CHAPTER III

SOCIAL LIFE

The social life of the Tamils of Pondicherry and Karikal was not much different from the surrounding districts of the Madras Presidency. Hindus formed the majority of the population. Tamil Christians and Muslims formed a minority.

The most striking feature of the Tamil society in the settlements of Pondicherry and Karikal was the institution of caste. Caste came to play an important part in ritual status, economic and political life. As will be seen in the course of this analysis, the caste rules were rigid and inter-caste marital connections were not permissible. Caste had much influence in determining the vocational professions of men. Social precedence was determined by caste superiority, those belonging to the higher castes naturally enjoyed certain privileges to which the lower ones were not entitled. Tamil society was further complicated by the division into Right and Left hand castes.
In this study, the way of life of the various castes, the numerous caste disputes, and the role of the dominant castes is taken up for consideration. The importance of the Christian Community within the social fabric, their customs and manners, the caste distinctions among Christians, all form part of this study. The last decades of the nineteenth century marked a period of social transition resulting from the introduction of the 'Renunciation' policy.

COMMUNITIES

The Tamils in the settlements of Pondicherry and Karikal belonged to different castes. The numerous castes found in these areas are grouped into three broad divisions: -- Brahman, Non-Brahman, and the Pariahs. The Brahmins may be divided into three main groups -- i) The Smartala, the devotees of Siva, ii) The Sri Vaishnavas, the devotees of Vishnu and iii) the Madhvas, who worshipped both Vishnu and Siva. Among the Brahmins, the Smartala were the most numerous and Sri Vaishnavas were next in number.

The following were the Non-Brahman castes quite prevalent in Pondicherry and Karikal: -- Vellalas - Tondaimandala Vellala, Thozhia
Vellala and Tuluva Vellalas. The other castes being, Kavarai, Yadavas, Chetty, Comis, Patnulkarsans, Kaikkolar, Pattaman, Senuikkudaiyan, Vaniyars, Naicker, Seniyan, Shanans, Kusavan, Vannan, Sembadavar, Ambattan, Kammalan, Palli, Chekli, Vania, Idaiyan, Kanakkan and Reddi. The Pariahs formed the majority of the population in Pondicherry. At Karikal however, the Vellalas were the single largest group, the Pariahs came next.

In Society, the Brahmans occupied a very high position. The Brahmans were traditionally priests, but in course of time many of the Brahmans took to various employments. They were engaged as messengers by the French. Some were engaged in assaying gold. Brahmans were also engaged in trade and as Company functionaries. In Karikal particularly, many Brahmans were landowners, and some were Mirasdars. Even as early as the eighteenth century, there was a Brahman street at Pondicherry.

1. Bedier -- Statistique de Pondichéry -- Castes in Pondichéry et districts en 1824 (n.p.)

2. Cordier -- Historique et Statistique de Karikal en 1825 - p. 402

Vellalas 7179, Pariahs 4197, Total population of Karikal settlements 33401
Towards 1752, the Brahmans population at Pondicherry was nearly 3000. The troops of the French East India Company were fortified in the Siva temple at Pondicherry, and they chased away the Brahmans for indulging in spying activities for the English. They fled to Negapatnam and returned after some time. Since then, their number dwindled and in 1870 there were only some 200 families at Pondicherry. A contemporary writer observes, that "the Brahmans of Pondicherry are ignorant, lazy, degenerated and despised by the other castes. Intelligent, but ostensibly venerated and living upon the blind credulous nature of the masses".

The Vellalas occupied the next position in the social rung. They formed the cultivating caste par excellence of the Tamil country. The Vellalas were the most numerous amongst the caste Hindus and by common consent were the first in the social scale amongst the Sudras.

4. Ibid., - p. 502
The educated among the Vellalas called themselves Modalies. At Pondicherry and Karikal most of the Vellalas were engaged in cultivation, trade, and government service.

Apart from the Vellalas, there were other caste Hindus who formed the artisan and merchant groups. The artisan castes formed a rather distinct unit vis-à-vis the cultivating castes. Among them a special position came to be occupied by the group of five castes known collectively as Panchalas. They comprise five occupational sections: Tattan (goldsmith), Kannan (brass-smith), Tachchan (carpenter), Kal-Tachchan (stonemason), and Kollan (blacksmith). The kaikkolars were a caste of weavers and some of them took the title of Modal. They occupied the first rank amongst the weaving community. The Seniyans specialised in weaving silk cloth. The Kusavans or Velans were potters by traditional occupation. They seemed to occupy a lower position in the social scale than the Tattans and, perhaps the Tachchans. The

Navarais were a caste of weavers. Abbé Carré, a foreign traveller observed that they used the right hand in their work and therefore were held in high esteem than the other artisans, who used the left hand in their work. The other artisan caste was that of the Shana, and it was this caste which made palm juice. The Ambattans a caste of barbers ranked fairly low in the ritual and social hierarchy like the Shana. The Vannans, or washerman, occupied a lower social position than the other servicing castes. Their occupation, the cleaning of soiled clothes, is considered as pollution in the Hindu scheme of values.

The merchant classes consisted of the Chetty's and Comitis. The Chettys and Comitis appear to have been Telugus, who migrated to the Tamil country and settled down as merchants. The Chettys were traders, shopkeepers, moneylenders. The Comitis were shopkeepers who sold various kinds of grain, vegetables, spices, butter, oil, and other articles. The Vaniyan were a Tamil caste of oil-pressers. The

Sengikkumiyans at Pondicherry were noted for their trading activities. The Nattamis were generally merchants and traders, mainly concerned with tanneries. The Yadavas a caste of herdsmen, shepherds and cattle-breeder formed one of the most numerous castes at Pondicherry. Some of them had the title Pillai.

Amongst the low castes, the Panchum Tamiim consisted of the Pariah, Pallan, Shikli and the Toti. The Shakliyan, being a Tamil caste of leather workers, the Toti a particular class from which village servants were chosen. The Pariahs who formed the bulk of the population, were poor people who were employed in the lowest and hardest work and were seen in all kinds of jobs. The Pariahs were in fact comparable to the serfs in other countries. The contempt and aversion with which the other castes and particularly the Brahmans regarded these people were carried to such an extent that in many places their presence or even their foot prints were considered sufficient to defile the entire neighbourhood. They were forbidden to cross a street in

9. Ananda Ranga Pillai (Poullé in French) was a Yadava.

Finally, we have the Reddi's, originally a non-Tamil speaking caste, who migrated from the Telugu region to Pondicherry. They had also settled down in various places in Tamil Nadu. They were a class of cultivators, comparable in social position to the Vellalas. In course of time, they came to own vast tracts of land in Pondicherry.

RIGHT & LEFT HAND CASTES: An important feature of the caste system in Pondicherry and Karikal is the division of the castes into Right hand and Left hand. This peculiar tradition is found only in southern India. Occupation and status seemed to have had nothing to do with this strange division of castes into two warring groups -- Right hand (Valangai) and Left hand (Ilangai). The cause of this division is lost in obscurity. T.E. Ellis thought that the intercourse with foreign nations brought about certain changes in the habits of a section of the

11. Lettres édifiantes et Curieuses -- (Lyon, 1819). Vol 13., p. 22
people, on account of which the landed proprietors, who were generally conservative, had a dislike for them, and such social dissensions brought about the Valangai and Idangai cases. However, it should be noted, that active intercourse with foreigners dates only from the seventeenth century, whereas one finds these divisions prevailing even much earlier. Gustav Oppert is of the opinion that it was the grouping of the industrialists versus the agriculturists, the former under the Jains, and the latter under the Brahmins. But, it should be observed, that this distinction of the castes was not based purely on the division into agriculturists, industrialists or traders. To cite an example, the Chettys, a trading community, was counted as one of the left hand castes, whilst another trading community, the Contis, belonged to the right hand castes. Similarly, whereas the Kavars, a caste of weavers belonged to the right hand caste, the other weavers belonged to the left hand caste. It is therefore quite clear that the division into these two classes was not based on difference in occupation or religion.

Abbé Dubois thought that the causes for the disputes among the two castes were partly social and partly religious. According to him, "the sole cause of the contest is the right to wear slippers, or to ride through the streets in a palanquin or on horse back during the marriage festivals. Sometimes it is the privilege of being escorted on certain occasions by armed retainers, sometimes that of having a trumpet sounded in front of a procession, or being accompanied by native musicians at public ceremonies. Perhaps it is simply the particular kind of musical instrument suitable to such occasions that is in dispute, or perhaps it may be the right of carrying flags of certain colours or certain devices during these ceremonies."

It may be said that the various theories propounded have not given a convincing explanation of the origin of this division. The causes for disputes among them, indicated by Abbé Dubois, would imply,


that the origin of this division should be attributed to social causes rather than to foreign contact. As years rolled by, the artisan and trading castes were becoming important in society, and as they grew wealthy, there was a tendency to claim the privileges of the landed classes. In the context of such an attempt, there must have been keen competition among the castes. The ones which gained better privileges came to be considered as the Right Hand castes, the rest as the Left Hand castes. The Right Hand caste comprised among other castes the Vellalas and the Parias, who were landlords and cultivators, and if the other castes joined them, it is clear that the artisan and mercantile communities aimed at attaining the status originally accorded to the agriculturists, and that resulted in the division into Right and Left hand castes. The question arises why they should call themselves as Right and Left hand castes. It is well known that amongst the Hindus, the Right hand is used for purposes such as eating, writing, and performing religious ceremonies, consequently having precedence over the left hand. It is quite plausible that this social habit
served as the basis for the social division.

The division into Right and Left hand castes existed even among
the upper caste Christian converts. The Pariahs were of the Right hand
caste.

