

CHAPTER IV

Education in Pondicherry (1674-1815)

I. Introduction

The attempts made by the French for the promotion of education since their arrival in Pondicherry in the year 1674 up to the year 1815 form the crux of the subject matter being dealt with in this chapter. In this context, it must be noted at the very outset that the French had actually come to Pondicherry not in accordance with any pre-conceived plan, but only at the specific invitation of Sher Khan Lodi, and that too, to serve as a counter poise, *vis-a-vis* the growing influence of the Dutch gaining control over the textile trade in the region.

Hence their first and primary objective was to consolidate their position in Pondicherry through the promotion of trade. It therefore took some years for the French even to consider the need to evince any special interest either in the education of the French settlers then known as *colons* or the local population. Trade was their primary interest. Alongside trade, the need for converting the local population was felt by the missionaries in due course of time. The conquest of the 'land' began with the conquest of 'souls'. And conversion served as a convenient but potent 'weapon' to conquer the minds of the people.

The growth of education in Pondicherry in those twilight years has therefore to be explored in the light of this historical perspective. Pondicherry and its surroundings were not just barren lands without population although it was not considerable. But its location close to the estuary of the river Sengi, served as a kind of meeting place or a point of anchorage, in the age of sailing vessels, for traders from Greece, Rome and China etc, with peninsular India since time immemorial.

So, it would be appropriate to present a brief survey of the political, socio-economic, and cultural status and conditions which prevailed in Pondicherry before the arrival of the French in order to identify the factors which ultimately prompted the French turning their attention to the promotion of education among the population under their protection. The denomination 'French' used here includes, besides the French administration, the missionaries as well as the company and its servants.

This study is carried out under four distinctly marked phases in the midst of all the developments that took place in the sphere of education in Pondicherry as given below:

1. The first phase began with the arrival of the French in Pondicherry in 1674, and continued up to 1815 when the French had to be content with the small chunks of territories which were finally left in the possession of the French.
2. The second phase lasted from 1815, upto the proclamation of the Third Republic in 1870.
3. The third phase lasted from 1871, upto the beginning of World War I in 1914.
4. The fourth phase may be construed as beginning from 1915, up to the final withdrawal of the French possessions in India in 1954.

II. Education in Pondicherry before the arrival of the French

Never before the arrival of the French, did Pondicherry and its surrounding areas enjoy the status of an independent polity or geo-political entity or serve as the seat of a ruler. It formed, from time immemorial, only a part of a larger kingdom of one or other ruler almost since the time of Asoka, if it is admitted that this territory must have once formed part of the Asokan Empire beyond which, the

Colas , the Pandyas, the Keralaputras and the Satyaputras held sway.

Nothing much is known about the political conditions in the Pondicherry area till the period of the Pallavas of Kanchi in the fourth century AD. According to some sources of Tamil literature, the territory of the *Aruvanādu* covered the region up to Ponnaiyar which must have included Pondicherry and its surrounding territory. That Pondicherry formed part of this *Aruvanadu* is further confirmed by the Varman's Bahur copper plates Pallava chieftain Nripatunga which mention that Bahur was situated in the *Aruvanattukilvazhi* (the eastern division of *Aruvanadu*). It was occupied by a people known as *Eiynar*, who were ruling over *Gymanadu* in the region which came to be identified as *Tondaimandalam*. The history of *Tondaimandalam* takes shape only after the fourth century.¹

Education in ancient Pondicherry

The Pallavas and later the Cōjas who held sway over this territory encouraged Vedic learning through the endowment of lands and villages to *brahmadeyam* and *chaturvedimangalams*. As the names themselves suggest , these endowments were made in favour of those well versed in brahmanical and Vedic studies. Another facet of the glorious state of education in this part of the country as early as in the VIII century AD is available from the famous copper plate inscription of Bahur. It speaks of a *vidyāstāna* (seat of learning) in Bahur village then forming part of the *Aruvanādu* for which a gift of three villages was made in the 8th regnal year of Nripatunga Varman, the Pallava king. It was already a well established institution of Vedic studies. The standard of learning and the accomplishment of a student of this *vidyāstāna* may well be gauged by reading the *prasasti* composed in elegant Sanskrit verses by a servant of the *vidyāstāna* by name Nagaya who has

been described as a man who knew the truth of sciences.²

The curriculum of the *vidyāstāna* consisted of the fourteen *ganās* according to a verse in the Bahur plates. The curriculum was framed by the learned men of the village. The *vidyāstāna* was maintained by the learned men of the village in the same way "as the Ganges(Mandakini) descending from the sky with all the fury of its rushing waves is borne by Lord Siva on one of his matted locks". The endowment in favour of the *vidyāstāna* consisted of the three villages of Chettupakkam, Vilangattugaduvanur, and Iraippunaicceri. The entire revenue from these villages was to be utilised for the *vidyāstāna*. The donor of these three villages was one Martandan of the family of Vaisali, a local chieftain of the Pallava kingdom. The chief had requested the king Nripatunga to permit him to transfer the ownership of the above said three villages situated in his *rastra* (district) to the *vidyāstāna* and the king appointed his minister Uthamasila as *ajivapathi* and ordered him to carry out the transfer.

This traditional form of sanskrit learning is known to have continued even during the Cōla period particularly in the XI century. According to Prof .Nilakanta Sastri, popular education was provided in temples and other places.It consisted of recitations and expositions of the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharatha* and the *Puranas*. Higher education was generally denominational pursued in *pālasālās* attached to *madams(mutts)* and temples. One comes across numerous inscriptions which speak of endowments specifically provided for the pursuit of Vedic studies.³

There was a similar seat of learning at another village called Thirubhuvanai, not far from Pondicherry. There were 260 students and 12 teachers in this *vidyāstāna*. The subjects of study were generally the elements of grammar ac-

According to the *rupavatara*, the four *vedas*, *vajasaneya*, the *chandoga*, the *brahmanas*, the *upanishad*, *baudhayana*, *grhyakalpa*, *gana* and *vyakarana*, *prabhakara mimamsa*, *vedanta satya sudha sutras*, besides the *Mahabharatha*, the *Ramayana* and *Manusastra* and *Vaikhanasasastra*, the last being expounded to popular audiences rather than taught as school subjects. The daily allowances given to students and teachers were all in grains; junior students were allowed six measures each and seniors eight.⁴ The inscriptions of the thirteenth year of Rajadhiraja (A.D 1048) which recorded these facts also exempted the teachers and students from active service on the committees of the village assembly in accordance with the resolution of the village *sabha*. Although it is not known as to how long these institutions of learning continued to flourish, it seems certain that popular education must have been provided to male children in the *pāṭasalais* attached to temples and *mutts*.

III. Pondicherry after the arrival of the French

A. The Evolution of Pondicherry Polity

At this juncture, it would be appropriate to explore the changes, political, social, economic, and cultural which took place in these territories which ultimately came to rest in the hands of the French in the year 1815. The changes which took place after 1815 alone had some continuity as well as historical credibility which could be construed as forming the basis for a constructive study of the structural aspects of education in Pondicherry.

Pondicherry, which was essentially a port town, did not overnight acquire the status of a 'state' on the arrival of the French in Pondicherry in the year 1674. It took more than half a century for it to acquire such a geo-political status, which however was severely threatened by events and developments in the course of the

next half a century and more, to be finally content with five scattered enclaves, viz., Pondicherry, Karaikal, Mahe, Yanam and Chandernagore. How the port town of Pondicherry emerged as a distinct political entity between the years 1674 and 1815 with occasional and sporadic attempts by the French to give shape to an altogether new system of education, forms the theme of this study here.

