CHAPTER –II

CULTURE AND LITERATURE OF PUDUCHERRY: AN OVERVIEW

Pondicherry has a great antiquity. A small town surrounded by countryside on the Bay of Bengal, in the south-east coast of India, Pondicherry was the seat of Vedic teaching and learning, founded by Rishi Agastya, who arrived from the North India, before the birth of Jesus Christ, much before the advent of contesting colonial powers on its shore. It became a literary hub during the time of Sri Aurobindo.

Few hundreds of years passed while Portuguese, Dutch, French and British competed for its occupation. Finally when the British occupied the whole of India, the French settled in Pondicherry and four other smaller coastal territories of India while the Dutch was satisfied to keep its presence in Goa. The French occupied Pondicherry for about 200 years before leaving it for good in 1954. However, it still is considered to be the French window of India, as Nehru called, with its language, culture and heritage buildings. As the introduction part of this dissertation has enumerated, before Puducherry writings in English came into existence at the dawn of twentieth century, writings in Tamil and French were produced in a large scale from Puducherry. Hence, it would be unjust to look at the contribution of English to literature in Puducherry leaving aside the prior literature of other languages. In accordance with that, an attempt has been made to give a brief sketch about the contribution of other languages to Puducherry’s culture and literature. As rightly put by Dilli,

If literature is one side of a coin, culture is yet another side.

Hence, culture and literature are inseparable and that they both have to go hand in hand(Dilli 2008: 35).

Establishment of any distinct culture is determined by the history of that particular Country, Region or a territory. It goes without saying that the French regime in the union territory of Puducherry has made Puducherry’s charm a stand alone one in the international community.
In this connection, before analyzing the culture and literature of Puducherry, it becomes vital to look into the rich history of Puducherry right from its origin. In order to meet this requirement, this chapter begins its far stretching journey with a brief of the ancient history of Puducherry from the early fourth century and moves on to the place of English in Puducherry pointing at the French influenced distinct culture and contribution of various languages to Puducherry’s culture and literature.

**Historical Significance**

As enumerated by Raja,

The ancient history of Pondicherry is associated with Saint Agasthya, the revered sage of the south. Excavations near Pondicherry have revealed the existence of a Roman settlement some 2000 years ago. It was also the site of many battles between the British, Dutch and French and was also the capital of French India (Raja 2003: 22).

Puducherry (or Pondicherry) was a part of the Pallava kingdom of Kanchipuram in the fourth century AD. During the next few centuries Pondicherry was continued to be under the control of several dynasties of the south. In the tenth century A.D. the Cholas of Thanjavur ruled the region for over 300 years but later on it was replaced by the Pandya Kingdom. Till 1638, Pondicherry came under various rulers like the Muslim rulers of the North; the Vijayanagar Empire and then the Sultan of Bijapur who came to rule over Gingee.

The 17th century marked the beginning of colonial era in India. The French East India Company had set up its trading centre at Puducherry in 1673. This outpost eventually became the chief French settlement in India.

Dutch and British trading companies also wanted trade with India. Wars raged between these European countries and spilled over into the Indian subcontinent. The Dutch captured Pondicherry in 1693 but returned it to France by the Treaty of Ryswick in 1699.
The French acquired Mahe in 1720, Yanam in 1731, and Karaikal in 1738. During the Anglo-French wars (1742-1763), Pondicherry changed hands frequently. On January 16, 1761, the British captured Puducherry from the French, but the Treaty of Paris (1763) returned the city to the French. It was taken again by the British in 1793 amidst the Wars of the French Revolution, but once again returned to France in 1814. When the British gained control of the whole of India in the late 1850s, they allowed the French to retain their settlements in the country. Pondicherry, Mahe, Yanam, Karaikal and Chandernagar remained a part of French India until 1954.

But after India gained independence in 1947, an agreement between France and India in 1948 agreed to an election in France's Indian possessions to choose their political future. On 1st November 1954, Pondicherry was transferred to India. A treaty of Cessation (together with Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam) was signed on May 28, 1956. It became a Union Territory to be administered by the President of India in 1962 under the 14th Amendment of the Indian Constitution (Raja 2003: 10-16).

**Cultural Legacy**

According to Raja,

Historians tell us that the French and the English were continually at loggerheads. Left to themselves the French were easy going peace lovers. Yet they were forced to play a tense cat-and-mouse game with the English (Raja 2003: 18).

During the reign of the British in India the English adopted their inimitable policy of ‘divide and rule.’ The chances of establishing their empire would have been remote, had we Indians been united. The English detected our Achilles’ heel and had their own way with us. But things were different with the French who ruled Pondicherry for an undisturbed period of
138 years. Their aim was not to plunder the settlement of Pondicherry. In fact, their policy of ‘mix and match’.

The fact that the British planted tamarind trees on both sides of the road in the South shows them in poor light. Money minded they werefor the yield from the tamarind trees poured into their coffers. But they didn’t bother about the heat waves the trees emanated and thereby made the travelers sick. The French planted neem trees on both sides of the road. For them the health of the common people mattered.

“Sarayatha Oothi PoorayathaKelu” goes a Tamil adage which is typically Pondicherrian. The proverb means Make one drunk and get the truth out of him. The British police used to beat up the suspects in order to get the truth out of them. On many occasions the innocents, to escape torture, put the blame on them and suffered punishment. The French police adopted a different technique. Inside the station the suspects were given mugs of toddy or arrack till they got intoxicated. In their Dutch courage they faithfully answered the questions asked by the police.

The French knew the real meaning of the wisecrack:

‘When wine goes in wisdom comes out’ (Thillaivanam 2007: 67).

In the First Part of the 20th Century, the French culture enjoyed an unprecedented intimacy with the local culture. Similarly, the Tamil culture too made a profound impact on the Gallic language and psyche. During this period a great number of literary texts were translated into Tamil. Victor Hugo’s novel Les Miserable became an instant hit with the reading public. All the major French writers down the ages found favor with the avid readers of Pondicherry.

As a corollary to this, several associations devoted to fine arts saw the light of day in the Territory. SocietePhilharmonique De Pondicherry (1920), Vasudevagana Sabai (1912),

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Selva Cani Gana Sabha (1940) flourished with the patronage of the connoisseurs of art. Some of these cultural associations managed to create a long-lasting impact on the cultural scene in Pondicherry. Special mention must be made of Thyaga Brahma Sabha(1946) that received financial assistance to organize celebration in honor of saint Thyagaraja for several years.

Stage production of drama received a new impetus with the arrival of Sankaradas Swamigal, a Renowned Tamil Stage actor and a playwright in Pondicherry. Although he died her & shortly afterwards, his example inspired the founding of several Nataka Sabhas (drama groups).

This ferment of cultural activity created a new bond between the several linguistic communities in Pondicherry. According to Raja,

There was a marked willingness to learn about different perspectives on life (Raja 2003: 44).

As Padbanaban Illustrates,

Many Indians noticed that the liberal and radical views of French scholars were quite different from the narrow-minded snobbery of the French ruling class in Pondicherry (Padbanaban 2002: 32).

