemies and pirates on the high sea. In October of 1746, the ship le Favoti was attacked and captured near Achin by the English who took it to Batavia and sold it to the Dutch. In the trade with Achin, commodities were bartered with one another. Whenever the French did not pay money for the goods directly purchased by them in the Achin markets, they used to exchange unvalued goods brought from Europe against them and also opium of Bengal. In this trade, the Superior Council obtained huge profits for the Company. There is evidence to state that the Company's ships le paix and le Duc d'Orleans were engaged in this traffic from 1738 to 1742. During the four year period the benefits of their operations were quite appreciable. The ship by name Paix got the profits of 5,105 pagodas and Le Duc d'orleans 4,235 pagodas.

Malacca, the chief emporium in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, continued to be receiving cotton textiles from the Coromandel coast, and marketing the same with the various regions of South East Asia. The Company's
vessels used to sail to Malacca where part of the merchandise carried by them were transferred to other vessels which were bound to China and Japan. Textiles called kailis or sailasses produced at Muthiyalpet, plain cloth, calico bleached or dyed, painted cloth of St.Thome and Pulicat were mainly exported to Malacca, where these were sold to the Muslim and Malay people. From Malacca these textiles were distributed to the surrounding islands of Sumatra, Java, Timor, Bantam, Borneo, Celebes, Amboyna and Moluccas. Merchants from these islands flocked to Malacca with gold and spices and exchanged them for textiles. Besides, leather was another item of export to Malacca from where it was taken to Japan. The articles which were chiefly imported from Malacca were crude camphor, musk, sandalwood, opium, incense, sulphur, durian fruits, pepper, cloves, tin and chinaware. Gold ingots were imported into Pondicherry for coining money.

The Superior Council of Pondicherry fitted out the Company's ships on hire basis and took keen interest to export textiles to Malacca. It received from the individuals the goods and cotton textiles despatched to Malacca, where they could be unloaded without delaying the ships. The council collected seven per cent from the individuals as freight charges for their goods shipped to
Malacca depending upon the quantity of the goods. In June 1729, the Company's ship Sungurama carried fifty three bales of goods, while carrying its own goods to Manila. The kling ships used to set sail to Malacca carrying merchandise from Pondicherry, Porto Novo, Pulicat, St.Thome and Nagapattinam. In this traffic, the French allowed private ships to fly their colours. During the period of Lenoir, merchant ships frequented Malacca with merchandise worth six lakhs of rupees and trade with this port reached its zenith. The Dutch and the Portuguese ships were also found in this traffic. From Malacca the Company's ships moved to the port of Batavia, where the Dutch had a trading counter. After unloading a part of the cargo at Malacca the ships carried the remaining cargo to Batavia and unloaded it there. Textiles such as blue cloth, piece goods, coarse cloth, chintzs and handkerchiefs were exported to Batavia, where these goods fetched a handsome price. Spices were brought from Batavia to Pondicherry. The French chiefly imported rum and arrack from Batavia to Pondicherry. These were under the monopoly of the Company. In the trade with Batavia, the council earned large profit in the sale of rum and arrack, which were staple items of import from Batavia.
Pondicherry - Far East

The maritime trade contact of Pondicherry was extended to the countries like Phillipines, Cochinchina, China and Japan in the Far East. In the Phillipines, Manila became a new market centre for the growth of Coromandel textile trade. The commercial relations with Manila started from 1720 or 1721. The merchant vessels of the Company as well as the native crafts carried on an extensive trading operation to the port of Manila. Textiles such as longcloth, blue piece goods, coarse cloth, stripped, ordinary, stuff cloth of Masulipatanam and Chandranagore, flowered cloth and fine chintzs were the major export items to Manila from Pondicherry. The first loading of the ships had given the French considerable profit. The second loads gave only their capital, while subsequent trips brought only loss. But, on the whole, this trade was advantageous which gave thirty per cent profit. Normally the Company was interested in this trade for a sum of 10,000 pagodas making about one fourth of loading. The ships had often sailed from Bengal.

The trade with Manila had been better in 1727 and 1728, so much so that the Council decided to continue this trade and fitted out the ship Sungurama on 23rd June 1729
with a consignment worth 13,964 pagodas out of which goods of the value of 3,364 pagodas were for the Company. In March 1737, the Company's ship Sankaraparike sailed to Manila with the consignment and a shipment of cargoes and fine chintz was loaded on it at Mylapore and Madras while bales of piece goods were taken at Porto Novo and Cuddalore. This trade was profitable for the Company. In 1738, the Superior Council had sent the consignments in which the Company was interested in loading the goods worth 10,000 pagodas which gave the profit of 13,133 pagodas to the Company after the expedition was over. In this year, the Superior Council obtained a huge profit from the sale of cloth at Manila market. Blue piece goods were sold for fifty per cent profit, stuff cloth of Masulipatanam and Chandranagore were sold for a profit between eighty and ninety per cent, coarse cloth, stripped and ordinary, flowered cloth and fine chintz of Madras for a profit from twenty per cent to twenty five per cent, whereas the chintz of Pondicherry and Tirupapuliur was sold partly at a loss and partly at cost price.

Tobacco was exported to Manila. In 1740, the piece goods and tobacco sent to Manila were sold at a low rate due to the arrival of goods by two or three ships from Surat. Flowered cloths were always sold at good price.
In 1742, flowered cloth sent to Manila market gave a profit of 150 per cent. Coarse cloth, blue cloth, and long cloth did not fetch any handsome price. As there was no demand for blue cloth, they remained unsold. In 1745, the sale of flowered cloth declined in the Manila market and unsold flowered cloths were left there. The textile trade at Manila was indeed very lucrative during the whole of the first half of the eighteenth century. But during the period of Dupleix, the trade with Manila was neglected as he was very much preoccupied with war operation against Muhammad Ali Khan. Later it developed. Both Hindu and chulia Muslim merchants carried on a profitable trade in the port of Manila. Armenian and French privateers also participated in this trade. They loaded various sorts of goods on board the ships bound to Manila. In April 1738, an Armenian merchant loaded at Pondicherry 300 to 400 bales of goods on board the ship Nossa Senhora de Saude bound to Manila which carried a part of the cargo brought by the ship Heureux Marchand and local Europeans and natives. To cite another example, in June 1750, the Governor exported a considerable quantity of chintz to Manila for his private trade.