Pondicherry started regaining its importance as a trading port from about the beginning of XVI century, first with the arrival of the Portuguese, who established a factory here sometime between 1521 and 1524.

The first French *loge* in India was set up in Surat in the year 1666, after Bebber, deputed from France to contact the Mughal Emperor, had obtained a *firman* from Aurangzeb in favour of *La Royal Compagnie de France des Indes Orientales* which had been registered in France less than two years earlier, i.e., on 1st September 1664. Evidently they settled here only to trade in spices and cloth and the idea of conquest and hegemony was far from their thoughts although they were quite aware of the earlier exploits of the Portuguese and the Dutch in India. Even the British had arrived in India only a few years earlier, and they were long time rivals in Europe even before their arrival in India.

In 1669, the French obtained another *firman* from Aurangzeb permitting them to establish a *loge* at Masulipatnam. François Martin arrived there along with Goujon, a member of the Surat Council on 7th August 1670. Shortly after their arrival there, they received a communication from Sher Khan Lodi, the chief of the fort of Valikondapuram (then under the Bijapur Sultan) to come and establish their factory in Pondicherry. Even after their arrival in India, it took almost another eight years for the French to land on the shores of Pondicherry. This they did, not on their own volition but due to fortuitous circumstances. And Pondicherry was

till then an unexplored region.

The French established their *loge* in Pondicherry in 1674. However some 19 years later, i.e., in 1693, the French *loge* and its small fort and the surrounding land ceded to them by Sher Khan Lodi was captured by the Dutch, although eventually restored to the French in the year 1699, i.e., after a gap of six years, following the Treaty of Ryswick. The territory then restored to the French included the fort and its surroundings, which they took possession of only after paying the Dutch a ransom of 16,000 *pagodas*. This amount, the Dutch claimed, they had to spend for acquiring the areas adjacent to the port settlement.

The village of Kalapet was obtained by François Martin from Nawab Davood Khan, the representative of Aurangzeb in the year 1703, in order to obtain timber from its forests for the construction of houses in the town. The same Nawab ceded a group of villages around Ozhukarai, besides Murungapakkam, Olandai, Pakkamudayanpet and Karuvadikuppam. The villages of Theduvanatham and Abishekapakkam, Odiyampattu and Thirukkanji were given as gift to Dumas by Nawab Safdar Ali, only in September 1740.

In 1750, following the victory of Ambur, Mussafar Jung confirmed the grant of Villianur and added 36 villages of Bahur in favour of the French. Since then, the French Indian territories were besieged three times by the English. The first time was in the year 1761. However, following the treaty of Paris signed on 10th February 1763, the territories were restored to the French. They were again captured in 1778 and restored to the French only after seven years (i.e. in 1785). They were captured for the third time in 1793. Following the Treaty of Peace signed on 30th May, 1814, the establishments were finally restored to the French in 1815, after a

gap of twenty two years. Since then these establishments continued under French rule for one hundred and thirty eight years, after which the French left the shores of Pondicherry on 31st October 1954 following the *defacto* transfer of power.

This being the brief historical background of French presence in Pondicherry, there was neither much scope nor necessity for the French to pursue a consistent policy in the sphere of education as such, with any semblance of continuity due to development both in French India and France. Hence, an in depth study of education and its advancement in the French Indian establishments turns out to be meaningful only after 1815, i.e during the last phase of their presence in Pondicherry when the French were finally in a position to have a stable Governmental outfit which could be expected to pursue some definite policy as such in the sphere of education.

The French came here merely as traders, and as traders the imparting of education could never have figured in their agenda of activities. Understandably this would have taken shape only over a period of time, considering the necessity to carry on their trading activities through the native traders smoothly. However the local traders were themselves adequately well versed in the nuances of not only internal trade but also of external trade having had established their trade relations with the Portuguese, the Dutch, the British, the Danes and also the French .

Moreover a hybrid language, which was a mixture of Portuguese, Arabic, Tamil, and Telugu was very much in vogue, especially amongst those who inhabited the coastal region- as this language developed over a period of more than hundred and fifty years since 1507, when the earliest Portuguese adventurers appeared on the Tamil coast, where Arab traders especially the Marakkayars held sway over the

coastal trade, alongside the enterprising native *chetties*. Moreover the services of interpreters, otherwise known as *dubashis* were available. It therefore stands to reason that education as such would not have received much attention until their political status became stabilised in this region, which happened after 1814-15 in a very strict sense. Until then the responsibility centering on education was entirely left to the care of the missionaries. In the meanwhile, considerable changes took place in the newly emerging Pondicherry milieu as it spanned over a period of more than 140 years since 1674 i.e., up to 1814-15.

This calls for a study of the evolution and growth of Pondicherry polity till about the beginning of the 19th century so as to provide a better perspective of the ground realities which were instrumental for the growth of education among those who chose to live under the protection of the French Indian government in Pondicherry.

B. The process of urbanisation of Pondicherry

The first phase of transformation of Pondicherry by way of urban development began with the outburst of war in 1676 between Sher Khan Lodi and Nazir Muhammed. As a measure of protection against the ill effects of war a sort of bastion was added to the *loge* on the north in 1676. François Martin had in the meanwhile applied to his friend Sher Khan Lodi for permission to entertain some native soldiers for purposes of defence. Sher Khan not only assented but also made over to him three hundred of his own men. Martin entertained these men as soldiers and made them settle down within his domain. He gave each a piece of land and encouraged them to build houses and employ themselves profitably in the manufacture of tissue cloth and other articles for export. ⁵

Under the protection of François Martin, new settlements like the fishermen's village, weavers' village, textile painters' village and coral polishers' village sprang up around the fort. ⁶ As per the *lettres patentes* signed by Louis XIV in February 1701 the Superior Council of the Indies, so far located in Surat, was transferred to Pondicherry which was made the seat of the Director or Governor General with supreme authority over all the other French factories in India.

By the *Lettres patentes* i.e., Letter of patent of Louis XIV issued to the Society of Jesus and missionaries in Eastern countries, the French had started their activities in India as per the instructions from their king in France.

Almost immediately afterwards, Martin was appointed President of the Superior Council and Director General of French affairs in India. "On arriving at his destination, Martin commenced the work of improvement; he laid out a plan for a large town, the erection of which he soon commenced. In little more than a year a hundred new houses had been erected, and the place presented such an improved appearance that, it is said, a person who had seen it in 1693 would not have recognised the territory. By the same course of gentleness and straight forward dealing which he had formally followed, he attracted the natives in great numbers to the settlement, so much so that at the time of his death in 1706, the native town was reckoned to contain nearly 40,000 inhabitants. ⁷ *

*Abbe Guyon places the native population between fifty and sixty thousand. M.V Labernadie who considered to be an exaggeration places it to thirty thousand.

The erection of a choultry in 1729 near the present Grand Bazaar provided the location for the *tribunal de la choudrie*. A prison for the natives was located

close by. On the basis of a plan furnished by Fr. Louis, the construction of a hospital was started in 1734 in the south western part of the town which was completed in June 1740. On the western side of the Governor's house a beautiful garden with five avenues was laid out. In the midst of this garden was a large and well furnished building used as a guest house for visiting dignitaries. Near this was the College of the Jesuits to which was committed the task of educating the children of the colony.