This comparison of the two diagonally opposite aspects of the Frenchmade a deep impact on the Indian’s mind. Their growing ideas of nationalism and patriotism would challenge the duplicity of French presence in India (Parthasarathi 2008: 43).

Once a French colony, Pondicherry still today has a few French families living there and French is an important language. A remarkable degree of French influence in Puducherry exists to this date. Puducherry was designed based on the French grid pattern and features neat sectors and perpendicular streets. The entire town is divided into 2 sections, as French
Quarter (Ville Blanche or ‘White town’) and the Indian quarter (Ville Noire or ‘Black Town’). Many streets still retain their French names and French style. In the French quarter, the buildings are typically of Colonial style with long compounds and stately walls. The Indian (Tamil) quarter consists of houses lined with verandas, and houses with large doors and grills. These French and Indian style houses are identified and its architecture is preserved from destruction by an organization named INTACH. If ever anyone wishes to demolish the existing house in the town area and rebuild, they need the permission from this organization and the new built houses should resemble the same architectural beauty it possessed before destruction (Kalladan2002: 54-55).

Puducherry now apart from a large number of Tamil residents along with People from Orisa, West Bengal and other states of India attracted by Sri Aurobindo and his Philosophy, also has a small number of non-Tamil residents with French passports who chose to remain French when the then ruling French Establishment presented the people of Puducherry with an option to either remain French or become Indians at the time of Puducherry’s Independence. Apart from the monuments pertaining to the French period, there is the French Consulate in Puducherry and several Cultural organizations. Another important one is Le Foyer due Sold at. It is a Legion hall for soldiers who served in the different French wars.

Of the cultural organizations the French Institute of Pondicherry, the Pondicherry Centre of the École française d'Extrême-Orient and a branch of the Alliance Française are noteworthy. A French-medium school system, the Lycée Français de Pondichéry, continues to operate under the aegis of the French Minister of National Education (France).

Though French colonized Pondicherry, some of the French Scholars had done a lot for the French Tamil Literary and Cultural integrity. This included the compilation of French Tamil Dictionary. The Pondicherry Institute of Linguistics and Culture (PILC) functioning in
Pondicherry carries out a lot of research with regard to Language and Culture of Pondicherry (Annusamy 2009: 55).

At present, French continues to be an official Language of Puducherry along with Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam. English is used to communicate between the districts of the three different regions. Apart from the common festivals and occasions, Pondicherry Witnesses some unique events every year to portray its existing cultural integrity with French such as Bastille Day and Fete De Pondicherry. On 14 July, Bastille Day, Pondicherry witnesses Indo-French pageantry. Uniformed war veterans march through the street singing ‘Marseillaise’ Heart-warmingly, The French flag can be seen flying alongside the Indian flag on many housetops. Fete De Pondicherry is celebrated from 15th to 17th of August every year. It is a cultural pageant coinciding with the Liberation Day and the Independence Day (Padbanaban 2002: 33).

Sri Anandha Rangapillai as Dubash of the French Governor and agent for Indian merchants during the French rule in Pondicherry recorded the daily events he had seen and heard. The Private Diary of Sri Anandha Rangappillai (1736 –1761), Vol. 1-8 is an important contemporary source to any scholar interested in reconstructing the history of eighteenth century India. The diary which was written in Tamil has been an exceptional master piece of prose style of that period. The original diary contains 12 volumes out of which 8 volumes have been reprinted and published (Thillaivanam 2007: 59).

The idea of museum was formulated in 1942. Jouveau Dudreuil and Br. Faucheux had carried out excavations on Arikamedu between 1936 and 1940 and discovered of shards of pottery, urns, baked clay etc., which were preserved in the public library for lack of a museum. The setting up of the historical and archaeological museum on 16th December 1942 provided the right solution to this momentous achievement. Since there was no separate post of a museum curator the librarian had to accept the responsibility for the maintenance of the
museum, especially with regard to the acceptance of donations and exchange of articles. The commission de surveillance de muse was constituted later to give a meaningful shape to the museum. The mounting political tensions in British India made the French project their past relationship with India in a favorable light. The French wished to highlight their cultural contribution to Pondicherry’s development through this museum (Daniel 2001: 25). Raja says that

Jawaharlal Nehru was found of poetic prose and this is best noted in his speeches. If he imagined Pondicherry as a window opening on France in his speech delivered here in 1954, then in may 1963 he urged the people here to retain ‘the perfume of French culture ‘ in Pondicherry. It was his sincere wish to respect the individuality of Pondicherry and protect its culture, fanned by fragrant foreign winds (Raja 2003: 44).

During the early 60’s French was used extensively in schools, in the judiciary and in affairs. The streets retained the names of the French luminaries after merger and government departments proudly displayed their functions written both in French and English on the boards hung at the entrance. Newspapers with French names like la voix nouvelle or le trait d’union helped to create an aromatic nostalgia about a bygone era. Jacana diagou, an advocate from a distinguished family, contributed meaningful articles to these newspapers. The society for the history of French India, founded by the French governor A. Martineau, encouraged local scholars to conduct research in the history of Pondicherry. This society has done invaluable work in publishing books and journals on Pondicherry’s history.

French Institute of Pondicherry (Institut Français de Pondichéry) was established as a result of framework of the Cessation Treaty of French Territories in India, and was officially inaugurated on 20 March 1955. The Institute is a part of the network of research centers organized by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and its existence is guaranteed by an
international treaty, namely, the Treaty of Cession of French Territories in India, signed between India and France in 1956.

The *alliance francaise* has been such a famous landmark since its inception that many people decided to learn French only to be a part of it. They loved to spend their time inside the institute just to enjoy its exotic ambience. The *lycee francais* imparted education to students of French nationality though Indian students were also admitted. The medium of instruction was French for all the subjects and English was taught as a second language.

The French culture had percolated down even to the working class. During the early 60’s the rickshaw puller’s repertoire of 10-12 French words impressed even the most skeptical tourists. In those days people got the impression that the perfume of France would keep Pondicherry fragrant for a long time to come (Kalyani 1999: 44-45).

As stated by Raja,

Many are the foreign words that have become household words in Pondicherry, and among the natives they should never be changed. And so hospital’ is still ‘hospital’ patient’ is still ‘malade’ sweet’ is still *bonbon*. Their tongues very easily articulate’ *bonjour* ‘bonsoir’ ‘bon voyage’ ‘au revoir’ rather than good morning’ good night’ happy journey and ‘good-by’. *Merci* and *oui* take the place of thank you’ and ‘yes’. The children go to *Ecole*, eat’ *salade* and drink café instead of school, ‘salade and ‘coffee’. And when it comes to calling names, words like *Cochon* and *Chien*, come out more contemptuously than ‘pig’ and ‘dog’ (Raja&Keshari 2005: 59).