CHRISTIANS: The Christian converts were largely drawn from the lowest
castes, viz., Pariahs. From the upper castes, quite a large number of
Vellalas, Modalis, Pillais and Reddis were converted to Christianity.
Whilst tracing the origin of the local Christians in Pondicherry, one
has to mention that prior to the year 1706 there were no local Christian
congregations as such in Pondicherry. It was during the beginning of
the eighteenth century that Tamil Christians began to migrate to Pondi-
cherry. The Rev. Fr. Tachard in one of his letters states that the
total population of Pondicherry in 1703 was about 30,000 out of which
there were about 2,000 Christians. Towards the middle of 1725 this

15. Cf. Appendix II - for a detailed list of the Right and Left hand
castes at Pondichéry. The privileges enjoyed by the respective
groups and the disputes between them is discussed later in
this chapter.
figure rose to approximately 1,000. Besides the Tamil Christians who migrated to Pondicherry there were several Telugu Reddis from the Godavari region. The Reddis were quite well to do and in due course of time they formed a separate settlement known as ‘Reddiarpalayam’ in the suburbs of Pondicherry. The earliest Reddi Christian settlement was around 1715.

MUJIRAS: The Muslims formed nearly one-twentieth of the whole population of the French settlements in India. They formed two groups, either Pattanis, i.e., descendants of the original invaders, or (more frequently) Choulis whose ancestors were forcibly converted to Islam.

DOMINANT CASTES: Amongst the castes enumerated earlier, the following castes: Vellalas, Costis, Reddis, Yadavas, Chetty, Kolalis, Pillais and caste Christians came to play a dominant rôle in the political and cultural development of Pondicherry and Karikal. Even the

Parishes by sheer numerical strength played a notable part in the politics of the region.

**JOINT FAMILY:** The typical Hindu family is the joint family. Even during the eighteenth century French travellers observed the units of joint family in the settlements. The eldest male member and his wife played an important role in the affairs of the joint family and were the deciding factors in matters of family and religion, joint investment of capital and other matters relating to birth, marriage and death. In the joint family property was held in common. The senior male member of the traditional joint family controlled the family's finances. The distinguishing feature of the system is, that it provided protection to the members during unemployment and sickness. It was also a centre of varied activities and amusement. But this system was not without its defects. It encouraged lack of initiative and self-confidence.

17. Anonymous - Telugu Christians (compiled from British India, Guntakal St. Joseph’s Press.)
The institution of marriage was not only hallowed but also enjoined by religion, and so marriage was considered a sacred union.

A Hindu who became a widower found himself in almost the same position as a bachelor. The latter was looked upon as having no social status.

The practice of child marriage was common among Brahmans and other high caste Hindus. Among Brahmans the usual age of marriage was between 7 and 10. The average age of marriage for females among Brahmans was between 6 and 7. The betrothal ceremony was considered to be very sacred, since then the bride came under the control of the bride-groom.

Most of the castes which were further sub-divided into sub-castes were endogamous. These restrictions made the Hindu society a closed society and prevented the free intercourse between members of different castes. The Hindus, as far as possible married within their own family circles. But intermarrying within the family circle had certain restrictions. An uncle might marry the daughter of his

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sister, but in no case could he marry the daughter of his brother. A brother's children might marry a sister’s children, but the children of two brothers or of two sisters might not intermarry. Among the descendants of the same stock, the male line always had the right of contracting marriage with the female line, but the children of the same line could never intermarry. Such rules regarding marriages were universally and invariably observed by all the castes from the Brahmans down to the Pariah. It was obligatory for the male line to have marriage alliances with the female line.

Polygamy was not ordinarily practised. It was, however, prevalent among the higher classes, especially among the rulers of the country. In the opinion of the Jesuits, polygamy among the Hindus has been one of the greatest obstacles in the conversion of the idolaters into Christians. Among certain castes polygamy was common. The Kaikola and the Jadar, the two weaving communities, had plurality of wives. The Pallan and the Pariah also had more than one wife.


20. Abbé Dubois -- P. 40.
But among the higher castes, like the Brahmans and the Vellalas, a man could marry another wife while the first wife was living, under certain circumstances only, if the first wife was barren or when all the issues had been daughters. Even then, the man could marry a second wife only with the consent of the first wife, and the first wife was still regarded as the chief wife and retained her prerogatives. Divorce was unthinkable among the higher castes. This could be had only when the wife was accused of adultery. Any violation of the marriage tie was observed only among the lower castes.

Contemporary observers like Ananda Ranga Pillai and foreign travellers give graphic accounts of the marriage ceremony. The practice among all castes to demand bride-price from the bride-groom's party seems to have been widely prevalent. The expenses were borne by the bride-groom's party and it was the custom to have the marriage

performed in the former's house. The practice among the rich to forego the bride-price, and bear the expenses, evolved gradually into the dowry system. This desire to gain honour by paying dowries should have become the custom among the respectable castes in the nineteenth century, when it became more difficult to find a suitable partner for the girl.

The marriage ceremony among the Brahmins lasted for five days. They had to perform several rituals. The practice of tying the 'tali' was adopted by the Brahmins from the Tamils when they settled in the Tamil country. Marriages among the other caste Hindus were equally solemn, though less elaborate. Generally one of the mendicant Brahmins performed the ceremony. In each caste, custom differed as to the manner in which the bride was demanded, the amount paid, the value of jewels etc. The marriage festivities would end with a solemn procession through the streets, which generally took place at night illuminated with torch light, and there was much fanfare and fireworks. The
couple (if they were wealthy) would be seated in an open palanquin richly decorated. The palanquin and the couple were adorned with flowers and jewels. As the procession wound its way across the town, relatives and friends came out to greet the couple, and the women performed the ceremony of Aratti to counteract the effects of the evil eye, while the men would offer presentations. After the procession reached the pandal, dancing girls entertained the guests. The marriages were mostly held in the months of March, April, May and June. It was likely that the Hindus selected these months, as the agricultural work was suspended, and the crops would have been harvested before this period.

POSITION OF WOMEN: The position of women during the period under review was quite deplorable. Their only vocation in life was to minister to man's physical pleasures and wants, they were considered

22. A.R.P. - Vol V - passim and also R. Challes - op. Cit, p. 95.
incapable of developing any of those higher mental qualities which would make them more worthy of consideration and also more capable of playing a useful part in life. In Hindu society, the woman in the family corresponds roughly to the Sudra in the caste system. Such feminine occupations as knitting or needlework were quite unknown to women.

Once a woman became a widow she was held in much less respect than other women. If they had not given birth to children, then they were treated with contempt. A widow was expected to be under mourning till her death and was forbidden to participate in amusements and festivities for her very presence was considered an evil omen.

Among the Brahmans and other caste Hindus the widows were forbidden to remarry. But amongst the lower castes this was allowed.

24. Ibid., p. 337.

25. At Pondicherry the marriage of widows was prohibited amongst the following castes:—Brahmans, Rajahs, Vellalas, Kavarai, Comti,
Concubinage was particularly common in large towns and was facilitated by the presence of the courtesans in society.

**DEVADASI**. The Devadasi system is an ancient institution in the Tamil country. The rise of the system as a separate caste seems to date from about the 9th and 10th centuries A.D. during which much activity prevailed in the Tamil country in the matter of building temples and elaborating the services held in them. After the break up of the Vijayanagar empire, they lost their social position due to lack of patronage and support. Though they lost their social position, they continued their profession. These girls had to dance and sing in the temple services and also when the images were carried out through the town in procession. Hence, the common name for them everywhere is Nautch-girls or Dancing girls. They were dedicated to the service of the god, but also gave their favours to his worshippers. They indulged in obscene songs and dances. Abbé Dubois observes, "their duties, how-

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Yadava, Chetty, Reddi, Kanakkan, Nattaman, Senaikkudaiyan, Mochi, Vania Rajputs, Kammalan, Kammavan and Patnulkarans. The low castes Palli and Pariah were allowed to remarry. (Décision du Comité Consultatif de Jurisprudence Indienne, du 5 Juin, 1832).
ever, are not confirmed to religious ceremonies. Ordinary politeness requires that when persons of any distinction make formal visits to each other, they must be accompanied by a certain number of these courtesans. To dispense with them would show a want of respect towards the person visited, whether the visit was one of duty or politeness."

Hindus have also been accustomed to hire them to dance and sing in their houses at weddings, or other festive occasions, and even when entertaining European officials. These girls were recruited to temples by various methods. Generally they were from the weavers castes. At Pondicherry, they were also from the other castes, but not from any caste inferior to the Kammalan. Some of the Devadasis were brought up by Brahmans, before dedicating, the girl was presented to the chief priest of the temple, who examined her for her beauty and accomplishments. Those who were attached to

27. Abbé Dubois, op. Cit, p. 337.

(Paris. 1887) - p. 244.
the temples, received a fixed salary from the temple. As the amount was small, they were obliged to sell their favours. During the early part of the nineteenth century (1818) the dancing girls at Vilnoor temple were prohibited by the government from singing. In May 1835, they were given permission after repeated representations.

During the period under review this class formed a separate caste, having its own customs and rules of etiquette. Dancing girls dedicated to their usual profession of caste, were formally married in a temple to a sword or a God by some men of their caste. There were two divisions, among them too, Right Hand and Left Hand caste.

**SUTTEE** The custom of suttee or burning of a widow along with the body of her dead husband was prevalent in some parts of the Tamil country even in the 19th century. It was confined to Tanjore and Trichinopoly districts alone, though a few cases occurred in other

29. In Chingleput district of the Madras Presidency, it was the custom among the weavers to dedicate the eldest daughter to be Devadasi.

districts too. In French India, one notices that it was prevalent in Karikal. Early in the 19th century when a widow attempted to commit suttee, the then Governor of the French settlements intervened and proposed to pay the widow a pension of Rs. 25. The widow hailing from Tirunallar district of Karikal thanked the Governor for his kindness, but was determined to commit suttee.

The custom of suttee was mostly prevalent among few castes. The contempt with which the widows were treated was the primary reason for this act. Besides this, the Brahmins induced them to commit the act on the plea that they would live again with their husbands with greater glory and comfort in the next birth. It is also evident that Suttee was voluntary, but not general. Though there is evidence to show that some widows committed suttee voluntarily, it was more due to the entreaties of the relatives, and also due to the practice of


32. P.A. - Ms. 6191

33. Comité Consultatif, of Cit.
administering drugs, which deprived the person of her senses. It will
be interesting to note that the Brahmans conducted the ceremony lead-
ing to this abominable act. They used to recite mantras in a loud
tone and even set fire to the funeral pyre, after emptying the jars
of ghosa on the wood. Tavernier remarked that in the greater part of
the Coromandel Coast the widow did not burn herself and that she was
buried alive along with the dead body of her husband. Buchanan speak-
ing about this custom among the Vellalas and Panchalas, remarked that
this custom was rarely practised and that for at least a century it
had not been practised. However, there were few such instances in
the Tamil speaking areas during the early part of the 19th century.