However, the old town founded by François Martin, established and raised to political importance by Dupleix was destroyed by the English after its capitulation in 1761 so systematically that when Law de Lauriston arrived in 1765 to take possession of the place, there was hardly a single house which remained in tact and it was difficult to recognise even the outlines of the old town amidst the heaps of ruins which lay all around. With the exception of two temples nothing remained to indicate the once flourishing and populous settlement.⁸

Law took up his residence at Ozhukarai and started reconstruction of a new town out of the debris. On hearing the arrival of Law, Frenchmen till then scattered all over the country converged towards Pondicherry. Tents were raised, streets were cleaned up. Everyone tried to locate his former abode. New houses were built on the basements. As a result of hardwork, new streets took shape on their old basements. Houses sprang up. Within five months, about 126 brick houses, 53 tiled houses 120 thatched houses and 1959 malabar houses were constructed. The speed of reconstruction was almost a marvel and in the course of next three years, a whole new town was built on the ruins of the old.⁹

The reconstruction of the fortification was however delayed for want of sup-

port from the authorities in France with the result that when the English attacked Pondicherry in 1778, the fortifications remained unfinished. Pondicherry fell into the hands of the British once again. This time the fortifications were all destroyed.

"Pondicherry after its restitution in 1783 was left in a very sad plight facing economic hardships and political uncertainty. There was a general spirit of despair and frustration among the inhabitants. Their trade and commerce had been ruined completely during the war and peace did not bring them any consolation either. They had hoped for economic recovery after the war, but were rudely disappointed by the establishment of a new company with monopoly over eastern trade. Only the inland trade was left open to private merchants. But in view of the political situation in the country it did not amount to much. Moreover the French settlements were denuded of practically all European troops, ammunition and other military stores and only a small number of sepoys was retained for the maintenance of law and order. Besides, all French possessions in the East were grouped into one administration under a Governor General with his seat in the Isle of France. Thus all of a sudden Pondicherry lost its pride of place as a capital and found itself reduced to the status of a dependency.¹⁰ Pondicherry was henceforth to stand as a defenceless city, a mere commercial centre without any political significance.¹¹

Some years later, the Revolution in France completely altered the situation in Pondicherry. In September 1792, de Phelines, an engineer was charged with the construction of fortification arrived at Pondicherry. In June 1793, definite information reached Pondicherry that the English were preparing to march against it. All that the engineer de Phelines could do in the course of a month and a half was to improvise filling up the gaps at some places. The town fell again in 1793, and

remained with the British up to 1815.

In the midst of all these vicissitudes, naturally, the French could hardly evince any interest in the promotion of education especially among the natives.

C. The Growth of population in Pondicherry

There are no reliable data shedding light on the population of Pondicherry prior to 1838. There are however grounds to believe that Pondicherry was not more than a small port with about 50,000 inhabitants before the French came to set up a *loge* here in 1674.¹²

According to one source, the population of Pondicherry town and its immediate surroundings was 30,000 in 1703.¹³ In 1706, i.e., the year of François Martin's death, Pondicherry had a population of about 40,000.¹⁴ This is said to have risen to about 60,000 in 1716 and 80,000 approximately in 1735 and must have remained steady for the next 25 years. According to Collin de Bar, the population of the territory under the French control was about 80,000 in 1700. In 1735, it is said to have risen to about 1,20,000.

According to another source, the population of Pondicherry in 1706 was about 80,000 of whom approximately 4000 were Europeans or *Metis*. By the year 1777 it is said to have declined to 28,321.¹⁵

In 1780, Pondicherry's population rose to 50,000. But by 1793, i.e., after the revolution and its repercussion in Pondicherry and its capitulation shortly after it, had dwindled to a mere 20,000.

Besides the political uncertainties and the concomitant symptoms of social instability plaguing the residents, the frequent natural calamities also added to

the woes of the people. There were famines in Pondicherry in 1687, so François Martin arranged for the import of rice by boats to be sold here.¹⁶ The famine of 1708 was accompanied by a severe drought. The price of rice was reported to have risen almost eight times.¹⁷ Pondicherry again faced acute famine conditions in 1717 having failed to receive rains during the previous year. In order to attract food grains to the town, all duties and levies on the import of food grain from outside the territory were suspended for 36 days. As a result of the drought in 1737 there was a severe shortage of rice. The *Conseil Supérieur* of Pondicherry authorised the purchase of rice at 50 *pagodas per garce* for distribution to its employees. Famine conditions continued to prevail till October 1738 when rice was sold at 80 to 100 *pagodas per garce*.

There was another severe famine again in Pondicherry in the year 1760. It is reported that there was not a single dog or cat left in the town, all the creatures having been consumed by the hungry population. Rats were sold at Rs. 2 each. Soldiers were obliged to sell their possessions in order to feed themselves.¹⁸

D. Growth of Trade and Commerce in Pondicherry

The town of Pondicherry, situated as it was close to the estuary of a river, although small, on the coast of the Bay of Bengal, developed in course of time into a trading port, with a native social structure composed of what came to be known as the left hand and right hand castes. The influence and power of the left hand castes who were primarily traders and artisans, found close affinity with those of the European merchants. The influence and prestige of the right hand castes, most of whom belonged to the non-trading class of agriculturists began to decline. The growth of the city in the course of more than 100 years since 1675 was however inextricably linked to the growth of trade and commerce. The activities of the

Compagnie des Indes Orientales which came into existence in 1664, continued almost up to the year 1770, when its privileges were finally suspended and the company itself got dissolved paving the way for free trade.

The local merchants could however play only a secondary role under the monopoly enjoyed by the French company. A new company, under the name *Compagnie Nouvelle des Indes* was established in 1785, but its privileges were revoked after five years, i.e. immediately after the Revolution in France. It was re-established some years later as a joint stock company and existed almost up to the year 1875.¹⁹

It was François Martin who laid the foundation for the growth of trade and commerce in Pondicherry. A unique feature of the company sponsored trade was that the soldiers recruited by François Martin were also allotted cultivable lands and encouraged to settle down and carry on weaving. These weavers, besides ensuring the defence of the town, also contributed to its economic prosperity.

The import of painted cloth to France from Pondicherry was however banned in 1685 in the interest of the manufacturers, as it had crippled the French textile industry in Lyon. The import of silk and muslin from India was also restricted in 1702. It must be noted that such restrictions and prohibitions were highly detrimental to Pondicherry, the prosperity of which depended entirely on trade and commerce. In 1709, the import of all kinds of cotton goods from India was prohibited marking the final victory of protectionism. In 1715 the company privileges were extended for 10 years i.e., upto 1725. But in the year 1719 itself, the old *Compagnie des Indes Orientales* was merged with *Law's Compagnie d'Occident* under the new name of the *Compagnie des Indes* as mentioned earlier.

When *de la Prévostière* took over as Governor in 1713 he found that coins were scarce and the products brought by ships could not be sold easily. The *arrêté* of 23 march 1723 however helped strengthening the capital structure of the company from 1726, and trade in Pondicherry gathered momentum. Apart from export, trade with other parts of India also developed alongside. The *Machilipatnam dépôt* was soon revived. With the recapture of Mahe in 1725 the company was further assured of a lucrative pepper trade. In fact between 1725 and 1759 the company had sent out to India an average of 20 vessels a year.

Trade with the interior of the country, which was hitherto the preserve of the employees of the company was thrown open to all. The local commerce began to yield huge profits. As trade and commerce developed cultivation of crops in the surrounding district was greatly encouraged.