The researcher is not quite sure whether anyone in south India except the native Pondicherrians will ever understand the word ‘*Sheesha*’. It simply means glass bottle. That word is from French or from English? Neither. It is from Urdu and reveals the connections this place had with Nawabs in the 18th century. It is needless to talk of the several English words used in India: now ‘tumbler’, bucket’, sofa, fan’, car’, gate’, etc.
It really comes as a surprise when we learn that 55 languages are spoken in this one
time fisherman’s village now transformed into a cosmopolitan city, thanks to Sri Aurobindo
Ashram and the Auroville. The fact that this dot on the map of India uses 5 official
languages- Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, French and English raises eyebrows. And if anyone
likes to know how a Pondicherrian thanks others, he does so in a short sentence made of three
different languages - Tamil, English, and French: *Romba* thanks *monsieur* (Raja & Keshari

**Puducherry as a Literary Hub**

Puducherry has been the land of several noteworthy personalities in various fields.
The literature of Pondicherry has cherished from time to time from the early 19th century in
the languages of Tamil and French. The arrival of Sri Aurobindo in Pondicherry marked the
emergence of English writings in Pondicherry amidst various writings in Tamil, French,
Malayalam, Telugu and other regional Languages of India.

As it is rightly said by various scholars, “Literature is the mirror of life.” In the same
way, to know much about Puducherry’s rich culture and tradition down from its origin, the
literary works produced by puducherrians in various time spans help a lot. The literary works
produced in Puducherry are not necessarily by the Puducherry natives. Mostly, contributors
are the settlers of Puducherry from various parts of India. This chapter elaborately discusses
how these literary works render a lot in upholding and preserving the unique culture and
tradition of Puducherry and its Enclaves.

**Tamil French Literary Connections**

Though the French Government ruled Pondicherry as its colony, it has rendered a lot
for the integrity of both French and Tamil culture. The amount of efforts taken by the French
Government and various French scholars towards the enrichment of Tamil and French culture illustrates their interest for the preservation of Tamil culture. The aspiration of French scholars to carry out translation between Tamil and French literature is alone important evidence sufficient enough to prove their interest towards Tamil Culture and Literature. The French version of Thirukural the secular book on morals rendered by a great scholar GnanouDiagou has fascinated many scholars. It is a matter of pride to all Pondicherrians that GnanouDiagou, one of the illustrious sons of this soil who earned name and fame in the 19th century pays a befitting tribute to its grandeur. In his preface to the French Translation of Thirukural Sir C.P.Ramasamyeyerhas rightly remarked that the Kural addresses itself to all classes and communities, and indeed to the whole human race and charges itself with the promulgation of virtue and of right conduct in the guise of familiar and friendly advice. In a series of pithy maxims, it lays down rules of universal acceptability dealing with most of our domestic and social problems and situations.

A great bilingual scholar, Desigam Pillai, in his book Tamizhagamum Frenchukararum dutifully records the services of French scholars who promoted cultural exchanges with zeal. The Jesuit priests who came here to propagate their religion learnt Tamil and for the purpose of their kinsmen to understand the nuances of Tamil, they wrote many books in French. The services of Boucher (1655-1732), De la Lane (1669-1746), Bouze (1673-1735), Gargam (1690-1742), Calmette (1693-1740), Coeurdoux (1699-1774) in writing books to help the French to acquire proficiency in Tamil, is thus listed by Desigam Pillai. Desigam Pillai, a lawyer and Tamil scholar also mentions the names of those who learnt Tamil. Perrin (1754-1820), Maguy (1758-1822), Dubois (1770-1848), Dupuis (1806-1874), Mousset (1808-1888), Legouste (1880-1863), Lap (1834-1893). The list may be tiring to normal readers. But it is a list to be remembered to understand the cultural fraternity that developed between the French and Tamil-speaking people, (Raja 2003: 69::).
Many scholars who collected the Tamil manuscripts and palm leaf texts during their stay in Pondicherry had given them to the Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris. Even now in many homes including this writer there remain palm leaf texts ravaged by time.

Messrs. Mouset and Dupuis wrote the Dictionnaire Français Tamoul (French Tamil Dictionary) running into 1270 pages and a Dictionnaire Tamoul Français-2 Vols. (Tamil French Dictionary) running into 1660 pages. Jules Gordin, who came from France to contest an election here for the house of elders and who became a French Senator, took steps to start Tamil section in the Paris University. The dream came true in 1879. From 1890 in the Ecole des Langues Orientales Tamil classes became a reality. Vinson Julien wrote a grammar called Manuel De La Language Tamoule Grammaire, Texts, Vocabulaire, and Lap, aBrege De La Grammaire Français Tomoule. Baulez wrote on colloquial Tamil Méthode De Tamoul Vulgaire. These are the pioneers and many authors who succeeded them had laid down firmly the path of inter cultural exchange and language fraternity (Raja 2003: 126-128). Thus it is clearly evident that since the beginning of the 18th century, French scholars in Paris dealt with a systematic and scientific study of Indian civilization. They planned to collect the treasures of Eastern literature, science and philosophy. Abbe Bignon, in charge of the manuscripts section of the Royal Library, wished to purchase all the chief works of literature from India and Indo-China (Vietnam). He got a list drawn up for this purpose. Roman Catholic missionaries, working in Bengal and South India, bought these books since they felt the necessity. Since most of these manuscripts were either in Sanskrit or in Tamil the task of translation was taken up seriously.

Joseph Beguines, Head of the Department of Syrian Language, was so impressed by Asian culture that he wanted to include this as subject for study in his department.

He received by chance MariadasPillai’s French translation of the Bhagavat Gita in Tamil. By analyzing this text Deguignes was able to coordinate the Indian chronology with
the widely acknowledged European one. Anquetil Duperron (1731-1805) came to Pondicherry but the battle of Wandiwash in 1760 forced him to leave. He took back with him to France a noteworthy collection of manuscripts in 180 different languages. This tradition of Indology, first initiated by Deguignes and Duperron, was borne ahead by A.L. de Chezy and his disciples Eugene Bournouf, Ariel and many others.

Le Gentil, a member of the Royal Academy of Sciences, came to India in 1978 to study astronomy. A book Voyages in the Indian seas records his observations and opinions. The traveler and naturalist sonnerat did pioneering work in awakening his country to the full significance of Indian culture, philosophy and sciences. College de France in Paris followed the example set by Deguignes and Duperron methodically. E. Lamariesse collected a number of poems of South India and published their translation. B. Adam, Justice of Peace in Karaikal between 1878 and 1884, translated into French the biography of Thiruvalluvar. Two of J. Vinson’s students, Barrique de Fontainieu and G. Deveze introduced some more Tamil texts to the French reading public. Containieu translated Inbathupal section of Thirukkuural into French. Interest in Tamil language had reached such proportions that the Administration in Pondicherry established a training academy Enfant de Langue to teach the local languages to French people opting for public service. Although this was not an Indology Institute many of the civil servants showed a keen interest in Tamil texts later on in their career, (Padbanaban 2002: 59-61).

Some Indian Scholars were also active in transmitting knowledge about Indian culture to France. Among them Mariadas Pillai (1721-1796) deserves special mention. Mariadas translated into French the Tamil version of the Bhagavad Gita. He also discovered the affinity between Sanskrit and Latin. The Frenchmen were keen on an exchange of knowledge and they spared no efforts to this end. Along with their political dominance in Pondicherry, they sought to enrich themselves with the treasures of the East (Annumasy 2009: 35-37).
Fr. Pons, who undertook missionary work in Chandernagore, was probably the first scholar to write a Sanskrit grammar book in Latin in the 18th century. Milliet, another French scholar, developed a comparative grammar of the Dravidian languages prior to Cadwell. P. de la Lane, a missionary, protested against Europeans erroneously addressing Tamils and Malabars and he wrote a whole book as an effort to remove this kind of ignorance and prejudice. He also wrote a Telugu dictionary.