SLAVE TRADE. When European mercantilism extended its activities
on the coastal areas in southern India, slaves were widely exported
by the Portuguese, the Dutch and the French. On account of the lacuna
of statistical data of the slave trade with foreign countries, it is

34. Thurston -- Castes and Tribes of Southern India (1909) Vol I - p.127
35. In Madras Presidency Suttee was deemed to be illegal and punishable
in the Criminal Court by the Regulation XVII of 1829. - Judicial
Consultations, dt. 2 February, 1830.
not possible to get a clear picture of the dimension of slave trade carried on by the foreigners. On the Malabar Coast, the Koplaha sold the kidnapped children to the supercargoers of European vessels, more especially to the French at Mahé and the Dutch at Cochin. The French at Mahé did not, in any way, control the export of slaves from their settlement. The government at Pondicherry maintained a particular register of slaves. As per this list, 166 children, all from the age group between 7 and 15 years were sold in auction or on consent with a price varying from Rs. 3 to Rs. 20. This gives the total figure exported. Such transactions were generally confirmed by a deed executed before local officials, which absolute right over the slave and in his or her future issues was also reserved in favour of the purchaser. Exchange of slaves was also permitted at Pondicherry. Thus the French had neither interfered with nor abolished the custom of slavery in their settlements.

36. A. Balessart - Souvenirs d'un voyage dans l'Inde exécuté de 1834 à 1839 (Paris, 1843) - p. 47.


Even as early as 1739, there are references to the transport of slaves from the Arcot region to Pondicherry. It is interesting to note, that in January 1747 the 'Conseil Supérieur' ordered all those who had slaves, to educate them in the Catholic faith and also have them baptised within a period of one year. Apart from exporting them, quite a few served as domestic servants. At Karikal in the year 1737 there were nearly 311 slaves. Most of the slave children were female and were sold by the Tamils. The buyers were mostly French, some Pillais and Muslims. The export of slaves was mainly to Isle de France and Bourbon. Slave trade in the French settlements continued even in the 19th century. It was only on May 3, 1854, that the 'Senatus Consulte' issued an order under the authority of Napoléon III putting an end to all forms of slaves trade and slave labour in the French colonies.

CASTE COUNCILS. The caste system played a vital rôle through the Council or 'Sabha'. Abbé Dubois noticed the decisive rôle of the

caste councils during his sojourn in the Tamil country. He observed
that it was this system which was mainly responsible for the proper
working of the Hindu social structure through the ages.

In matters of social administration, each caste was an
autonomous unit. In almost every village each sub-caste had its head-
man, known as "Nattanaikkaran", 'Kariyaathan', 'Ur-Kavandan' etc.,
The headman's jurisdiction was usually confined to petty matters of
social discipline. Appeals against his decision and disputes of a
grave character were referred to a higher tribunal, consisting usually
of a Council of Headmen, presided over by a 'Nattan', or 'Ejaman'.

At Pondicherry and Karikal these Caste Councils dealt with disputes
even regarding property rights. Ananda Ranga Pillai remarks that at
times the Governor nominated from amongst the leading members of the
different castes, a panel to adjudicate on such matters and draw up
an award. The decision was written by the Court and town accountant

43. Ibid, -- Lettre du Nabob Dost Alikhan an Gouverneur de Pondichéry -
esclaves - 5 Sept. 1738.
44. Ibid, No. 29.
and later approved and signed by the Governor, N.Duplex. The different caste councils combined when there arose any grave matter of general interest to be decided.

The head of a caste was elected by an assembly of the particular caste. When the Headman died, normally his son succeeded. Only in instances when he was sent out by the caste or government (government had the right, when the person was of bad conduct), the successor had to be accepted by the assembly. This assembly of the caste was to be authorised by the police and comprised of all heads of the family of the particular caste. None from the external castes were allowed. They were to be above sixteen years of age, and met at the police station and the proceedings were supervised by a Saiur in the presence of European police officer. The Headman was elected by majority vote.

The matters which came before the caste Council were for the most part connected with marriage and morals, prohibited occupations,

45. P.A. No. 16.
46. Ibid.,
47. Dubois, op. Cit; P.33.
religious offences etc. In the nineteenth century one notices changes
in their function. All caste disputes to be adjudicated were to be
represented by the respective Heads and duly recognized 'notables'.

Matters of a simple nature were taken to the local police. Later,
they were taken before the 'Juge de Paix', and on appeal, to the Governor.

Other disputes of a more serious nature, even if it were within one
caste or between several castes, relating to their religion, customs,
and privileges were to be exclusively decided by the Governor.

**URBAN & RURAL LIFE.** The town of Pondicherry which had suffered the
ravages of wars was rebuilt by F. Martin towards the end of the seven-
teenth century. By 1706, the population of the settlement of Pondi-
cherry rose to about 50,000 inhabitants. The town was divided into
two sectors -- 'ville blanche' (white town) and 'ville noir' (Black
town), separated by a canal. The white town was occupied during the
18th century and until the latter half of the 19th century by the

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49. Comité Consultatif, op. Cit. - Dec 1826 - Rapport du juge de
paix au Gouverneur Cordier.


Europeans, Créoles and some Topas. The Black town was populated by
the Hindus, Christians and Muslims. From the Diary of Ananda Ranga
Pillaí one observes that many of the streets in the Black town were
named after communities, viz., Brahman Street, Vellala Street, Saní-
yan Street, Chetty Street etc.,

During the Governorship of Lenoir, Pondicherry made rapid
progress in the construction of houses. Earlier, the houses were
built of mud and wood, but since 1721, with bricks and tiles. A
contemporary traveller observes that the town was charming, particu-
larly the sector occupied by the Europeans. But, during the siege
of Pondicherry by the English in 1763, the entire white town was razed
to the ground. This part of the town was rebuilt later. Karikal
town had nearly 700 houses built of bricks and tiles, and hundreds
of thatched huts in the suburbs. The population of Karikal town in
1730 was around 5000. Muslims were greater in number than at Pondi-

cerry.

54. Archives Coloniales - C 80. Lettre de Tessigny au Contrôleur
général, 25 Janvier 1740.
By the middle of the nineteenth century, the town of Pondicherry, had numerous imposing buildings in the white sector. The style of architecture being Gothic. Pondicherry was built neatly, compactly, as an ordered whole, and in pursuance of a definite plan. Even in the Black town there were some houses noted for their style, viz., the House of Ananda Ranga Pillai (18th century) and that of Kattukara Appauppalé. These houses had spacious ground floors, with an open courtyard and huge columns.

Social life in the settlements, both in the urban and rural areas was characterized by caste distinctions. The Shanars and other lower castes were deemed to pollute a Brahman if they approached the latter within a specific distance. The pollution at sight was also prevalent and perhaps the most extreme form of pollution. Even among the lower castes there were certain gradations. A washerman or a barber would not touch a Parish though he himself was very low in the social scale. These untouchables were denied drawing water from the village
wells, for their very presence was deemed to pollute the place. The Parsees were segregated both in the urban and rural areas. The higher castes kept them at a distance.

Pondicherry, the capital of the settlements, naturally absorbed most of the trade. Merchants from different centres had their agents at Pondicherry. Besides the merchant and industrial classes in the town, there was a class of wealthy merchants and dubashis who played a very vital role in urban life. European participation in the expanding commercial activity in the region could not have been sustained without the help of a native mercantile group. Merchant castes, like the Chetty's and Costis played an important rôle. They financed lucrative branches of business as well as advanced money to the government. They were enterprising and invested in betel, indigo, and arrack farms. Some financed weaving and artisan trades. Some sponsored overseas trading ventures. During the early decades of French settlement in Pondicherry, many of these merchants acted as

intermediaries between the French and Indian communities. As go-betweens, they were called dubashi. The need for dubashi stemmed from European ignorance of the laws and habits of the country. The dubash performed other tasks, like mediating in caste disputes, supplying provisions to the French community etc. As the eighteenth century drew to a close, the importance of the dubash came to an end. Once the French were firmly established, the role of the dubashis changed. Henceforth, they had to earn their wealth in more pedestrian ways.

The Tamil country is well known for its corporate village life from the earliest times. At Pondicherry and Karikal life in the villages resembled that in the rest of the Tamil areas. The 'Communes' in both the settlements formed a cluster of villages, large and small. The villages formed distinct units by themselves, self-sufficient in the matter of most of the fundamental necessities, and even of the several comforts of life. Wealthy Tamils built choultries for the

56. Ananda Ranga Pillai a Yadava was dubash to Dupleix.
poor and for the benefit of travellers. This was open to all castes.

Regarding food habits, of the Brahmans, it must be noted that they never touched meat, or fish and anything that contained life, such as eggs etc., vegetables formed their principal food. People of other castes consumed meat, but even amongst them, only the lowest class consumed meat openly. Many among the upper castes did not venture to cook meat in their own houses and had it cooked in a secluded corner of their cowsheds. On festive occasions such as wedding, meat was not offered to the guests. It was the Pariahs who ate meat openly and also carrion. Rice was the staple food of the wealthy, and ragi, cambu, and cholam formed the normal diet of the poorer classes. Pulses, vegetables and condiments were also consumed. Betel was chewed by almost all the classes.

Dress also is in some ways distinctive of caste in the broader sense of the term. Among Brahmans, men were required by tradi-

tion to wear the eight-cubit piece of cloth or vashti after initiation.

Differences between castes were carried further in the matter of women's dress. The principal garment being the polavadi, but the differences in the length of the cloth and the manner in which it was worn varied. Among Tamil Brahmans, the length of the polavadi being eighteen cubits, amongst non-Brahmans it varied between ten and twelve cubits. Among the Pariah women, it was smaller in size.

A good variety of ornaments were worn by both men and women, particularly by the women. The wealthy adorned themselves with silver and gold ornaments. The poor wore copper bracelets.