The Seven Years War, however dealt a severe blow to the trading activities of the company. An effort was however made to retrieve the situation by the *édicte* of 1764. In the midst of these encouraging indications of growth, the government of France took a step which seriously dampened the budding prosperity of the town. The monopoly rights of the company were suspended by the decree of 13 August, 1769. However the *edict* of 1770 accorded the right of free navigation and commerce east of Cape of Good Hope to all Frenchmen. This *édicte* was subsequently withdrawn, as France soon felt that monopoly of trade was necessary which led to the formation of the second *Compagnie des Indes* substituting the former company. This step however, in turn affected the trade within India, thus choking up a highly remunerative active export business. This move considerably alienated the feelings of the local traders and created discontent among the whole population.

The Revolution in France and its after effects in Pondicherry also had its impact on trade and commerce. Trading activities remained paralysed due to the disturbed political situation here. A large number of local craftsmen, weavers and dyers migrated to Madras. Production of cloth having ceased, money became scarce. Cultivation was also abandoned by the peasants, many of whom left the territory for good. Even for such of those few who remained here, there were no jobs. The economy of Pondicherry thus remained almost shattered till the French took over in December 1816. The local trading community did not face any special difficulty as such to cope up with the growing complexities of trade and commerce due to lack of school education or educational facilities.

IV. Christian missionary activities in the field of education

Before recounting the developments leading to the advent of Christian missionaries and their educational efforts in Pondicherry, it would be appropriate to have an idea of the different religious congregations and their activities in Pondicherry in the early years of French rule here.

i. Arrival of Capucins-New Churches

François Martin the founder of French Pondicherry after founding the city invited Capucins to Pondicherry from Madras who had already settled there to satisfy the religious needs of the Europeans here. The Capucins complied with this request and many had arrived to settle at Pondicherry. One of them, Fr. Louis constructed a church in the fort. In 1684, another church was built outside the fort dedicated to *Saint Lazare*, at the expense of an Indian "head of the Malabar merchants of the French company" *Lazare de Mota*, who in 1686 further bequeathed to Capucins a land and some houses. On 1st of July of the same year, the Capucins

purchased from various persons another land apart from that given to them by the company and the head of the locals which formed a square with 20 *toise* aside. On 11th August 1688, they were asked to construct the bridge and the bastion at the north from the old fort and on 16th December 1702, a property of a square *toise* to 100 *toise* at the south east of the fort was given to them as compensation.²⁰

ii. *Société des Missions Étrangères* (Society of Foreign Missions)

Société des Missions Étrangères came to Pondicherry during the second half of 18th century, and established chief seminary near Pondicherry.²¹

iii. Arrival of the Jesuits: Their first task

Some missionaries of the Society of Jesus or the Jesuits came to Pondicherry in 1689 where they got the hospitality of the Capucins and they started the missionary work in Pondicherry land occupied today by the mission with the adjacent place and the eastern portion of the land.²²

The French colony had then depended on the spiritual jurisdiction of the Bishop of San-Thome of Mailapur. So the Jesuits had no difficulty to get his permission to exercise their zeal at Pondicherry and forming a congregation of natives, they erected a church dedicated to Blessed Virgin under the title of *Notre-Dame de la Conception* (Our Lady of Conception) in a land given by Tanapa mudaliar, a local merchant who in course of time got converted to Christianity.²³

At the same time they asked the French government that the mission could enjoy a legal existence which they got. The *Lettres Patentes* of 1665 granted and signed by Louis XIV permitted them to establish missions in all the establishments and trading ports which France possessed in this country and assured them assistance and protection in all the establishments which they set up in foreign

territories .²⁴ (See Appendice 1(i)).

The content of the *Lettre Patentes* is given here.

Louis B-1 GOD'S GRACE, KING OF FRANCE AND NAVARRE

Salute to all present and to come,

The ardent zeal in *Pères Jesuites* (Jesuit Fathers) are conducted for the propagation of the belief having made them to overcome the difficulties which appeared in the missions which they have undertaken, since many years to Eastern India, with a fervor and charity. They had consolation to get involved considerably in growing the religion, and as we have informed all the people the usage which they have effected the assistances which we have given to them for their organisation, either by our protection or by the amounts which we have offered out of own funds, for the maintenance of those which were utilised for this sacred work, we are excited to give them new marks of our satisfaction and we have to protect almost against Europe, a war in which the defence of the several religions have mostly no human reason, we do not allow to extend our rights beyond the seas for the development of the religion and willingness to continue our protection to those who are employed with French. We also know them, what utility can be to our men the curious remark which most of those religions so distinguished by their erudition that by their piousness (piety) are for the improvement of arts, sciences and shipping. For these reason and other aspects, we are moved in this regard, out of our special grace, with full royal power and strength we have allowed and allow herein, so signed with our hand, *Jesuites Français* who will be sent by their superiors to the East India in the capacity of missionaries or mathematicians, to go over there in full freedom and exhort them to our subjects who will be settled there or run business; as also to serve for the study of things which can contribute for the de-

velopment of arts, sciences and shipping; allow them to settle everywhere. There will be counters, factories, places or other establishments of the French nation or French Royal Company of *Indes*, to send such number which they would like among them in the adjoining Kingdoms and countries, as they will deem necessary for the remarks which they will have to make and to make use, for this purpose, the generous gifts and other assistances which we grant to them. If, we give mandate to our dear and much loved son Alexander of Bourbon, nobles of Toulouse, Admiral of France, Vice-admirals, chief lieutenant, of navals, Chief Escadres of Iles, special Governors of our cities and places, Mayors, Eochevins, Consuls and all other officers, every assistance favour and did have to lie given to (*Pères Jesuites*), necessary to execute this without they being given any trouble, hindrance which could delay their travel, because, such is our pleasure. Let us pray, request and require all Roys, Princes, Pontents, States, Republics and our other friends, Associates, our Confederates, their officers and subjects give to Jesuit Missionaries very aid and protection which they would require offering to effect the same in such case. In witness whereever, we have got our seal to put in this regard.

Given at Versailles, in the ninth of March, grace year 1665.

LOUIS

Following the permission granted to the Jesuits by the Bishop of San-Thome and *Lettres Patentes* accorded by the king, the Jesuits had at Pondicherry an independent existence of the Capucins for spiritual and temporal purposes.

In 1703, there were many Jesuits in Pondicherry town. Some of them followed the evangelisation of unfaithful people while some of them followed the policy of the education of the children.²⁵

Actions relating to the pagans and Christians

On those days, the religious events at Pondicherry were of course less numerous, because the contemporaries do not speak much about it.

On 9th of March 1714, the Superior Council of Pondicherry considered many proposals put forward by the Jesuits in order to increase the conversions of Indians. In 1715, the government having given orders to prevent the pagans from celebrating their festivals on Sundays, a large number of Indians left Pondicherry; much embarrassed, the Superior Council gathered the Capucins Jesuits, and priests of Foreign Missions to consult them. The Capucins answered that ceremonies should be allowed. Fr. Bouchet, the Jesuit, told that freedom already granted to the inhabitants should not be taken away and they should be permitted to enter the Siva temple situated near the Jesuit church at Pondicherry²⁶ Mr. Tessier, the Procurer of Foreign Missionaries asked the Tamils to come back to the temple situated near the Jesuit church at Pondicherry.²⁷ This temple was demolished by Duplex during the siege of Pondicherry in 1748.

iv. The Ursulines in Pondicherry

The congregation of Ursulines founded in Europe by Angelica Merici also came to Pondicherry during this time at the invitation of Governor Dumas. On the 15th December 1738, the Superior Council of the colony in Pondicherry signed a deliberation conceding to Ursulines to run a school in a small land in Pondicherry. The Ursulines were already in Pondicherry since they came here at the request of Fr. Norbert, the Capucin to establish schools and offer to the poor girls of the colony a religious, literal and good education.

