the problems of robbery. The robbers not only robbed the goods but also killed them. This necessitated the introduction of martial art in their activities. *Sangam* classics provide details about the threats faced by the traders both on land and sea, necessitating the accompaniment of armed guards with the fleet of Caravan. Moreover the society also recognized the martial character of the merchant community. The merchants had to travel long distances through insecure roads. They had to face critical situations, in which they had to fight even for their life. The merchants had to meet *Vanicai makkal*,\textsuperscript{310} *nammakkal* \textsuperscript{311} and *pricei makkal* \textsuperscript{312} on their way of trading in order to facilitate their activities.

**CHAPTER - V**

**MOVEMENT FOR LIBERATION FROM THE FRENCH**

The liberation of the Indians as well as the French Indians was from the hands of French through movements. All through the implementation of good education done by the French, the social heritage and the observances of the Indian tradition find very difficult to accept totally the French culture in India in general and in Pondicherry in particular.\textsuperscript{313} At this juncture, the civil disobedient movement led by the national leaders like M.K.Gandhi, Sardar Vallabhai Patel, Gopala Krishna Gokhale, Lokmanya Tilak, Subash Chandra Bose and others find as an enlightenment to their movements for liberation against French in Pondicherry.\textsuperscript{314}

**French India under the Impact of Indian Nationalism**

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{223} *Epigraphia Indica*. Vol. IV. P146
\item \textsuperscript{224} *S.I.I.*, Vol. VIII. No.198.
\item \textsuperscript{225} *S.I.I.*, Vol. VII. No.442
\item \textsuperscript{1} *Historical and Cultural Relations between France and Indian from 17th- 20th Centuries*. Vols. II. Published by Association Historique Internationale de l’ Ocean Indien, Sainte Clotilde, 1987. P. 287.
\item \textsuperscript{2} Jean-Marie Lafont, \textit{Reminiscences: French in India}. Published by Indian National Trust for Art and Culture Heritage (INTACH) New Delhi: 1997. P.326.
\end{itemize}
From the beginning of the twentieth century a new political consciousness arose in French India especially after the partition of Bengal in 1905. The French settlements in India served as a convenient place of refuge for political conspirators and Indian nationalists. The most important among them were Subramania Bharathi, Aurobindo Ghosh, and V.V.S.Iyer, seditious literature like *Gaelic American, Indian Sociologist, New York Call, and Evening Post* from different cities like London, Paris, and New York were banned. *The Moayyad* and *Luna* had been mailed to Pondicherry and Chandernagore through post and smuggled later on into British Indian territories for distribution. Besides, the importation of seditious literature through post, it was reported that arms were brought into British India via Pondicherry from Paris.

Unable to face the repression of the British India government, the press of the revolutionary newspaper ‘*The India,*’ in which the famous poet and journalist Subramania Bharathi worked, had to shift office from Madras and it continued to be printed from Pondicherry. A secret society called “India Office” came to exist in the house at 58, *Rue de mission étrangères,* Pondicherry from where *The India* was printed and revolutionary leaders kept in touch with the centres of agitation in Europe and America, especially with Tirumalaichary in London, Shyamji Krishna Varma and Madame Cama in Paris, who had regularly sent seditious literature to the India Office members.

The influence of anti-British activities in French India resulted in the spread of social and political consciousness. There was a strong anti-European feeling among the natives of French India. Journals like *Soujanaranjany, Vijaya, Balabarati, Darma, Suryodayam* and *Swadesamitran* published from Pondicherry, *Nyayabhimani,* issued from Karaikal and *Swadin Bharat* an anti-British journal printed in Chandernagore

---

regularly preached an anti-European tone. The intense spread of revolutionary movement had its impact on French India also.

The anti-European feelings brought the Swadeshis of British India and the Comité Radical-Socialist of French India closer to each other. Both the parties preached socialism in a subdued manner. This was evidenced from the Député election held in 1910. One of the pamphlets which circulated about May 1910 remarked. The “Radical Society” at Chandernagore led by Bonomali Pal, Bholanath Das, Sadhucharan Mukharjee and Satish Sur, never been able to tolerate the tutelage of Pondicherry and started an agitation demanding an equal number of representatives in Chandernagore Municipal board. They also demanded in the Conseil général at Pondicherry that the revenue of Chandernagore should be spent on Chandernagore, since it contributed a major share in the colonial budget next to Pondicherry. While offering political asylum to the Indian nationalists the French administration at the same time was forced to reckon with the British. The British press went on accusing France as responsible for terrorism in British India to the extent that the “anarchist’s agitation in India which causes intense concern to the British Government, is probably direct from Paris.” England even proposed to France the exchange of territories in Chandernagore for British Indian territories around Pondicherry, but this idea was rejected by the French.