The custom of painting the forehead with a variety of marks was prevalent. Men mostly had the potti mark, the Saivites had three horizontal stripes on the forehead, and the Vaishnavites were distinguished by the three vertical lines from the nose upwards. The women also had the potti mark, they also painted the face, neck, arms, legs

and every part of the body that can visibly with a deep yellow cosmetic.

SOCIAL CEREMONIES. According to the Hindu Dharma Sastras, a Hindu

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has to pass through many Sanskaras to purify his body. From the moment

of birth to death, he has to undergo these ceremonies as his religious

obligation. The main Sanskaras according to Hindu law givers are the

following: (i) Pumsavana (male production ceremony) (ii) Name Karna

(name giving) (iii) Anna Prasana (food giving) (iv) Upanayana (initia-

tion) (v) Vivaha (marriage) and vi) funeral ceremonies. Contemporary

sources clearly indicate that even in the nineteenth century as it was

in the preceding centuries those ceremonies were observed most scrup-

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ulously. Nagendra Ranga Pillai refers to the custom among the Tamils

to perform purification ceremonies on the occasion of deaths or marriages

by means of Brahmans who received money or rice in return for their

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services.

59. Purifactory rites.

60. Abbé Dubois, -- Hindu Manners, customs and ceremonies - passim.


(July 11, 1760)
Like marriage ceremonies the funeral ceremonies of the Hindus and others were long and elaborate. To Hindus these ceremonies were obligatory, for, only through these strict and devout ceremonies the departed soul was deemed to proceed to heaven without any interruption. Moreover, these ceremonies were considered to be essential to enable one's ancestors to dwell in heaven. Hence Hindus, particularly the Brahmins, executed these final ceremonies with great faith and devotion. Here again, there were differences between the funeral ceremonies of the Brahmins and non-Brahmins. The Brahmins performed it according to their Vedic beliefs and sincerely felt that these last obsequies were important to enable one's soul to be relieved from the cycle of birth and death and to attain ultimate salvation. The ceremonies lasted for ten days, and on the last day, the Shraddha ceremony was performed. This ceremony was one of the most important and expensive of Hindu ceremonies. The gifts and feasts given on this occasion were believed to reach the soul of the departed. The funeral ceremonies of the non-Brahmins were less ceremonial and more noisy than that of the Brahmins. Musical instruments were used in the funeral
processions of the non-Brahmans, but never in those of the higher castes.

The three communities - Brahman, Non-Brahman, and Pariah --
have separate places for the disposal of the dead. The Brahmans cre-
mated their dead, the non-Brahmans also cremated, but used a separate
place, and the Pariahs buried their dead.

SUPERSTITIONS Many superstitious beliefs were in vogue among the
people. Padfield, during his stay in the Tamil country as a missionary
has studied the superstitious beliefs of the people in detail. Accord-
ing to him there were no less than 43 different things enumerated as
prognosticating good and 34 evil if any one of them happened when one
set out on a journey. For instance, to overhear a pleasant conversation,
to meet a group of dancing girls, to meet an elephant, to meet two
Brahmans or four Comitis, to see umbrellas, etc., were considered good
omens.

The following were deemed to be bad omen. It was considered a bad sign if any one should try to persuade the departing traveller not to go, to meet a widow, a lone Brahman, a Pariah, a leper etc. At Karikal, it was deemed that an owl or vulture brought ill-luck to the house on which it perched. It was believed to be a good omen to hear a bellring, the braying of an ass and so on. All classes believed that evil spirits could be warded off by talismans prepared by the professional sorcerers. Many professional sorcerers were Muslims and prepared talismans for Hindus and Muslims alike.

Belief in astrology was also quite prevalent. Ananda Ranga Pillai was a great believer in astrology, and by slow degrees he made Dupleix and many other French Officers evince interest in it. In fact, the Muslims, the English and the Dutch all sought guidance from Tamil astrologers in their political undertakings.

63. Ibid., p. 287.

be complete without mention being made of the entertainments which they enjoyed. Wrestling, cock fighting were quite common. Wandering jugglers and acrobats toured round the villages and gave gymnastic performances. Bull-fighting was also common. Dramatic performances were organised at Pondicherry. A metrical ode in Telugu composed in honour of Ananda Ranga Pillai by Kasturi Rangaiyan, a great scholar of Trichinopoly, was set to music by Mangapati Iyer of Trichinopoly.

Dancing women were taught to sing it, and they gave a performance before a public assembly at Pondicherry. Aside from this, there were the performances given by the nautch-girls at which both Tamils and Europeans were present. In the later half of the 19th century playing chess was very much in vogue. But this was mostly amongst the European circles.

**SOCIAL LIFE OF THE CHRISTIANS** The Christian population at Pondicherry and Karikal consisted almost entirely of catholics. There were very

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(25 August 1746).

few Protestant families. Ananda Ranga Pillai in his diary observes that the caste Christians did not mingle with the Pariahs even at places of worship. Tamil Christians continued to retain the traditions of their Hindu fore-fathers. In Madras Presidency even the Protestants had their own churches and never permitted lower caste Christians to worship in them. Bishop Heber, on enquiry found that the Christians were very particular about their castes and refused to inter-dine with other caste Christians. They had separate enclosures in the church and inter-marriage among them was unthinkable.

In the French settlements in India, the conditions were similar. The caste Christians had obtained a privilege from the French early in the 19th century, that they were to have a separate enclosure in the churches. In 1745 a French priest from Karikal who had come to Pondicherry felt offended at this distinction and instigated the Pariah Christians to remonstrate. The barrier wall was demolished, but the caste Christians objected to this, and refused to attend service.

Subsequently a barrier of chairs was put up, to separate the Pariahs from others.

The caste Christians were mainly from the following groups — Vellalas, Modalis, and Reddis. The division into Right and Left hand castes extended even among caste Christians. Mgr. Magny one of the Jesuits sent from Paris to study the manners and customs of the Pondicherry Tamil Christians, called in French 'Rites Malabares', writes to say that for the most part they followed the Hindus. Even the Pumsavana (male production ceremony) was given much prominence amongst the Christians. Among the Christians, baptism or Gnanasam was a very important ceremony by which the infant embraced christianity. In the matter of succession of properties the customary practices of the Hindu's were followed among the Christians. It is only in 1891 after the introduction of 'Remonciation' that there were certain modifications. The marriage ceremonies of the Tamil Christians resembled closely that of the Hindus, except for the religious ceremony at the

68. A.R.P. - Vol I, p.264. -- Even in the 1920's and 1930's there were such strifes.

69. Archives Coloniales, Vol E, No. 82.
Church. Regarding funeral ceremonies, Christians in general and the catholics in particular behaved and continue so, very much like the Hindus in their ceremonies when some one died in a Christian house.

It was customary among the local Parishes to sit the whole day beating their drums. This is in vogue even today among Christians in villages. The Shraddha and other ceremonies were clearly the relics of the Hindu customs.

The Christians of Pondicherry during the 18th century formed only one sixteenth of the total population and according to Ranga Pillai all of them were poor, save a few. It was only towards the end of the 18th century that they were able to keep themselves in comfort as databasis or in other employments. They were mostly servants and coolies.

**SOCIAL LIFE OF THE MUSLIMS** The Muslims in Pondicherry and Karikal formed two major groups, Pattanias, i.e., descendants of the original invaders or (more frequently) Choulias whose ancestors were forcibly

70. This aspect will be discussed later in this chapter.

71. The Christian population of the Carnatic Mission was around 60,000 in 1776, out of which Pondicherry counted for approximately 10,000
converted to Islam. Muslims were predominant in Karikal. In both the areas they were mostly traders. Besides the major groups mentioned above, there were others, viz., Harakayars, Ravuttars.

Like the Tamil Christians, the Muslims too retain the traditions of their Hindu ancestors. They had certain restrictions regarding their marriage. The Harakayars (a group along the Muslims) divided among themselves according to their occupations such as merchants, blacksmiths, weavers, barbers etc., These groups were endogamous and intermarriages were forbidden. Similarly among the Ravuttars there were many territorial sub-divisions like the Puliyankudian, the Klayyan-
kudian, Musiriyar, etc. which were strictly endogamous. Even among the Muslims the Pumsavata (male production ceremony) was given much importance, so also the Namakarna ceremony. Among the Muslims it was celebrated with great eclat, with music and tom-toms. As among the Hindus, the child took the name of the parent’s father or mother or

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Christians and Karikal same 2,000.
A. Leunay -- Missions de l’Inde (Pondichéry) p. 68.
72. Total population of Karikal settlement - 33,401. Muslims accounted for nearly 5000.
Cordier - Historique et Statistique de Karikal en 1825, p.402.
the saint venerated by the family.

The marriage ceremonies of the Muslims closely resembled Hindu marriages. Horoscopes were consulted and even omens were consulted to find out whether the unions would be happy or not. Ananda Ranga Pillai alludes to the use also of sorcery, by the Lubbais. It was the usual custom amongst the mixed races like the Marakkayars to seek the bride like Hindus. They also followed the custom of early marriage. The actual date of marriage was fixed by Hindu astrologers. Among the minorities connected with marriage in which traces of Hindu influence were clearly visible, mention may be made of the formal planting of what is called "ulkurthakkal" (marriage post), the ceremonious erection of a pandal, offering of pansupari to the guests, the processions attended with music, the tying of tali etc.,

Many of the funeral ceremonies of the Muslims bear a great resemblance to those of the Hindus. The idea of the death pollution

73. A.R.P. - Vol IX, p. 117.
74. Qanoon-e-Islam, p. 84.
observed by Muslims in the Tamil country was totally alien to Islam. Pollution was observed for two days and no food was cooked in the house. The widow, like a Hindu, broke her bangles and tali and never wore a bracelet or nose-ring until she was to remarry. The ceremonies observed after a funeral, on the third day at the grave, was attended by relatives and friends. Passages of the Koran were recited and gifts offered to reach the soul of the departed. Death feasts and anniversaries were celebrated. These were clearly Hindu beliefs which the Muslims of the Tamil country borrowed.