Fr. Norbert had written the contract executed between the Superior Council,

the Ursulines, and himself and submitted the same to the governor. The latter referred it to the Bishop of Saint Thome who, in his capacity of ordinary Father of Pondicherry had to decide this matter.

The Bishop studied the seventeen articles which include this contract, and showed numerous objections against his adoption. The objections made same impression over the members of the superior council and on Fr. Norbert, who modified many of his proposals and the agreement was signed in the chamber of council, on 31st December 1738.²⁸

The Bishop was highly satisfied to see that the Superior Council fell in with his opinion to wait from France the decision which would be given, before final decision. He himself wrote to the French government, which replied to him on 21st February 1741 that the Ursulines, following misunderstanding going to leave the colony, it became of no use to look after the rights of Bishop and of those of the Superior Council.

The Ursulines, in fact left Pondicherry and after words the efforts to establish any educational institution for girls had failed till 1827.

The articles of agreement executed between the Superior Council of Pondicherry and Ursulines from 1738 is given below: ²⁹ (See Appendix 1 (ii))

Article 1

The number of religious ladies at present will be fixed at eight revered mothers without any convent sisters.

Article 2

The superior council having taken suitable actions for the foundation of the

convent for Ursulines religious ladies in pondicherry town, will construct buildings necessary for the said community, both for the religious and the lodges (residents and outsiders), and will furnish by the temporal administrators whatever necessary for the maintainance and substances of the said religious ladies.

Article 3

It has been agreed upon with the said religious women, that for their food and maintenance generally what so ever hundred *pagodas* for year and an hall barrel of wine to every religious woman and twenty jars of brandy will be given by the administrators, every year, for the requirements of the entire community.

Article 4

With fixed and annual pension of one hundred *pagodas* each, ladies cannot claim or insist any other things and are not likewise bound to any expense for buildings, necessary repairs, maintenance of garden and other domestic private persons, which will be maintained and paid at the cost of the religious women.

Article 5

The wine necessary for the mass, oil for the spiritual maintainance of a lamp in the chapel, of the monastery, the wax and the movement necessary for the chapels, a saxton (Sacristain) for taking care of two persons serving as porters and two gardeners, will be furnished by the administrator of temporal of the community.

Article 6

What will be necessary for their travel upto their boardings and dresses and linen, necessary for their travel will be granted for all religious persons, meant to come from France to this monastery will be granted to all religious (persons); to this effect, they will apply to the directors of the companies in India who will be requested to provide the same and to grant them free passage in one of their ships;

a room in the monastery with wooden articles and dresses in use of the country, the whole according to the decency and at his will be furnished to every religious persons in his arrival from Europe.

Article 7

The Bishop of Vannes and the directors of the company of India will be requested to allow only the religious persons to come to Pondicherry only who are endowed with the convent from where they started; if some are wanted to go back or it was forced to send back, they could, arrive in France, return to their monastery.

Article 8

If subsequently, it happened that any subject who wished to join Christianity in Pondicherry, his/ her endowment will be regulated by His Grace, the Bishop of San-Thome or his French sub-delegate and the administrators of the community jointly with Reverend Mother Superior.

Article 9

When His Grace the Bishop or his sub-delegate will decide incidently, for grave reason, to send back to France any religious person, he will inform the same to the governor to perform him the passage in one of the (vessels) ships of the company.

Article 10

If likewise there is in the community any religious person whose conduct and character was dangerous setting with bad reputation in the town, he/she will be sent back to France and His grace the Bishop cannot refuse her obedience upon the

request which will be made to him by the council.

Article 11

The monastery will always be provided with an ecclesiastical superior in the capacity of the delegate or ordinary and acting his part who will be selected among the Reverend Fathers Capucins established in Pondicherry, to maintain good order in the community, according to the rules of their institution and common law, and will provide all that is in the ecclesiastical competence.

Article 12

He can at the same time be an ordinary director of conscience if not another ecclesiastical man from among the French in the town will be chosen.

Article 13

The Chief Superior of Reverend Father of Capucins will be requested to furnish the subject who will be required and who will seem to be the most suitable to discharge the duties of superior of the monastery, who will perform the mass, everyday and will administer the sacraments and carry all the other duties connecting his monastery, with help of this one hundred *pagodas* per year and hundred and twenty jars of wine (white or red) and twelve jars of brandy, will be annually given as honorarium of Reverend Father, the said one hundred *pagodas* and the rest will be handed over to the superior of the home of the Reverend Father Capucins for disposal. The Reverend Father will have a resident adjacent to the monastery to be able to remain there only in the case of necessity and always with the permission of his senior or local superior, and in case it necessitates to change the superior, it will be made at the request which will be made by the council to the chief superior of Reverend Father Capucins who will be requested to provide another subject of the community to fill up this place; and this superior being a

Capucin, he will always be dependent of his chief superior who could remove him which deems fit to him informing the council, and presenting to him another one whom he will decide more capable to accept this job.

Article 14

All the girls who are present to being admitted in schools will be admitted in the monastery freely without distinction of status and condition, if there are reasons to exclude some one, it can be only with the consent of the governor. With regard to the girls who are being admitted, they will be so, effecting payment to the religious ladies for their food alone and excluding their maintenance three *pagodas* per month to which their pension has been regulated for the present, save to increase or reduce later according to the time and circumstances.

Article 15

The senior ecclesiastical superior will form the normal and common rules which will be necessary for the smooth order inside the monastery, which will be approved by His Grace the Bishop, taking into consideration the climate and situation of the country and will however take effort to the maximum possible, confirming to the constitutions and rules of the defect of religions ladies and the regulations will be communicated to the chief governor.

Article 16

The properties and the temporal affairs of the community will be administered and regulated by the second of the fort (who will preside over all the assemblies and deliberations) and two *bourgeois* (middle class persons) who will discharge for three years, the duties of administrator and will be nominated by the council.

Article 17

As the Superior Council of Pondicherry is put in charge to give the religious ladies some subsistence, genuine and sufficient for the present movement and time to come in future; it has been agreed to with the superior of the religious home and the ladies who compose it that all the pious legacies and donations made unspecified will be utilised for the relief of the present foundation and to this effect, the income from the said legacy will be handed over to the administrators. With regard to the legacies, the utilisation of which will be determined by the donors, they will be employed according to their intentions unless for the best, it is not decided convenient to change something at their tendencies.

Though the Ursulines established schools in Pondicherry, these schools were meant for the children of the French settlers in Pondicherry. However, it is not necessary to go in to further details about the agreement reached between the Congregation and the Superior Council, as well as their educational activities because of their departure from Pondicherry. This came as a great blow to the spread of girls education in Pondicherry for almost the next hundred years.