The imports consisted of camphor, frankincense, benjamin, brazilwood, resin, a few luxury items like gold
chains and silver specie. In January 1740, the ship Le Duc d'orleans imported twenty candies of frankincense, ten candies of benjamin, thirty five candies of brazilwood and fifteen candies of resin into Pondicherry. These were transhipped to Chandranagore. Raw cotton was chiefly imported from Manila for textile industry. The development of manufacturing textile compelled the French to import cotton from Manila. In 1740, about hundred and forty bales of raw cotton were imported into Pondicherry. Hemp and sulphur were imported from Manila. Iron bar was always brought to Pondicherry. In 1737, the Company's ship Sankaraparike brought 1,44,000 pounds of iron from Manila. These were sold at the rate of sixteen pagodas per bar at Pondicherry market. The sale of goods except iron imported from Manila in 1737 was very dull.

Several boxes of silver were imported from Manila. These were converted into coins in the mint at Pondicherry for commercial purpose. Cowries were brought from there and used as coins in place of silver fanams. The Superior Council entered in the animal trade with Manila. The trade vessels which frequented the port of manila, used to bring horses from there besides other goods. In 1740, the ship Le Duc d'orleans transported 123 horses from Manila for the Company's use. These horses were
employed in the army and also were given as presents to the local chieftains by the Governor besides sales. A horse received as present by Tiruviti Baluchetti was a Manila horse and was valued at 80 pagodas. We may presume that Manila horses were well trained and were suitable for Indian climate. During this period Manila appeared as a main entre for supplying horses to Pondicherry. The Superior Council loaded the ships with goods collected from individual merchants on hire basis, besides Company's goods to Manila. It collected freight charges depending upon the quantity and quality of the goods. It may be pointed out that in June 1729, the ship Sungurama was loaded with 423 bales of goods at 16 per cent and fifty three bales at seven per cent freight charges.

The French extended their commercial relations with Cochinchina as well. The Jesuit bishop went to Cochinchina and obtained permission from the king of that country to trade there. Hence, the seagoing vessels of the Company which often set sail to eastern countries carried on an extensive trading operation with the port of Cochinchina. During the period under review Cochinchina became an important centre of trade for cotton textiles from Coromandel coast. The major items of export from Pondicherry to Cochinchina were orkandired cloth, unbleached
cloth and longcloth of Salem. These fetched a handsome price at Cochinchina and were in great demand there. These cloths collected from Mathiripakkam and Salem were shipped in the accounts of the individual merchants to trade in Cochinchina. Besides, piasters were sent there for purchasing commodities. In 1756, the ship Hermione was loaded by the Superior Council with 1268-752 marcs of piasters and 657 rupees in goods to make the shipment complete. In addition to cloth, many articles of little consequence such as toys, glasswares, light stuffs particularly those of red colour, brought from France, were exported to Cochinchina where these articles found profitable market. All kinds of arms manufactured in Europe, especially swordblades made after the fashion of the country, all sorts of jewels from diamonds to common crystal were exported and sold at a high rate. The trade with Cochinchina was not of more advantage in 1756, because the king of that country made the French employees many a time fools and wanted exorbitant duties which he made them to pay. A large variety of goods were imported into Pondicherry. Sugar was brought from there for local consumption. Besides, cinnamon, calembouc, sandalwood, sapan, rosewood, ebony and ironwood were imported for constructing houses as well as for export to Europe.
From Cochinchina the French sailing ships went to China and Japan for trade. The Company had its direct trade relations with China and sent ships from Lorient. From 1700 to 1710 fourteen vessels plied between France and China touching the port of Pondicherry with diverse goods. But the trade from Pondicherry actually started in 1726, when the Company did not send any vessel to China and sent the order to the Superior Council at Pondicherry to despatch a vessel every year to Canton in the Company's account with enough cargo and to bring back the goods which were needed for Coromandel region and Europe. Hence, the sea-borne trade of Pondicherry developed with Canton in China and the merchant ships of the Company frequently sailed from Pondicherry. Every year, in the month of June without fail the Superior Council had been sending a ship with enough cargo to Canton in the Company's account and sent the report from time to time to the Company at Paris about the loading of the ships bound to China and other Asian ports under instructions given to the Council by the Company. In July 1729, the Company decided to trade directly with China. Subsequently, it sent the ship l'Argonante with provisions valued at 16,000 to 17,000 marcs for the purchase of tea and silk to be sold in the French markets. In the same month of the year, the Superior Council made the
request to Duvelaer, a factor at Canton to send cloth, porcelain ware and other China attractions worth 400 pagodas to make presents to nobles in the country of Pondicherry, Bengal and Masulipatanam. Duvelaer de la Barre conducted his trade privately and invested large sums of money in trade during his voyage to China. After his arrival in China, he noted significant benefit in the gold trade of China.

Indeed, silver and other items exported from France to China were exchanged against gold which earned great profit from 32 to 40 per cent to the Company. When the Chinese came to know about the huge profit obtained by the Company in the year 1735, they took care to increase the price of gold just when the merchant ship reached China from France. Consequently, gold became all of a sudden rare and it was used only as a supplementary transaction, when other purchases were completed. But when the ships had left the port, value of gold resumed its normal course. Later for want of funds, the Company did not take much interest in the direct trade with China. The Superior Council sent the ship Saint Benoit with goods to China and this shipment had gave only 17 1/2 per cent profit in 1737. In June 1739, this ship was again despatched to Canton after collecting the consignment of pepper from Mahe. The capital
invested in this expedition was around 90,000 pagodas out of 135 which 25,000 pagodas were furnished by the Company.