However, the outbreak of World War I had brought England and France closer together and as a member of the Entente Cordiale the French India administration had to take strong measures against the anti-British propaganda. Accordingly the Décret, of

---
11. Ibid. P.93.
13. Ibid.P.86.
22nd August 1914 suppressed the freedom of press. An Ordinance of 22nd September of the same year banned all publications coming from foreign countries into French Indian settlements and a strict vigilance was mounted on the Indian nationalists residing in French India.\(^{327}\) The activities of the Indian nationalists had brought about the spread of nationalist sentiments in French India, giving rise to a new consciousness in the minds of French Indian people. Nationalism in French India, although Indian generated or inspired, was unique in character.\(^{328}\) It was the Indian tradition that had thwarted the assimilation policy of the French and had furnished the bonds of religion, caste, and language, common historical tradition of India, which together with shared experiences, provided the mortar with which nationalism was built in French India.\(^{329}\)

The nationalist upsurge was essentially generated by the political and social changes, introduced in the traditional way of life under the impact of colonial policy of assimilation brought into the territories primarily by the French.\(^{330}\) The problems emerging under this impact, such as dissatisfaction with the existing political and social order and the introduction of new and conflicting values, proved conducive to the growth of nationalism.\(^{331}\)

With the spread of nationalism in French India, nationalist elite emerged, with ambition and aspirations for political leadership. The nationalists were proud, self-conscious, cherishing anti-French feelings, discontented, and contemplating of playing a major role in the affairs of their country.\(^{332}\) During the first decades of the twentieth century, these elite were weak and small and so had to face countless handicaps due to the

---

repressive measures of the administration. In the beginning they were to differentiate between democratic France and tyrannical France. They appealed to the former against the latter. They started a campaign against misadministration and prejudice, accusing their fellow citizens, of racism, tyranny and undemocratic practices. They asked for equal political rights with the French, parliamentary representation for Indians in all assemblies, equal distribution of taxes, equal benefits from the budget, equality in education, and equality of opportunities. The nationalists called upon the people to preserve their national customs and to open their eyes, for it was time to be prepared for responsibility. The struggle between the nationalist elite and the French administration had a vital impact on politics in the settlements.

**Emergence of Labour**

France came out of World War I her economy was weak and her politics was unstable. This had its impact on French India. The administrators of French India had brief tenures in office. Between 1919 and 1939 there were not less than fourteen Governors. The result was that the French administration languished and no vigorous policy could be taken.

The War had tremendous repercussions on people in French India. Abnormal political and economic conditions caused an insistent demand for better conditions. There was popular demand for (i) transformation of corrupt civil servants and justice in all the departments; (ii) electoral reforms, particularly the abolition of the existing two-list

---

electoral system; (iii) equal distribution of electoral seats in the local assemblies.  

Trade both inland and overseas came to a standstill leading to sharp increase in price values of food grains and starvation. The paper currency lost its value due to shortage of metal coins.

During the post war period the French administration had to face the problem of challenge against its authority as the growth of Indian nationalism affected the native population of French India. The French administrators followed the draconian methods of suppression and oppression to stamp out the seeds of Indian nationalism from the soil of French Indian settlements. Thus, the ideological basis of the Indian nationalism was taking deep roots even in the early twentieth century.  

It is a unique factor that mass mobilization in the French settlements was achieved not through a nationalist struggle but through labour unrest. The labour force in the textile mills in Pondicherry had a substantial population and was experienced enough to form the basis of mass movement against the mill management and French colonial rule.  

Though sporadic incidents of labour unrest were witnessed even by the turn of the 1880’s in the three textile mills of Pondicherry, organized form of protest came into existence only in the 1930s.

Among all the working section of French India like textile workers, handloom weavers, household workers, seashore labourers, toddy tappers and others, the textile workers were the first to organize their struggle against exploitation of the mill owners in

---

27. The Madras Times, 10 September 1910, out of the 12 seats in the Conseil général, native members elected only 6 members representing a population of 1,85,840 (in 1922) and 6 seats were reserved for 560 Europeans; (iv) the introduction of universal suffrage for men and women with only one list; (v) cutting down the share of budget spent for officials salaries (the total amount of the budget in 1922 was 2,690,400 rupees of which the salary of government servants amounted to 1,43,1,645 rupees, representing more than 53% of the budget); (vi) removal of tax burden (during the war period all the taxes were raised high and new taxes was introduced, land tax was increased by 10%, home tax was tripled and new taxes like income tax, service tax and tool tax were introduced); and (vii) demand for removal of customs barrier.