V. Missionary efforts in the field of education:

The growth of Pondicherry from a small coastal village into a port town in the course of about seventy five years, and its subsequent emergence as an established political entity in another quarter century and its final consolidation as a power to be reckoned with in the days of François Dupleix did not in any substantial measure create the climate nor provide the conditions necessary for introducing a new pattern of education for the local inhabitants. Nevertheless, the Catholic Missionaries, since the days of the Portuguese had engaged their attention to the

running of schools especially for the children of the early converts in a caste ridden Hindu society, primarily as a means to teach them the tenets of Christianity. This must be viewed in the then prevailing social context, where education, if any, was the exclusive preserve of the upper castes of Brahmins, Kshatrias and Vaisyas. The Sudras were totally excluded from this realm of privilege . The Jesuit missionaries were also very successful in bringing about a few conversions among the upper castes. Although they established schools, there was much resistance among Brahmins to send their children to such schools run by the missionaries. There was not much scope for teaching the children of lower castes in those schools where the children of the upper castes were taught. This kind of resistance was met with later even in seminaries which were started to train the youngsters for priesthood.

The first Frenchman to officially arrive in Pondicherry, then a tiny coastal village was Bellanger de Lespinary on 4th February 1673. Bellanger handed over command to François Martin, the following year, who was 'shrewd' enough to understand that a new born colony needed the strong arm of religion to lean on. He was there fore instrumental in brining a few Capucins from Madras who had been administering to the spiritual needs of the European community in Madras since 1642.

In 1695 as already mentioned by *lettre patentes* signed and granted by Louis XIV the Jesuits were authorised to establish missions in all the places where the French had established themselves and were also assured help and protection.

In these circumstances, the Capucins were placed incharge of the Europeans and the *créoles* while the Jesuits were assigned to take care of the natives.

In 1687, after the revolution which flared up in Siam, the Procurator of the Society of the Foreign Missions in the Far East came to reside in Pondicherry as noted already. Two years later, some Jesuit missionaries who had been expelled from Siam also landed in Pondicherry and found hospitality with the Capucins. In 1691, they obtained from the then French rulers in Pondicherry a piece of ground adjacent to the original Vedapureeswarar temple. The French colony, then being under the spiritual jurisdiction of the Bishop of San Thome of Mylapore, the Jesuits had no difficulty to exercise their ministry in Pondicherry.

The success of the Jesuit missionaries thanks to the process of indigenisation of Christianity encouraged by such missionaries as Robert de Nobili and Constantin Beschi in the very heartland of Hindu orthodoxy led to contraversies and even conflicts between different Catholic missionary congregations, necessitating the intervention of the Pope Gregory XV prohibiting all such customs as could not be adopted without compromising the Christian religion. This constitution is said to have been sent direct to the Jesuits in the year 1623.³⁰ The Jesuits also contrived to conceal this order from their opponents until 1680.

It is for this reason that it is proposed to deal with the Christian missionary activities in two segments:

1. Upto the year 1700 A.D

2. After 1700 A.D

1. Upto the year 1700 A.D.

After the Portuguese, Catholic missionaries carried on their mission on the east coast of Tamilnadu i.e., from San Thome in the north upto Kanyakumari in the south and from Kanyakumari upto Mangalore and Goa on the west coast of penin-

sular India Then came the Dutch Protestant missionaries, who also worked in some parts of Tamilnadu.

The question of imparting to the natives religious education in those days presented some difficulty then as it does now. The issue of medium of instruction was no less real. In the entire Tamil coastal region there were quite a few who spoke Portuguese or a mixture of Portuguese- Tamil, while the rest spoke Tamil. The Dutch missionaries therefore learnt Tamil and taught everything in that language, reserving English (which soon became popular on account of the English East India Company's progress) for teachers in training schools and seminaries. Besides this they produced the Bible both in Tamil and Telugu for the benefit of the knowledge of the natives.³¹

The Protestant Danish Missionaries also followed the same policy as the Portuguese Catholic missionaries before them . The first printing press in India was set up at Ambalakat, near Kochi by a Jesuit missionary in 1577. According to the same author, the Jesuits contrived to conceal the order of Pope Gregory XV issued in the year 1623, from their opponents until the year 1680 and in the meantime persisted in evading all of its requisitions, and in sending to Rome allegedly false reports of their proceedings. They are also accused of having assured the Pope that the use of sandal wood, the 'sacred' thread ashes of cow dung, and other Hindu customs about which so much noise had been made were only marks of civil distinctions and not at all affecting their religion; and that their use was justifiable according to the intention of the persons adopting such practices.³²

On the pretext of this explanation offered to the sovereign pontiff, they allegedly continued to carry on their proselatisation work according to their own

prescriptions," not only themselves forbidding the *parriah* converts to enter any church, but commanding all missionaries of other orders also to do the same. One Jesuit Bishop went so far as to threaten them with ecclesiastical censure, if they refuse to comply with this inhibition". This was purportedly done to conciliate the brahmins, who never allowed a heathen parriah to cross the threshold of their *pagodas*.

According to this author, " It was manifest to all other orders that the Jesuits were thus doing evil to the cause of religion for the advancement of their society's prosperity, but they were determined to go in their own way, unmoved by the most temperate remonstrances, and defying all opposition and authority. Their opponents continued loudly to complain of their adoption of several heathen customs in their mode of performing the rites and ceremonies of the church."

An incident which took place at Pondicherry in the year 1700 has been presented as evidence of this Jesuitical approach different from other countries and denominations.

"At Pondicherry, in the year 1700, they celebrated the Assumption of the Virgin Mary with unusual solemnity; but the pomp and ceremony on the occasion were deemed, by the more conscientious, injurious to the Virgin and scandalous in the eyes of the spectators. Many and loud complaints were made, because a vast quantity of drums, haudy boys, trumpets and other musical instruments were hired from the neighbouring *pagados*, together with a band of these heathen musicians who were constantly playing in the temples... The service concluded with a procession... An image of the Virgin was carried on a litter, resembling that on which the heathen bear their idols in similar processions. Instead of the glory, which usually

encompasses the head of a Romish saint, they adopted the splendid circles that are used to decorate the pagan images. Numerous persons marched on the both sides of the litter, carrying parasols to shelter the image from the sun, after the heathen manner. One with a napkin kept brushing away the flies, which was also in imitation of the heathen, who pretend that their idols are incommoded by those insects. Throughout the procession neither prayers nor hymns were chanted ,the whole being conducted, say the Romish missionaries of other orders, more like an idolatrous service than a Christian solemnity. The tumult and din that prevailed throughout are compared to the confusion attending the marriage procession of a Hindu. Later the Pope is reported to have positively commanded the "Jesuits to refrain from practices so injurious to the church and requiring all orders of missionaries upon pain of censure, to observe a uniformity of proceeding and in every respect to conform to the established rites of the Church". According to the same author, whose subjective preferences and antipathies stand out transparently clear.³³ This incident show the tolerant approach of the catholic missions which was different from those of other countries and denominations.

2. Missionary activities in Pondicherry after 1700

In the following year, i.e.,1701 an over zealous attempt on the part of the Jesuits to interfere with the Brahmins had nearly proved fatal to the French interests in Pondicherry. François Martin who was a devout Catholic succumbed to Jesuit persuasion to pull down a Hindu temple north of their Mission House, which almost drove the entire community of Brahmins to quit the town. This however was averted, thanks to the conciliatory attitude of François Martin, the French chief of the settlement

Prior to 1700, there were not many native Christians in Pondicherry.

Fr. Tachard, in one of his letters written in the year 1703 mentioned that the total population of Pondicherry in 1703 was around 30,000 out of whom about 2000 alone were Christians³⁴ in other words, only one fifteenth of the population i.e. a little less than seven percent.