The principal articles of export from Pondicherry were pepper and cardamom of Malabar, besides textiles. Funds were sent by the Superior Council to the factors at Canton for the maintenance of employees as well as for purchasing merchandise and the Superior Council asked the factors to send the copy of the statement of expenditure. In addition to the funds, the Superior Council reshipped the imported European goods such as wine and alcohol to Canton and these were sold to the Europeans and employees at the same price paid by the employees of Pondicherry as per the orders of the Company. The French Company at Paris recommended the Superior Council to engage the vessels for hire to the individuals to load the merchandise for outgoing as well as return trip from China and it also advised the Council that the Superior Council should collect the freight charges always a little less than what the English charged. As a result the Superior Council received from the individuals the goods which the merchants would like to despatch to China and for return to this coast.

The main articles which were imported from China consisted mostly of tea of different varieties, porcelainwares, rhubarb, bleached silk of Nankin, silk cloth
like Gourgontinus and Damaskas, furniture, puquine, strains, fans, warnish, porax, gambage, China ink, paints, china root, papers, rattan and chinese dancing dolls. Besides, galega (hardroot), gumlac, curcuma, quicksilver, cinnabar, borax, musk, tutenag, mother of pearl, cinnamon and ginseny were imported from China. China supplied to the Superior Council a consignment of gold which was converted into coins at Pondicherry. The flow of gold from China had stopped the import of gold from France. The Chinese vessels were also found in this traffic. In April 1750, a Chinese ship brought considerable quantities of goods from China and it was commanded by a Portuguese, from whom goods worth 28,230 rupees were bought by the Superior Council for the Company. However, in 1753, the sale of Chinese goods declined in the Pondicherry market. It is recorded in May 1753, the European ship le Villeflis brought from China ten candies of alum, forty candies of China root and some porcelains to Pondicherry. At that time the captain of the ship Selle found no purchasers for the said goods. When the Governor came to know about this, he told Ananda Ranga Pillai to ask the Company merchants to buy them. The Superior Council took keen interest in importing gold from China which was in great demand on the Coromandel coast. In 1750, it informed Caveilv and Fenetau, factors at
Canton that after loading the ships, the funds should be converted into gold and sent to Pondicherry deducting the cost of 20,000 slabs of porcelain. In 1751, the Superior Council requested the factors to forward the products of corals and the sale of silver marcs sent to that port in the shape of gold. In order to minimise the risk, the factors were requested to send gold in several Portuguese ships and also through the English ship if they had on hire basis.

From Japan bullions such as gold, silver and copper were imported into Pondicherry. These were taken to the mint for coining money for commercial purpose. In the trade with Far Eastern Countries, the Company's ships and private merchants' vessels were to face the attacks on the high sea from the English who were the arch-enemies of the French. The English captured the French ships sailing to Manila and China on behalf of Muhammad Shah, emperor of Delhi and bearing his flag, and took them to Batavia where they sold them to the Dutch. To avoid the attacks from the English, the French used to send their ships bearing the flag of Muhammad Shah and the Danish flag and passport. In this traffic the trade was profitable for the French Company.
Pondicherry - Indian Ocean Islands

The French extended the maritime trade of Pondicherry to various islands of the Indian ocean such as Ceylon, Maldives, Mascareigne, Mauritius, Bourbon, and Madagascar. In the island of Ceylon, Trinkomali, Galle and Colombo were important ports frequented by several ships from Pondicherry. Trade with these ports was extensively carried on by the Company and by the native merchants. The native crafts plied between Pondicherry and Colombo and Trinkomali carrying a wide range of commodities. A few native merchants who owned ships sent them with textiles to Colombo where they had their own agents for selling the goods. A native craft, by name Anandapuravi, plied between Pondicherry and Colombo transporting various sorts of merchandise. From Pondicherry a plethora of cotton textiles produced on the Coromandel coast such as tapisarassa, blue cloth, coarse cloth and printed cloths known as chintzes were largely exported by the Superior Council to Colombo and Trinkomali for sale where they were in great demand. Spices, cinnamon, rice, sugar, coconuts and coir were imported from Trinkomali and Colombo to Pondicherry. Fibre of coconut was in great demand on the Coromandel coast. It was largely used in manufacturing cables for ships.
The Superior Council took keen interest in importing arrack from Colombo through Porto Novo. It may be pointed out that in May 1705, the Council authorised the French merchants residing at Colombo for the supply of 50 legres of arrack of Ceylon for delivering it every year to Porto Novo at the rate of 25 pagodas per legres. Ships laden with arrack arrived at Pondicherry directly from Colombo. The sale of arrack was the exclusive monopoly of the Company. Its import from Ceylon was hindered for sometime in 1724 owing to the closure of store house of Colombo arrack in November 1724 as per resolution made by the Council. Arecanuts were mainly imported from Ceylon for local consumption, through Fort St. David. The pathan merchants settled on the Coromandel coast traded with Ceylon and transported considerable quantities of arecanuts including arrack from the port of Galle to Fort St. David. These were brought from there to Pondicherry for sale. Animal trade also was conducted by the Superior Council. Elephants were imported from Colombo. These were employed in the army, besides sale. The French had begun in some measure to make lively trade at Trinkomali after the end of the war between the English and the French in 1778. Cinnamon which was procured earlier, could not be obtained from there because the King of Candy refused to
fulfil his treaty for cinnamon and destroyed a great number of trees which were too contiguous to the Dutch establishment. However, in the trade with Ceylon the import of arrack from Colombo was greatly profitable for the Superior Council.