30. Ibid. PP.244 - 150.
Pondicherry and achieved the first workers amelioration by the Décret of 6th April 1937. There were three textile mills in Pondicherry and employing about 8000 labourers. There were about 7000 traditional handlooms at Pondicherry. Most of the mill workers at that time belonged to the deprived castes. Due to their rural background, illiteracy and little bargaining power, they were employed as forced, bonded, and child labourers. The mill workers had to work 12 hours per day and compulsorily 24 days in a month. They had to work all the days including Sunday, there was no security of job, and their wages were relatively very low. As such they lived under constant threat of dismissal if they agitated against the mill management. Moreover, during this period their attempt to improve their conditions rarely met with success. Whenever workers started an agitation the mill management put it down with the help of local police and French administration.

The worldwide economic depression in 1930s affected the textile productions in French India by (i) the imposition of customs barriers (ii) cut-throat competition; and (iii) decline of overseas market for textile products leading to decline in the demand for cotton cloths from Pondicherry. For the above reasons the mill managements took measures to reduce their cost of production. This was done through retrenchment of workers and through reduction of their wages. The mill workers organized a series of strikes and block outs and put forward their legitimate demands (i) eight hours work; (ii) right to collective bargaining; (iii) increase in wages; and (iv) holidays and right to form workers unions. The changing socio-political atmosphere clearly affected the course of the labour movement in Pondicherry. The workers were attracted by an individual leader, a group of leaders or by social organizations like French India Youth Association and Harijan Seva

34. Ibid. P.75.
36. Ibid. P.276.
In September 1931, a French India Labour Conference was held at Odiyan salai maidan in Pondicherry. It was arranged at the initiative of Selvaraju chettiar and by his followers. Leaders from Tamil Nadu like P.Subburayan and Kanaga Sankara Kannappan addressed the conference. This conference was the first labour conference in the history of French India. Since the French administration did not come forward to solve the workers problem, the members instigated the workers to form secret unions to fight for their rights. These committees began to function indirectly and took important decisions regarding their struggle against the management to improve their conditions in mill.

Meanwhile, in June 1936, Front Populaire headed by Leon Blum, consisting of Communists and Socialists formed a coalition government in France. This pro (left) Communist government in France aroused great expectations among the workers of the mills in French India. In this hope they went on ‘stay in-strike’ again on 25th and 26th July 1936. Consequently, the situation became tense. The Governor, Léon Solomiac (1934-1936) sent the French police to control the situation. A worker of the Rodier Mill was killed in the violence. The police then moved to the Savanna Mill, were the situation had become tense due to spreading of the news that a worker had been killed in the Rodier Mill. In order to control the situation the Governor gave shooting order to the police. It resulted in the killing of twelve workers and some workers were severely injured. In order to meet the situation and to meet the increasing militancy of the labour

---

movement, the third company of the eleventh regiment of *Infanterie Coloniale* of French force was brought to Pondicherry and stayed on up to 1939.357

**Nationalist Trend of Politics**

Upto 1928 the politics of French India administrator was Henry Gaebelé. His three sons Albert, Fnitz and Robert were respectively the Presidents of the *Chambre de commerce*, the *Chambre de agricole* and of the *Conseil général*.358 An opposition to their family politics was started by Sellane Naicker, a nationalist and the leader of the *vannia* caste along with Joseph David, Thomas Aroul and others. They formed a “Popular Party” otherwise known as “Franco-Hindu Party” in 1922. The members of this opposition group were often described as subversive elements, as sympathizers of the India Congress, Communists and as anti-French by the Gaebelé Party.359

The Franco-Hindu Party defeated the pro-French Gaebelé Party in 1928. In the election which was held in 1928, J.Coponat the Franco-Hindu Party candidate was declared as *Député* elected by a majority of more than 38,000 votes defeating the opposition Gabriel Angoulvant.360 In the same year, Eugene Le Moignic who also had the support of Sellane was elected as *Sénateur*. The Franco-Hindu Party also registered landslide victory in the *conseil général, conseils locaux* and Municipal elections.361

The fraction headed by Joseph David known as “David’s Party” held sway for about ten years from 1934 to 1944. This party failed to gain the support of both the agriculturists and labourers.362 In order to strengthen its position it had to depend on the

---

45. *Ibid*. P.76.
support of civil servants who in turn were benefiting through corruption and smugglings.\textsuperscript{363}