Known to the Tamils as Veerama Munivar, Fr. Beschi brought out his Tamil-French Dictionary in 1744. Many do not know that he was also a writer of short stories and parables. This genre, according to him, is very effective in communicating certain universal values. He was also known as the Father of Tamil prose (Kalyani 1999: 71-72).

The 19th century witnessed the emergence of a group of lexicographers. The lexicographers, Mousset and Dupuis, used the Tamil-French Dictionary compiled by Fr. De Bourges in the 18th century extensively. These two scholars wrote a Latin-French-Tamil dictionary and a book entitled Tamil-French vocabulary. Fr. Dupuis brought out a revised and annotated edition of the Koduntamizh grammar text of Fr. Beschi and an abridged version of Sentamizh grammar in Latin in 1843. By this time, Fr. Beschi’s book Paramarthaguru Kathaigal was published with the original script in Latin and a Tamil translation. Later this work was translated into English by P. Raja as The stupid Guru and His Foolish Disciples.

E. Martinet’s monumental work, Dictionnaire de Prononciation TamouleFiguree en Francais (1877), dealt with principles of Tamil grammar and made a distinction between pure Tamil expression and colloquial variations. The Tamil pronunciation was given in French phonetics.

These grammar books and dictionaries were indispensable for bridging the cultures of France and Pondicherry. It is because of such pioneers that translation of French texts became
possible. Translators and general readers still remain indebted to these scholars (Raja 2003: 71-72).

Julien Vinson who was born of French parents in Karaikal was brought up in a polyglot and liberal milieu that enabled him to appreciate the importance of Indian culture. He studied Tamil literature and befriended great scholars like U.V. Saminada Iyer, Nagai Vedasalampillai (Maraimalai Adigal), Pandit Svariyar, Ayakannu and Ayasamy Pulavar. Several men and scholars exerted profound influence on his understanding of Tamil culture and heritage. Between 1879 and 1921 he worked as Professor of Hindustani and Tamil at L’ecole Nationale des langues orientales. He did extensive research in various fields of Indology and published books like *Le verb dans les langues Dravidian’s* (1878) (*the verb in Dravidian languages*) *Legends BuddhistsET Djainas* (1900) (*Jain and Buddhist legends*).

He translated some parts of *Chintamani, Cilappatikaram* and *Manimekalai*. He had chanced upon the ancient text *Villai Puranam* amidst a collection of Tamil manuscripts in *bibliotheque Nationale* in Paris. To honor this serendipitous discovery, Prof. Vinson copied it meticulously and consulted his friend U.V. Saminada Iyer about this text. After painstaking research, the latter proved beyond doubt that this is the *Sthalapurana of Villiyamur*. After his return to Pondicherry he was appointed head of archives. He was also a member of the historical society of French India (*La societe de l’ histoire de l’ inde francaise*). It was a strong desire of his to die in Karaikal, his adopted homeland. His grave is still there reminding people of his efforts to bring two cultures together.

Gabriel Jouveau-Dubreuil came to Pondicherry as a science professor and spent the better part of his life here. His journey from the classroom to the remote areas of Pondicherry can be explained by referring to his abiding interest in archaeology and architecture. During those days only a few grand temple cities like Madurai and Tanjore were known to tourists. Europeans Judged Indian temple architecture and sculpture according to Eurocentric theories.
which failed to encompass the larger principles of aesthetics present in India. Refusing to follow the beaten track he researched into the complexity of Dravidian art and culture. His purpose was to formulate critical standards based on an in-depth knowledge of the Dravidian legacy. In 1912 he submits the thesis on this subject to the Sorbonne University. He demonstrated successfully that Dravidian architecture had evolved according to its internal dynamics without being hindered by any other influence down the ages. His thesis was published with the title: *Archaeology of South India.* His excavations of the Arikamedu site, along with Br. Fauchex, have demonstrated *Poduke* alias Pondicherry’s trade link with ancient Rome. After the discovery of Chinese celadon wares near Arikamedu, Jouveau-Dubreuil argued that Pondicherry’s port activities could have stretched till the Far East through Malacca and Sumatra even in the Middle Ages. This French professor also identified many villages in Pondicherry, like Tirukkanji, Ramanathapuram, (Villianur Commune), Embalam (Nettapakkam Commune) and krishnavaram (Bahur Commune) as Prehistoric and archaeological sites (Padbanaban 2002: 220-222).

**Roll of Puducherry in the enrichment of Tamil Language and Literature**

According to Raja,

> Tamil, one of the two ancient languages of the world, can boast of a literature created over centuries. Yet it needed the Italian missionary, Father Beschi, popularly known as Veerama Munivar, to give the Tamils their first prose classic (Raja 2003: 112).

Written in Latin and then translated by the author himself into Tamil, the work *Paramartha Guru Kathaigal* was published as bilingual edition in Pondicherry.

It is true that several other foreign missionaries in Pondicherry, like Father Dupuis, have enriched Tamil literature by their invaluable work. It is also undeniable that two
eminent Tamil writers, Mahakavi Subramania Bharati and V.V.S. Iyer, who sought political asylum in Pondicherry, penned their major works here.

While scholars still continue to debate over which was the first short story written in Tamil – Subramania Bharati’s *AarilOruPangu* (one-Sixth) or V.V.S Iyer’s *KulathangaraiArasammaram* (*A peepul Tree on the Bank of Tank*) – it is heartening to note that both the stories were written in Pondicherry.

It was only from Pondicherry that Subramania Bharati, a radical poet, inspired the freedom movement in Tamil Nadu through the medium of his glowing and devocative songs on Mother India. It was only here that V.V.S. Iyer wrote his lovely short stories and commented critically on the *Ramayanam* (Ramalingam 1998: 35).

According to Thillaivanam,

The poetical works of Savarayalu Nayar mirror the cultural and political aspects of 19th century Pondicherry. (Thillaivanam 2007: 44).

Born on Dec 9, 1829 in Pondicherry, he studied Tamil language and literature under a very well known scholar, Mahavidwan Meenatchi Sundaram Pillai of Trichy. The teacher was so fascinated by the sagacity of the taught that he sang the praise of his most illustrious students in his poem *Savarayalu NayarMaalai*. Yet another eminent scholar Mahavidwan Thiagaraja Chettiar of Kumbakonam sang *ErattaiMaalai* in his honor.

Equally good in the French language, Nayar began his career as a teacher in Petit Seminaire, and then moved onto the College *Francaise* to work as Professor. For a time he rendered his assistance to the management of Mission Press, a press that played a predominant role in the literary history of Pondicherry. A scholar par excellence, he authored several work and proved himself an adept in the not easy at all to write genre, called visual poetry. His famous works like *Perinba Sadagham, Perinba Andhadhi, Vedhiyar Ozhukkam*
and Thirunavatall in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, speak volumes about his faith in Christianity.