As early as in 1703, the Jesuits opened a few schools for the children of the 'colons', i.e. the European residents in the settlements. One of these schools had become so well known that some years later, there were in that school as many as thirty students in all including two Europeans, one from Paris and another from London. Besides them, the son of the Governor of Cuddalore, five from Africa, one from Spain, and a few others from such far off places as Pegou, Bengal, Madras, Porto Novo, Surat, Ispahan and others were on the rolls of these schools. Evidently these schools catered to the needs of the European settlers in various parts of India and elsewhere, but had very little to do with the education of natives. They were meant only to train and educate their own men to take up the priestly career.

These initial missionary efforts were primarily the extension of Jesuit educational endeavours in Europe, especially in France, which still continued as the bulwark of Catholicism in Europe.

Missionary activities in Pondicherry were initially confined to administering the spiritual needs of the small number of European settlers in the town. However in 1714, the French Jesuits succeeded in persuading Governor Dulivier to prohibit the Hindus celebrating any of their feasts on Sundays. In a spontaneous reaction, the Hindus decided to leave the town for good, compelling the French authorities to revoke the order. The *Conseil Supérieur* then decided to respect the

local customs and ceremonies of the Hindus and advised the missionaries to be more prudent in their dealings with the local population. Since then Hindus were at liberty to follow their religion although over zealous missionaries tried to interfere in their religious affairs from time to time.

Missionary efforts in India began much earlier than in Pondicherry. The Portuguese were in fact the pioneers. Their missionary activities were not confined merely to conversions, but were supplemented by opening of schools, especially to teach the children of the newly converted natives the prayers and tenets of Christianity. Although primarily they were concerned with converting the natives, their activities extended to the field of education not only for the benefit of the converts but for others as well. As in the case of conversions, the missionaries had to face many problems even in the field of education due to caste factors. Caste consciousness was so strong among the newly converted natives that parents of children belonging to one caste were not willing to send their wards to schools where children of another caste were on the rolls. Even habitations existed away from one another according to the castes. There were also converts from among the 'out castes' the members of which were regarded as falling outside the fold of Hinduism. The missionaries had to tolerate these age old beliefs and practices of the locals.

While some missionaries were tolerant, not all were willing to accept these age old beliefs and customs, giving rise to conflicts among the missionaries of one and the same religious persuasion, and some times between different denominations and nationalities of Christianity. In the light of the above, it would be appropriate here to deal briefly with the missionary activities related to conversion

and then proceed to recount those related to education.

Secondly, Christian missionary efforts in the south of India started almost from the beginning of the 16th century, following the arrival of the Portuguese. Hence missionary activities under the French were only a continuation of the efforts which began with the efforts of the Portuguese, and then pursued further by the Danes, the Dutch and the English for almost one hundred years.

It is to be noted in this context that between 1724 and 1726, over 600 persons were baptised after a lot of effort. A great many of the converts were from the so-called low castes. Members of the high castes were not so much inclined to embrace Christianity because it was said to have preached the equality of men although it was not to be confused with the principle of equality of the French Revolution. It only preached the spiritual concept of equality of all Christians in the eyes of God.

6. Missionary efforts in field of education upto 1815

Nevertheless these initial efforts of the French missionaries in the field of education which came to fruition towards the beginning of the XVIII century, marked the beginning of modern education in Pondicherry with separate classes, standards, prescribed syllabi and curricula, examinations, time tables, promotions, detentions, etc.

These schools run by the missionaries were however found inadequate to meet the needs of the settlement. The Superior Council, at one time during this period, even considered sending the students to France for higher studies.³⁵

In 1738, Ursulines came to Pondicherry for starting girls education but had

to leave immediately as we have already noted.

In the mean while, many Christians from other regions such as Coimbatore, Thanjavur and other places flocked towards Pondicherry because of the security they could enjoy under the French flag and their favourable disposition towards the Christians. Preference was given to the local Christians in matters of employment. It was even considered by the French trading company that it was a dishonour to their religion to prefer Hindus to Christians. According to the Diarist Anandarangapillai, Christians formed only one sixteenth of the total population in Pondicherry towards the middle of the eighteenth century and almost all of them were poor. Writing in the year 1747, he recorded that only off late, a few Christians had been able to keep themselves in comfort as Europeans' *dubashes* or in other employments; they had been able to build themselves brick houses to save fifty or a hundred or two hundred or three hundred rupees. The rest were all servants and coolies .³⁶

It was around this time that Convents of indigenous sisters were started by Jesuit fathers Coeurdoux and Ansaldo (reference to carmel convent). Fr. Ansaldo, inspite of the popular prejudices of the times which did not permit the women folk to learn or unite, tried to start schools for native girls.

When Mgr. Champenois, Co adjutor succeeded Mgr. Brigot as Superior of the Mission, he built a seminary near the cathedral and founded a college in Pondicherry to provide education for the native boys, and also to those who aspired for priest hood.

It was around 1775 there were moves to grant the *Société des mission*

Étrangères the charge of the Carnatic Mission which came to be called as *Mission de malabar* by replacing the Jesuits who held sway in Pondicherry. In March 1776, consequent on the dissolution of the society of the Jesus, the Carnatic Mission was by *lettre patentes* of the Louis XVI entrusted to the care of the *Société des Missions Étrangères*, Paris, which by the decision of the *Holy See* was to take charge of all that part of South India under the care of the jesuits³⁷. It may be mentioned in passing that according to M.de Saint Estavan, the Christian population of Pondicherry had by this time increased to about 10,000.

The college opened by the Jesuits in Pondicherry some years ago had to be closed down following the suppression of the Jesuits in France in 1764. This was reopened only on 31 May 1787, and entrusted to the priests of the foreign missions (*Prêtres des Missions Étrangères*) who had succeeded the Jesuits in 1776. Here it may be noted, that the Jesuits all over the world owed their allegiance to the Pope in Rome, whereas, the Priests of the Foreign Mission were expected not to function against the interests of the French nation, although ultimately all of them owed their allegiance to Christ and the Roman Catholic church.

Although the French Indian Administration authorised its functioning in Pondicherry, no grant was given to the priests to run the institution.³⁸ Father Magny, an old Jesuit who subsequently joined the Foreign Mission was placed in charge of the college. Though the College enrolled a good number of students it stopped functioning following the repercussions of the French Revolution. Subsequently Fr. Magny returned to Tarangampadi, accompanied by a few of his students and the college ceased to function thereafter.

Apart from this *collège*, there were two other educational institutions in

Pondicherry. One was the *Séminaire Général* of Virampattinam established in 1771 by Mgr. Pigneau de Behaine. Europeans, Chinese as well as Annamites found admission in this *Séminaire*. The other was *Collège Malabare* where Indians who were reluctant to enroll in the other institution on account of caste consideration were admitted.