In 1931, E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker, the leader of the Self-Respect Movement in the neighbouring Madras Presidency visited Pondicherry.\textsuperscript{364} His radical ideas on social reforms found followers in Bharathi Dasan and Noël. Bharathi Dasan propagated the need for a change in the social structure through his poems. V.Subbiah and his band of youth organized a Youth League in the year 1931, along with the Student’s Associations of Colonial College and Calve College. They organized a strike for the introduction of compulsory primary education in French and in the mother tongue of the area concerned.\textsuperscript{365} Mahatma Gandhi organized a separate organization called \textit{Harijana Seva Sangh} as a part of the \textit{Sathyagraha} movement in order to obliterate social oppression and remove untouchability in British India. The Youth League founded and led by V.Subbiah and others took up the issue of untouchability and started a \textit{Harijana Seva Sangh} in French India in Pondicherry on 6th December 1933.\textsuperscript{366} A branch was started in Karaikal with Arangasamy Naicker as President. \textit{Harijana Seva Sangh} popularized \textit{charka}; \textit{kadhi} organized reading rooms and extended its helping hand to the labour movement.\textsuperscript{367} Mahatma Gandhi visited Pondicherry and Karaikal in 1934 and Jawaharlal Nehru visited Pondicherry in October 1936. Their presence infused a spirit of nationalism among the populations.\textsuperscript{368} Thus the seeds of opposition to the French administration were sown and the persistent demands for liberal rights and privileges yielded rich dividends in the 1930s.\textsuperscript{369}

The economic redress and liberal sanctions achieved by the labour movement gave a fillip to the nationalists to form their political party.\textsuperscript{370} The foundation of \textit{Mahajana Sabha} at Pondicherry in 1937 by Marie Xavrey, Dorairaj and R.L. Purushothama Reddiar, was followed by a similar branch at Karaikal by Arangasamy Naicker, Savary Pillai, Vion de Pazanear and Leon Saint Jean and in Mahe by I. K.Kumaran.\textsuperscript{371} Various Associations like, Labour Unions, Student Associations, Youth Associations, Merchants Associations, Peasants Associations and Women’s Associations were brought under the ideologies of the Indian National Congress and Communists.\textsuperscript{372}

The \textit{Mahajana Sabha} grew up very soon to challenge the position of David’s Party in politics. The \textit{Mahajana Sabha} Party wanted to do away with the powers of the Governor under the \textit{Ordonnance Organique} (1840), to remove the existing two list voter system and to ensure the conduct of free and fair elections.\textsuperscript{373} It put up its candidates against David’s Party in elections for the \textit{conseil général}, \textit{conseils locaux} and Municipalities, which were held in 1937. With the manoeuvre of Governor Horace Crocicchia and by the undemocratic means David’s Party registered success in the elections.\textsuperscript{374} Nevertheless, the \textit{Mahajana Sabha} gained in Karaikal while David’s Party came out successful in Pondicherry.\textsuperscript{375} The contradictory electoral results and the rivalry between the two parties left the settlements in the grip of violence.\textsuperscript{376} Having lost faith in French administration the labour force led by the leaders of \textit{Mahajana Sabha} formed a front against the French administration, captured many Municipalities in Pondicherry and violated all the municipal rules with regard to civil registration of births and deaths.\textsuperscript{377} The

\begin{itemize}
\item 59. \textit{Ibid.} P.112.
\item 63. \textit{Ibid.}, P.22
\end{itemize}
village *Panchayats* worked as local courts deciding civil and criminal cases in order to avoid French courts.\(^{378}\)

Peace was restored in French India after the arrival of Governor Louis Bonvin on 26th September 1938. His first task was to restore political peace in French India. Municipal elections were abandoned by the *Arrête* passed on 18th February 1938 and replaced by Municipal commissions appointed by the Governor for five years.\(^{379}\)

World War II which broke out in 1939 had its impact on French India. During the war period (1939-44) French India passed through a time of political turmoil and economic difficulties.\(^{380}\) If there was renewed nationalism among the population on the one hand, on the other, many people rallied for France and professed loyalty to the French cause. Emergency decrees were passed.\(^{381}\) France was occupied by Nazi Germany and vanquished France had to accept the treaty of Armistice of 25th June 1940. The pro-German Vichy government was established in France. But, French India refused to accept the Armistice and to recognize the Vichy government and its laws regarding India. Bonvin, the French India Governor had instructed the administrators in all the settlements to follow a policy of caution and co-operation with the British India government.\(^{382}\) French India was forced to depend in every respect on British India. There was fear among the population that the British government of India would forbid the import of necessaries into French India and even would demand the settlements being incorporated into the neighbouring British districts.\(^{383}\)

---

70. *Ibid.* P.293.
The economy of French India was weak. Due to the stoppage of financial support from metropolitan France, its budget had to depend on receipts from salt and opium and revenue from alcohol and tobacco which constituted 45% of the total receipts. In order to meet out the financial difficulties and the cost of the War, the French administration imposed new taxes. Land tax and income tax increased by 100 percent, a tax on occupied buildings was introduced; stamp duty was increased and bills of lading were taxed. The expense of budget was reduced and other developmental works were stopped. Trade activities came to a standstill. The textile mills in Pondicherry closed indefinitely due to the high price of cotton and shortage of coal supply. Fund was collected to compensate deplorable conditions of labour.

