Urbanization And Social Changes 1673-1816
CHAPTER V

URBANIZATION AND SOCIAL CHANGES. 1673-1816.

5.1. URBANIZATION AND THE LIFE OF THE NATIVES IN THE TAMIL TOWN.

This chapter deals with the social changes and social stratification of the Tamil society and the European society in Pondicherry due to the urbanization of Pondicherry during the French colonial rule in the 18th century. The colonial society was divided on ethnic lines as the white society and the native society. The white society was constituted of Europeans- French, Portuguese, mixed race of people born to French and Portuguese, any other European country people, and those born to a European and Indian. The native society was constituted of Right hand caste group people, the Left hand caste group people and the Muslims. The composition of the native Hindu population changed during the French colonial rule. The native people, who depended on agriculture, constituted the Right hand caste group. Before colonization, they were rich and influential, when compared to the other existing businesspersons, artisans and craftmen. They enjoyed several rights and privileges in the locality. The people of the artisan group formed Left hand caste group. They were not rich. They did not enjoy the rights that were enjoyed by the Right hand caste people. The colonial government in the beginning accepted the discriminated privileges accorded to the people of the Right hand division by the native tradition. After the emergence of the colonial town, Pondicherry, the merchants and the artisans, who formed the Left hand Caste group, who availed the new economic opportunities and who had become rich and influential as well, challenged the privileges and rights of the Right hand Caste group. It led to the outbreak of the communal tention in the native town.

In Pondicherry during the nineteenth century, the right hand division included the Vellalas, Cavares, Komutis and the Pariahs. The Pariahs according to Weber were the biggest group in terms of number in the right hand division. The left hand division comprised the Chettis, the Kammalar castes and Palli and Vanniars.¹
Robert Challe tries to identify three classes in the society of Pondicherry in 1690s. However, the distinction suggested by him might be rigid. According to him, the urban society of Pondicherry was divided into three classes. The merchants, fabulously rich, the "banians," Indian merchants, shop keepers and the Europeans formed the first class. The other Tamils constituted the second group. The third were muslims. Apart from the divisions of the society, Robert Challe gives his impression of the cultural behaviour of the Brahmans women. The wives of the Brahmans were unapproachable. They observed their customs in a heroic way including the ceremony of 'Sati'.

Challe comments that the prostitution was very widespread. He does not elaborate. However, the social set up that emerged due to the influx of the bachelor military and mercantile persons was the cause for the spread of the prostitution.

The caste division conflicts became frequent due to urbanization. The Tamil merchants, who had capital, became the new affluent group in the urban centre. They came from other places and were involved in trade and commerce. Besides, they received the contract for production of textile fabrics from the French company and fullfilled the contract by using the weavers in the vicinity of Pondicherry. Those merchants, who were the new comers to the town, became affluent because of their dual occupation. They claimed certain privileges and treatment, which broke the tradition and caused social tention.

There were two hierarchies in the Hindu society. They were Ritual hierarchy and Secular hierarchy. Ritual hierarchy was based on sanctions from religious literature. Secular hierarchy was generally based on economic criteria. In rural Pondicherry, a vital deciding factor of the position of an individual or a group in the secular hierarchy was the area of land owned. In the urban situation, wealth acquired through mercantile or commercial activities, pursuit of the other professions such as government service, political office, law, medicine, production of textile fabrics etc granted social prestige and status. An urban dweller could, of course, own land in the rural hinterland. However, the land owned by him was an additional factor for ascertaining social differentiation, not the decisive factor as in rural Pondicherry.

During the colonial rule, the physical space in Pondicherry town and the society of colonial Pondicherry was stratified based on colour and 'racè, as the White town and the
Black town. The white town was the area, which was situated on the coast to the East of the canal running from North to South, where the ruling elites lived and had their offices. It was obviously superior compared to black town. The black town, which lay to the west of the canal, contained the native Hindus, Muslims and the converted Christians. Both divisions of Hindus operated at a supra local level, that is, beyond the boundaries of the village. At the level of the village, the Pariahs lived in a separate hamlet called Paracherry, away from the main village site. It was not possible for them to approach the upper caste houses or streets, because that practice was forbidden. However, in the supra local context, the Sanskritised NonBrahmin caste i.e., the Vellala and the Pariah were part of the right hand division. At the village level, the artisan castes who belonged to the left hand might not have liked the dominance of the landowning Vellalas, but would not dare to challenge it openly. However, in urban Pondicherry, the Kammalar and other castes of the left hand division challenged the claim to certain privileges by the right hand castes.

As regards social stratification among Christians in Pondicherry, there were European Christians and native Christians. A majority of the members of the native Christians were converts from the Hindu fold, who lived in the Black town. In Pondicherry, the Catholic Vellalas known as Chouters carried with them, after their conversion to Christianity, the Hindu concept of hierarchy, based on purity of the higher castes and impurity of the low. They insisted on erection of a wall in the church, to ensure that, during church adoration services, they may avoid contact with the untouchable Pariah converts. The Vellalla Christians also retained the Hindu custom, which required married women to wear a tally round their neck as a symbol of marriage. To avoid social boycott by Vellala Christians, the Christian priests were unwilling to administer the last sacrament to the dying Pariah Christians. On 23rd June 1704, a Cardinal issued a decree, which stipulated that Christian women could wear the tally as a symbol of marriage, however they could not have the figure of the Hindu god, Ganesha, on the tally. Instead, a cross or Virgin Mary was insisted. Articles 6 and 7 of the decree provided that women could not be excluded from sacraments in the church when they were impure. The decree also made it mandatory for a Catholic priest to enter the house of a dying Pariah Christian to administer the last sacrament. However, caste consciousness and notions of purity-pollution were so strong
among the Vellala Christians that the provisions of the decree were difficult to enforce. Most Pariah Christians were poor. Among Vellala Christians there were different economic strata consisting of the rich and influential and the less well to do. Due to the conversions to Christianity, the Vellalas, who were already differentiated based on sub-castes, were further differentiated on religious basis.

The process of urbanization offered opportunities and avenues for progress to artisans, who belonged to the low caste people. They became so affluent that they demanded the Company to extend to them the privileges, which were usually enjoyed by the people of the right hand caste division only. The French government granted them the privileges they wanted, and set a revised tradition, which was the cause for several social frictions. As the French company established its trade and as Pondicherry urbanized, it attracted considerable immigration of people. The migrants were priests, weavers, merchants, financiers, intermediaries, entertainers, potters, and other artisan groups. They settled in different localities and the streets in those localities bore the name of the caste group, which then resided there, and even today.

A fundamental transformation took place in the tradition and custom of the Tamils, when the French legalized the use of streets by all inhabitants. The French threw open streets to all castes before the revolution, during the period of Governor Lenoir. It must have been a change in the caste tradition and in the caste bound behaviour of the Tamils. Whenever new roads were laid, the government meant them for all the people, both of right hand and left hand castes. The people were forced to stick on the doors, the information that the new streets were opened in the general interest. "The king did not want to have any distinction among his citizens, irrespective of their beliefs, ways of life, richness, or their poverty. Consequently, every one, in horse or palanquin, could use the newly laid down streets to return to their house." That new regulation was new for caste people, because, certain castes used to refuse the use of their street by the people of some other castes. The idea that only one division of people could use a few streets was strange for the Europeans. The modern concept of citizenship was western and bourgeoisie. On the other hand, membership based on caste was Eastern and Indian. The French concept of 'citizenship' and use of streets by all citizens must have upset the rival divisions of Right Hand and Left Hand caste, but not all castes.
The Hindus tried and mostly succeeded in upholding their cultural identity, despite the influence of the European culture on them. The life of the Hindus included religious rites. The Christian preaching and conversion measures mostly did not change the beliefs of the Hindus. The acquaintance of the converted Christians with the Europeans was generally professional and depended on their class, but not their religion. Only a few rich Tamils could mix with the Europeans. The Hindus did not hesitate to leave the town, when their religious sentiments were hurt. Some castes like the Brahmins never returned to Pondicherry even after the siege of 1748 was over. They did not feel comfortable under the French Christian rule. They preferred their own men like the mahanattars, who knew their tradition and culture, to dispense their cases.

The Hindus preserved their Right hand and Left hand divisions and perpetuated them through their caste conflicts. Such conflicts arose when some company merchants, who were Tamils, began enjoying the privileges of using torches and palanquin, because of their status, but not because of their caste. Their marriages were richly celebrated to portray the status and greatness of the family. The pomp of a marriage celebration symbolised richness also.

The function and practice of catholic and foreign culture amidst native culture restricted the natives to exercise freely their culture. Under the pretext of religious tolerance, Governor Herbert, gave liberty to any individual to follow his own cultural manners and religious customs. Such permission actually gave full freedom to the Europeans to practice their religion and celebrate their religious festivals freely. They restricted the celebration of Hindu festivals. Hence European culture was dominant in Pondicherry.

The urbanization of Pondicherry promoted a positive economic situation, which made even high caste people change their occupation. During the last quarter of the seventeenth century and the first half of the eighteenth Century, weavers and others from the over-crowded weaving villages began to settle down in Pondicherry. Prosperous trade in handloom products tempted the economically poor people belonging to even upper Hindu castes, Viz., Brahmins, Kayasthas and other Nelasska castes, to come to Pondicherry. They changed their original occupation and sought a living in handloom weaving. They
could not have normally done that, in their native village. Those weavers specialized in cotton cloth production.¹¹

Thus urban growth of Pondicherry provided a conducive economic situation in Pondicherry, which led to the occupational mobility in the town. New entrants in any one of the processes of the cloth production were welcome in Pondicherry. Spinners from entirely different professions took to weaving, dyeing or printing, because, they found the new profession more profitable. We do not find any evidence pertaining to caste barriers stopping their occupational movement in the region during our period. The Hindu Caste system was originally based on functional division of the society. Therefore, the availability of employment went a long way in deciding the degree of its rigidity and flexibility. The new comers were drawn either from other occupations and from rural areas. In both the cases, they registered occupational change. ¹²

The following list gives us an idea of the occupations of the natives of Pondicherry. It shows that the Hindu population like the European population, formed of various elements, so that we could identify the name of the castes as cultivators and artisans. The following details of the then existing castes were found from the palm leaves. ¹³
The native society was almost organised and hierarchised. The Hindus lived in the streets, named as the street of weavers, of painters, of oil merchants, and different guilds. Their caste manners decided their daily work and the name of their streets. The rules of caste prevented them from attempting new occupation. However, some of the natives, who came from outside, changed their occupations, and some pursued double occupations like cultivation and weaving. The secular hierarchy of the Tamil society may be seen through the occupations of Dubash, Nainard, cloth merchants, the employees in the mint-the changers, the writers, entrepreneur, the minting-goldsmiths, chief verifiers of gold, bleachers, the markers and a chief engraver, weavers, black smiths, carpenters, artisans, potters, merchants of oil, painters, pressers of cotton, merchants of tobacco, merchants of Indigo, changers of money, men who go to search toddy, merchants of arrack, people involved in transport and transaction, middlemen, moneylenders, brokers, dalals, and money exchangers.
The rich Reddis and Vellalas formed the top stratum in rural caste and class hierarchy. Below them were the cultivators. The lower castes constituted the bottom of the hierarchy. Though the weavers performed a vital productions function by producing the much-demanded cloth, they were marginalized by the politico-social economic system, which was oriented towards profit making by merchants and intermediaries. Dupleix represented the system, in which profit making through trade extortion and collection of booty through capture was not uncommon.  