No wonder that he took a lot of interest in Theimbavani a 17th century Tamil classic authored by father Beschi, popularly known as VeeramaMunivar. Nayagar mastered the work that sang the life story of Mary’s boy child, Jesus Christ and toured all over Tamilnadu to lecture on that immortal classic. These discourses won him the title Theimbavani Ubadesigar. His writings and discoveries brought him not only fame that spread even to France, but also bagged for him many awards and titles. Nayagar was instrumental in demolishing the dilapidated perumal temple at Bahur, and constructing a church in its place. He was also responsible for establishing a girls’ school in Pondicherry in 1865 and thereby championed the cause of women’s education. It is heartening to note that in several of his songs, Nayagar had advocated for prohibition even in those days. This reformer passed away on Jan 30, 1911 (Nayakar 2008: 45-46).

To Mahakavi subramania Bharati, Pondicherry not only provided shelter but also inspired him to pen the best of his works during his decade long stay here. Well known among his works are Panchali Sabatham (Vow of Panchali) Kannan Paattu (Song of Kannan) and Kuyil Paattu (Kuil’s song). They speak of Bharati’s eminence as a poet. A retelling of a chunk from the epic Mahabharatha, Panchali Sabatham runs to 2500 lines. It is quite long for that episode but it is never long-winded. Written in a very simple style that is in turn with the folksongs, the common people sing this sat work. It bubbles with puns and reveals layers and layers of meaning to the inquisitive readers. Like Sri Aurobindo’s Savitri, Panjali is a symbol. Bharati has succeeded in portraying Panchali as a symbol of mother India whose freedom is curtailed by the Alienintruders. KannanPaattu is a collection of about 25 songs. Bharati treats Kannan (A Tamil Version of Lord Krishna) as his friend, father, mother, king, mentor and disciple and above all as his lover. Pondicherry’s pre-Independence
period was studded with lovely woods and there was a lot of greenery around. Cursed by the real estate businessmen who defiled the sanctity of Mother Nature by installing cancerous buildings on her. Bharati a “Lover of Nature,” was lured by a grove at Muthialpet owned by his friend Krishnaswamy Chettiar. On one of his visits to the grove the poet was carried away by a singing Kuyil and his imagination ran riot. That was a background for the birth of his Kuyil Pattu. Again Bharati has used Kuyil as a symbol. It is symbolic of Jeevatma while man is symbolic of Paramatma. Real love is that which is developed towards Paramatma.

Among Bharati’s other writings that belong to the Pondicherry period are his Prose Poems. Many were the English writers of the Romantic period who were skilled in writing poetic prose. The credit for introducing such a technique into Tamil goes to Bharati. Bharati’s association with Sri Aurobindo was so helpful to him that he learnt nearly 200 rigs and prayers from the Rigveda. That must have influenced the writing of his Prose Poems in 5 thought-provoking sections. Bharati’s stay in Pondicherry proved to be very beneficial to the Tamil literary world for it was only here that he created his immortal works. Subramania Bharati, who insisted that all citizens without any exception are kings of India, sang -

“The crows and the sparrows are all our clan –

The seas and the hills are our king.

Wherever we turn our eyes,” (BS: 25.)

He was one among the noteworthy political refugees in Pondicherry.

It was in 1906, there patriotic Mandayam brothers, Tirumalachariar and Srinivasachariar, launched a new Tamil weekly, India. Their main purpose was to provide a free outlet for Bharati’s flaming thoughts. When the British Government in India pulled ‘the stormy petrels in national politics up by their collars and threw them behind bars, Bharati’s faithful friends forewarned and advised him to go to Pondicherry where the British had no hold. To escape from the tightening net of the British Government, Subramania Bharati
reached Pondicherry in 1908 and spent 10 years as a political refugee in this peace loving land. He lived here under the patronage of Kuvalai Kannan, Swaminatha Dikshidar and Sundareasea Iyer, Sankara Chettiar, Ponnu Murugesu Pillai – all admirers of Bharati. Kuppusamy Iyengar looked after the new political refugee in Pondicherry for a time. Very soon the patriotic Mandayam brothers, Tirumalachariar and Srinivasachariar, who launched a new Tamil weekly, *India*, in 1906 with the main purpose of providing a free outlet for Bharati’s flaming words, too shifted to Pondicherry from Madras and continued publishing *India* from here.

After moving from the British India to the French India, Bharati felt that he was no more in shackles and his pen could flow freely. Every piece he wrote in his weekly was satirical to the core. The British, the spineless moderates in politics, and the self-centered Indians who still kept out the freedom struggle were the targets of his attack. The weekly favored nationalism, welfare of woman and mass education. In every issue what actually took the cake was the cartoon. It is said that every cartoon was drawn under the able guidance of Bharati. Those cartoons spoke in fitting terms of the policy of the journal.

Bharati’s deep involvement in Indian politics gave him the power and strength to voice his opinions boldly. *India* began to enjoy a tremendous popularity. The public loved the cartoons so much that they cut the page, pasted it on a cardboard and displayed it in front of their houses. The British took several measures to stop the printing of the journal. But all such efforts publicized the journal all the more. The French Government in Pondicherry said ‘no’ to the request made by the British to ban the journal.

Bharati’s friendship with a like-minded political Refugeeecum-intellectual, Sri Aurobindo, made him write his essays in English for the monthly journal, *Arya*, edited by the latter. Sri Aurobindo for his part learnt the Tamil language and translated excerpts from Tamil classical literature with the help of his friend. It was only during this period, Bharati
wrote his Tamil short stories, the well-known among them being ‘Aaril Oru Pangu’ and ‘Milakai Pasha Samiyar’. It was only from here he wrote Tamil essays to Gnanabhanu, edited by another fiery revolutionary, Subramania Siva.

Pondicherry not only gave Bharathi a new life but also boosted his career as for he had patrons, friends, and admirers in plenty. He made a small coterie of disciples too. Kanaka Subburathinam, who later became famous as Bharatidasan, was the chief of his disciples. Bharati’s stay in Pondicherry turned out to be the most creative period in his lifetime. The Government of Pondicherry has not only Honored Bharati with a statue and named the government park after him, but also preserved as a national monument his house in Easwaran Dharmaraja Koil Street, where he lived and preached the religion of love, (Ramalingam 1998: 100-103).

Varahaneri Venkatesa Subramania Iyer, (V.V.S. Iyer for short) who had joined the Indian revolutionaries in London and abroad, came to Pondicherry in 1910, and stayed here till the British Indian government announced an amnesty after the first world war. Like his friend Subramania Bharati, V.V.S. Iyer too stayed in Pondicherry for a period of ten years (1910 -1920). Born in a village near Karur on April 2, 1881, he joined the bar at the early age of twenty. While in London the idea of freedom dawned on him and that was a turning point in his life. His revolutionary spirit attracted the eyes of the police and in order to evade arrest he escaped to Pondicherry. Sometime in Nov. 1910, he reached French India where he mastered the French language. This work inspired him to write a synthetic treatise on military strategy, adapting Napoleon’s method of warfare for a war against the British rulers.