Till the year 1776 there was not a single Indian priest as the Jesuits contented that natives were not yet fit for priesthood. Since 1776, it was decided to enroll natives in the seminary. However caste Christian families were not prepared to send their children to the Virampattinam seminary where they feared their wards mixing with Annamese and Chinese students whom they considered as out castes. This prejudice on the part of the caste Christians led to opening of the new seminary exclusively for native children. In 1784 there were as many as 14 inmates in the seminary. At this time, the Carmel Convent founded by Father Coeurdoux had as many as 30 nuns. The Congregation of the nuns founded by Fr. Coeurdoux for members of the upper castes and the other congregation founded by Fr. Ansaldo 1750 for the members of the lower castes continued to function in Pondicherry.³⁹

The Great Revolution that broke out in France in 1789 turned out to be the most significant event that almost halted the activities of the missionaries in Pondicherry. Historians have described it as the *bourgeois revolution*. The rivalry between the *bourgeoisie* and the nobility surfaced in Pondicherry even in the days of François Dupleix, who represented the *bourgeoisie*. Hence, some of the very significant developments relating to the events connected with the other effects of the Revolution in Pondicherry and the deliberations of the Colonial Assembly deserve to be noted here. In one of its first acts, the Colonial Assembly

decided to impose on the priests in Pondicherry the civil constitution of the clergy passed by the National Assembly. Most of the priests refused to accept the dispensation and left for Madras.⁴⁰

In the meanwhile the Civil Commission deputed by the National Assembly in Paris to supervise the reorganisation of the colonies recommended that four representatives of the local population should be admitted to the Colonial Assembly whenever matters pertaining to Indians were to be discussed. Lescallier, the Civil Commissioner had further proposed the election of the new Colonial assembly consisting of only 12 members to be elected by French citizens of 25 years and above with a minimum of one year domicile in French India and owning property worth Rs 500 or with a minimum of two years domicile and paying a monthly rent of five rupees.⁴¹ Franco-Indians generally called *topas* were also given the right to vote at the elections to the Colonial Assembly subject to similar conditions, provided they were legitimate children of free parents, and were able to read and write French. Such citizens eligible to vote under this category numbered only 214 plus 14 *topas*. At this time, there were in all only 228 persons above the age of 25 who were found eligible to vote having knowledge to read and write French in Pondicherry. This conditional approach to open the doors of citizenship to those residing in the French possessions in Pondicherry stands out as a subtle device on the part of the French in India to extend their influence over the native population through the imposition of the supremacy of the knowledge system of the day and at the same time use their language as an inducement to draw the local population into their own cultural orbit. This cannot therefore be construed as one of the revolutionary measures of the French Revolution. The number of local citizens who possessed the knowledge to read and write French serve merely as an index

of the spread of missionary education among the wealthy citizens of the city even though religionwise, data of such persons are not available. However it is clear that the import of western education was quite insignificant, in the insignificant French Possessions in India.

Moreover, these people could not have acquired the knowledge to read and write French through their education in the *thinnai-p-palligal*. Although the data relating to the religious affiliation of those natives who possessed knowledge to read and write French are not available, it may certainly be said that quite a number of local merchant families which were actively involved in trade and commerce had accepted its utility at least in trade and commerce.

Besides, the question of the language unlike religion was not regarded as an emotive issue in those days. Language was more or less considered as a tool for survival especially by those belonging to the merchant community, the members of which were a highly mobile lot and were always prepared to move from one place to another, always looking for most of all, security to ply their trade without hindrance. The acquisition of the knowledge of French and other foreign languages must have been regarded as comparable to the present day craze for a degree in business management. Moreover neither the spirit of patriotism in the true sense of the word nor linguistic chauvinism was a powerful factor in public life in Pondicherry.

The fact that such notable persons as Candappa Mudaliar, Nidarajappayer, native Police Chief Veranaickér, and many others in the service of the French were adequately well versed in French, besides their own mother tongue, stands out as evidence of the steadily growing importance of the French language from the day

days of French rule in Pondicherry.

In both the Portuguese and the French company's schools, the missionaries played an important part. Coming to India as they did as chaplains to the Catholic servants of these companies, they taught Christian doctrines in their schools and often guided their educational policy. They also extended the scope of the company's schools far beyond the limits of the settlement. Sometimes with monetary help from their company too, they started schools for non-Christian children gathering them from the neighbouring villages and not only educating them but often feeding and clothing and even supplying them with books and slates.⁴²

After the arrival of Protestant missionaries at Tarangampadi on the south-east coast of Tamil Nadu in 1706, their efforts were led by two missionaries Ziegenbalg and Plutschou. They immediately began to study Portuguese and opened schools for Indian children. These missionaries started schools in 1725 for 'heathen' and Muhammadan children and four missionary schools for Christians. In the former schools, they were unable to teach religion except natural religion owing to the opposition from the parents of the children as well as from the lay or non-Christian teachers whom they were forced to employ due to lack of educated Christians. They therefore lost interest in these schools and concentrated their activity on the missionary schools and on direct missionary work.

These missionary agencies in Indian education are important, not for their achievement- though this was considerable in the circumstances- but for the impetus, in fact, the start, they gave to government enterprise. Missionaries, especially if they belonged to nations or religious denominations other than from the ruling British East India Company, were at first suspected by the government, and natu-

rally also by the Indians. But they soon won the people over by the free education they imparted and the general raising of the standard of literacy and morals they effected among the local population.

The involvement of missionaries in the educational field was closely inter linked with their efforts at prosetization of the native population and not prompted by purely altruistic motives. Even here they had to adopt different strategies, and each one of these congregations had to change their strategies to meet the requirements of different native communities, because the caste ridden Indian society was driven by irrenconciliable customs and practices, as among the priestly caste of Brahmins and the power wielding Kshatriya and the wealthy Vaisya castes ruling at the top, with the Sudras and the outcastes languishing at the bottom.

After the decline of the Portuguese power towards the middle of the 17th century, the influence of the Catholic missionaries was on the decline, while that of the Protestant missionaries of the Danish, Dutch and English origin on the ascendancy. But with the arrival of the French , the efforts of the Catholic missionaries gained momentum .However from the time of the French Revolution till the return of the monarchy in France in 1814 the mission in India could get neither missionaries nor money from France to carry on their missionary work here. Further the dissolution of the *Société des Mission Étrangères* in 1809 dealt another severe blow to missionary efforts in Pondicherry. Even before this Pondicherry passed into the hands of the British in 1793 and remained with them till 1816.

In the midst of these political developments, neither the French nor their missionaries had any kind of respite or tranquility which were pre-requisites for

them to devote any serious and consistent attention to activities that would have helped them promote the cause of education among the native population, although this objective was never out of their mind. But the very process of evangelisation itself made it imperative for them not to neglect the cause of the education at least as a tool to keep alive the fire of the Christian religious fervor burning especially amongst the progenies of the French settlers and the native converts.

VII. Education for the natives

As for the education of the indigenous population, there were Brahmins, a very large number of Vaisyas as members of the trading community or cow herds, and the Sudra castes who constituted the dominant groups wielding influence in the civil society. There was no question of education of the outcastes. However the French with the view to attract them to their religion issued an *Ordonnance* as early as on 12 January, 1747 to provide instruction to the slaves.⁴³ The French equated the outcastes to the 'slaves', although Indian historians do not agree that the status of the outcastes was as bad as that of the slaves.

Streets in Pondicherry were laid out for each caste separately. All the tiled and terraced houses were provided with what were known as *thazhwāram* or *thinnai* (verāndahs). These *thinnais* served as schools and were known as *thinnai-palligal*. Children from other castes were not allowed in schools meant for specific castes. To begin with, the students wrote on slates stand with their fingers and then on the palm leaves with stylos. Books, if at all they had used, were mostly in palm leaves. These schools were run by *pandits* and *vathiārs*, well versed in local languages, religious lore and arithmetic.

Thus the evolution of French settlements in India had taken place alongside

the activities of the European missionaries with their efforts of conversion of the natives to their faith. During this period, though feeble in attempt, the French had taken up the promotion of education as it was intended mainly for their own children and rarely for the children of Caste Hindus. They felt that conversion as well as education of the natives should go side by side since their very aim was to teach the gospel of Christ to the new converts. Though they could not achieve much in the field of education during this period, they laid the foundation of an educational system which developed further with the establishment of educational institutions by the Government, the Christian missionaries and private agencies which is dealt in the ensuing chapters in detail.

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