Absentee landowners, who also flourished through trade, thanks to the politico-economic system, owned the lands around Pondicherry. The profits were invested in land and led to the emergence of a merchant rentier class. Another avenue for acquiring land was by manipulating the system through procuring of parwanas.

A rentier class, which lived on rents from the land, owned, existed even prior to company’s rule. In the new system, the Europeans became the new rentier class. The production and trading activities of the company opened up new opportunities for merchants intermediaries, traditional bankers etc., that led to the emergence of a new middle class in Pondicherry. Pondicherry’s urbanization was another aspect of change. The emergence of the middle class and Pondicherry’s urbanization started before Ranga Pillai’s time. The emergence of Pondicherry, as a town, was due to the efforts of François Martin who encouraged weavers and merchants to settle in Pondicherry.

“Raja Sri Governor Avargal” indicates continuity and change. The term Governor is not indigenous. It had indigenous equivalents. The office of the Governor had most of the characteristics of what Max Weber called traditional authority. The Governor held court where he received nazars and titles and exercised the powers of the traditional monarch. In that way there was continuity with the system, the French inherited. However, the office of the Governor, unlike that of the traditional king, was not hereditary.

It was the period of transformation, when we could see the combination of the old and the new in a number of spheres. In warfare, the sword was used along with powder shot and guns. During public ceremonies, gun salutes were fired in honour of a visiting dignitary. That was accompanied with Mughal ceremonial of holding court, to receive or give presents. The French servants of the company were involved in ballroom dancing as
their entertainment. After a party or dinner, a ‘nauch’ was organized. In the sphere of trade, the contract system between the company and merchants came into vogue. The earlier practice of reaching agreements relating to trade under a piece of cloth, diminished. There was considerable interdependence of different segments of society. The merchants and weavers depended as much on the company as the company depended on them. Washer men, dyers, appraisers and shippers too depended on the company. The company too looked up to them to maintain and improve its trading activities.

Grants of land or Royal permission were obtained through pressure on the grantor. The French obtained permission to set up mint by paying huge sums. Bribery and corruptions were not uncommon. It would not mean that the system was bad. It indicated the level of valueless ness in the people who ruled in the context of time, in which they lived. It was just the same elsewhere, such as Madras.

One cannot trace the nature of the life of the Tamils by just knowing about a unique Tamil, Ananda Ranga Pillai. However, he definitely depicted the Tamil culture, even while mixing with the Europeans. His life was a model to show how far a native could grow in power under the colonial rule and yet remain a traditional Hindu, rooted in Tamil culture, unlike Kanagaraya Mudaliar. He was a privileged Tamil leader, who enjoyed certain powers and responsibilities in the company’s administration. He entitled himself, as the chief of the Tamils. He was the Dubash of the company like Kanagaraya Mudaliar Dubash, from Sanskrit Duve (deux)(two) basha (languages), on the whole Interpreter, meant the courtier of the company. He was an intermediary. He was a great merchant himself. His own bales were marked with majestic R. He had the right to use palanquin and to use the gold handled walking stick, and a golden chain. In the Durbar in 1747, where he was conferred the dignity of courtier, he received as an insignia of his functions, a badge, ‘baton aux Annes’ of the company. Among the natives, only he was authorised to wear the chapels while entering into the Governor’s House. However, he did not obtain the honour of hearing the drums beat, when he entered into the fort.

The Company used the services of this Hindu in many ways. The chiefs of the French government depended on the native elites like Ranga Pillai for a fund of information, and hence for safer administration. Rangapillai used to give report to the Governor of the members of the council and of the trend of business. He furnished some
details on the judgments of the court of the natives. He used to inform Governor Dupleix on everything that he would need for his administration.

In the matters of the Tamils, the Governor considered the suggestions offered by Ranga Pillai. He knew the state of affairs of the town. Ranga Pillai knew the measures, which could be implemented without hurting the customs and feeling of the Hindus. The people— the artisans, washers or scavengers— would leave the town, if their feeling was hurt. Ranga Pillai despised the interference of Mrs. Dupleix, in politics. He saw in her a woman, who broke the Tamil tradition, in which a woman plays a passive role in politics, administration, employment and business. She hated him as well. The administrative system permitted Rangapillai derive his influence from Dupleix’s patronage. He was the factotum of a powerful Governor. However, Madam Dupleix emerged as a rival center of power and patronage. Ranga Pillai did not approve of women taking part or interfering in political affairs. The upper strata of society to which Rangapillai belonged, required its woman fold to observe seclusion.

After Ranga Pillai, in the second category, came the Nainard or Provost of Police, whose charge was hereditary. Under Dupleix, it was Vira Naikar successor of Perumal Naikar. He had the supervision of peons, prison near the Court and of the prison in the down part of the clock tower. He was in effect the Inspector General of Police.

The Hindu merchants were divided into old and new merchants. They were hierachised, based on the privileges they had acquired. Some had the right for a palanquin, to carry the torches, broad umbrella, and rondel and to use golden headed walking stick. In the early part of the 18th century, the company merchants were given privileges of using torches and palanquin. Those privileges were accorded to them, since they belonged to the rich class, not that they belonged to the right hand caste. Venkatachala Chetti’s sons were given the privilege of using torches publicly. Teliya Singa Chetti was given a palanquin and torches. The administration placed some merchants in charge of the mint, which was the most recent creation in Pondicherry. The director of the mint was a European. Immediately after him was a Brahmin, whose work was very soon abolished. The different employees in the mint were the changers, the two writers, one entrepreneur and the minting-goldsmiths were divided into old and new. The
latter came from Alambarai. There were four chief verifiers of gold, and bleachers, the markers and a chief engraver.

The life in the Black Town lay at the mercy of the word of the Governor. His word was law. Yet, sometimes Ananda Ranga Pillai supported the natives and solved the problems of the Hindus by using his influence with the Governor. On 22\textsuperscript{nd} September 1746, Pillai secured the release from prison of some debtors. On Pillai’s request Subbaiyan got back his old appointment in the warehouse at the fort and Karaikal Thiruvengada Pillai was restored to his former post.\textsuperscript{25}

The list of people, who gave gifts, in the diary of Ananda Rangapillai gives us an idea of the relative affluence of the different sections of the Tamil population. It specifies the number of Mohurs the people gave to Dupleix as the gifts on the occasion of award to him of cross of St.Michael in 1747. The gifts were counted in mohurs. One Mohur had the value of around 15 rupees. From the list, the company merchants, certain chetties, who were involved in trade, the merchants of clothes, most of the Vellallas and the people of Ouzhugarai seem to be affluent and rich, when compared to the weavers, potters, merchants of oil, pressers of cotton and merchants of corals.\textsuperscript{26}

Caste affinity of the Hindus was strong in Pondicherry. People of the same caste preferred to live together. That was evidenced in the names of the streets, where a particular caste people lived. Under such circumstances, a problem arose when a Komutti of right hand caste division rode on horse back in Chetty Street, where left hand caste people lived. Ramachandra Aiyan restored peace through negotiation in 1747.\textsuperscript{27}

Though living in uncertain times, the Tamils, who were chased from one place to the other, maintained their belief in the religion and the social structure it suggested. After the end of the siege of 1748, the peace brought back to Pondicherry the families of rich Hindus. Eighty thousand inhabitants of the town were Hindus, who remained faithful to their traditions. The right hand castes, which alone had the right to have horses, robes, and white hat, and the left hand castes preserved their old divisions.\textsuperscript{28}

The administration of the town gave priority to the economic and political issues than social issues. The caste hierarchy promoted by native caste tradition was questioned in the urban society by the left hand division of Hindus, and supported by the colonial government, because, they immediately required the support and help of the affluent left
hand division people. The men of the right-hand caste objected to the men of the left
hand caste entering the town by the Madras Street, either on horseback, or in palanquin.
They urged, on the ground of the long-standing custom of the country, that the privilege
was reserved for them alone. The members of the Supreme Council of Pondicherry did
not support the claim of the right-hand caste and did not admit the exclusive use of that
road. They declared that, Pondicherry would be free passage for all traders and Chettis
along the Vazhudavur or Madras roads. 29

The Mohammedans formed a part of the Tamil population. They observed the
Ramzan season solemnly. The 27th of Ramzan, which corresponded with September 20-21,
beginning at sun set on the first day, according to their religion, was auspicious for
Mohammedans. 30

The traditional village panchayat system of settling cases continued during the
colonial rule also. The Mahanattars like Lakshmana Nayakkan, Sankara Ayyar, Suna
Muthurama Chetti, Seshachala Chetti, Chittambala Chetti and others were the accepted
leaders of the Tamil society. They used to settle the Tamils’ social and economic disputes
such as the dispute between Asarappa Mudali’s wife and his younger brother Dairiya
Mudali. 31

The colonial administration did not interfere in some of the traditional practices.
Widows in general, irrespective of castes, were looked down upon, teased, insulted and
condemned. They were forbidden to move in the public places. They were left to linger
in poverty. The society, social customs and the social ethos were harsh on the widows.
Ill-treating widows was found common in the native town in the 18th Century. Poor
Agamudaiya widows earned a bare and uncertain living by pounding rice and selling it.
They had scarcely a cloth to wear. The barbers annoyed them, when they went about the
street with uncovered head. It was not uncommon for barbers to seize such women in the
streets. The administration seemed to be indifferent to such attitude of the people towards
widows. 32

The French Catholic priests preached a different ideology of the life after death.
However, it did not change the religious practice of the Hindus regarding life after death.
It was customary in the Tamil town to adhere to the purification ceremony. Purification
ceremony was held on the bank of river Thenpannai in Tiruvennanallur. In the case of
the Hindus, a purification ceremony was usually performed to a man at the point of death. According to their custom, that ceremony was performed to a man at Tiruvennanallur in the presence of his children and wife. That time he escaped death and was brought to the town. The ceremony for him was twice performed there.  

The purification ceremony was a ritual ardently carried out by the Hindus of Pondicherry also. It was administered to a person believed to be at the point of death, as a remedy to the sins that he may have committed in his lifetime. During that ritual, the sacred water – ‘Thulasi Theertham’ would be sprinkled over that individual, uttering the names of 108 rivers. It was believed, that dying there was a blessing for the following reason. According to a Purana, Lord Shiva chose Sundarer to be his disciple at the time of his marriage at Thaduthatkondoor. Lord Shiva actually disclosed his divine form to Sundarer at Thiruvannanallur, where the latter sang in His praise. Hence, that place became an auspicious place, for it was ‘Paadapetra sthalam’. It was part of the Tamil culture to commemorate the death of the ancestors by giving alms. Ananda Ranga Pillai gave alms to beggars and Brahmans on his birth anniversary.  

As in medieval Europe, barbers in Pondicherry were, and in some regions many still are, employed as physicians and surgeons. The local ‘Vaidyars’ were also there. They gave treatment to the diseased persons. The native treatment was economic and effective. However, the people in general were not health conscious. They believed in God or fate for the cure of a disease.  

The funeral procession of a Hindu carried out with state honours during the colonial period was new to the Tamil society. If a Tamil, who was in the service of the government, happened to die, when in service, he was buried with state honours. The government flag was part of the procession. The funeral procession of a Tamil notable, who held higher post in the government, was as follows. Thiruvengadam Pillai died in February 1791. With all formalities his body was taken in procession accompanied by Tom Tom, flute, the flag of the Government at 5 o’ clock in the evening. A great number of people had gathered on either side of the road till his garden, where he was buried. These were the features of the burial procession of a Hindu official.  