**RIGHT AND LEFT HAND CASTES DISPUTES** The distinction between castes of the Right Hand and Left Hand led to several disputes. The Right hand castes enjoyed certain privileges like riding on horsebacks in processions, to carry certain standards, and to use twelve pillars for their marriage booths. These rights were denied to the Left hand castes who could erect only eleven pillars. Thus, the subjects of

76. Qaanoon-e-Islam, op. Cit.,

77. The Christians too followed these customs.
contentions were generally social and ceremonial matters. The right to wear slippers, to ride through streets in a palanquin, the privilege of being escorted by armed retainers or being accompanied by native musicians and the use of the particular kind of musical instruments.

Towards the close of the seventeenth century, Pondicherry was mostly inhabited by the Right hand castes. It was F. Martin who invited the Chetty's (Left hand castes) for trade purposes and granted them certain privileges. They were allowed to build houses in three streets to the north of the port, and the Right hand castes were prohibited from passing through these streets with any standards or for any ceremony. With respect to marriage processions they were to go along the said streets, and the order also stipulated that any infringements of the order would result in a fine of 1200 pagodas.


At Pondichéry some of the low castes (Left hand), viz., Kallar, Vannan, Sambadavan were allowed to wear sandals.
From the contemporary sources we have evidence of these disputes and how they were resolved. In 1741 the Right hand caste objected to the use of the Madras street by the Chettys, either on horseback or in palanquins. The 'Conseil Supérieur' ordered that this claim could not be admitted and that "by order of the King the town shall be free to all its inhabitants, irrespective of caste or creed, that there shall be no bar or restriction in the case of any particular sect, and that all shall be allowed unrestrained enjoyment of the streets, so long as the laws of the State are not infringed." In October 1754, the Vedapuri Iswaran temple belonging to the Right hand caste was destroyed by the left hand caste people. In August 1767 there was a major uprising between the two groups. The marriage pandals of the Left hand castes were burnt, and crowds nearly 5000 strong passed through the European quarters. The disputes were

79. I.N.A. - Pondichéry - Military Consultations, August 1690.
dt. 31 July, 1741.
quite frequent until 1768, and no public processions were permitted after 1768 for quite a few years. The Left hand castes were forbidden to carry white flags in processions. It should be observed here, that during the tenure of Jean Law, the Right hand castes enjoyed more privileges, and they held most of the civil and military employments. Amongst the Europeans, they played the rôle of courtesans and dubashes.

Even early in 1772 there were fresh disturbances. The Left hand castes represented to the Governor their grievances, consequently the Governor ordered the Mayor to close the Madras Gate. Thus on the day of Mattu-Pongal, the daity was not taken out in procession from the town, nor did the people visit one another, the bulls also were not let free. In 1794, when the Right hand castes celebrated the feast of Varadaraja Perumal, they carried standards bearing the figures of the kite and the monkey which right belonged to the left

82. T.N.A. - Caste Disputes
84. Diary of Tiruvengadam Pillai, Jan 12, 1772.
hand castes. The police forbade both the groups from taking out any procession in honour of their Gods.

At Karikal also there were such disputes, even in the nineteenth century. In January 1822, there was a violent revolt, because the Government had inadvertently permitted a Vaniyan the rights and privileges of the Right hand caste. A similar uprising took place in 1823 near the Grande Aldée at Karikal when the Karmalans were permitted to wear sandals. The members of this Left hand caste were not even allowed to use a carriage in the streets of the Right hand castes even if a Right hand caste individual offered him a ride. In 1851 at Pondicherry, they were forbidden to wear sandals, to go in palanquins, to put up pandals etc., since, they could not prove the right to these privileges.

In all these caste disputes, the headmen of the castes and the notables had the sole right of questioning any violations and initi-
ating action against those responsible. Only in grave circumstances
the matter went up to the police and then the Governor. In October
1854, a petition was presented to the Governor Varniaco Saint-Maur,
requesting him to prevent the use of carriages in Pondicherry streets
by the Vaniyans. The "Conseil" gave a decision to the effect that
the Vaniyans had the right of going in carriages but in a different
direction, so that the carriage should not be an instrument of pride
therby leading to strife. The same order permitted the Vaniyans
the use of carriages along the main streets of the Right hand caste.

This order undoubtedly marked a progress, but yet recog-
nised the distinction between the two groups. The order was further
modified in February 1857, whereby the right of free movement along
the streets of Pondicherry and its suburbs in a palanquin or carriage
was granted to members of all castes of the Right and Left hand with-
out any distinction. The free use of all the streets for all their


88. A.R.P. - 1858.
ceremonies was also accorded. The administration following a prudent 'wait and see' policy declared that it was not for interfering in the religious and other ceremonies of the people.

In Madras City when trouble arose in 1869 between the two castes it was suggested to the Chief Secretary to start an "espionage organisation" of these two castes to maintain peace and order. But the government deemed it unnecessary. Upto the middle of the 19th century, this was a regular affair in town and cities in the Madras Presidency. Whereas it has to be noted here that as a result of the conciliatory but firm policy of the French Indian Government, the distinction between the Right and Left hand castes ceased to exist by the 1960's.

**FRENCH SOCIETY**  A study of French life in the settlements is of interest from two points of view. First the settlements themselves underwent during this period a striking transformation. From small

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groups of traders, they later developed a vigorous settlement life. This period of social transition raised many problems. The second point of interest is the effect on the French settlers of a distant and alien environment.

The social organization of the Company's employees makes an interesting study. Europeans were few, there were nearly twelve hundred at Pondicherry in 1741. All were not employees of the Company, but the majority owed their livelihood to it. Over four hundred and forty European employees, civil and military, figure in the Pondicherry estimates for 1747. At some of the smaller posts there were only two or three.

These people, especially the civil employees and military officers came, from good families and having been accustomed to comforts, found life in India quite difficult. At Pondicherry, much of the food needed by them, was imported from Bengal where it was cheaper;

90. Chandernagore 500, Karikal had 68 in 1824. The growth of the European population is treated later in this chapter.

but only the Governor and Councillors could afford such dilapidations.

The health of the employees and troops was safeguarded by hospitals
at Pondicherry, Karikal and Chandernagore.

The social activities of the employees during the early
period seem to have been decidedly limited. The birth of the Duc de
Bourbon resulted in a magnificent festival at Pondicherry. The
ringing of bells in the fort and the churches of the town heralded
the commencement of the festivities. Dupleix and his wife took part
in a state procession to the chapel, attended by an imposing retinue
of sepoys. Even elephants and lions were paraded on this occasion.

The duarist Ranga Pillai also refers to the birthday celebrations of
Dupleix, when several songs were composed in his honour.

One of the drawbacks to life in the settlements, was the
small number of European women. Some were sent out from France, but

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93. Ibid., Vol II, p. 279.
these were mostly absorbed by Pondicherry. Consequently the French were forced to marry créeses. Later on mixed marriages often took place with 'Métisses'. There seems to have been no ear on the social relationship between the French particularly the local inhabitants. What social intercourse there was, took place, between the Company's servants, the dascas and the traders. The relations of Ananda Ranga Pillai the dascas of Dupleix, with de Leyrit, and the Concillors was close and his advice was obviously valued. He could invite Dupleix to a grand dinner and the Concillors to wedding feasts, but it was a privilege for him to be permitted to talk with a Concillor's wife, and of the ordinary give-and-take of social intercourse there was little or none. One Concillor, M. Delorme was regarded as exceptional because he always treated Indians as equals. French officials and their families visited the houses of the natives and accepted pan-supari from them. The French adapted themselves much more easily to local habits than the English. The French even arranged parties to

94. Dupleix himself married a crée of Chandernagore.
96. Diary of Tiruvengadam Pillai (n.p.) Jan 24, 1774.
visit Hindu temples on the occasion of great festivals and watch the elaborate rites of Hindu worship.

French society at Pondicherry during the eighteenth century was not free from gossip. This was common even at the residence of the Governor. During the nineteenth century, with the increasing number of French in the settlements, their activities widened in several fields. European artists were invited from the "Académie impériale de musique" at Paris and they gave concerts in the salons of Pondicherry. French scholars evinced interest in Indian studies and there was quite a development in the realm of ideas.

To what extent were the early French settlers absorbed into the mainstream of Indian life? It seems clear that generally speaking the early factors kept apart and aloof from Indian life, though

97. Anonyme - Pondichéry en 1746 -- p. 5.
98. Commerce de Pondichéry, 7 Oct, 1856.
99. This is discussed in the chapter on "Culture".
they had developed no contempt for Indian social customs. That they borrowed was only superficial, they were only the excrecences of Indian customs and not their essence. They adopted various Hindu superstitions without absorbing Hindu philosophical ideas. Some of their borrowings were concerned with daily life — chewing of betel, eating food in the Indian style, love of processions, fireworks, nautch-girls etc. It was only in the 19th century, that Frenchmen as a result of their far greater contact with Indians of all ranks, whilst still being French on the surface, yet unconsciously imbued some characteristically Indian ideas.

SOCIAL RELATIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT Even in the first uneasy years of their rule, the French in India did have a concept of responsibility for the welfare of the people they ruled. The laws and customs enforced by the French varied. The Company's charter stipulated that
French law be applied to the French in the settlements. In dealing with the Indians however, it was often necessary to observe local practices. The "tribunal de Chauderie" (chaudery court) was established to administer justice to Indians according to their own laws and customs. This principle of respecting the customs and manners of the Indians was stated in the arrêté of the "Conseil Supérieur" of 13 January, 1769 -- "that the French nation had undertaken from the very beginning of its settlement in India, to render justice to the natives having recourse to French justice as for the native laws, customs and manners". It is of interest to note that Jean Law when reorganising the sepoy force at Pondicherry in Nov 1775, wanted that one Company was to consist wholly of Pariahs or outcastes converted to Christianity. One cannot determine the motive. Perhaps it was his dislike to mix up castes or it could have been his conviction that the Christian Pariahs would be more loyal. This was abolished by a Royal Ordinance of January 1776 which stipulated that men of all

100. R.A. -- Mss 172 and 217
religions were to be admitted and there was to be no separation by

101 caste or creed. The arrêté of January 1769 was reiterated in January 1819, when the MetropolitanCodes were promulgated in the French Indian settlements. By the arrêté of 6 January 1819, the French 'Code Civil' was applied to Indians only where it be applied without

102 any prejudice to their manners and customs.