Maldive Islands situated in the Indian Ocean attracted the vessels from Coromandel coast. The seagoing vessels of the Company often visited Maldive Islands with various sorts of textiles that were manufactured on the Coromandel coast. They carried textiles, rice and other food stuffs to Maldive Islands, where they were exchanged for coconuts, cowries and other products. On return, the ships brought coconuts, coir, coconut products, ambergris, marine products and mats. Coconuts were chiefly imported from Maldive Islands. It may be presumed that the requirement of local oil mills compelled the French to import coconuts from Maldive Islands. Cowries which were a kind of tiny sea shells available in plenty at Maldive Islands were also mainly imported from there in order to use as token currency in Pondicherry and in Chandranagore. The Chulia Muslim merchants of the Coromandel coast predominated in the trade with Maldive Islands. Coconuts and cowries were the stable articles of imports from these islands to Pondicherry throughout the eighteenth century.
The Mascareigne island grew as a significant market centre for Coromandel textiles during the period under review. There was a great demand for cotton textiles in this centre. The Company's vessels frequently sailed to this island from Pondicherry carrying various items of textile. Cotton fabrics such as lampasses, coarse blue cloth, chintzes and lungies were major export varieties from Pondicherry. Provisions, rice, fowls, sheep and other goods were loaded on board the ships bound to Mascareigne. These were partly consumed by the crew and partly unloaded there. In November 1739, the ship Jupiter carried to this island a cargo of a few bales of piece goods. Criminals from Pondicherry were transported to Mascareigne along with passengers. They were employed in the plantations. The Superior Council frequently despatched the vessels to Mascareigne with a view to getting the funds which would have been available on sale of wine, spirit and other European goods. Letters from Pondicherry were despatched to this Island, from where these were sent to France. The French privateers and native merchants traded with this island supplying textiles and fitted out their vessels from Pondicherry. On return, this island supplied considerable quantities of cowries to Pondichery where these were used as coins. It is
worthwhile to note that in July 1746, the ship Marie Joseph which left Chandranagore for this island brought from there a ship load of cowries including soldiers who were off-loaded at Karaikal after facing a minor attack from the English. Firewood was brought from Mascareigne. The development of brick industry made the Council import 160 firewood chiefly from this island. Besides, silver brought from France to Mascareigne was imported from there to Pondicherry to be coined and sent to Chandranagore.

The island of Mauritius became the principal settlement of the French and a centre of active trade for the Coromandel textiles. It was not only the arsenal of the French forces, but also centre of their commerce. The navigation to this island from Pondicherry was regularly 161 undertaken by the ships of 150 to 200 tonnage. Cotton fabrics like stuff cotton of Porto Novo, blue piece goods and white cloth of northern parts were the major items of export from Pondicherry to this island where these cloths 162 were largely consumed by the slaves and were in great demand. In March 1788, the ship le deux Cousiness transported 264 bales of excellent quality of white cloth of different varieties and 42 cunjams which were brought from 163 Vizakapatanam and from local areas. Livestock, grains, wine, plants of chiraz trees and seeds of indigo
were other items of export from Pondicherry. Besides, ships carried provisions to this island for the daily use of slaves. On 25th October and 17th November 1740, the ships St. Benoit and Cheval Maril sailed from Pondicherry with full cargo of rice, food stuffs and other goods to this island respectively.

Spices like pepper, cloves, cinnamon and cardamom were sent to this island from where these were transhipped to Europe. It is evident that in October 1738, Butler who was at this island, was advised by the Superior Council that twenty five cases of cardamom bound to France should not be damaged in the ship and stored in a place very dry. Slave trade was only of minor importance in the sea-borne trade with this island. Slaves both boys and girls were shipped from Pondicherry to this island besides passengers in order to work in the cotton plantations.

The articles imported from this island were silver marcs and other European goods that were brought by the Company's ships from Europe to that island. It is worthwhile to note that in December 1758, the frigate le Fidele sent by the Council of this island arrived at Pondicherry with 2,967 marcs of silver. Similarly in April 1760, the ship le Compagnie des Indes and the frigate
le Baleine brought 60 chests of silver and 25 bales of broadcloth, silk, European cloths, powder, shots and wheat. Wheat was imported to avoid the scarcity of food grains at the time of famine. Besides, timber which was available in plenty in this island was a major item of import into Pondicherry for constructing buildings. Being situated on the route between Europe and India this island acted as a halting point for the Company's ships coming from France to Pondicherry and vice-versa.

The island Bourbon being located near Madagascar island became a centre of commerce receiving textiles from Coromandel coast. It acted as a halting point for the ships sailing from Pondicherry to France and vice-versa. For instance, on 30th February 1704, two French ships fully loaded at Pondicherry reached Bourbon island and halted there from 29th March to 7th April and then sailed to France where they reached on 15th August 1704. The articles exported to this island were mainly cotton fabrics of various kinds such as tartan, handkerchiefs, muslins and printed cloth known as chintz for the consumption of slaves. Besides, food supplies, rice, meal, oil and sugar were exported. Cotton textiles occupied the first place among the items of export from Pondicherry. When in 1704 Francois Martin found that there were no funds in his hands and no
ship from Europe, in order to obtain the funds through the sales of goods, he sent the ship loaded with textiles worth 450 pagodas to sell them in the island till the arrival of the ships from Europe with funds. The French colony in this island was the main receiver of textiles from Pondicherry and acted as a market place.

A few luxury articles, pieces of furniture and jewels produced in Pondicherry were sent to Bourbon island. These were sold to the Europeans. Live stock, poultry seeds, plants like cinnamon trees were transported from the Malabar coast. Skilled workers like stone cutters, builders, joiners, 'luscars', unskilled workers and slaves were taken from Pondicherry to Bourbon to work at various levels. Slave trade was an important feature in this traffic. In 1728, Benoit Dumas became the Governor of the Bourbon island. When he came to Pondicherry, he purchased 100 slaves, both boys and girls between ages of 8 and 25 years, and were shipped on board the ship Sirene bound to the Bourbon island to work in the plantations such as cotton, coffee, tea etc. On return the Company's ships brought back timber or wood available in plenty in Bourbon island for cabinet work. Raw cotton was chiefly imported from this island for manufacturing textiles. Bourbon supplied oranges as well. When Pondicherry was
isolated from its hinterland, Bourbon supplied corn and maize to Pondicherry. Besides, slaves were imported from Bourbon at the time of war to enroll in the Lally's army. Moreover, some articles imported from Europe were transhipped at Bourbon to Pondicherry. Ships were usually despatched to Bourbon to bring these articles. In 1704, when there was shortage of funds at Pondicherry, the Superior Council was asked to decide about sending the ship St. Louis to Bourbon to bring from there the value of wines and liquor, which the ship Marchand des Indes had unloaded there during her passage.