A Hindu joining a notable position was celebrated in a grand manner in the Tamil society. However, the Christians were jealous of it. It created communal friction.
Fresne offered the son of Thiruvengadam Pillai the position, the chief of Malabars. After accepting the post and after getting ‘pattan’, ‘Siropai’ and gifts with dhasies, music and other formalities, he came back home. His friends and well-wishers greeted him with the gifts of rich cloths. However, Belavendran Pillai, a Christian, tried to stop the matters there. He did not succeed.  

Pondicherry’s native marriage customs and rituals did not change even after urbanization and even after a century of foreign rule. Hindu marriage celebrations, which were part of Tamil culture, were popular for their music, dance and decorations. The bridegroom was taken pompously in a big procession. It continued even in late hours, when torches were used. The son of Thiruvengada Pillai aged 14 married the daughter of Anna Pillai (aged 10) on July 8, 1791. The Bride-groom’s processions took place at 2 a.m. Night, the groom was in a palanquin accompanied by three elephants, one with ‘Ambari’, second with ‘Nagaara’ and the third with Eagle flag, Abudiri, Alavattam, Venchamarai, sepoys, tom tom, flute and other accessories.

It seems that the Europeans appreciated and enjoyed the Indian marriage functions. When such cultural processions passed through the streets of the Europeans, some French people came to their balcony to enjoy the festivities and fire works entertainment. ‘Manchal Neer Vasantham’. Ammi Mithithal, Arunthathi Parthal, Ennai Nalungu, Kappu Kattuthal, Mappillai Azhaippu, Maruvunal, Pandakkal Naduthal and Penn Azaithal, were part of Tamil marriage celebrations. Sool seithal was another important custom in Tamil culture.

The French, when invited, took part in the Tamils’ social functions. However, they responded only to the invitation of rich people. Hence, the French people acknowledged and strengthened economic relationship rather than social relationship. The French dignitaries, who were invited for the marriage function, participated along with their families. They stayed there for a long time and enjoyed it. Sometimes, the total expenditure of the marriage went upto 100 ‘viragan’.

Though, on one side, a rich Hindu marriage was pompously celebrated, and, acknowledged and attended by the foreigners, a section of the Tamils were not only away from the festivities, but also objected to the Pillais’ caste rights. Hence, even during social functions, the Tamil society could not be seen as one homogenous group. They
were divided into left and right divisions. Abiram Mudaliar arranged ‘Ambari’ and other accessories on an elephant and torches for the bride. The crowd of pariahs caused commotion. They questioned the right of a Pillai to go on a procession on an elephant. There was precedence. Yet, the Mayor Coulan warned Mudaliar, who was also called Pillai.

It seems that, besides left hand and right hand division conflict, there was conflict between sub groups of Paraih and Karaian’ caste. The Paraih and Senars were in different section of the society, and realized that other Caste groups dominated over them. Paraih criticized the ‘Karaian’ caste for trying to become great in the town. 37

There were some instances when both the left and right divisions stood united. The Tamils’ protest of 1791 was one of them. A revolt broke out in 1791, when Vinayagam Pillai’s property was unjustly brought to auction. The revolt of 22nd August 1791 was unique in the history of the social upheaval in Pondicherry. Though the agitation was put down, the spirit behind the whole event was visible. It seems that through the protest all the divisions of castes participated to redress the injustice caused to a native.

Only a few shops were opened, because of the protest. Even after 10 o’ clock there were no sales. ‘Coulon’ the Mayor of Municipality, other notables and the police ordered the shop owners to keep their shop open. The auction that stopped abruptly on 22 was conducted on 23 with all security. Amandu Nayakar took the house of Arumpatai Vinayaga Pillai in the auction for 1,500 ‘viragan’ and one Topas took his shops for 1,650 viragans. The participants of that agitation, one by one, were traced and brought to prison on August 26. The Police were posted to guard the house of Muthusamy Mudali, Devara Chetty Pichaiah Pillai, who led the revolt. 38 Thus the agitation was put down.

The change of government in 1793 affected the cultural practices of some people. Since the time the English came to Pondicherry in 1793, some people like the son Thiruvengadam Pillai did not celebrate ‘Pongal’ Festival here, instead, they went to Siruvanthadu ‘agrahaaram’ and celebrated Pongal there. There is no evidence to specify the cause for this change of place. 39

Malpractices, such as, corruption were prevalent in the French administrative bureaucracy. The Tamils were also guilty. Kanakkar were men of slender means. Nainar, the head of police, accepted money from the chettis and favoured them in 1751.
He threatened Papaya Pillai and his son entering their street on a palanquin. Not only caste, but also class distinction played a role in the functioning of society. 40

5.2. URBANIZATION AND THE LIFE OF THE FRENCH IN THE WHITE TOWN

The French did not observe the ceremonies of the Hindus, though they participated in the family functions of the Tamils. The French culture was reflected in the life of the white town, in their marriages and baptism. The white town was enlivened with ceremonial receptions of Royal guests and processions for taking presents. The rituals of the burial ceremony of governors reflected the French culture and formed part of the feature of the social life in the French town. The French colonial rule led to inter-community births. Topas were described as the metis of European men and Indian women. Most of them were of Portuguese origin. The Creoles were born of the French and the Portuguese. These changes, which happened due urbanization, were seen in Pondicherry.

Offering gifts and ‘dowry’ to a wife was customary among the French. On 22nd February 1705, François Martin married Agnes des Prez, grand-daughter of Claud Vojvvin d’ Ardanecourt, Councillor of the superior council of Pondicherry. She came to India on the request of her grand parent. In recognition of that visit, François Martin gave a dowry of 1500 pagodas (7,875 livres). 41

The Capuchins blessed an average of fifteen marriages every year. The average age of the bride was hardly 16 years, those of 13 an 14 were many, even one married at the age of 11 years 9 months and 25 days. Those, who married at ages 20 to 25 years or more, were almost always widows. The customs of the country perhaps gave encouragement for early marriages. Colbert, who approved the young marriages in Canada, made it for India There were around fifteen European baptisms every year. 42

The French practiced the custom of giving alms to the poor in memory of the members in their family, who had died. The custom was similar to that of the natives. 43. Mrs. François Martin gave 300 pagodas to her people, to distribute them to the poor, in honour of her husband.
Royal receptions were new to Pondicherry. One could see the blend of Tamil and French culture in such ceremonies. On such occasions the native musicians, artists and dancing girls got opportunities to display their talents and earn. Tamils took part in political functions. In 1747, the Nawab of Carnatic came here. White and Yak tail chowries and fans of peacocks feathers, were waved, and white umbrellas were carried on either side of him. There was music, which consisted of pipes, drums of fifes. First in order, marched the Mahe sepoys; next came the Poligar’s peons, the Nawab’s palanquin was borne after these, and abreast with it was carried that of the Governor; the Nawab’s troopers followed, and the soldiers brought up the rear- represented in French style.  

Since the villages of Pondicherry formed the hinterland of the town, they shared the festivities of the urban center. Tornams were tied and flags hoisted in the 36 villages of the Bahur jagir on the day of the arrival of the Nawab of carnatic and Chanda Sahib’s departure.

Sweet distribution to celebrate birthdays was customary to the French. In Pondicherry sometimes the local converted Christians like Abiram Mudaliar spent for that occasion. It was the sharing of joy among the French at the expense of an Indian Christian. All the Tamils were not included in the celebrations, there was discrimination based on class difference.

The capture of ships was celebrated in the white town, both religiously and socially. However, the celebration was due to economic reasons. An English ship was captured at Madras. Silver worth 2,20,000 dollars was found in the ship. The officers attended a service in the church, with trumpets and music: twenty-one guns were fired, and there was rejoicing. The white town witnessed similar celebrations, which were arranged for the victory of the French over their enemies. Dinner, dance, recitation of poems and gambling featured the victory celebrations. The natives did not seem to have been invited for such parties.

Whenever there was change of power in Pondicherry, it was jubilantly celebrated. The natives also joined with the French to celebrate the victory. After Lawrence took possession of the Fort and the town of Madras at 8 o’ clock on Monday, September 1, 1749, in Pondicherry, the Brahmans did puja, coconuts were broken, sheep were sacrificed and other ceremonies were performed, before the flag was hoisted. Then an
extraordinary salute was fired from the Fort and from the ships. Tamils, Mohammedans, Lubbays, Pattanawars, and coolies crowded into the town joyfully. 

Celebrating the feast days of higher authorities was common in French life in Pondicherry. The Tamil notables out of formality wished them on such days. Should it be the feast of the king, even the Tamils were invited on behalf of the Governor. On the feast day of the King, the people of the town, who were invited, took breakfast in the Governor’s house. The officers, sepoys and the military men were given food and arrack liberally, though it was a besieged town.

The rituals of the burial ceremony of Governors reflected the French culture and formed part of the feature of the social life in the French town. François Martin the Governor of Pondicherry expired on 31 December 1706. He was buried in the fort in the small Church St.Louis. The Canons blew and the detachment of 50 men of two Corporals and two sergeants paid him the last honour. The funeral processions of the French notable also reflected the political, religious and social customs of the French. Firing of the gunshots, flag hoisted at half-mast, ritual at the church, and the chores of relatives were some of them. Shipping was temporarily suspended. It might be noted that the company merchants, to gain the favour of the Governor, participated in the procession. The funeral ceremony of the French military general was organised in a manner different in Pondicherry. General Mauriki de Bussy died of a heart attack in January 1785. The models of the army awards of the General were designed and kept with black border in Governor house, and inside and outside of the church of Capuchin. Canon shots accompanied the Royal homage. The burial took place inside the premises of the Capuchin church.

The Creoles were born of the French and the Portuguese. The Creoles of Portuguese blood in Pondicherry felt insulted, when an Indian wanted to marry them, though he was one from the Royal line. The great Moghul Emperor asked Dupleix in 1751 the hand of his stepdaughter, the daughter of his wife, Chonchon. However, Madame Dupleix, ‘La Begum Jeannè, did not like to give her daughter to a ‘disloyal’ person. All the Portuguese blood of the Creole rose up with indignation in 1751 against the proposal. A good number of the French here married Metisses.
The ‘refugee category’ French people existed in Pondicherry. Quite often, the captains of the ship, which departed from France disembarked persons, who did not figure in the role of crew, in Pondicherry. They did not search for jobs. Then these men came to the houses of Moors, where they led generally a miserable existence. They used to get involved in bad bargains. The superior council of the company took decisions. Those, who were of good conduct and capable of rendering some service were kept and others were sent back to France. ⁵⁵

Tamil society was apparently influenced by the ideal of ‘equality’ propagated by the French Revolution. The people of Pondicherry received the news of the outbreak of the French Revolution, which reached on 22nd February 1790. They welcomed it, because they had their own grievances against the old regime. S.P.Sen expresses his view on the inclinations of the French towards the revolution as follows: “There was the deprivation of trading facilities in Pondicherry by the establishment of a new monopoly company. There was the loss of the status of a capital of their own. It was subordinate to the Government of Isle de France. There were drastic reductions in civil administration. There was the withdrawal of practically all European troops and munitions. In short, there was the indifference of the home government to further the Indian possessions.” ⁵⁶

The French people in Pondicherry were in no mood to carry the new revolutionary principles of ‘Equality’ and ‘Fraternity’ to its logical conclusion. They did not admit the Indian inhabitants in the general assembly. From the beginning till the end, in India the revolution was confined only to the French people and did not touch the Indian inhabitants, who merely looked on as curious spectators. ⁵⁷

The French civilians and their family members could practise their religious and social customs almost as freely as they did in France. Pondicherry became “un petit coin de France”, a small part of France, with the French settlers, civilians and soldiers and their families, living their lives according to French customary usages in French surrounding, “with the bells of the little church calling them to worship on Sunday, ringing merrily on festival occasions, or tolling mournfully on days of grief and sorrow”. ⁵⁸
5.3 THE INFLUENCE OF THE FRENCH RULE ON THE NATIVE CASTE SYSTEM.