The Ordinance of 7 July, 1826, stipulated that the Indians of all castes were not allowed to dress in western style. The primary reason being, the French were interested in maintaining the difference

103 between the races. By the Ordinance of 30 October, 1827 a 'Comité Consultatif de Jurisprudence Indienne' was set up. This Committee in an advisory capacity was to help the courts in interpreting the laws, usages and customs of the Indians. Until 1880 there were no major changes. As mentioned earlier in this study, the décret of 24 April

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101. Laude - *Recueil de Législation* p. 13


Any one who violated this ordinance was subjected to 25 whip lashes or a fine of Rs. 25.
1850, made all the laws of France regarding the 'état civil' applicable to the people of French India with certain reservations intended to safeguard the traditional Indian customs. By virtue of this décret the Indian Christians had to comply entirely with the provisions of the 'Code Civil'. However, the Hindus and Muslims were allowed to follow their own personal law, in all matters regarding marriage, adoption, succession etc. Until the 1880's one observes that the main policy of the government was to establish peace and order, to create a climate of justice for all, to safeguard the people, and, in effect, to preserve the social order rather than reform it.

RENONCIATION: The year 1921 is of cardinal importance in the history of French India. Renonciation (Renonciation) which opened the door for 'expropriation', was the grant of the right to renounce by every French subject, his personal status. All those who did so became 'renonçants' and were governed by the political and civil laws as applicable to the French citizens in the colony, viz., Europeans and their descendants.
The advent of the Third Republic in France brought about the introduction of certain democratic reforms in French India. In France, both conservatives and reformers assumed that ideas govern history, that political order can only be built upon philosophical order. The nineteenth century was also a time, throughout Europe of rapidly widening knowledge. Thus philosophical, religious and social thought was immensely affected by new facts, arguments and theories drawn from the natural sciences, from historical and philosophical studies, and from the new 'human sciences' of sociology and psychology. The nineteenth century was re-eminently the time when scientific humanism came of age. This was first due to the idéologue group, but more emphatically to the positivists. The common trend in France during the last decades of the 19th century was a primary emphasis on man's freedom and creativity and on a vitalist humanism.

It cannot be denied that this spirit of humanism, characteristic of the Third Republic along with the acknowledged colonial

104. Chief among them were Henri de Saint-Simon, Auguste Comte & Hippolyte Taine.
policy of assimilation born of the absurd conception of 'mission civilisatrice' had its influence on the colonial policy makers.

Even as early as 30th September 1879, M. de Roger, Minister for Justice in his despatch to Admiraal Jauréguiberry, Minister of Marine and Colonies wrote that to facilitate the gradual assimilation of the Indians, it would be necessary to evolve the procedure for renunciation. Admiral Jauréguiberry in his despatch to the Governor of French India stated thus:-- "it is my sincere hope that the progress of the manners and customs, and the progressive fusion of the different classes will allow you at a given time which cannot be determined now, to be governed by common law, you will do well to try to hasten the realization of this expectation, extremely desirable, by making it possible for all the diverse classes of the native people, to enjoy the fruits of a common education, thereby making the caste barriers still dividing them to crumble down".

105. B.C.I. -- 1879.

106. Le Progrès, 4 Sept 1892.
One must consider the social conditions prevailing in French India during the decade preceding the promulgation of this décret. The caste distinctions in the settlements, particularly at Pondicherry and Karikal persisted and the lower castes, especially the Pariahs were the worst sufferers. The condition of the Pariah converts to Christianity was not any the better. The caste system was strongly entrenched even amongst the upper caste converts.

It was in 1871 that the people in the colony were empowered to elect a deputy to the 'Assemblée Nationale' in France. The Décret of 1871 introduced election by adult suffrage to the 'Conseil Général', and reserved one half of the seats in the electoral councils to be filled by the French. The electors were enunciated into two separate lists -- Europeans, Descendants of Europeans and Indians. This division into two 'listes' led to agitation amongst the Indians. The

107. This is discussed further in the course of this chapter.
failure of these political experiments between 1871-1890 was also responsible for the introduction of 'Rémunération'.

The décret of 21 September 1881, granted the French Indian subjects of either sex to renounce the personal status. Any one above 11 years of age irrespective of caste and religion had the right to renounce their personal status and opt for French citizenship. Hence, it is known as 'Rémunération au Statut Personnel'. By the observance of certain formalities, the Indians could renounce their indigenous status and their personal law. Once made, the 'remuneration' was held final and irrevocable. All those who did so were 'renonçants' and were governed by the political and civil laws as applicable to the French citizens in the Colony. Upon renouncing, the person had to take a different surname.

'Renonciation' was a special form of 'naturalisation' extended only to French India. The primary objective being to bring about a social transformation and ameliorate the plight of the depressed classes. This was also linked with the assimilation policy of the French colonial regime. An Indian who wanted to renounce, could do so, only in French India and not in the other colonies. The Indian renonciant ceased to be a French subject and became a French citizen. Thus, a renonciant could be a voter in the other colonies whereas the Indian non-renoncants could exercise their franchise only in French India.

In the other colonies notably Algeria and Indo-China the French extended the benefits of only 'naturalisation'. Although Algeria was represented in Parliament in Paris from 1833, the only voters were French citizens. French citizenship depended on the acceptance of French law and French institutions, impossible for a Muslim bound by

Many took the surnames of former French officials, viz., Ariel, Gordier, Moras. Some adopted names like, Dupleix, Bussy, Balsac, Ricord, Byron etc., Some had Indian surnames viz., Ponnou, Tamby, Parendjody.
Voronic law. On the other hand, Algeria contained a large body of Jews of ancient stock, settled in the country from before even the Arab invasions. These had been recognized as French by the Second Empire in 1861, though remaining subject. In 1970 their disfranchise-ment was completed by the Décret of 24 October. By the décret of 25 May, 1931, 'naturalisation' was conceded to the Amazites of Cochinchina.

The Administration in French India gave active support for the propagation of this new concept of assimilation. A few months before the promulgation of the décret in the colony, the administration published in the Bulletin Officiel, that "the renunciation of one's personal status does not imply any change of religion. The liberty of conscience is one of the fundamental principles of our public right, and one can become a French citizen without ceasing to profess Hinduism or any other religion. Those who attribute a
contrary interpretation to the renunciation deceive knowingly the local people and thereby subject themselves to be prosecuted for false propaganda."

Since the introduction of 'Renonciation' many of the local people became 'renongants'. Ponnoutamby Poullé ('Christian') was the first 'renongant'. He took the name La Porte ('the door'), to signify the fact that 'renonciation' had opened the door towards the West. As a social reformer he was the first to oppose casteism in Pondicherry and rendered considerable service to ameliorate the conditions of the Pariahs. Born in 1832, La Porte was educated at the Catholic Seminary, later entered Government service as interpreter in 1855. He then took to law and became 'Conseil agréé', and came to be considered as the leading Indian lawyer and the best criminal advocate of Pondicherry. He was the leader of the Liberal party

which spearheaded the reforms in the electoral system in 1879. As a radical reformer he believed in liberty of religion and was responsible for setting aside the arrêté which forbade construction of Pagodas and temples without government authorization in French India.

During the administration of P. Theodore Drouhet (Governor) the 'renonciation' movement gathered momentum. Christians and Hindus of different castes became 'renonçants'. Amongst the Christians, most were Pariahs. From the caste Christian group, they were mostly Vellalas, Reddis, and some Pillai and Mudalis. The Hindus who became 'renonçants' were the Vellalas. Not many caste Hindus took to this before the close of the century. As for the Pariahs, they were drawn not only from the Christian community, but also from amongst the Hindus.

The chief organs which supported this movement were the administration and local periodicals founded by the Vellala Christian

111. Le Progrès -- 4 July 1886.
renongants. Le Progrès de l'Inde française' (French-Tamil weekly)
published at Pondicherry from 1861 was the leading weekly which arti-
culated the views of the renongants and Pariahs. The others were --
'L'Echo de Pondichéry', 'L'Impartial de Pondichéry', 'Le Progrès de
Karikal', 'Le Républicain de l'Inde française', and 'Traité d'Union'.
These were other organised movements to help the lot of the depressed
classes. In 1892, some prominent Pariah renongants founded an asso-
ciation called 'Société progresiste des renongants Valangaimougattars'
(The society still continues to function at Pondicherry). Despite
the fact they became renongant, some members of this community felt
the need to found such an association to help the welfare of their
members. Many of the French journals in France supported 'renonciation',
viz., 'Journal des Débats', and 'La France Coloniale', 'Le Radical',
'Le Temps', 'Les Débats', 'La République française' and 'Le Rappel'.
Most of the articles in these journals and dailies related to the ques-
tion of extending special rights to the 'renongants'. Though the
writers were inspired and influenced by the spirit of humanism, they
had little knowledge about the local customs and manners of the people.

The opposition to the 'renonçant' movement was led by Chanemougavelayoudamodélier, the undisputed leader of the caste Hindus. The son of a businessman, he was himself concerned with trade, and in course of time he emerged as a very powerful element in the political arena of French India. He viewed this so-called policy of assimilation cutting at the root of Hindu tradition and culture. Besides, Chanemougaven termed this policy, as a policy of machination introduced by the French to create a separate list of electors, thereby creating cleavages amongst the Indians. The majority of the caste Hindus, 113 Parihas and even some Tamil Christians supported him. Chanemougam and his followers termed it as a sacrilege against the caste system. 'Ronençants' were considered by them to be worse than Parihas. The pro-renonçant journals like 'Le Progrès' criticised his stand and attributed this to the caste feelings of the Tondaimandalla Vellalas.