Apart from writing admirable short stories, all of them collected under the title, Managayakarasiyin Kaathal, he has authored the biographies of Napoleon, Garibaldi, Mazzini, Rana Pratap Singh, Chandra Gupta and others. On Nov. 1, 1914 he began an English translation of the Ancient Tamil Classic Thirukkural and completed it in a record
time of five months. Iyer left for madras in 1920 to edit a revolutionary Tamil daily, Desabakthan that threw him behind bars on charges of sedition. And on June 3, 1925 he got drowned while trying to save his daughter from a watery grave, (Ramalingam 1998: 106).

Bharatidasan (1891-1964) a famous Pondicherry – Poet – Dramatist - Shorts Story Writer - Essayist – Journalist – Editor – Scriptwriter - for films - was named Kanaga Subburathinam by his parents. As an expression of his love for Mahakavi Subramania Bharati, the self-exiled poet in Pondicherry, he called himself Bharatidasan (devote of Bharati) and wrote under that penname. Apart from fighting against the aliens, he fought for liberation of women, advocating a good education and economic equality for them. Through his prose writings and poems, he attacked child marriage and encouraged widow marriage. As a firm believer in democracy, he sang incessantly for the upliftment of the working class. Lured by the Self – Respect Movement (a rationalistic movement that stood for socio—religious Reformation) of Periyar E.V. Ramasamy, Bharathidasan’s poems took a different turn. They gave wings to rationalistic ideas. His tirades against the evils of religion and the mischievous powers that were at work against Tamil language earned him enemies who degraded his fame by misrepresenting him and under-rating his powers.

Bharathidasan’s published works that number over forty includes Azhakin Sirippu (laughter of beauty), Pandian Parisu (gift of King Pandian) and his immortal work Kudumba Vilakku (light of the family). A good number of his lyrics flowed from his pen and they in sheer beauty of sound and emotion go unsurpassed. His images drawn from nature remain unmatched in modern Tamil literature. Karagam, Pupuvai Murasu, Thai Nadu, Desopakari and Desasevagam were some of the journals he edited and Kuyil was his favorite poetic mouthpiece. Inspired by Subramania Bharati’s Kuyil Paattu (Song of the Koel) Bharatidasan started a literary journal Kuyil. It was his ambitious project. Hurdles were many. Yet the poet plunged headlong into his chosen project, (Ramalingam 1998: 111-112).
Popularly known as Poet Pudhuvai Sivam, Mr. S. Sivapragasam is remembered even today not only for his contribution to the growth of Tamil literature but also for the generous services he rendered to the growth of Pondicherry. No wonder that he had earned unstinted admiration for his poetry and political courage. Born on October 23, 1908 in Pondicherry, which was then under French rule, Sivam had his education in Thinnai government schools. Well versed in his mother tongue Tamil and in his chosen language French, he had his inspiration from the poems of Mahakavi Subramania Bharati and eagerly imbibed the revolutionary spirit and took up arms against the alien rule. He gained valuable experience and proper training under the tutelage of poet Bharatidasan especially in the art of poesy. In fact, he acted as the latter’s amanuensis on several occasions and found delight in making fair drafts of his mentor’s scribbling for the press. And it was this act of devotion that brought out the poet in him and was instrumental in the growth of his talents. Equality, liberty and fraternity form the hallmark of his poetical works. As one who evinced keen interest in redressing the grievances of the labor class he wrote for the man in the street in a style that was at once simple, direct and impassioned. In fact, Sivam’s very first collection of poem’s published in 1930, found a solution to the problems faced by weavers.

Poet Pudhuvai Sivam’s pen, mightier than the sword, fought against the alien intruders and he used the journal Pudhuvai Murasu, started in 1930 as a weapon against the British supremacy. The journal had to jump over several hurdles and, to cap them all it was banned in the British India. Booked by law for offence, its managing editor was tried in the law court of French India. He was fined 1000 francs and convicted for six months. But he continued his fight against both the alien governments. He played a very major role in the freedom struggle of Pondicherry and was responsible for the eviction of the French from that peace loving Tamil country. No chronicler of the struggle for freedom in Pondicherry could ever afford to ignore a stalwart like Sivam for he did something that was fit enough to go into
the Guinness book of world records. And that was to bring together two political parties the Congress and the Communist—that were poles apart in their doctrines.

The self-respect movement, headed by Periyar E.V.R., attracted a social reformer by nature, Sivam. This Dravidan movement made much use of visual arts for their propaganda. The veterans of the movement knew for certain that stage drama was a very powerful medium for conveying their ideals to the common man. Perhaps that was the reason why eminent men of the movement like Arignar Anna and Kalaigned Karunanidhi wrote plays. But for his involvement in this movement, Pudhuvai Sivam would not have blossomed as a poet and dramatist for what is his oeuvre if not propagandist literature. Tamil society, ruined by superstitions beliefs, was like a mote troubling the mind’s eye of Pudhuvai Sivam, through his writings he preached for an undivided humanity and advocated for a literate India. He thought aloud of the problems of women in India and hollered for their liberation through proper education. He dreamt of a society completely free from the most barbarous and inhuman atrocities done in the name of religion and so called gods and goddesses. To cut the matter short, Sivam’s poems, essays, songs and plays proved to be the offspring of his progressive thoughts. Many of his songs are not only thought provoking but also serve as feast for the ear.

Sivam’s contribution to Tamil language and literature is immense. His 15 collections of songs and poems, and a little more than ten plays (many of them are not available now) gave a clarion call to all his like-minded brethren to join hands with him to create a society that would hun all differences and treat all human beings as their equals. Apart from being a Tamil teacher, he ungrudgingly headed several organizations that were started with the noble intention of giving language and speech training. Though not financially sound he stated a publishing house of his own. He called it Gnayiru Book Publishers and ventured into that ever-tricky world by publishing the works of several writers like Periyar, Anna, and
Bharatidasan. He thereby encouraged their creative talents and added to the wealth of Dravidian thought. As editor of several newspapers and journals at various times, he contributed his share to Tamil journalism too (Raja and Keshari2005: 260-270).

A book written by Dr. Panch Ramalingam says that there are about 200 writers of Tamil in Puducherry. Apart from Bharatidasan, Vanidasanand PudhuvaiSivam, Now there are some contemporary writers like Mr. Kalladan, Mr. Manner Mannan (son of Bharatidasan), Sachudhanandham, Panjiangam, Jothi, Thillaivanam, SayabuMaraikayar, Prabanjan, and a few more writers. In terms of Tamil poetry from Puducherry, the poetry of Vanidasan stands unique and distinct from other contemporary writers. In accordance with the style of writing. Most of the Tamil literary works have the style of the writers from Tamilnadu. Jothi has compiled and published about 145 books on moral stories for children which could be considered as good Children literature. SayabuMaraikayar who is also an academician based in Karaikal, has more than 35 books to his credit. Prabanjan’s literary works are considered to be the gems of Puducherry’s Literature in Tamil. His works travel along various issues faced by different sects of People. The entire society is represented in most of his Short stories and Novels regardless of any discrimination. Most of his works tactfully attack the major social evils predominant in the society such as corruption, bribery, women harassment and student harassment prevalent in Universities and colleges.