The eighteenth century was a period of transition in the history of Pondicherry, politically as well as economically. Growing social insecurity and demoralization, prejudicial to the interests of the people, also marked it. The new French influences began to penetrate slowly in Tamil society in Pondicherry. Nevertheless, the traditional features in general marked the social structure and some new ones were added to those, according to the special environments or influences of each. 59

Stein suggests that the frequent conflict between the two divisions of Hindus during colonial rule was that both sides claimed superior position over the other. Muthu Ulagappa Chetti’s ‘white horse riding’ conflict in 1748 is another example. 60

In Pondicherry town, there were people of various castes, which had some uniqueness in their attitude and in their profession. There were the Brahmans, Chettis, Mudalis, Komuttis, and Tattuvadis. The Komuttis claimed to be of pure Vaisyas descent; the Profession of its members was Trade. Tattuvadis claimed to be Brahmans. Their title was Pandit or Rao. In 1740, more than thousand people comprising of Brahmans, Komuttis and Tattuvadis arrived from Vellore, Arcot, Wandiwash and other neighbouring places. Guzeratis had taken refuge in Pondicherry in December 1740.

A council of arbitrators helped the superior council. This council of arbitrators ensured continuity in the tradition. However, this council’s help did not have a say in disposing European cases and criminal cases of the Tamils. The council of arbitrators in Pondicherry was constituted of the Tamil notables of Pondicherry. They helped the Superior Council in deciding civil and criminal cases of the Tamils. There was representation from almost all castes in the council of arbitrators. The following was the list of names of arbitrators who were mahanattars. Ananda Ranga Pillai, Lakshman Nayakkan, Sankara Aiyar, Adi Varaha Chetti, Chidambara Chetti, Arunachala Chetti, Kalatti Chetti, Ezhuttukkara Bhiman, Kondi Chetti, Nallathambi Mudali, Tillai Mudali, Pavazhakkara Uttira Peddu Chetti, Peddachi Chetti, Sungu Seshachala Chetti, Virta Chetti, Ariyappa Mudali, Chinnadu Mudali, Karuttambi Nayinar. 61

The services of some Tamils were availed for selecting and employing Tamil labourers, though they were Pallis, who in traditional Pondicherry was considered low
caste. They seemed to have gained importance during the French rule. Nallathambi, Appu and Pichakuppan were the head of the Pallis who were used to choose the able matchlock men. Sometimes Ananda Ranga Pillai was engaged to supply coolies. Hence, there were agents to supply labourers. Pallis were also used to carry messages. The head-peon was Muthu, a Palli, he with twenty peons carrying a message set out for Madras.

In Pondicherry, Visanganadu Kallars, belonged to a subdivision of the Kallar Caste. They were found suitable for daring and yet reliable tasks. Madam Dupleix’s spies were Visanganadu Kallars, a sub-division of the Kallar Caste. They were bold in fights. They would bring news and kill any one.

The French administration gave discriminatory treatment to some sections of the native society. It seems that it was prejudiced against the Brahmans. It was seen in the order of November 1748. That order clearly reveals the antagonistic nature of the French administration against the Brahmans. The Superior Council’s orders of November 4, 1748 ran as follows: the owners of houses deserted by people might bid for them at the outcry, except those Brahmans who left their houses; the latter would not be allowed to live there.

The administration of Governor François Martin legalized the caste behaviour of the native people. It acknowledged the social privileges, which were accorded by tradition to the right hand division. Hence, the right hand castes division received early support from the colonial government. Therefore, the right hand caste people did not want to budge to the desire of the left hand division. The right hand caste people had documents signed at an assembly in François Martin’s time regarding the nature of privileges of the right and left hand caste people. The temple agreement was drawn up in 1720 in ‘Sarvari’. It was a festival celebrated by a procession of the image of the gods, on the last day of Dasara. Lenoir permitted Parvettai, and allowing the left-hand people’s horses and palanquins to pass along the Raja Street and certain streets common to both. Finally, government rule was redrawn in 1750, canceling the original deed and substituting another.

The left hand, right hand conflict cannot be categorized simply as caste rivalry. There were castes within each division. The rivalry for prestige was between divisions. The left hand caste people were not permitted to ride on elephants or horses without the permission of the administration. The left hand caste people claimed that they would ride
horses. They alleged that the left hand caste dancing girls did not show them due respect and threatened to leave the town, if they were not permitted. It was a wonder why the other dancing girls of the left hand caste or the dancing girls, who were imprisoned for not standing up in the presence of left-hand caste people, had not complained, although they had been in prison for six days. Therefore, it may be understood that it was not a problem between the dancing girls and Pillais, but between left hand castes and right hand caste divisions.  

At the same time, the Governor was diplomatic; he wanted to avoid the ill will of the left-hand caste people, who belonged to the rich class. The Governor, fearing the complaint and ill will of the left-hand caste people, did not release the dancing girls. The Chettis, Smiths, Carpenters Kammalas, Kollars, Chucklers and artisans formed the left hand castes; while Komuttis, thattans and aasaries formed the right hand; Brahmans and Idayans belonged to neither. Idayans were outside that division because God was born in the form of a man in an Idayan’s house. They were neutral by reason of that event.

In another dancing girls problem, which took place in 1757, unlike the earlier one, the Governor seemed to have a hand in the problem in the beginning itself, by ordering the arrest of the dancing girls. It seems the colonial government began the intervention policy, unlike the earlier period. The Kammalars, who belonged to the left hand division, used to erect the Kinnither for the Goddess Kamatchi and carry her to the temple after taking her in procession along the street of the left-hand caste people. In 1757, the car was more than the usual height and the dancing girls danced in the street. Kandappa Mudali imprisoned the dancing-girls, under the direction of the Governor. The Kammalars, claimed that they had built the car as usual. They alleged that the dancing girls had been unjustly treated.

The left-hand caste people got permission from the Governor to take the Goddess Kali on October 22, 1757 in procession along with Varadarja Perumal. However, in matters of taking idols of Gods, the permission of the right hand caste people were needed, and not of the Governor. There were Nattars for each of the right hand castes; the most important of them were the Kavarais (Naidu), Agamudaiyans (Naidu), Vellalas (Mudaliar) and Kaklolars (Mudaliar). It was suggested that the left hand caste people
requested the right hand caste people to allow their idols to be carried in procession along with Dharmaraja and Mariyathal idols, so that the procession might be more magnificent. They disagreed to do so. They never liked to yield, since it had become a prestige problem. The right hand caste people also did not yield. Therefore, the Governor forbade the right-hand caste idol Varadaraka Swami to be carried in procession, unless they agreed to the Goddess Kali being carried also. The Parvettai (Masana Kollai) procession could not be held on 22 October 1757.

The Governor ordered the Kalahasti Iswaran alone to be carried in procession. However, the authorities of the temple would not conduct the procession without Varadaraja Perumal. In that manner, the Vijayathasimi Parvettai was also prevented. Governor Leyrit ordered that Varadaraja Swami and Kalahasti Iswaran alone should be carried in procession and not the Goddess Kali. Thus, they celebrated the Vijayathasimi Parvettai festival for Varadraja Swami and Kalahasti Iswaran on 26th October 1757.

The caste people usually chose their leader separately. So, there was one leader for the right hand division and another for the left hand division. However, one person was accepted as the head of both the right hand and left hand caste people on 2nd March 1785. It happened for the first time. We are unable to identify the cause for such acceptance. It did not last long. There was divided opinion about the nomination, and many people did not accept it.

Thiruvengadam Pillai settled the quarrels of left hand castes. Strangely, the left hand castes started a new practice: they reported their problems to the head of the right-handers and obeyed them. The right hand division had a feeling that the left hand division had become weak.

The colonial government gave a ruling that the native people should celebrate marriages in their respective houses. The castes of different hands were losing their traditional rights, because of the intolerance among them. A marriage ceremony was held in the house of Dhevara Chettiar, who was the Natamai and popular person of the Kavarais. The procession came the Devara chettiers holding sign flags. Nevertheless, a crowd of Chetties, who were left-handers, objected to this and reported to Couthanseau. Kavarai Dhevara Chettiar had violated the ruling that they should not hold processions,
holding any sign of their honour. Couthanseau declared that they have to celebrate any function related to marriage, in their respective houses, not out side.  

There was another incident between the two divisions. In consequence, both lost the right to use ‘mela’ instruments in their temples. This amounted to the intervention of the French rule in the religious matter of the Tamils. It is a pity that the Hindus had to accept the government’s order.

Another problem arose between the two divisions regarding the celebration of the urchavam for Varadharaja Perumal. Since both the parties were adamant the “ther’ procession could not be celebrated at all on 12th December 1785.

The umbrella as a prestige symbol was another caste problem in which the authorities interfered and settled. The son of Ponnappa chetti and the son of Azhagiamanavala Chetti, the left-handers held a silk umbrella each accompanied by the crowd of Mahanattars passed the street of the right-handers. The right-handers complained to Thiruvengada Pillai, Moracin and General Conway. Then the crowd of Mahanattars walking in the street of the right-handers holding umbrella was forbidden. The son of Ponnappa Chetty and Srinivasa Chetty son of Azhagiyamanavala Chetty were put in prison. Conway gave a new order in 1788 that each group were permitted to hold umbrellas in their respective streets. In the streets of the white, both the groups could hold umbrellas, but for those who were given royal permission, others could hold umbrella for them, and others should hold umbrellas themselves. Those not given royal permission, had to hold the umbrella themselves.

Another problem started when Subraya Pillai, the mint accountant, walked along the Chetti Street holding an umbrella. The problem ended, after he apologized for his wrongdoing. The mint accountant must have been influential. However, he could not but apologise.

The left hand- right hand rivalry affected not only the car procession but also the death procession. The death of a goldsmith revealed the intensity of the problem. On 4th February night 1788, a goldsmith, who lived in the street of the right-handers, died. In the following morning, they started making a ‘ther’. The Pariahs objected to the ‘Ther’ procession. Through out the 5th, since they quarreled with each other, the dead body could not be removed. The Kammalars proposed that they wanted to prepare
‘Vasandhi’ (wooden platform), hold ‘Thappu & ‘Semakalam’ (music) and go. However, the pariahs refused and suggested that the dead body might be carried in a ‘yenai’ (Dholi), and the Vasandhi could go without making noise. The General ordered that everything should be arranged as usual. At last, the Kammalas prepared Vasandhi, which was carried by four, and two followed silently. The dead body of the 4th was taken away on 7th February 1788.

The use of ‘tharai’ and ‘thapattai’ (leather rhythm instruments) for funeral procession also caused tension between the people of different castes in 1788. The left-handers and the right-handers resided in the street of Pallis. While a dead vanichi was taken along that steet, Blacksmith Chidambara Mestri, Kammalar, objected to the use of tharai, thapattai and semakala: When the right handers went to the General to complain, the crowd of pariahs took the corps and buried it with all festivities. There was a separate chatram for the pariahs. There was one Choultry called the Parayan Choultry where the Poligars’ peons had been encamped.

A trip of a left hand division man along the street of a right-hander on a vehicle erupted in antagonism between divisions in 1789. Those types of conflicts made the French officers important, because, for every caste-conflict, the people requested them to mediate and their word became the verdict. They did not seek the help of a Tamil leader and obey his words. The son of Thirouvambala Chetty went on a vehicle, along the street of Yadavas, which started from the road of the Vazhudavur Gate. The right-handers stopped and broke the vehicle. The Chettys complained about the matter to Thirouvengada Pillai and the right-handers went to Reynaud the Police. The verdict was not in favour of the Chetties. However, Reynaud warned the right-handers, who had forcibly taken the vehicle.