The textile trade of Coromandel coast found its way through the port of Pondicherry to the island of Madagascar, where the French made their first colony and establishment. The Company's ships and country crafts continued their voyage from Pondicherry to the island of Madagascar and they often sailed towards that island after taking on board textiles and some provisions. This island was a halting point for the Company's ships coming from France and Pondicherry and vice-versa on account of its position between Europe and India. The Company's ships, in fact, while coming from France, after touching the islands of Mauritius and Bourbon, halted at Madagascar for a little while and after taking rest they used to set sail towards
Pondicherry leaving Madagascar with sundry goods brought by 181 them from Europe and letters from that island. Textiles were regularly exported from Pondicherry to this island. Skilled weavers and artisans were mainly carried from Pondicherry to Madagascar to work in the woollen industry because, the French intended to develop and carry on the trade in woollen, silk stuffs and painted cloth of that island to India and China. Various goods were imported. Flax, sugarcane, wax, different kinds of honey, tobacco, indigo, black pepper, gumlac, amber, several silky and cotton substances were items of import from Madagascar island. Besides, pitch, tar, whale oil, salt fish of all kinds, manufactured hemp and different kinds of silky were important objects that were brought from Madagascar island. Timber available in plenty in that island was chiefly imported into Pondicherry for building houses, constructing ships and cabinet works. Raw cotton was imported into Pondicherry for manufacturing textiles. In addition to the Company, the French privateers traded with Madagascar. The English were found trading in this island. Those private merchants who were trading with that island, captured some English ships while coming from Madagascar to Madras in June 1748. During the period under review, the French colony situated in this island acted as a market centre for Coromandel textiles.
Pondicherry - East African Coast

Mozambique was an important trading centre situated on the east African coast with which Pondicherry had its maritime trade relations. From Pondicherry coarse cotton, guinea cloth and piece goods, white and printed cloths were carried by the Company's ships in large quantities to Mozambique from where these were distributed to the neighbouring places. These cloths were sold to the slaves. On return they brought back gold, ivory, amber, ebony and a few luxury goods. After reaching Mozambique, the French conducted negro trade and carried slaves to Pondicherry to employ them mainly in the army at time of war with the English. As soon as the goods conveyed by the ships were sold in Mozambique, purchases in diverse goods were made there for the return journey of the ships to Pondicherry. In this traffic only the Company's ships were fully engaged for carrying goods.

Pondicherry - Europe

In India's trade with Europe, the French Trading Company alone had the sole right to load the ships at Pondicherry with goods belonging to it. No other ships from France could, therefore, be loaded for India nor from India.
to Europe. The French Company at Paris continued to send its merchant ships to India throughout the period under review. All ships of the Company left the port of Lorient in France and touched Cadiz where they used to take considerable quantities of silver and wines. From there, these ships reached the Islands of Bourbon and Mauritius rounding the Cape of Good Hope through Mozambique channel with frequent stops at Anjouane and more or less a prolonged stay in the said islands they used to set sail to Pondicherry. But some of them made their voyages in different directions. The merchant ships were set sails from Pondicherry most of the time late due to want of cargo. The Company used to complain to the Superior Council that ships returning to France did not leave India on time, that is, before the month of February. Generally the ships took about five months for their sea voyage. In the long voyage the crew suffered from scurvy on account of which the ships had to anchor for a while at Cape of Good Hope on their way. Because of this the ships could not reach Pondicherry in proper season.

The merchant ships were generally fitted out at Lorient under the control of the captains of the Company and rarely under the Officers of the King's marine institution. They enjoyed certain privileges under the captain of the
port. They had liberty to load some quantity of goods on their own account. The Company received a lot of complaints against them. Therefore, it issued orders to the Council at Pondicherry and Chandranagore to place strict control against them at the time of shipment. But the Superior Council could not do anything, because the clandestine shipment was the easiest thing in India on the riverside or on the high harbour. Therefore, effective supervision was made only at the port of Lorient, when the ships reached France. The culprits were punished. In 1727, the chairman of Rennes condemned the captain of the ship St.Louis to a fine of 3,000 pounds, confiscated the goods loaded fraudly on the ship and stopped the payment of his salary. Besides, he was also retained in prison. However, the Company allowed some of the French privateers to load their cargo on the Company's ships to India either by authorising or issuing transport permit to them. As a result most of the Company's servants shipped their cargo and derived a great profit.

The main articles of import from Europe were gold and silver marcs, gold laces, copper bar, coral, woollen bedsheets, broadcloths, iron and wine besides less valued goods such as hardwares, glass items, clock, watch, scissors, nail, anchors, carbon and materials for war. The
goods exported from Pondicherry were mainly cotton textiles of the Coromandel coast, pepper of Malabar, saltpetre, coffee of Mocha and Bourbon, redwood, sapanwood, rattan, cowries and leather. Among the imported articles, bullions such as gold and silver marcs occupied the first place. Gold and Silver were in great demand in South India. Gold marcs were imported from Europe in order to mint coins in the local mints. When there was no possibility of getting silver from Spain on account of war with the English in 1742, the Company sent 101 marcs of gold in 1742 and 740 marcs of gold in 1743 as a part of its funds in order to convert them into pagodas at Pondicherry mint because of the advice given by the Governor Dumas. In the month of July 1746, gold worth a lakh of rupees was imported into Pondicherry. At the beginning of the year 1743, gold cost 700 pounds per marc and silver cost 49 pounds instead of 48 and 50 per marc. Its import was lesser than that of silver marc.