The book titled Puducherry MarabumManbum authored by Kalaimamani Kalladan, Pudhuvai Thamizhagam Varalarum Panpadum and Pudhuvai Manilam Varalarum Panpadum by Thillaivanamand the enormous amount of research works carried out by Padbanaban the Assistant Director of the Information directorate regarding the origin and tradition of Pondicherry fetch us rich information about Pondicherry and its Enclaves. These books clearly illustrate the influence of French culture over the lifestyle of the people of Puducherry.
The book titled *Missionary History of Pondicherry* authored by Rev. Dr. Sambath provides us a clear portrayal of the emergence of Christianity and Christian Missionary in Pondicherry from the early sixth century onwards. This book is an evidence to study and understand the welfare and Educational works undertaken and carried out by various Missionary in different periods for the growth and development of Pondicherry.

**Literature from Mahe**

In comparison with the contribution of Tamil and French to Puducherry’s culture, the roll of Malayalam: the official language of the Mahe region is less prominent. However, the literary flair of M. Mukundan, one of the pioneers of modernity in Malayalam literature proves that the contribution of Malayalam to the literature of Puducherry is of no less significant. He was born on 10 September 1942 at Mayyazhi in Mahe, a former French territory in Kerala. He is the current President of Kerala Sahitya Academy. He is known in Kerala as ‘MayyazhiyudeKadhakaaran’ (Story teller of Mayyazhi) -Mayyazhi figures in his early works; 'Mayyazhippuzhayude Theerangalil', 'Daivathinte Vikrithikal', 'Appam Chudunna Kunkiyamma' and 'Lesli Achante Kadangal'.

His first literary work was a short story published in 1961. Mukundan has so far published 12 novels and 10 collections of short stories. Mukundan's latest four novels ‘Dithyanum Radhayum Mattu Chilarum’, ‘Oru Dalit Yuvathiyyude Kadankatha’, ‘Kesavante Vilapangal’ and ‘Nirtham’ carry a change in structure and approach. ‘Oru Dalit Yuvathiyyude Kadankatha’ reveals how Vasundhara, an actress has been insulted in the course of acting due to some unexpected situations. It proclaims the postmodern message that martyrs are created not only through ideologies, but through art also. ‘Kesavante Vilapangal’ one of his most recent works tells the story of a writer Kesavan who writes a novel on a child named Appukkuttan who grows under the influence of E. M. S. Namboodiripad. ‘Daivathinte
‘Vikrithikal’ bagged the Kendra Sahithya Academy award and NV Prize. ‘Ee Lokam Athiloru Manushyan’ bagged the Kerala Sahitya Academy award. Daivathinte Vikrithikal has been translated into English and published by Penguin Books India. In 2008, Mukundan’s magnum opus MayyazhiPuzhayude Theerangalil fetched him the award for the best novel published in the last 25 years. Three of his novels were made into feature films in Malayalam. Mukundan wrote the script and one of them bagged a state film award. Mukundan’s latest novel is "Pravasam" (which literally means Journey) and tells the story of a Malayali whose journeys carry him around the world. The French government conferred on him the title of Chevalier des Arts ET des Lettres in 1998 for his contribution to literature (Pasupathi2009: 110-112).

As there has been no significant literary contribution in original from the Yanam region of Puducherry Union territory, literature in Telugu does not decorate this chapter.

Translators Guild in Pondicherry

As Raja illustrates rightly

Pondicherry today can boast of being a cosmopolitan city. It can also puff up its chest and declare that 55 languages are spoken here. And while doing so it can never afford to forget the staunch support given by the Ashram and the Auroville in making it what Pondicherry is today. (Raja 2003: 49).

It really comes as a surprise when we learn that even during the time of the French; Pondicherry had exposure to many different parts of the world and housed many polyglots. It is all the more heartening to note that most of the polyglots were Tamilians, thanks to the missionaries who taught Latin, Greek and French to the Tamilians.

Several centers were established to train translators in various languages and the most famous was the college founded by Father Tachard. The French administration made the best use of the service of the translators to communicate with the common folk. It is true that the
trained translators were not awarded any diploma or degree. Perhaps the authorities believed more in skill than in decorations on paper. And the translators too proved that they were worth their salt. They were invariably called *Mozhichelvargal (Rich in Languages).*

Francois Martin, in his Memories, refers to a Tamil translator by name Kollande who helped the French trading company. The Tamil scholar and historian Mu.Tha.Velayudhanar avers that Kollande must be a corruption of ‘Kozhandai’, a common name among the Tamils. Another translator who translated Persian texts into Tamil was also a Tamilian. Known to the French administrators as ‘Madhana’, he was ‘Makhananda Pandit’. His duty was to translate all the letters that Duplex received from the Mughals and the Nawabs of Carnatic. In fact, he translated the Persian letters into Tamil and Ananda Ranga Pillai in turn translated them into French to Duplex. The most famous among the Tamil translators of the 18th century Pondicherry was Mariadas Pillai. A translator’s job in those days, as it is today, was a much demanding one and the designation ‘Dubash’ was an envied one (Raja &Keshari2005: 220-221).

To keep the Writings in French alive for ever, some Puducherry loyalists to French language and literature like David Annusamy, Krishnamoorthi and Madhana Kalyani have been actively involved in either penning French literature or translation among French, Tamil and English. To illustrate, Krishnamoorthi has from time to time translated some interesting French short stories into Tamil with great care and enthusiasm.

**The Magic of the Printed Word**

During the French rule, Pondicherry citizens read and enjoyed a number of newspapers and periodicals. The interest in general news was matched by a nascent political consciousness. The years that followed the merger saw an outburst of activity on this front. More than 50 journals and magazines were published between 1955 and 1970. It was a
motley collection of French, English, TamilTelugu magazines and journals. A Vincent rao
was the first prospective editor to submit an application for starting a journal of the name the
Voice. Journals like Dumdum, Cocorico, Studio, Paravatha Kula Mithran, L'impartial, Voice
of Pondicherry, Vimochanam, Silambou, the Southern Times, Soujenial Outtiyogastar
Munnetram, Ezhai Thozhilai and Estate Buyer appeared in 1955. Sanjeevan, The Marathi
quarterly of Pune, shifted its office to Pondicherry in 1955. The following year, another
bunch of journals like Puthuvai Seithigal, Kaavalan, Voix de l’educateur, Puthuvaimani and
Congress introduced new ideas to their readers. These last two journals were launched
respectively by the secretary and the convener of the district congress committee. Between
1957 and 1958 Vanambadi, Arulmari, Dipti (Kannada Journals), Santhi Vikatan, la voix
Nouvelle (Poudoukural), Nabajyothi (Oriya Journal) and Tamizh Muras confirmed the
impression that the local people demanded in-depth information about the world outside.
Vanambadi: a trilingual literary weekly, was started by Gopady alias Mannarmannan. Santhi
Vikatan: a monthly journal was edited by M. Ali Maraicar and appeared from Karaikal.
Published by G. Kitcheneraj, Tamizh Muras was a Tamil weekly. He was authorized to
publish the poems of Bharatidasan.