Due to urbanization of Pondicherry, the town experienced several socio-economic changes. However, the conflicts persisted. In August 1794, a conflict broke out between the right hand and left hand divisions, when a Chetty, who belonged to the left hand division, held a white umbrella in the Vedapuri Ishwaran temple and when the people of the right hand division grabbed it and ran away. Colonel Nickson wanted to maintain the status quo in Pondicherry regarding the temple practices. He enquired people like Samba Siva Shastri, a landowner of the ‘Common castè and also a Mulla, who supported the
stand of the people of the Right hand caste. It might be noted that a Mulla’s opinion, and that of a ‘common castè person (Yadava) was considered before deciding a case. The colonel declared in 1795 that the Right hand and Left hand people would do as they did before 1768. 82

The administration of Pondicherry did not allow the people of the right hand and left hand divisions to draw the car for ‘Vaikunda Egadesi’ festival on 12th December 1795. 83

The recurring conflicts between the left and right hand divisions and the way they were resolved shows that the colonial rulers were the new mediators in the so called caste prestige disputes among the Hindus.

5.4. NATIVE CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS DURING URBANIZATION

This part deals with the nature of the native customs, which sustained and the customs that changed because of colonial urbanization. The continuity and change of customs and tradition of the natives may be traced in the customs of the Hindu merchants’ invitation of the persons in power, greeting people on their feast day, marriage function of a native family, exchanging gifts, funeral function, the beliefs and superstitions, the entertainments and cultural programmes.

The Hindu merchants usually invited the persons in power with presents to participate and honour their family functions like marriage functions. Seshachala Chetti celebrated the marriage of his daughters. He gave presents to Dupleix of the value of Rupees 1000 and to Mrs.Dupleix of the value of Rupees 100. 84 Even during the Chola period the elites of the town invited the officers who who worked in the king’s palace and felt pleased, when they took part in their festival.

Burying the treasure was common among the Tamils during the period of the kings and the colonial period. They wanted to safe guard them from the burglars and soldiers. Nevertheless, the treasure, which was underground, was considered to be the property of the government. During the time of siege, Arunachala Chetti, a merchant placed his gold and silver articles in a copper pot, which he buried in his storehouse. The administration seized and carried it away to the fort. 85

Greeting people on their feast day was a part of French culture. Greeting people on such days was not in Tamil tradition. However, the tradition of greeting elders and kings on their birthday was prevalent in the native custom. On St.Joseph’s feast, the Governor’s
name day, the company’s merchants and the mint people visited the Governor, gave him presents, and greeted him. Ananda Ranga Pillai went with his employees - washermen and the people other castes and greeted the Governor. The Governor reciprocated the gesture of respect showed by his subordinates by offering gifts, but not to all of them. The Governor gave gifts to poligars, sepoys and matchlock men. He gave them a rupee each and two yards of broad cloth as well to each horseman and match lock fellow and sent fitting gifts for their masters also. The giving and receipt of gifts shows the political, social and economic ties between the rulers and the ruled.

On Bakrid day, Hindus wished their Muslim friends. Ranga.Pillai went and presented Nazars of 5 rupees each to Khan Bahadur, Ali Nagi Sahib, Chanda Sahib’s son, and Jafar Sahib (Mir Ghulaam Husain’s father). Ali Nagi Sahib and Chanda Sahib’s son took only one rupee and returned the rest: Khan Bahadur took the whole, but with great reluctance. That was how the notable Hindus used to greet Muslims. Colonial urbanization did not change the tradition.

A marriage function of a Muslim Royal family of Chanda Sahib took place in 1747. However, the grandeur of the marriage cannot be accepted as a sample of all Muslim marriages. It was the marriage of the prince of the royal family. Nevertheless, the French culture had not influenced the traditional Indian Muslim marriage customs. The French councilors participated in the procession. One hundred and twenty trays with sugar, sugar candy, pan supari, laced cloths and jewels sent from Chanda Sahib’s house to Hirasat Khan featured the marriage in the family of Chanda Sahib.

It was customary for the merchants, landlords and lesees of land to give presents to the French Governors or higher officials. The French Governor and the Indian rulers too used to compliment each other with gifts. During the days of monarchy, the elites of the empire wished the king on his birthday or on auspicious days. During the colonial period, the Governors and the higher officials enjoyed the role of the monarchs and the ministers. Hence, there was continuity in the ‘tradition’. However, the the types of gifts, such as Spanish taffeta, Velvet of Soria, blue and gold velvet cushions, which the French Governor gave to Nawab Anwar-ud-din-khan were new in the colonial period.

Exchanging gifts during the colonial period manifested the continuity of native tradition. The gifts of the French governors were mostly of things manufactured in
Europe, where as, the Indian rulers gave curio decorated with precious stones. The nature of the gifts reflected the cultural background of those, who presented them. Governor Dupleix sent to Abd-ul-Hamid Khan, son Abid-ul-nabi Khan, Nawab of Sidhout, six yards of two-cloloured broad cloth, six yards of velvet, six small knives, six pairs of scissors, two framed mirrors worth two pagodas, Bussorah tobacco worth 15 rupees, two stout canes, and two bottles of Europe vinegar. 92 Formerly Safdar Ali Khan had presented Dumas with a Kalgi, a sword set with precious stones, a fancy cross-hilted dagger, a shield, a bow and arrows and a drum; and also gave him Alisapakkam and other villages. 93

During the colonial period, we see a change in funeral celebrations of Tamil notables. Gun salute was not part of Indian Tradition, yet it was used during the French period. The corpse of Thiruvengada Pillai, brother of Ananda Ranga Pillai was carried to the burning ground in an ivory palanquin, with music, roundels, and peacock-fans followed by the great men and the Company’s merchants of the town. All this was traditional. However, guns shots were fired. It was a drift from the tradition.94

The Governor gave gift articles, which were traditional. Nazar was the common name of the gifts offered to the higher authorities by the lower authorities on important occasions. The Nayinar complimented Pillai the company’s Dubash with a nazir of a roll of china silk. Governor Dupleix offered Pillai a chain with pendant, turra and sarpech, four pieces of the finest broad cloth and 18 yards of cloth of gold, and a salute of 15 guns. 95 This was hardly surprising. Ranga Pillai was very useful to Dupleix for he handled Dupleix’ business deals. He was also Dupleix’ interpreter- a job involving delicate negotiations with other native powers. Giving gifts to his Dubash was Dupleix’ way of acknowledging the debt he owed to Pillai.

The beliefs and superstitions of the Tamils survived despite the dominance of the French Catholic culture. French culture had its own set of beliefs and superstitions. Muttayya Mudali used to believe in evil omens. 96 Marriages were decided based on horoscopes. 97 The cat crossing one’s path and the meeting an oil-seller were considered ill-omens; People broke their journey, as well as chewed betel to avert the impending misfortune.
Though Dupleix did not believe in evil star, Ranga Pillai thought that the bad time in Dupleix's period must be due to his evil star. Though Ananda Ranga Pillai had been so close to Dupleix. he remained a typical Tamilian like other Tamils, with his traditional beliefs.

Entertainments-cultural programmes and gambling- took place in pre-colonial Pondicherry. 'Theru koothu' a roadside cultural programme, used to take place throughout the night. Dance performance of artists on the stage would also take place. During festivities in the colonial period, European dances, in which the French people danced, took place. It was new in Pondicherry's cultural context. The sources of entertainment and enjoyment were many in the French quarters. To celebrate the victory of Dupleix after the siege of 40 days from 6th September to 16th October 1748, before and after the dinner, games of luck were played, in which 4000 to 6000 rupees were spent. The dance lasted till the 4 o'clock in the morning. The Tamils played intellectual games like ‘dice-gamè, based on the numbers that appear on the dice.

One of the hobbies of the French was reading books. This practice was less common among the natives. However, the French in Pondicherry did not represent the French population in France. Only a group of French population had come with the support of soldiers. Most of them, who came, did not have families. Therefore, their behaviour cannot be compared with that of the Tamils. Besides, the French enjoyed drama and liked conversation. The conversations were about the daily problems or the preoccupations of the time. Dupleix had brought a Drama troop. In the belongings of Paradis, seven volumes of “Les Metamorphoses” of Ovide, a drama, were found. Marchand, apart from numerous volumes of Mathematics, possessed the novels “Les Contes des Fees” and “Le Paysan Parvenue”. In the library there were 500 selected volumes ‘Paradis perdu' de Milton, (Paradise Lost by Milton), the works of Sally of Boileau, the books of Philosophy, and Persian books also. The French dramatized a play in honour of the heroic defence of Pondicherry of 1748.

5.5.CULTURAL CHANGE DURING THE COLONIAL RULE

The furniture that the French used in Podicherry during the colonial period was different from the Tamil people's culture. The French culture was also manifested in their ornaments. François Martin initially used the twisted fringe cords. Later the French made
some light elegantly shaped furniture. The cot was always in four-poster, because of mosquito net made of very fine gauge. The most important part of it was the head; a big seat for leaning back that was profiled and ornamented with golden sculptures, which was accomplished by Indian artisans. The ornaments were shells of flower garlands and leaves of Acanthus. The heat of Pondicherry necessitated making of cane-arm chairs in large numbers. The numerous sofas had generally one foot in the middle, three feet in the front and two in the rear. They were very harmoniously shaped. It was the new design of the French.

The urbanization of Pondicherry initiated the transmission of Indian culture and Hindu philosophy to France. It was only from the 17th century that the real dialogue started directly between France and India, primarily through the accounts of French travelers of India. The merchant Jean Baptiste Tavernier gathered valuable information. Scholar François Vernier studied Hindu philosophy and religion; and exposed to Racine, Boileau, Moliere and La Fontaine to Indian Literature, which became a source of inspiration to them.\(^{101}\)

The French culture did not affect the culture of the people of Pondicherry to any significant extent. Ananda Ranga Pillai himself was not affected by his constant and daily contact with the French. He remained to the end a devout Hindu steeped in superstitions and orthodoxy. He regretted, in his last days, the desecration of the caste Hindu's streets by the incursions of low castes and Europeans.\(^{102}\)

The word for Europeans “Farangi”(Parangi) was as much a word of contempt as Pariah till recently. Disputes as between Hindus right and left hand castes, arose even among Catholics in the matter of hoisting white flags during the St.Thomas Church festival.\(^{103}\)

The native Christians primarily remained Tamil in their customs and manners. Conversions in those days did not imply any great cultural contact and change.\(^{104}\) In spite of the close contact with the French, Kanagaraya Mudali, the Christian Chief Dubash had little trace of French culture. When he died, the “Mahanattars”, a body that consisted of the representatives of all Hindu castes, but not the Superior council, decided on his widow’s claim.
One French priest even went to the extent of rebuking the wife of Kanagaraya Mudaliar who had come to the Church in a perfumed sari of Muslim gauge and decked with ornaments with kumkum on the forehead. He insisted that Christian women wear European dresses and discard jewels and kumkum. The local Christians refused to enter the church, if that condition was insisted the native Christians gave priority to their Tamil culture to the alien religion Christianity. The priest had to yield.

In the colonial period, the French culture entered in some ways the portals of the Tamil elites. The impact of French style was seen in the furniture found in the houses of Tamil elites. Jouveau Dubreuil found in the house of Ananda Ranga Pillai the sofa, on which the courtier of Dupleix Ranga Pillai used to write the journals. He also found the armchair on small wheels used by Dupleix and the chairs plated with silver, with the velvet seats.