Silver marcs and piastres were chiefly imported from Europe. The Company continued to send a large quantity of silver marcs on every voyage of the ships from Cadiz and silverpiastres from Seville and Mexico to Pondicherry for ensuring currency in South India where it was converted into pagodas and rupees in the mint of Pondicherry and of the
great Mughal at Alambarai or at Arcot. It is said that in June of 1750, the ship le Maurepas brought 50,000 marcs of silver to Pondicherry from Cadiz. In January of 1756, two ships of the Company by name Danai and Harmione brought 4,00,000 piastres from France each one carrying 2,00,000 piastres to Pondicherry for commercial purposes. In order to mint coins to buy merchandise for Europe, the Superior council required gold and silver in abundance from Europe. Labernedie underlined the necessity of these metals and stated that Paris should send gold and silver to Pondicherry because India which supplied several products in abundance, purchased very little quantity of European goods and insisted on precious metals very often to keep in the treasury or to utilise for the need of the people. Gold and silver were used not only for making threads for cloths but also for making ornaments and idols, besides minting coins in South India.

Gold, silver strips and cloths including gold threads were other important items imported from Europe to Pondicherry. Gold and silver cloths from 10 to 12 yard were imported from France. These were good in quality for the local taste. Similar was the case with gold and silver strips, whereas gold threads imported by the council were always bad in quality and did not fetch a good price.
Besides, copper was imported from Europe together with other metals in less quantity and was taken to the mint for issuing coins. It was in great demand in the Coromandel region and was used not only for minting coins but also for making household vessels. When in 1756, the Superior Council had great difficulty to get copper from Japan, it imported a considerable quantity of copper from Europe, which was taken to the mint at Masulipatnam for converting it into coins.

Next to this, iron bar and tin were items of imports from Europe. These were mainly imported from France by the Superior Council. In April of 1753, the ship *la Villefli*x brought plenty of tin from Europe to Porto Novo, where the French purchased it at the rate of about 33 pagodas per candy of about 500 lbs and brought to Pondicherry for resale. There was no demand for iron bar in the markets of Coromandel region and so they were not sold. Iron, imported into Pondicherry, was re-exported mainly to Mocha and Manila. Another important item was lead which was used as war material mainly for bullets as well as for bales. The Company always loaded some quantity of lead on the ships for balancing them on every voyage to Pondicherry. It is said that a quantity of 2,00,000 pounds of lead was required for the Superior Council every year.
Besides its use as war material, it was sold to the local 210 rulers and merchants. In 1748 lead was sold at 50 rupees per candy at Pondicherry market.

Coral was one of the items imported by the Company into Pondicherry. It was largely used in the manufacture of jewellery and luxury products especially for making ornaments. The Superior Council imported it chiefly from France for sale in the local markets. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, coral did not fetch good price, due to uneasy sales in 1700 of corals remaining from the previous consignment, and thus commercial advantages of the Superior Council were reduced. It was during the period of Le Chevalier Herbert, that the coral merchants did not ask more than 106 pagodas per maund and bargained to buy it from the Governor through their organization, because coral was not only poor in quality, but also very small. The French continued to import some amount of coral from France for sale in the local markets. It was not generally of good quality and was sold from 108 to 64 pagodas per maund depending on the quality.

Besides, broad cloth ordinarily of red and green colours, scarlet broadcloth, velvets, serge woollen in blue colour and woollen bedsheets were the major imported items of the Company into Pondicherry. These were largely
brought to Pondicherry and were sold by the Superior Council at the Company's warehouse to the local merchants who resold them in the rural markets. Besides, these were given as presents to the local chieftains and to the native merchants at the time of their contract of supplying textiles to the Council. During the period of Lenoir and Dumas, broadcloths were imported in large quantities. Its sale declined in the Pondicherry market. In April, 1748, about forty to fifty bales of broadcloths remained unsold in the Company's warehouses due to their inferior quality. These cloth were faded and moth-eaten. It is important to note that the French broadcloths did not yield much profit to the Superior Council, because it was not better in quality than that of the English broad cloths which the French purchased and brought from Mocha, where it was called Mocha broadcloth.

The serge woollen cloths blue in colour and some quantity of new green coats with red facings and button holes were chiefly imported from Ledeve in France and were supplied to the French troops rather than for sale in the local markets. Fine coats of different colours were brought from France and were given to the Europeans. Draps were other variety of cloths which were imported from France. The Superior Council at Pondicherry claimed to
import a large volume of this variety and sent the orders to the Company at Paris. But the Company did not take care of the orders of the Superior Council and always sent these 218 cloths below the orders of the Council. The Council did not import large volumes of velvet from France as there was no demand for it in the local markets. In order to send seven to eight pieces to Chandranagore and one for Mahe, 219 velvets were imported in less quantity into Pondicherry.

Liquors like wine, brandy, Imperial water and 220 Hungary water were other items of import. The Superior Council always imported some barrels and bottles of wine and brandy from Europe for sale in the local markets as well as for use in the hospitals, besides presents to the local chieftains and nobles. The Council could not get considerable income through the sale of liquor because of bad conditions. Therefore, the Superior Council complained to the Company at Paris in 1726, that the quality of wine in barrels and bottles brought by the ship le Jupiter was not good, on account of which no one wanted to purchase it. At that time, the Council sold some barrels of wine at the rate of five to six pagodas per barrel. The bottles were badly corked. Those who had bought them did not even drink. So the Superior Council sent the message to the Company at Paris not to send wine in bottles as it might become a loss
to the Company, because the foreigners were unhappy at being cheated by the wine sold here and decided to order it from Europe which would affect the Company's trade in wine. Since three years the Europeans found that the wine imported by the Superior Council was useless.

The wine of sherry (zeros) variety was absolutely necessary for the hospitals, for sale to the inhabitants and for the use of the crew in the ships. Madeira which was of another kind was softer and it was considered very exciting to the nerves. It was sold at Madras for 45 to 50 pagodas per bottle, whereas at Pondicherry it cost more than 80 pagodas. Saige was wine of red colour and was imported from Berdeaux and it was sold at 200 rupees per barrel. Wine, both in barrels and bottles, imported into Pondicherry was not in good condition. During the period of Godeheu, out of 300 to 400 cases of wine, not even a single one was good. As a result Godeheu had to dispose them of once at the price of a bottle. The sale of this article did not give much income to the Superior Council though it was the Company's monopoly. This was sent to Arcot and other trading marts for sale.