113. Revue des Colonies -- 1900.
114. Not all caste Christians were renonçants.
How far was the act of 'renonciation' implemented in its true spirit? Though in theory, renonçants were supposed to give up their way of life etc., in practice it was very negligible. Caste differences did continue both amongst the Tamil Christians and Hindus. There were frequent disputes between the caste Christians and the depressed class Christians. Some members of the clergy avoided having domestic servants of the low caste. The Pariahs had separate priests to attend to their spiritual needs. They had a separate enclosure inside the church. It is only after the 1930's one notices a sense of awakening amongst the low caste Christians. The renonçant Christians hailing from the low caste groups were becoming conscious of their privileges.

In what way did the renonçants benefit either materially or socially? It is no doubt true that renonçants were preferred in government employment. But the scale of pay and other privileges were the same as that applicable to others. In the realm of politics
they came to exercise some influence both under the three lists and two lists system. Renongants who were serving in other colonies exercised the right to vote. In French India, the renongants, particularly the Vellala Christian renongants formed an élite group. One cannot deny that the benefits of French Civil law was enjoyed by them. It must be mentioned here, that the renongants who went to Cochin-China were given preferential treatment by the Colonial administration to the detriment of the Anasites.

It is rather striking that 'renonciation' in French India succeeded to some degree only at Pondicherry. At Karikal the figure was low and this was primarily due to the rigid caste system prevalent in the settlement. Towards the close of the century there were very few renongants from the other areas - Mahé, Yanam and Chandernagore. In 1890 the distribution of renongants eligible to vote in the second

116. A renongant with a Bachelor's degree was placed on a higher level than an Anasite with a Master's degree from France.
'listes' were as follows -- Pondichéry 1036, Chandernagore 16, Karikal 132, Mahé 53, none at Yanam. The reason why it succeeded at Pondicherry may be explained away thus - the predominant Parisian population, closer contact with the Europeans, the rôle of the élites in propagating this idea. The period between 1895 - 1900 marked a decline in the number of remongants.

The élite group amongst the remongants came to play a leading rôle in the political and cultural development of Pondicherry. This group consisted mainly of individuals from the upper castes (Vellalas) and the Tamil Vellala Christians. They were influenced by French education, their stay in France and by their close contacts with the French. By the end of the nineteenth century some of the remongants rose to high positions in the French Indian administration. The

1881 -- 2000 remongants
Figures for 1898 -- 2861 remongants
1900 -- 3000 remongants
renonçants who served in the colonies rose to eminent positions parti-
cularly during the twentieth century.

In conclusion, we must analyse the reasons which led to the failure of the 'Renonciation' policy. Primarily it was due to the caste barriers in the settlements of Pondicherry and Karikal. The traditional caste ridden Hindu society was not receptive to these changes. During the early years of 'renonciation', the renonçants were even ostracised by the rest of society. Secondly, the people of the settlements realized that apart from the right to vote in a separate list, this did not benefit them much in French India.

Thirdly, the caste Hindus and Christians amongst the renonçants were not very much enthusiastic in the Parish following. Thus, even amongst the renonçants, caste played its rôle. Some French writers termed the renonçants as a hybrid group. This cannot be disputed.

118. Sri Soudjanarandjani -- Nov 4, 1898.

Some were 'Greffiers' (Registrar in the Court) a few as 'Percepteurs' (District revenue Collector). M.A. Ambou attained the position of Secrétaire-Général in 1908. Saint-Pierre Apparayer as 'Sous-Chef de Bureau' l'élasse in 1887.
By and large, the renoncéants, be they Christians or Hindus, continued to follow their way of life. Though, on paper they renounced their personal status, in practice this was not true. Renoncéants were not in favour of widow remarriage and even for intermarriage amongst the high castes. The 'Rènonciation' movement which can be considered as a social revival movement failed because the leaders did not draw into their fold the Pariahs by the thousands.

ASCIETY AND POLITICS

As mentioned earlier, it was in 1875 that the people in French India were empowered to elect a deputy to the 'Assemblée Nationale', and in 1875 a Senator. In January 1879, adult suffrage was introduced for the elections to the 'Conseils Locaux' (Local Councils) in the various settlements in French India. The 'Conseil-Général' replaced the 'Conseil Colonial' in 1879, and members were elected by adult suffrage. The 'Conseil Colonial' was set up in 1872, consisting of twelve members. Five of them were officials

119. To enter the Metropolitan cadre of service, even the renoncéants had to succeed in the Colonial Competitive examinations. Many Christian renoncéants served as Administrators in the African
and the remaining seven were distributed as follows:—two from the Europeans, and one each representing Hindus, Catholics and Muslims.

The Vellalas were the representatives of the Catholics. Even in the 'Conseil Locaux' the Vellalas were dominating, next were the Modalis, Baickers and Chettys.

The first 'Conseil-Général' formed in 1879 comprised of 14 Europeans and 9 Indians. In this body also, the caste Hindus and caste Christians dominated. Election was on the basis of the two lists system, the Europeans were elected by the first list comprising of Europeans and their descendants, and in the second list elected the Indians.

The period 1871 - 1931 is noted for the alliance between Ponnoutamby Bouillé and Changonouga Velayoudamodéliar in the local politics. Both represented the interest of the Indians. Ponnoutamby

Colomnes and Indian Ocean islands. M. Paul-Pont served as Judge of the High Court, Saigon and M.J. Simonel as Chief Justice, Ivory Coast. Before the First World War, many Pariahs became renegants to serve as soldiers in the French army.
a Vellala Christian, formed a progressive group amongst the Tamils (mostly Christians) and was concerned in the emancipation of the downtrodden from the rigours of the caste system. He also pleaded the cause for a greater degree of assimilation with the French and both the political leaders were against the two list electoral system.

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The clamour for one 'listes' led the Home Government to divide the electorate into three 'listes'. This was a necessary consequence of the 'Renunciation' policy. In this agitation for reform in the electoral system, it should be observed that P. Poullé and his following consisting mostly of Tamil Christian converts, some of whom had adopted the social customs of the Europeans, desired the same privileges as the Europeans and their descendants. The élite group among the Tamil Christians were the most ardent supporters

120. C. Poullé - Notes sur l'Inde française - Régime Politique (Chalon-1894) -- p. 47.

121. Chanemanga Velayudamodéliar was a member of this 'Conseil Colonial' For the composition of the various elective bodies see Appendix III.
When the décret of 21 September 1881 concerning 'Renonciation an statut Personnel' was promulgated in French India, the electoral system was also remodelled. All the inhabitants of the colony were divided into three 'listes' of electors, the first consisting of Europeans and their descendants, the second of those 'natifs' who became renonçants, and the third, of the 'non-renonçants'. In the elective councils there was reservation for nearly equal number of councillors for each 'liste'. The 'Conseil-Général' elected in 1884 following the arrêté of 26 February 1884 consisted of 30 members, ten from each 'liste'. Amongst the renonçants of the second 'liste' the majority were Christian renonçants and there were three Christians out of the ten elected from the third 'liste'. Amongst the non-Christians, the Vellalas formed the majority.

122. P. Pouillé on 16 January 1973 appeared before the 'Tribunal Civil' with shoes. The President wanted Pouillé to conform to local usage the latter refused and was sentenced for indiscipline. Pouillé appealed to the Cour de Cassation and was defended by J. Godin.
Elections to the 'Conseils Locaux' in the five areas and to the 'Conseils Municipaux' in all the communes were on the same system of adult suffrage as modified by the three 'listes' system. All electors except Government servants were eligible for election by any 'listes' irrespective of the 'listes' to which the candidate belonged. The 'Conseillers' were elected for a period of six years, one-half of them were renewed by rotation every three years. Each member of the 'Conseil-Général' was required to possess a knowledge of French, and each member of the other 'Conseils' a knowledge of the local language. For purposes of election to the Chambers, French India was classified under the head 'La Colonie' with the right of electing only one deputy and one Senator. Since, it was not permissible to regulate by Presidential décrets matters pertaining to the 'Lois Organiques' (23 July 1840) of the French Constitution, the three 'listes' had no place in the elections to the Chambers.

He won the case (Arrêté de Cassation du 'juillet 1875') - Godiers' success in this case 'Bas et Souliers' won him the title of defenders of native interests.

123. As per the two list system the electorate consisted of 600 voters in the first list, and 60,000 in the second list.
which were decided by a pure numerical majority of votes.

The reasons for introducing this three 'listes' system were, first it was in keeping with the 'renonciation' policy and secondly it was a matter of political expediency. Since the 'renonçants' were considered as French citizens they had to be classed as a separate group. The French colonial administration viewed it as rather a political risk to include them in the first 'liste' to which they were entitled, having become French citizens. By keeping them in a separate 'list' the colonial administration was able to maintain the political equilibrium and thereby warded off any threat to their rule.

The period from 1881-1886 is noteworthy for the part played by Fonnoutamby La Porte in French Indian politics. La Porte

124. In the elections to the 'Conseil-Général' of 1884 under the three 'listes' system the electorate, consisted of: first 'liste' -- 650 voters, second 'liste' -- 2500 voters, third 'liste' -- 58,500 voters.
who championed the cause of the renomants was the leader of the liberal party expousing the views of the second 'liste'. He had been earlier a member of the 'Conseil Colonial' since 1872 and later of the 'Conseil-Général'. Since most of the renomants were concentrated at Pondicherry, the sphere of activity of this party was largely confined to this region. La Porte was against the caste system and pleaded for more closer ties with the French. The Liberal party's Chief organ was the French-Tamil weekly, 'Le Progrès'. The weekly enjoyed considerable reputation and the articles published were of educative value, not only from the renomants' viewpoint, but also on matters of general interest pertaining to British India and the rest of the world.

La Porte vehemently opposed the three 'liste' system and the creation of a separate 'liste' for the renomants. He criticised this policy on the ground that the 'naturalised' Algerians and Annamites were included in the same 'liste' with the French. To him, the French were 'elder brothers' and the renomants 'younger brothers' hence there

125. Proces Verbaux du Conseil-Général, 1884.
should be no discrimination between the two. As long as La Porte headed
the party, there was a strong alliance between the first 'listes' and the
second 'listes'. He pleaded his party's cause at Paris before the Ministers,
and the President of the Republic. On La Porte's death, the non-renonçants
were elated. The cry was, 'La Porte is dead, his party is dead. It is
we who will govern'.