The closets the French used in Pondicherry resembled to the big closets, which were known as Norman closets in France. They were new to Pondicherry. They used some claw-footed tables but very rarely. The refreshment buffets had perforated panel in order to help the aeration of food. A writing desk placed above a chest of drawers, the whole surmounted on a bookcase was another type of furniture. It was particularly esteemed in Pondicherry. The whole formed big beautiful furniture with two locks, of which the major part was sketched as a cabin with the designs in the form of vase or fruits like pomegranate or pineapple. Sometimes the mirrors came from France, although the frames were sculptured at Pondicheny by the native artisans with flowers or shells cut and perforated.

Women’s dressing tables were not seen in common Tamil peoples life. However, the French made small console table, small writing tables and women dressing tables. They harmonized with the French life of that period. There were “Cot, sofa, closet, chest, and five chairs, which garnished the house of surgeon Albert, father of Mrs.Dupleix.

In the 18th century Pondicherry, there was exchange of knowledge of culture, and workmanship of France, China, and India, through the precious objects that were bought or presented. Mostly French used to collect the rare or the precious objects. They received from France and from China, the trinkets. The paintings, engravings, glass works, clocks and watches, came from France. The princès (Raja’s) of the country
bought them. The lacs, the ivories and the silk works came from China. Those were sent to France. The arachnidean clothes were made in India. The shirts made with those clothes were sent by Bussy to Madame de Pompadour in a snuffbox depicting the fine quality of certain Indian cloth. At Dacca, there was embroidery, which was then in demand. Among the curios that Dupleix took back to France, were, “an ivory tower of the fashion of the day with nine storeys and a shield made of the skin of Rhinoceros ornamented with diamonds.” Delarche possessed a beetle box in gold, which valued 650 rupees. They portrayed the art and workmanship of the artisans of Pondicherry.

The Europeans and the rich Tamils used Sedan chairs, palanquins and company coaches for traveling. The work of art in those vehicles characterized the French culture of that period. The sedan chairs served for small trips and were analogues to those in France. We could still see one of those sedan chairs in the Governor house in Pondicherry, which was a gift of Jouveau Dubreuil.

The members of the royal family used to utilize the palanquins in the days of monarchs. However, it had come within the reach of the rich people in the colonial period. In addition, the decorations were modified according to the taste of the people, who used them. The elites of the town used palanquin. Travel was expensive, but comfortable. According to the description of Le Gentil, the palanquin was a sort of sofa or a small relaxing cot attached to a bamboo of five or six inches of diameter. It was more or less curved in the middle, with a canopy over it, as a top, and screens on the side. Five Indians, who were called ‘Boues,’ of whom three in front and two in back, used to carry the palanquin by holding on their shoulders the ends of the bamboo. Those who were rich had always six ‘Boues’ and they used to maintain ten to twelve. It was a sort of luxury, as in Paris of having eight to ten horses in one stable, while two or three were enough to draw them in the streets. In case of a long voyage, ten or twelve ‘Boues’ were absolutely necessary for relieving others.

Status and power of a person was revealed through the nature of the materials they possessed and the type of decoration they made in the palanquin they used. Rich men’s palanquins were richly ornamented. The frames were ornamented with ivory or oyster shells. The feet were in silver and were ornamented with designs of pineapple or sunrise. The top was beautified by a sheet, which had golden laces, as in the case of cushions and
mattress. The palanquin of Madame de Schonamille, the daughter of Mrs. Dupleix, was of ebony wood and was ornamented with apples and flowers on the front and with silver on the back.

Hunting was a hobby for some French officers, who lived in style. The state coaches were gold coated and drawn by six or at least four horses. Although the officers used to go more often in palanquin, they used to maintain, some beautiful horses for their pleasure and for hunting. Indian princes too used to go for hunting. The French elites used guns; the natives had used bow and arrows.

Certain artistic features of Indian culture influenced the dressing habit of Dupleix, which enriched the French culture in the colony. Indian ornaments, feathers and tuft that he used are some examples. He put on linen, silk works, gauzes and magnificent robes. He used to wear often in the public ceremonies rich Indian ornaments, sumptuous feathers, tuft of stone works and the robes of honour with golden and silver embroidery, which the princes had given him as gifts. The dresses were in the fashion of France, but were richly embroidered by Indians, so that, sometimes, even one could not see the cloth, which disappeared under the ornament. Those works of art were a tribute to the native artisans. During colonial urbanization, the native culture blended with the French culture.

The Chinese artistic fabrics were imported into Pondicherry. Sets of porcelain objects such as plates, vessel and soup-tureen were imported. Their form was borrowed from Europe. Jouveou Dubreuil found at Pondicherry some rare specimens of beautiful porcelains. The native elites began using those types of plates and vessels.

The French generally did not like the food of the natives and the Tamils did not prefer the food of the French and their food habits. Since the period of Dumas, the bread in Pondicherry was as good as in Europe. According to Dupleix cold rice, vegetables and the ingredients of cury were not worth eating. The Tamils compared the French to the Pariahs due to their food habits and the way they eat food. There was disagreement between the natives and the French on each others food and the food habits. However, the French began using rice to make bread. The French ate beef in secrecy, since the Hindu religion forbade people eating beef. Though they did not relish rice breads, they had to bake and eat them. The French used to prepare a sort of bread prepared by rice powder. However,
it was not like the one prepared in France. There was a baker for the French who prepared bread for them. ¹⁰⁷

Let us cite, an example a part of the bill of a meal offered to Dupleix by Duquesne on 17th March 1749. That gives us an idea of the nature of items the French elites used to take.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Two services</th>
<th>Rs.</th>
<th>Ps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A boiled beef &amp; two soups garnished with</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One chicken and stuffed with mushroom</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigeon pie garnished with ‘artichant’</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(A kind of leaf)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Etc. (continues) ¹⁰⁸

Pondicherry saw the sale by auction of certain French materials in February 1752. The items sold were new to the market in Pondicherry. They were: a painting on cloth, a Geography Map on cloth, ‘Church History’ in 36 Volumes, ‘The Condition of France’ in 6 Volumes, ‘A Holy week’ in 2 Volumes etc. They were sold for 250 Reupees. The natives did not go for those auctions. ¹⁰⁹

Tamil culture enriched the French culture, when the Tamil folk songs, which were the part of Tamil life, were translated into French and sung in the French parties. The French wanted to acclamatise themselves with the native language. They had hobbies and played sports and games, which were were part of their culture. There were also other distractions. They used to play games betting huge amounts. In the evening of the capture of Madras, there was some gambling like bets up to six thousand rupees. Dupleix often used to play cards.

Catholic religious festivals and the Government festivals became the part of life of the society of Pondicherry in general and French society in particular. The Tamils and the French participated in the government functions. ‘Te Deum’, a thanks-giving hymn, was played for each victory brought to French in India or in Europe. Festival of the French King on 25th August was called Raja Pandigai, but the real festival of Pondicherry was on 17th of October.

Strolls, long or short, were not the habit of the native people. The French, however, spent their spare time or weekends by undertaking long strolls or small tours. For them,
the favorite destinations were Muthialpet, Bommaiya Palayam, Kalapet, Marakanam and Madras. The week-end relaxation was new to Pondicherry.  

Some French showed interest in learning some Indian languages including Tamil. They needed to communicate with the Indians in general, and Tamils in particular, for political, economic and administrative reasons. They were obliged to know the socio-cultural background of the natives through reading local literature. In 1729, Lenoir, Commander-in-Chief of Pondicherry, announced that scholars in India were occupied with preparing lists of various alphabets, grammars and dictionaries of Indian languages. Many Jesuits in Pondicherry were engaged in learning Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu and Kannada. Through the learning of Indian languages, Indian culture was learnt and likely to be transmitted to Europe.

Women’s education first began in Pondicherry in 1738. The French were concerned about lack of adequate modern education in Pondicherry. Efforts were made to mobilize funds and educate girls. At the arrival of Dumas, the Jesuits, who used to teach them read and write French and a little mathematics, gave the education to the children, young European men and converted Christians. No one had earlier taken up giving education to girls. Hence formal women’s education originated during the French colonial period in Pondicherry.

The Superior Council was interested to promote western education. Therefore, they ensured the necessary funds for the installation and subsistence of ursulines, a congregation of Catholic nuns. A trust was set up for the purpose. One-third of the fines, which was collected from those who sold liquors, were diverted to maintain the ursulines, who came to Pondicherry to promote women education. On 15th September 1738, the Superior Council conceded the lease of arrack, mineral water, white and red wine. It prohibited everyone to sell liquors to individuals, failing which they would face confiscation and a fine of 100 pagodas, of which 1/3 went to the company, 1/3 to the informer and 1/3 to the appointed person for the maintenance of Ursulines.

When the sum they wanted to spend on education was not adequate, alternative arrangement for income was made. The council made elaborate plans for those sisters community’s administration under Rev.Father Norbert, a Capuchin, for the years
from 1739 to 1741. Nevertheless, the ursulines did not submit to the authority of the governor. Therefore, on 9th September 1740, the council sent them back to France. 115

In Pondicherry, some caste people, like the Brahmins, were privileged to learn Sanskrit. In 1746, the natives were not so interested in the study of sciences. Their knowledge consisted of reading, writing and calculation. For learning those skills, they had traditional schools, where they used to send their children. Each caste had its school of its own. The Brahmins studied the Shastras and the history of the religion, and some others learnt ancient astronomy in which they had very old bodies composed by the famous college of ‘Brahmanes’, which was popular in the time of Alexander. 116

Constructing tombs in burial places and inscribing compliments on them, which happened during the colonial rule, was new to Pondicherry. The French government buried General Bussy and Douchemen in the garden of Capuchins church and construct tombs to commemorate their glory. General Monsieur Marquis of Bussy died in Pondicherry on 7th January 1785. Two tombs, with lime and with minute work were constructed inside the compound of Capuchins Church, on the left and right, spending 1,000 Viragan. Their battle honours were inscribed on them on 31st July 1787.

The Flag at half-mast and putting on black dress with which the funeral ceremony of the French generals was organised and conducted in Pondicherry was new to the native culture. Removing the bones and restoring them in the tomb was unknown to Pondicherry. French flag fluttered at half-mast, black flag was fixed in and out of the Capuchins Church, and the pictures of their victory awards were fixed. All the notables put on black dress. When the bones of the above said generals were taken out and put in the tombs built for them, the military men showed respect by giving a gun salute. 117

As stated, French culture and French workmanship gradually entered and acquired a place in Indian cultural heritage. The French Emperor presented a precious gift to Tippu in 1789. The French Emperor’s gift to Tippu Sultan, which was a ‘Tapisseries des Gobelins’, a rich carpet, was unloaded from the ship by 50 Katumarans and 100 cafrees. Even while folded, it was of the length of 50 feet. In Paris, it consumed the work of 200 artisans working for 10 years to make one carpet. Its cost was a lakh of rupees. Le Comte de Macnamara, who brought the notables of Tippu from France, announced the cost. The carpet depicted a war scene of ‘The battle of Louis XIV’, in which the horse
Ravuther, foot soldiers, canon vehicles, the commandant, who led the army, and portraying distinctly the persons, was woven. It was presented to Tippu. The French sent 33 able and responsible men, who would be in the service of Tippu for three years. Among those 33, there was one Architect who would build palace buildings and one Engineer who would construct Forts. Even during the period of economic distress, the attitude of the town’s people towards work was such that they took up work, which only suited them and which their caste permitted them. The town’s people did not seem to care about helping the company. In 1748, the French Company required a lot of coolies for construction purposes. However, the administration could not easily get coolies in Pondicherry town. Trade and weaving were less then, because, trade was not flourishing. Hence, those involved in the production of textile fabrics were thrown out of job. All but the cultivators worked for daily wages under the company, as it suited them. Yet, the unemployed people did not volunteer themselves to become coolies. The colonial urbanization did not change the beliefs of the Tamils: “God reveals to all how powerful is His help.” “God’s purposes are unknown.”