Caps of beaver, wigs, gold and silver watches were articles of minor importance. The Company used to send caps
of beaver to Pondicherry about 150 to 200 in number for sale. The gold and silver watches and costly clocks were imported into Pondicherry along with other goods for sale in the market and also to give as present to the local rulers and nobles. Those watches which were sold well were called Romilly and Carre. The gold watch usually was sold at the rate of 205 rupees in the local markets. Besides, some miscellaneous articles such as scissors, flasks, knives, spectacles, snuff-box, combs, writing cases, locks, etc. were generally imported from Europe together with luxury goods. These goods were sold only to Europeans. Some of these goods were also presented to the local chieftains. The Company imposed certain taxes against the sale of these articles.

War materials like guns, gun powder, balls, grenades, shots, munitions, double barrelled guns and pistols were chiefly imported from Europe by the French. These were mainly utilised in the artillery and were despatched to the French camps at Villianur, Arcot, Arani, Ginjee etc. to fight against the English. The Governor at Pondicherry supplied some of these articles to the local chieftains as gifts. They also purchased them from the warehouses for use in the battles with their enemies. It is said that in 1748, Nizam-ul-Mulk asked the Governor to
provide two great guns with some shots to him. By supplying these items, the French extended their influence on the political reasons. It is reported that all war materials imported into Pondicherry were of bad quality. And so, the Superior Council ordered to be returned to France all items of no use or bad quality or whatever could not be disposed of here. However, the Council very often thought that it was more convenient to dispose of these items locally even at a loss than to send them back to France. Anchors, nails and carbons were imported together with lead. These were shipped at Lorient for balancing the ships bound to Pondicherry and these goods were sold in the local markets and also exported to other Asian ports where there was a shipbuilding industry.

The merchandise which were exported to Europe, consisted mainly of printed and painted cotton textiles, pepper, saltpetre, coffee, redwood, rosewood, sapanwood, rattan and cowries besides leather, camphor incense, myrrh and alum. Among the goods exported, cotton textiles were chief and stable items of export to Europe from Pondicherry. Textiles such as white and blue, guinēa, garas, painted cloth, common handkerchiefs, basins, organdis, stinkerques, tarnatanes, betilles, and muslin of low quality were collected from the Carnatic province through the Company's
merchants and were shipped at Pondicherry by the Superior Council in large quantities to Europe. Textiles and handkerchiefs collected even from Pulicat, Masulipatanam and Yanam were also exported to France. It is reported that in October of 1729, the Company's ship le Royal Philippe carried 350 bales of different kinds of goods including handkerchiefs of Pulicat, Masulipatanam and Tranquebar to France.

During the period under review, the stuff cotton or calicoes manufactured in the Coromandel region were in great demand in the European countries where it was used for curtains and dressing. The French concluded contracts with the local merchants for supplying textiles to the Superior Council. Subsequently, they collected bales of textiles from different parts of the country through the local merchants and stored them in the Company's warehouse and then shipped to Europe after the arrival of the vessels from France. Usually the bales of cloth were collected by the Superior Council from the Company's local merchants, examined and packed and then shipped to Europe. When in 1726, the Company asked the Superior Council to send dark blue cloths, the Council at Pondicherry purchased twenty bales of Dutch type costing 35 pagodas and 11 bales costing only 32 1/2 pagodas for export. In 1736, the Superior
Council could not procure sufficient quantities of silk cloth for export. In the same year the Council wrote to the Company at Paris stating that it was not possible to bring even a single piece of silk cloth from many of the markets as the villages were completely abandoned on account of the terror of the Marathas in the Carnatic region. When the French could not procure textiles from the Carnatic region, they used to collect the goods from Bengal and shipped them to Europe.

The quality of textiles purchased by the French depended on their sales at Lorient. The commodities shipped at Pondicherry were unloaded at Lorient, where they were kept for two or three months. Later, they were disposed of by auction under the supervision of one or two directors of the Company sent for this purpose from Paris. Normally, it was estimated, that this sale brought hundred per cent profit. The goods purchased in India worth 5,09,20,129 pounds between 1725 to 1736 were sold out for 99981.948 pounds with a profit of more than ninety six per cent. In 1742, on account of the problems created by the English on the Coromandel coast, the French managed to procure only poor quality of goods from the merchants and shipped them to Europe instead of sending the ships empty. Though these were poor in quality, they were sold well at Lorient
bringing in a profitable income to the Company. At this time the goods purchased were worth 1,36,64,652 pounds and sent to Europe; but were sold for 2,19,53,021 pounds which provided approximately a profit of 82,28,376 pounds. The Council did not hesitate to show the causes for the poor quality of goods that were sent to Europe. Throughout the period, the export of textiles to Europe was beneficial for the Company's commerce.

Pepper was one of the major items of export from Pondicherry. The Superior Council collected considerable quantities of pepper from Mahe on the Malabar coast for shipment to Europe. Pepper had great demand in Europe during the period under review. The Superior Council continued to purchase pepper from Mahe and brought it to Pondicherry, from where it was shipped with other goods to Europe. Referring to the Malabar pepper, John Splinter Stavorinus says that pepper from Malabar was esteemed the best of all that was produced in Asia and was the most sought after by all nations. Thus the Council purchased pepper, cardamum and groceries locally in important trading centres on the Coromandel coast to which pepper from the Malabar coast was carried over the mountains by the merchants. In 1726, not having any big quantity of pepper in the storehouse, the Superior Council had to buy 100 pounds
of it on the coast. Its interest was to buy even more than that for export. But because of the shortage of funds, the Superior Council could not buy pepper, cardamom and groceries in full in the country in 1726. On some occasions, the ships bound for Europe went to Mahe and took considerable quantities of pepper to France which was collected from its surrounding areas. In January of 1741, the ship le Comte de Toulouse carried pepper worth 1,58,386 pounds from Pondicherry to France. Besides, pepper imported from South East Asian countries like Achin, Malacca, Banta and Batavia was reshipped to France. In February 1742, the ship le Duc d'Orleans took 250 candies of round pepper to France which were brought from Achin. Throughout the period, the Superior Council continued to send certain amount of pepper to Europe, where it was in great demand for consumption of the people.