The non-renonçant group was led by Changemougavelayouda-
modélier. Changemangan had been a 'Conseiller' since 1972, a shrewd poli-
tician who could adapt himself to the circumstances, he emerged as the
undisputed leader of the third listes and continued to be so until his
death in 1969. It has been noted earlier how bitterly he criticised the
introduction of 'renonciation' and the division into three listes. How-
ever, in La Porté he found a stiff opponent. Changemongam could even
manipulate the support of the clergy. The members of the 'Missions Étran-
gères' (Foreign Missions) did extend support to Changemougas. Partly,


this was due to their fear that the lower castes would not embrace Christianity, if they were to openly support La Porte. Yet, they did not sever their ties with the Europeans. This alliance between the 'Missions-Estrangères', Changamougam and the Europeans was labelled as the 'Parti clérico-Brahmanique!'

Changamougam played a leading rôle in the election of deputies and Senators to the Chambers of Paris. Since the deputy was elected on a simple majority vote, Changamougam and his followers exercised their voice. In course of time he came to influence these deputies and sought their intervention in the colonial administration. The election of Pierre Alype as Deputy in 1931 caused a sensation. Alype was a Pariah from the suburbs of Pondicherry, though he became a renonçant Changamougam and his party supported him. This was primarily because he was a Pariah, and moreover his rivals were French, particularly

Jules Godin, a protégé of the Europeans and the renonçants. Besides, this was a political exigency to secure the Parish votes for the election of the Deputy.

On the death of Ponnoutamby La Porte, Louis Rassendrin was elected leader of the Liberal party in July 1895. A Tamil Christian of the Vellala caste, Rassendrin's control over the party of the renonçants was not as undisputed as that of La Porte. The Liberal party though it supported the administration, continued its demand to be included in the first 'listes.' The Party also opposed any move to introduce a single 'listes' of voters. This, the renonçants felt would drive a wedge between the French and the renonçants. To them, the French stood for justice, equality and progress, and the interests of the French and the renonçants were identical.

129. *Le Progrès* - 4 April 1896. - A Parish Christian, his baptism name was Sinnapin (Paul). When he became a renonçant, he took the name of Pierre Alype. He continued to be a deputy until 1898.
The election of a Senator in 1891 brought about the schism within the party. M. Jules Godin and M. Hébard were the candidates. Hébard was supported by the first 'liste', whilst Godin was backed by most of the renongants. Rassendrin, Favéry and other leaders were in favour of Hébard. Changemougam and his party supported Godin.

In January 1891 Jules Godin was elected as Senator from French India. Since then, the influence of the Liberal party declined. A dissident group was formed led by Guanadicom, the son-in-law of Rassendrin.

The elections to the 'Conseil-Général' held since 1892 led to violent conflicts between the renongants and the non-renongants. Changemougam and his followers were accused of indulging in such acts.

Meanwhile the Home Government had sent M. Nouet (ex-Governor, 1890) to the colony to report on the electoral reforms. Nouet in his report recommended a two 'liste' system -- Europeans, descendants of Europeans

130. Le Progrès -- June 4, 1897.
131. B.O.I. -- 1891.
and renongants in the first 'listes' and the rest to form the second
'listes'. Simultaneously, the demands of the renongants to be grouped
with the Europeans increased. By playing a dual rôle the renongants
threatened French dominance in the elective bodies. This ultimately
climaxed in the suppression of the three 'listes' system.

The décret of 21 September 1899 introduced the two 'listes'
Europeans, descendants of Europeans and renongants fulfilling certain
qualifications comprised the first 'liste', and the others formed the
second 'liste'. This manoeuvre on the part of the colonial adminis-
tration dealt a great blow to the renongants.

A review of the above electoral analysis indicates that
the formation of the three 'listes', by the state itself made it im-
possible for the development of any definite political principles. It

133. Le Progrès - 7 August, 1892.
134. B.O.I. -- 1899, p. 212. -- Renongants of 15 years standing, pos-
sessing a diploma of the University, with at least five
years of government service or having exercised their
only produced the undesirable consequence of each 'liste' allying itself with another so as to exclude the third, from all participation of political power. In this struggle for combination no political principles were involved. The second 'liste' was introduced with the avowed object of inducing the 'mestifs' to renounce their indigenous status. But the results of the functioning of this three 'listes' system were quite different. The second 'liste' consisted mostly of Christian renonçants and was dominated by the caste 'chrétiens'. The second 'liste' was in close alliance with the first, thereby leaving the third 'liste' to its own resources in the game of politics. The consequence of this has been that the third 'liste' was constrained to use the only effective power in its hands. This was for the election to the Assemblies in France. The numerically strong third 'liste' always managed to secure its own deputy and quite often its own Senator.

franchise during the last five years qualified to be enrolled in the first 'liste'. On 31 March, 1898, the three lists consisted of the following:

| First liste | -- | 551 voters |
| Second liste | -- | 2,826 voters |
| Third liste | -- | 57,729 voters |
Regarding the population of French India during the early part of the 18th century we have no authoritative figures. Some idea is gained from the Mémoires of F. Martin about the population of Pondicherry settlement. The official figures given by the 'Archives Coloniales' for 1746, state that the population of Pondicherry had increased to 80,000.

There were variations in the population figures particularly at Pondicherry and Karikal during the Carnatic Wars. The decline in population was also due to famines and epidemics. For the 19th century we have reliable data. Between 1891-1901 the population of Pondicherry had doubled, thereafter it remained static.

At Karikal however, one notices during the same period a decline, this was primarily due to emigration. The increase of population at Pondicherry may be attributed to the settled conditions, and increasing trade activities.

135. Mémoires de F. Martin, Vol III, - in 1706, Pondichéry settlement including had a population of 50,000.

The European population in French India was concentrated at Pondicherry. In 1720, there were nearly 1200 Europeans, this declined to 761 in 1824. The Europeans in the other settlements were very small in number, except for Chandernagore. In 1824 there were only 68 at Karikal and 500 at Chandernagore. It was but natural that Pondicherry being the capital had a higher percentage of Europeans. At Mahé and Yanam there were only 17 and 14 Europeans respectively in the year 1848. Since the 1750's there was a steady increase in the number of Europeans in French India. In 1851 the European population in the settlements was as follows:-- Pondicherry 2253; Karikal 220; Chandernagore 544; Mahé 14 and Yanam 99. There was a decline since then and the figures for 1862 being:-- Pondicherry 793; Karikal 212; Chandernagore 239; Mahé 13 and Yanam 39. Towards the close of the nineteenth century, there was a further decline. The European traders

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137. Cf. - Appendix IV -- for the population charts in French India from 1740-1900. The number of Europeans, descendants of Europeans and Indians is given. For Karikal the caste-wise breakdown is given for the year 1824.

138. Almanach de Pondichéry - 1856.
from the other surrounding regions had left, the number of foreign missionaries had also declined. The European population in French India comprised mainly of the officials, teachers, missionaries and some engaged in commerce.

**EMIGRATION**  The beginnings of Indian migration in the modern period are not absolutely certain, and contradictory and conflicting statements have been made as to when they commenced and to which country. There has been emigration during the European phase from South India to Ceylon, to S.E. Asia and Africa. The Portuguese and the Dutch took Indian subjects to their other colonies, viz., Java and Molucca. It is only during the British and French periods of Colonial policy that Emigration begins to be on an organized scale, and was sponsored and regulated by agreements between the respective governments.

139. A. E. F. -- 1863.
The movement is considered to have started with the abolition of slavery in the British dominions in 1834 and in the French territories in 1854. It should be noted, that Tamil migrations had commenced even as early as the end of the 18th century. They were destined to Ceylon, Burma and the Straits settlements. Emigration to the Isle de Bourbon (Réunion), a French colony, started during the last decade of the 18th century. We have no precise details for this period. The labourers were mostly recruited from the French settlements of Pondicherry, Karikal and Chandernagore, and also from the adjoining British territories of Madras and Calcutta. According to the Police Commissioner of Calcutta, emigration to Mauritius and Bourbon dates from 1819. In 1830 artisans were taken to Bourbon.

The contracts were said to be liberal, at Rs. 9 p.m. in addition to food, and the contract was for five years.

Even before the abolition of slavery in French India, there were several Indians in Réunion. Most of them were Tamils and worked as domestic servants and artisans. They had migrated earlier, because of the close administrative links with French India. With the abolition of slavery the movement gathered momentum. In 1849, nearly 8,078 coolies were working in Réunion. Other French colonies followed the example set by Réunion, viz., Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guiana.

By 1856, the number of Indians in Réunion rose to 37,005 and in Martinique and Guadeloupe it was 6,506 respectively. From French India, Pondicherry and Karikal handled most of the sailings. At least 70,000 were sent during the period 1803 - 1867 from these two ports to Réunion, Martinique, Guiana, Guadeloupe and Antilles. It is only after 1880 that Tamils from French India went to Cochin-China. In June, 1857 a Society for Emigration was formed consisting

of 16 French Commercial firms in India for the purpose of recruiting Indian labour for the French colonies. A Chief Agent for emigration was appointed at Pondicherry, and an assistant at Karikal. The last sailing of Tamil emigrants (sponsored by the Compagnie Générale Maritime) from Pondicherry and Karikal to Martinique was in 1862.

The French Minister for Colonies felt that their settlements could not meet the demands. During the years 1862-63 there was no emigration of Indian labour, but there were quite a few sailings from British India.

Regular sailings from French India were resumed as per the accord dated 27 April 1864 between the Government of Martinique and the 'Compagnie Générale transatlantique' for the transport of labourers recruited in India. That the great majority of migrants to Martinique were Tamils is evident from the provision made for the

142. Ibid.,

143. P.A. Ms - 395.
celebration of Pongal festivities in Martinique. Besides Tamils,
Telugus were also shipped from Pondicherry and Karikal to Martinique
and Guadeloupe, particularly after 1874. The migration to these
areas continued till 1994, when it was discontinued because of the
difference of opinion between the Government of India and the
French India Government.

144. Thani Nayagar -- "Tamil Emigration to the Martinique", Journal
of Tamil Studies, Vol I No. 2 (1969) p. 75 - 123.

145. Cf -- Appendix for V for emigration patterns.