The French officers were not pleased to be the subordinates of the Tamil officers. Tillai Maistri was the Nayinar and he was a Poligar as well. La Selle, a French police personnel, had to work under him for a panam a day. He did not like to work under anative. He did not respect Tillai Maitri and he also grumbled.

Two French letters give us some idea of the French in Pondicherry. The first letter speaks of the assassination of Nasir Jung and Anwar-Uddin Khan and the French military success. The second letter expressed dissatisfaction of the French King about the Pondicherry administration. The dissatisfaction, besides being political, was also due to the reason that the French government did not take care the economic growth of the people in general and French people in particular. It seems that the King was concerned about the necessities of life of the people. However, the Pondicherry government did not do anything. Dubois, the French emissary came to talk with Leyrit merely about that in 1760. The superior council was called to discuss the matter. However, nothing significant was done.
The French revolution initiated in the French and the natives a new trend of settling their problems. The French government did not care for the well being of the natives during the period of Lally. They took care of their military and political safety. However, people thought in terms of their necessities and rights. The French people here wrote to members in the National Assembly. The Tamil people also gave in writing suggestions to the National Assembly.

The converted-Christians, might be close to the Governor. They were the minority. The governor tried to take care the interests of the Tamils for survival of the government, because the natives were the majority. The coverted Christians tried to show their strength against the Tamils. However, the governor despised such effort of the Christians. He did not support them. In 1791, there was an aborted attempt by native Christians to show their strength against the Tamils.

The native Christians were jealous of the jobs of the Tamils and the importance they gained due to that. They had the illusion that with the support of the French rulers, they could emerge as a dominant power over the non-christian natives. Therefore, Belavendran Pillai, Mariadossu Pillai, Abiram Mudaliar and Kondi Chetty, enemy of Devara Chetty, conspired together and made a political move. The native Christians wanted to establish a new party among themselves, excluding the Hindus. They wanted to get the support of some left hand caste members and wanted to constitute a committee and a Municipality to decide the affairs of the Tamils. Belavendra Pillai suggested that idea. The Committee met several times. It was an opportunity to the French, to set natives against natives in Pondicherry. This was similar to the British policy of divide and rule.

5.6. URBANIZATION AND COMMUNAL IMPLICATIONS

In the beginning of their rule, the colonial rulers seem to follow policy of non-interference to the native religion. François Martin, from 1699 onwards, even before the departure of the Dutch from Pondicherry, saw the example of the Dutch, English and the Danes. Therefore, he felt the need of “permitting the Mohammedans and the Tamils to exercise their religion.” He had at first left the natives to practice their religion in full liberty, the Muslims in the two mosques of Pondicherry, the Brahmins in four temples.
The French clergy supported by the colonial rulers, wanted to obstruct the free religious life of the natives by the imposition of restrictive laws on the religious practices of the Hindus. The Capuchins and Jesuits protested against the existence of temples with idols in French town. The priests knew already the difficulty of evangelizing the Muslims. In March 1701, on the request of the French Christian people, François Martin forbade all ceremonies of Muslims and Tamils during the fortnight of Easter and all Sundays. However, some exceptions had been made. By persuading the chiefs of castes, he managed to succeed in making them observe the new restrictions. The contempt was high among the natives. From July 1701, some inhabitants were planning to quit Pondicherry because of the religious discomfort.  

The communal situation intensified in 1702 due to the grave action of the colonial ruler. 16th August 1702 was a red-letter day in the history of Pondicherry, when the natives of Pondicherry rose in agitation, for the first time, against the French power protesting against their religious repressive measures. In August 1702, Martin warned the chiefs of castes that they must accept the restrictions and even he would close one of the temples. The natives staged a protest. The agitation redoubled on 16th August despite threats. The caste people joined together, all the workers boycotted, the shops were closed and the weavers did not do their work. They formed a group of about 15 thousand persons in the street. They went to the gate of Madras and threatened to withdraw from Pondicherry. The Church authorities realized that the native religion had to be tolerated. Martin's pressure and pleading to persuade the people failed. He assured the natives of the government's non-interfering approach in matters pertaining to their religion. He obtained from the chiefs of castes the promise to send back all to work and to come on their own to the fort in the evening. Martin gave up the policy of imposing restrictions on Hindu temples. He had to drop the idea of closing a temple. He succeeded in stopping the procession of the idols in some of the streets of Pondicherry. Nevertheless, some Brahmins' processions took place in the same year 1702, in the streets far away from the Fort. 

The communal situation mounted in Pondicherry caused by the colonial rulers was a deurbanising factor. It almost destroyed the trade of the company, besides discouraging settlement of the natives in the neighbouring places. The natives by their resistance were
prompt and correct in their first attempt to resist the government’s religious restrictions. Nevertheless, they were worried of the future. In between 1702 and 1705, 2000 families vacated the town. The natives observed more or less the prohibition imposed on ceremonies. On September 1705, the caste of weavers, who consisted of 1/3 of the population of Pondicherry asked for lifting of the prohibition recently imposed by Martin, regarding the celebration of certain annual festivals. The natives were given permission. However, on 4th September Father Tachard and other Jesuits entered into the temple of Pillaiar (Vinayaka) of the caste of the weavers and denuded the idols of their silk veils. The protest of 1702 was repeated. This time, after four days of agitation, the natives achieved not only freedom of worship, but also obtained extension of their religious liberty to hold ceremonies by the side of Weavers street and Grand bazaar every month. Martin had to concede defeat, for the communal situation ‘almost ruined the business of the company in Pondicherry’.  

Catholic religious practices, which the French priests tried to impose and preach, did not change the beliefs of the Hindus the least. The Hindus did fasting and penance on auspicious days, as part of their religious commitment, which, they believed, would fetch blessing from God. On such days, they used to light special lamps or set up special ‘Kalasas’.  

The French government and missionary authority under the protection of French rule induced native catholics from Tamil Nadu to migrate and settle in Pondicherry to practise their religion without hindrance and to earn their livelihood. In the year 1703 the total population of Pondicherry was only 30,000 out of which there were only 2000 Christians. Their number rose to only 3000 in the year 1723. Conversions were not many, but migration increased the population of the Christians. In the year 1724-1725 about 600 Christians were newly baptized.  

The conversions led to tension between the people of the two communities- Hindu and Christian. At that juncture, the prejudice and evil designs of Madam Dupleix aggravated the tension between two sections- French and Tamils. She wrongly presumed that by torturing Hindus, she could root out a section of Hindus and there by root out Hinduism. On the contrary, it strengthened their faith and united them. They represented the matter to the Governor. Madame sent Pariahs to live in the houses of the Brahmans,
Komutis, Vellalas and other castes, in order to remove the religion of the Tamils and establish Christianity in its place, but she failed. 133

Some French priests constantly objected to the traditional Hindu religious practices. Sometimes they did not get the approval from the colonial ruler. During the siege and subsequent troubles of 1748, many Hindu temple festivals, which people used to celebrate, could not be celebrated. However, after troubles were over, when peaceful life resumed, ‘Kinni-ther’ festival was celebrated in honour of Goddess Kali by the black smiths as before. Nevertheless, the Karaikal priest at the St.Paul’s Church objected to the celebration of the festival, in vain. Thanks to the initiative of the Hindus and the consistent effort of Ranga Pillai the celebration of that festival resumed. That was the period of the revival of Hindu religious festivals, which brought back the Tamils into Pondicherry. The priest’s contention was that a festival, which had long ceased, ought not to be revived. However, the Governor ordered the celebration of festivals as before. 134

The peaceful situation did not last long. The French government, under the influence of the Catholic clergy, enforced either ban or restrictions on the celebration of Hindu religious festivals at the end of 1748. The Hindus celebrated several festivals. The following were some of them. Sivaratri festival, which used to occur in February, 135 the fire-walking festival in the Dharmaraja Temple at Ranga Pillai’s Tiruvengadapuram Choultry, which was usually held in March, 136 Kaman festival, which was observed especially by Marathi Brahmins in March, 137 Varadharaja Perumal Car festival in May 138 Masi Makam and Pramadhi festival. 139 Lenoir, the Governor, allowed the Car and other festivals to be celebrated. He also gave permission to build a new temple. 140 ‘Uri Katti’ festivals was one of the festivals celebrated by the Hindus, especially by the Chetties and Kammalars. In this festival, gift packets, which were hung in every street, were hit and taken by the competent youth, who came before the car procession. 141 It not only caused tensions among the communities, but also affected the Company’s trade as well. The weavers, artisans and merchants did not feel comfortably settled in Pondicherry, because of the religious intolerance of the French government. A general permission was granted to celebrate festivals and processions except Iswaran temple.
Sometimes the government felt that if the town had to prosper, the natives’ services were necessary. So the religious feeling of the Hindus should not be wounded.  

Certain colonial rulers like Governor Dulivier prohibited even Hindu funeral processions on certain Catholic feast days. He imposed restrictions on the celebration of Hindu festivals. The Hindus collectively departed from the town. The Unity of the Tamils saved not only their right but also their prestige. One new moon day fell on a Sunday in February, Dulivier refused to give permission to celebrate it. In three days three-fourth of the population left Pondicherry. The town lacked provisions, since the commodities were stopped on the way; and the funds were also exhausted. The ships ‘La Paix’ and ‘Le François’ could not be loaded. Since the inhabitants had left Pondicherry, the revenue was not paid to the company. Dulivier climbed down and gave the Tamils the permission to celebrate their festivals.

The French Christians did not mix with the converted Indian Christians. Therefore, a separate church for the native Christians had to be built. The Capuchins built St.Lazar church in 1688, to serve the Indian Christians, who could not mix with the European Christians. That church was called the church of Malabars. The colonial power permitted the Pariah Christians to go on horse back on wedding days.

The Capuchins built a church for the French Christians. It was Notre Dame des Anges. Their graveyard was also different from the converted Christians. It was located near the church. The Christian cult was celebrated there for the first time on 15th August 1707. Near the new church, they had also the house of their order.

The Capuchins looked after the religious requirements of the Catholics. They prepared and preserved the parish minute register, which is useful to study that period. A refuge was constructed on the seashore from 1701 to August 1704. That work had been entrusted to the Capuchins. They first officiated the church of St.Louis in the Fort, and from 1707 onwards, in the church of Notre Dam des Anges, which had replaced the church of Malabars. They looked after the administration of the sacraments – baptizing, blessing the marriage and offering the last sacrament. Besides, they were also in charge of preparing, maintaining and preserving the parish registers. They maintained the registers, from 1729 onwards in duplicate, and the registers were duly numbered and paraphrased.
It seems there was no communal tension between the Catholic community and the Muslims except in 1748, when Governor Dupleix ordered the destruction of their mosque. Even while the Capuchins were settling down, the Muslims had their quarters open towards the countryside beyond Oupar by the most ancient gate of Pondicherry, the gate of Cuddalore, situated at the top of the extremity of ‘Rue de L’Evechê on the maps. A mosque at the extreme south of the quarters indicated that the Muslim had already settled down in Pondicherry.