The year 1960 matched the output of printed matter of the previous years. Jananayagam, Bal Dakshina, Desiyam, = I (equals one), Sakthi, Newsletter, Puthuvai-Kural,
Sujanaranjini, Anbumalar, Tamizh Oil, Kuyil, Tamizh Selvi, Tamizhanangu catered to a wide
section of people eager to learn about the various events and personalities in the world
beyond the narrow confines of Pondicherry. The last three journals mentioned over here were
literary journals and proved that local readers possessed refined taste.

In the early 60’s World Union (English) and Purodho (in Hindi and Bengali) were
circulated in Pondicherry and in north India. The journal Annual appeared in 1963, World
Union made its focuses in 1965. The bulletin of the chamber of commerce and Pondy
Observer and New Times Observer joined the ranks of the journals already in circulation in 1966. Jipmer News (a fortnightly house journal published by Jipmer), IIPA bulletin, News from Pondy could find a niche for themselves in Pondicherry and elsewhere. By 1970, Vaigarai, Seelam, a French journal La Voix Des Anciens Combattants ETVictims De Guerres, Yoga Life, Porval, Agni Shiksha, Avilan Diary, Nabaprapaksh (Oriya) were launched with the hope of providing more quality information to the reading public.

Most of these journals had been generally launched and ran by individuals with the intention of rendering intellectual service to society. In those days, financial management of the journal was not a very tough challenge or else so many of these periodicals would not have seen the light of day. Since advertisements were hard to come and the quality of printing used to be rather shabby. Circulation was managed by a handful of news agents who did not function on a professional basis. Moreover, magazines and journals were brought out irregularly so the subscribers gradually lost interest. Journals bearing the same title have been published at different points of time. The survival rate of many of these journals has been quite unsatisfactory but their intellectual contribution must be acknowledged. In those days when the television was absent and films were not so common these periodicals had brought both information and entertainment to their readers. Many of these had been circulated elsewhere and created a positive image about this union territory (Raja2003: 143-145).

Place of English in Puducherry

It was Lord Macaulay’s famous Minutes on Education Policy proposed in 1835 that had brought in English based education to India replacing the oriental languages. In fact he introduced English based education in India in order to facilitate the British governance over here. Though his move was considered imperialistic or selfish, gradually the people of India began to munch the fruit of having learnt English language and literature. India being a
multicultural country with more than one thousand languages, really needs one common medium of instruction, and that could only be English: a globally accepted common medium of instruction.

Now in India, English is taught as the second language in all Schools and Colleges. Though English was began to be taught in the British occupied India from the mid of the 19th century, in Puducherry its much prominent entry was as late as 1960s following the independence of Puducherry from French regime. How ever, since the mid of 19th century the students who had the privilege of getting educated from the missionary such as Petit Seminaire and St. Joseph of Cluny had the opportunity of acquiring English based education. As far as the writings in English is concerned, entire credit would go to none other than Aurobindo Ghose; a great savant, a poet, politician and journalist who from remote Calcutta sailed in disguise in a Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) bound ship to reach silently the shore of Pondicherry on 4 April 1910. Though he penned his innumerable creative writings in popular genres of poetry, plays and essays on criticism, none of them except his writings on yoga and philosophy was from the land of Puducherry. This precisely states that, his flair for creative writing was not much when he actively began to involve his mind and body in the search for inner truth through yoga during his first four formative years in Pondicherry (1910-1914), before propagating the secret of yoga to the external world. Recently, Sabtha: the publication unit of Sri Aurobindo ashram compiled and published the collection of his plays and poetry in separate anthologies. Evoked by Sri Aurobindo’s thoughts on Philosophy, Literature, Yoga, Religion, National and International Politics, History and Sociology, at Art and Literary Criticism, Ethics and Culture through the journal “Area” which he devoted to the highest philosophy in association with Mirra Richard later popularly known to be the Mother of Ashram,
Scholars from all over India and even abroad gradually began to throng around Sri Aurobindo. Following the setting up of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram they all became the part and parcel of it. The most notable among them were, Sri Nolini Kanta Gupta, Pavitra, A.B. Purani, Sri Dilip Kumar Roy, Champaklal, Nirodbaran, and K.D. Sethna, M. P. Pandit, Satprem, Prithwindra Mukherjee and R.Y. Deshpande. During their life at Pondicherry, almost all of them rendered their writings on wide range of subjects in line with Sri Aurobindo’s thought and Philosophy. As they are hardcore spiritual writings, they are not covered under the ambit of creative writings in English from Puducherry. However, their impact over other few creative writers of English from Puducherry cannot be denied. Though most of those scholars contributed their articles, poetry and essays in appreciation of Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy of yoga, spiritual thoughts and doctrine, there were a very few like Satprem who through his contributions criticized the way the ashram and Auroville transformed after passing away of the Mother.

Aju Mukhopadhyay, Manoj Das, Shyam Sunder Jhunjhunwala, Raja, B.V Selvaraj, M.L. Thangappa, Rita Nath Keshari, Themis, Shyam Kumari, K.M. Shantha, Seema Devi, Ashalata Dash, R. Jayanthi, MaruaNetto, S. Murali, Clement Lourdes, U.R. Anusha and B. Sankar are the most identified contemporary writers who have been rendering their valuable contributions in various genres to the world of creative writings in English from Puducherry.

This includes a few of Sri Aurobindo’s path-seekers in recognition of their creative writings in English. The most popular genre among the contemporary Puducherry writers in English is poetry. The fact that out of the 18 identified notable writers, 15 are hard core poets also serves as evidence to this claim. Raja and Aju Mukhopadhyay are the celebrities well versed both in poetry and short stories while Manoj Dasis a pioneer bilingual short story writer in both English and his Mother Tongue Oriya. Like any other Indian writing in English, the
literary works crafted by Puducherry writers in English as well echo the Indian sense and sensibility with due appreciation of Indian culture and tradition. Beyond the appreciation of Indianness, the writers also tend to criticize certain major social evils that are a threat to our civilized Indian society through their short stories, poetry and novels. Pondicherry was the setting for the first third of the Booker prize-winning novel *Life of Pi* by Yann Martel.

In recent years, apart from original writings in English from Puducherry, translation also is being carried out from Tamil to English. Kalaimamani Kalladan has translated Valluvar’s *Thirukkural* into English so as to make even an ordinary reader of English to understand the real essence of each couplet without any difficulty. Recently, Clement Lourdes, Associate Professor in English at Pondicherry University has translated 13 best short stories of Prabanjan, a foremost contemporary Puducherry short story writer in Tamil into English under the title *Kuyil and Other Stories by Prabanjan*. Sujatha Vijayaragavan, Professor of English at Pondicherry University has translated and published the famous Tamil folk and tribal tales under the title *Hundred Tamil Folk and Tribal Tales* in 2010.

In the process of historical and critical study of Puducherry writings in English, the dissertation in tends to explore if the influenced distinct tradition of the French Puducherry culture is echoed in any of the literature in English from Puducherry. The third and fourth chapters will make a historical sketch of the Puducherry literary writings in English.