Saltpetre was another article which was annually exported from Pondicherry. It was essential for making gun powder. The Superior Council regularly collected a considerable quantity of saltpetre mainly from Patna and Bengal besides Coromandel region, and sent it to France, where it was required in large quantities in the gun powder industries. The Company's ships were main carriers of this commodity from Pondicherry to Europe. In February of 1757,
the ship le Sechelles carried 1000 bags of saltpetre along with other goods to France. Coffee was one of the major items re-exported from Pondicherry. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, it was directly taken to France from Mocha and Bourbon island. When in 1726, the Company resolved to do this trade from Pondicherry, its export commenced at Pondicherry. Hence, the Superior Council regularly imported certain amount of coffee from Mocha and Bourbon and reshipped together with other goods to France. In October 1740, the ship le Lye sailed to France carrying with her 2,458 bales of coffee from Mocha and 353 bales of coffee from Bourbon together with other goods.

Timber such as rose wood, red wood and sapan wood were other articles exported from Pondicherry. These were chiefly imported in large quantities from Burma, Siam, Cochinchina and China and were re-exported to France, where there was a great demand for them. The Superior Council sent these articles regularly on every voyage of the ships bound to France, where these were supplied for building houses, cabinet works and shipbuilding industries. It is reported that in February of 1756, the Superior Council exported 12,296 pieces of sapan wood and 200 million pieces of red wood through the ship le Lye to France. Another item of export was rattan. It was chiefly brought from
Achin, Malacca and Java in South East Asian countries and was transhipped by the Superior Council to France, where it was used for cabinet work and furniture. In February of 1757, the ship Sechelles carried with her 1,500 packets of rattan that were brought from South East Asian countries to France.

Cowries were also found among the items exported from Pondicherry. It was brought from Manila and Maldives Islands and re-exported to Europe, where it was used as the lowest medium of exchange. In February of 1757, the Superior Council loaded on board the ship Duc de Berry 2,500 sacks of cowries together with other goods to France. In the later part of the eighteenth century, leather (cows hide) was found among the exported articles of Pondicherry. The Superior Council collected leather from the interior markets and exported it in considerable quantities to Europe, where it was in great demand for making footwears and bags. It is said that in September 1789, the Superior Council loaded 366 small packets of leather on board the ship Necker bound to Europe along with other goods.

Indeed, some miscellaneous articles such as sandelwood, Arabic gum, mother of pearls, pearls, alum, incense, myrrh and camphor were also included in the export trade of Pondicherry. The Company at Paris obtained from
the Superior Council the sample of alum and camphor which were not available in India and ordered the Council to send these articles to France. The Superior Council imported alum from China and Tonkin; camphor from Achin, Malacca and Manila, Arabic gum from Mocha and transhipped them in substantial quantity to France. The camphor, myrrh and incense sent by the Superior Council to the Company in 1728, through the ship Mercure were not sold at Lorient. At that time the sales directors of Nantes (in France), Godeheu and d'Hardancourt made several observations of the goods badly purchased by the Superior Council and in order to show their unhappiness they sent back `camphor to Pondicherry. These articles fetched handsome price in European markets.

Alfred Martineau points out that the average of goods imported into India in the years 1767, 1768 and 1769 was valued at 1,24,00,000 been 12400.000 pounds. Later there was decline in the imports. In 1771 and 1772 the average of goods was about 62,00,000 pounds only. The decline was on account of the fact that during this period, Law de Louriston at Pondicherry and Chevalier at Chandranagore were only the main importers of the goods from France. Their shares in the sales figured 95,89,000 pounds whereas the shares of other dealers were only 28,48,000 pounds. At that time, Law de Louriston did not handle the
capital that was involved in the trade. In the same period, the English had increased their annual sales upto 80 million pounds in the Coromandel region. It is true that in the later period, the situation slightly improved. The total sales of goods in 1771 and 1772 after leaving a discount had been 2,23,10,000 pounds. It was 160 million pounds for the years 1773 to 1777, that is to say the average was 1,15,00,000 pounds for the first two years and 21 million pounds for another two years. However, it seems that on account of growing difficulties to ensure goods in India, the general expenditure was more on the higher side and that the net result of the imports ended in a loss.

Exports improved day by day. Two years after the arrival of the French, Francois Martin wrote to the Company at Paris that he would be able to send an annual supply of 257 piece goods worth 1,00,000 pounds or more. Abbe Morellet gave an account of the purchases made by the French in India between 1725 to 1735 that is during the period of Lenoir, the global figure was 5,09,80,429 pounds which was an average annual of 42,50,000 francs. In 1732, it rose to 56,35,000 pounds. According to S.P.Sen, the export trade was consequently limited to two million pounds per year after 1765 for the remaining period of the Company's life 259 because of the lack of finance. J. Conan rightly points
out that Pondicherry exported goods worth two and half
million francs every year to Europe. On judging the
above fact, we may presume that the annual export from
Pondicherry was two million pounds to Europe.

From the above discussion, it may be said that
Pondicherry was well connected with the important ports of
Asia and it was linked with France. It served as a centre
of assembling goods for export to France, because of the
maritime trade activities. The port of Pondicherry
developed as a lively and flourishing centre of transit
trade besides functioning as a chief emporium of French
commerce in the East.

The entry of the French capital in the sea-borne
trade of Pondicherry brought out some commercial changes in
the trading pattern of Pondicherry. Since the native
merchants and French East India Company actually traded
simultaneously, certain methods and trading practice became
standardized in Pondicherry and the markets catering to the
overseas needs had grown. Therefore, we may say that
revolutionary changes had also occurred in the long distance
trade of Pondicherry. In fine, it is concluded that the
nature of change consisting of evolutionary and
revolutionary changes led to the growth of capital
accumulation. The impact and role of the finances of trade will be dealt with in the next chapter to assess the role of the French in the maritime trade of Pondicherry in the eighteenth century.
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