Jesuits and the Capucins differed in their ideology. Hence, they opposed each other. Jesuits seemed to accept native customs in Christianity, where as the Capucins wanted to isolate Christian religion from native culture. That difference of approach, led to the confrontation between the Jesuits and the Capucins. The growth of the town witnessed rivalries of sections of catholic communities. Their dispute was about possessing the parish of the Malabars and the approach to conversion.\textsuperscript{146} The catholics conflict may be compared to the Right hand- Left hand conflict. However, there was a difference. In the latter, only the people conflicted, but not the religious authorities.

The Jesuits were adaptable to natives expectations, for the attainment of their objective of conversion. The Jesuits used to use saliva in the ceremonies of Baptism, a sacrament. However, in 1746 they avoided saliva, because the Tamils called Christianity ‘the religion of spit’.\textsuperscript{147} The Jesuits attempted to Indianise Christianity to popularize it in Pondicherry. They had to make some adjustments like allowing the wall raised in the church of Jesuits and the crackers used even in the Christian festivals. During that period, in an average, there were 200 baptisms every year, of adults as well as children.

The government passed restrictions on employment of workers on catholic festival days and Sundays. Informers of the violators were rewarded. The order of 14\textsuperscript{th} November 1746 prohibited the inhabitants of Pondicherry, white or black to work on Sundays and on the days of festivals. The violators would be fined 10 pagodas, of which half would be given to the informer and the other half to the poor.

The Europeans employed the poor natives as the servants and servant-maids, whom they considered slaves. The government, induced by the clergy, passed an ordinance for the forced conversion of the ‘slaves’, which naturally provoked the Hindus. Thus, an Ordinance of 12\textsuperscript{th} February 1747 ordered all those, who had slaves in their houses, to
educate them in Roman Catholic Religion and administer the sacrament of Baptism to them within one year. The superior caste Hindus hated to embrace a religion, which preached equality, and to give up their social privileges.¹⁴⁸

Sometimes hatred among Christians was manifested in catholic religious festivals. St. Paul's priests requested Lally's permission for people to go to Ariyankuppam for a ten days' festival. Kanakaraya Mudali built Ariankuppam Church for the Jesuits. The festival began on 30th August 1759. It was the festival of the Tamil Christians. When the image was being carried out through the Villianur Gate, La Sellès peons did not permit the Christians to pass the gate. When the people attempted to pass, the peons beat them, so a disturbance arose.¹⁴⁹ It seems to be similar to the native caste division conflicts. The Tamil Christians attended mass in St. Paul's Church.¹⁵⁰

A strange communal dispute was about to erupt in the town, but it was averted. A Christian carried a dead body along the Brahmin Street, when they were not there. However, when they came to know of it, they reported the matter to the officer. The officer agreed to enquire about it and the problem subsided.¹⁵¹

The French Revolution of 1789 made its impact on the church of Pondicherry. The clergy was Indianised. They were subjected to new regulations and were freed from foreign authority. The priests were threatened by prohibition, by their superior at Madras. The assembly promulgated the civil constitution of the clergy, in order to avoid any foreign authority.¹⁵²

The Pondicherry map put up by De Fer and published in 1705 located the Vedapuriswara temple on the extreme East of the street, today named as Needarajapayer street. The whole land, to the East of the symmetry of Missionaries, the Mission Press and the portion of the ‘Rue des Missions Etrangers’ which adjoined them, belonged to it. The pond of the temple, occupied almost the whole land comprised between the Rue Des Mission Etrangers, the extension of the street Needarajapayer and the fencing of the sisters of St. Louis de Gonzague. It encroached on its south portion on the half of the breadth of Rue St. Ange. This detail was found in an old plan belonging to the Library of Archives.¹⁵³

According to the map of De Fer, in the beginning of the 18th century no construction existed on the place occupied today by the cathedral.¹⁵⁴ In 1728 the Jesuit fathers started
the constructions of Immaculate Conception Church, which ended towards 1736. Tha church was destroyed except three feet of land in 1761 by the orders of the English.

After the return of the French to Pondicherry on 1st May 1769, the Jesuits constructed the ‘Chapelle de secours’ in the courtyard of the mission with the entrance in the street of Mission Etrangers. Rev. Fr. Planet residing then at Mission transformed the remaining materials of the chapel in a storehouse. Then the Jesuit fathers and their successors, Fathers of Mission Etrangers raised the church, which became the present Cathedral, or the foundations of the church destroyed in 1761. It was completed towards 1791 and in September 1791, the apostolic curate Mgr. Champenois consecrated it.

The Cathedral was the reproduction of the church of 1728, but not entirely, for it lacked the south bell-tower, which was very visible on the picture, found at Tanjore by Jouveau Dubreuil and reproduced in ‘Le Vieux Pondicherry’. The works of Jouveau Dubreuil points out that the Vedapuriswara temple existed during second century before Christ and then ‘Poudouvai’ (later Pondicherry) was depending on the administrative centre called Ozhugarai.

On 21st December 1952, Fr. Faucheux found some old maps among which one, Jouveau Dubrieuil had given the first in date, to him. He confirmed that Fr. Faucheux had indicated a big stretch of land to the temple. That particular map located the temple fully in the street of Mission Etrangers. Another map was the one, which was added to the report of priest Guyon. One could see there the position of the church of the Jesuits constructed in 1728.

Mrs. Dupleix and the Jesuits secured permission from Dupleix to destroy the Temple of Iswara in 1748. On 7th September 1748, soldiers were stationed at St. Paul’s church in view of the matter in hand. On 8th, September they began to pull down the southern wall of the Vedapuri Iswaran Temple and the out houses. At once, the temple managers, Brahmans and mendicants came and reported to Ranga Pillai, of the demolition of the southern wall of the temple. Ranga Pillai told them to remove the images and other things used in festivals and vahanams to the Kalahasti Iswaran Temple. The managers departed to meet the heads of castes.

Tillaiyappa Mudali, Uttira Chetti, Ammayappan, Pichandi, Devanayaga Chetti, Venkatachalam, his brother Lachigan, Kuttiva Pillai, Chinnadu Mudali, Andanavaka
On that the Governor revoked his order, 161

demolish their mosque, not a step would be left for they would all fall upon the
and told Abdul-Rahman: he met the Governor and challenged him if he had ordered to
house. When they were pulling down the walls round the mosque, some Libyans went
mosque, that stood opposite to and west of the Capuchins Church and behind Godfrey's
The Governor and Medam Duplex ordered to pull down the ancient Phthahmepan

permission. 160

The Governor gave them
articles from the temple, which was being destroyed. The Governor asked him to give them permission to remove the
in all, went to the Governor and asked him to give them permission to remove the

Armenian Alex Mudall, Peddu Chelli, Tilliyarapa Mudall and other heads of cases,

other images. But they did not listen to him. 199

temple, but also the articles, the images used in the festivities, the Pillar and all the
temple, but also the articles, the images used in the festivities, the Pillar and all the
demolished. Ranaa Pillar asked him not to delay, unless they would lose not only the
Armenianepan, the court next the Shrine, and Phthahmepan, the Great Court were

The southern wall and the outer houses of the temple had been pulled down, the

phil and Medam Duplex were appointed,

people consented to demolish the Armenian temple, and that he would secure its destruction
Churchy Dubsh, Arnapumma Ayyan had told St. Paul's priests that he had obtained the
Vedapuri Armenian Temple and build it else where; if Arnapumma Ayyan was made the
bargained with Mr. Duplex that they would get people's consent to demolish the
Armenian Alex Mudall and Lachlegha, masoon Venkatachalam's younger brother, had

Armenian Alex Mudall and Lachlegha, masoon Venkatachalam's younger brother, had

a solution to the problem, if not they were ready to depart from the town.

He was prepared to receive them on the third day, when the Talims wanted to find
two Talim groups wanted to take chances. The Governor avoided meeting the Talims for two

were departed. Hence meeting the Governor would not change the situation. Yet, the

their influence to the Governor. On account of the war at that moment, it did not matter
Talims had already left the town and there were not even hundred people to represent

However, Arnapa Pillar felt that it would not succeed, because most of the

that they would either kill themselves or vacate the town.

when they asked the Governor to drop the attempt of destroying the temple, he rejected

Mudall, the managers of the temple and others, met Ranaa Pillar. They suggested to him

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The Mahanattars requested the new Governor, Godeheu, in 1748 to give permission to rebuild the Vedapuri Iswaran Temple. A meeting, attended by the Governor, Delarche, Barthelemy and Ranga Pillai was held on the issue of proposed construction. In that meeting, Godeheu admitted that the town had not thrived, because people could not follow the customs of their caste. Some of the Tamils objected to proposed Temple rebuilding.

The Governor then asked if a promise had been made to build it at the Company's cost. Ranga Pillai replied that in the time of Lenoir and his predecessors, orders were received from the King of France to destroy the Vedapuri Iswaran Temple. All the caste people were summoned, and told that a Temple would be built else where, as it was in the middle of the street. Nevertheless, the caste-people persisted in declaring that they would rather die than have the Temple demolished. Consequently, orders were obtained from Europe that all should be allowed to follow their own religion. Lenoir thereupon said, he would permit a new Temple to be built, and allowed the car and other festivals to be celebrated as men pleased.

The French fathers took up some services such as teaching languages, subjects and skills. There were five priests and two brothers at Pondicherry in 1703. The father De La Breuille taught philosophy. Fr.De La Lane learnt the languages of the country to enter into the mission. Fr.Turpin taught the Latin language to some young French and Portuguese, who aimed at ecclesiastic status. Bro-Moricet taught to read and write, Arithmetic, driving and other sciences to the children, so that they could earn their bread. All these measures were useful for the French.

Pondicherry had a school of studies of languages and subjects administered by the Jesuits. Students from several parts of the world came to learn. The Jesuits contributed to the Educational progress in Pondicherry. Students from all over the world gathered here and learnt languages, philosophy and theology. However, they served only the foreigners, not the natives. They could not instruct the natives for want of knowledge in the native languages. The early French education was useful only to the foreign elites. Latin language, philosophy and theology were taught to those who were born in high caste. The Jesuits had 30 boarders, who were coming from all parts of the world. They admitted two Europeans, one from Paris and another from London, the son of the English
Governor of Cuddalore. Africa had sent the Jesuits five young children born at the Mascarin Island America sent them a young Spanish born at Philippines, whose father was the General of Galleon of Spain. The others were from Pegu, Bengal, Madras, Pondicherry, Porto Novo, Surat and Ispahan, Capital of Persia. This school consisting of foreign students was new to Pondicherry.

The French company considered the possibilities of promoting education and boarding in Pondicherry through Urseline Catholic Sisters. The Bishop of St. Thome supported their stay and efforts. However, the Superior council did not permit their teaching in Portuguese and did not approve the building of a Convent for them, because they were only four. Therefore, they had to return to Europe. Even before the government took the initiative; the Christian missionaries were active in starting educational institutions in Pondicherry. For example, Pigneau de Behaine started the College Malabare in 1771.

As stated earlier, the Hindu population in Pondicherry confronted several hardships during colonial rule. However, they sustained their Hindu character, thanks to their social ethos and customs, which preserved them. Malcolm with his experience in South Indian affairs remarked in his notes the following instructions in 1821 to his assistants. “I do not know the example of any great population, preserving, through such a period of changes and ‘antagonistic’ rule, so much virtue and so many good qualities, as are to be found in a great proportion of the inhabitants of Pondicherry. This is to be accounted for, by the institutions of the Hindu, particularly that of caste, which appears to have raised them to their present rank in human society”. 

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