The free France movement, centred spearheaded by Général Charles de Gaulle in Algiers, attracted people from French India to join the force. Fund was collected for the Resistance movement by means of donations, lotteries, theatrical shows and displays. As part of the movement an anti-Fascist movement called combat was organized in French occupied colonies. In French India the combat was organized in February 1944 by Emmanuel Adicéam, a French Indian and a retired French official from Algiers, Lambert Saravane, professor at the Colonial College in Pondicherry and Arsane Prigent, a Frenchman and an active member of the strong Communist oriented labour union of France called Confédération générale du travail (C.G.T).

The Communist Party of French India which was founded in September 1942 by V. Subbiah extended its support to the combat and V.Subbiah became its President. This party began to propagate anti-Fascist ideas to save Communist Russia and France from the control of Hitler’s Germany. Women, teachers, doctors, students, merchants,
Congresses, Communists, judges and magistrates became members of the combat. Despite the majority of the French officials in the combat, a considerable French population swore allegiance to the Vichy government.\textsuperscript{390} The free France movement in India was weak and it never developed into a strong platform for rallying the French citizens of French India around de Gaulle.\textsuperscript{391} However, the combat movement gave fillip to the French India Communist Party to bounce back into the main current of French Indian politics.

\textbf{The French Programmes for Cultural Transformation}

French authorities were quite aware that the future of the French settlements in India depended largely on the “total colonial policy of France.”\textsuperscript{392} Their main desire was to win over the Indian nationalists; because they were anxious that the Indian nationalistic flavour would affect the fate of French India. But, Indian leaders reacted to this problem differently. They believed that the liquidation of British domination would be followed by the end of the other foreign dominations.\textsuperscript{393} Sardar Vallabhai Patel firmly asserted that the French settlements too must be liberated at the same time as India became free from the British rule.\textsuperscript{394} However, Nehru believed that French Indian problem could be resolved diplomatically after India became free. The French authorities believed that the Indian nationalists would take a more moderate stand once the country became fully independent.\textsuperscript{395} A lot of hope was placed on the French “humanitarian principles that had inspired the colonial policy of the Third Republic” and that the “idea of radical discrimination and prejudice against coloured people had always been alien to the spirit of the French people.” Therefore Paris authorities instructed Henri–Paul Roux, the \textit{Chargé d’affaires de France} in India to follow a policy calculated to improve future French

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{78} \textit{Ibid.} P.42.
\item \textsuperscript{79} A.Appadorai and M.S.Rajan, \textit{India’s Foreign Policy and Relations. Op.cit.} P.247.
\item \textsuperscript{81} \textit{Ibid.} PP.105-131.
\item \textsuperscript{83} \textit{Ibid.} PP.131- 135.
\end{itemize}
relations with India and was also instructed to take interest in the promotion of better economic co-operation between the two countries.\footnote{396}

Meanwhile, F. C. Baron conceived a cultural programme for French India. It emphasised the desire of the French government to develop cultural institutions in the French Indian settlements and establish a university at Pondicherry, which would be a centre for the imparting of the culture of France, and in its highest and noblest aspects in various forms- literature, arts, and sciences, theoretical and applied.\footnote{397} Thus it should serve India by bringing French culture here and should serve France by bringing Indian history and culture to the French.\footnote{398} Added more, he thought about a sort of dual citizenship, so that people might be citizens of both India and France.\footnote{399} Thus French India would serve as a \textit{Le trait d’union} between France on the one hand and India on the other. Baron hoped that Indian people would appreciate the value of this cultural programme and would wish to retain them.\footnote{400} He also believed that this cultural programme, if accepted and implemented, would go a long way to strengthen the French influence in India.

Paris authorities quite agreed with the views of Baron and they also secured considerable support from the French Indian political elite.\footnote{401} When he met Nehru along with Roux on 27th May 1947, Baron outlined the idea of this cultural programme. While expressing his great appreciation to Baron’s proposal, Nehru insisted that the Indians naturally wanted a united India without any foreign bases or extraterritorial rights.\footnote{402}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\footnotesize
\bibitem{footnote3} \textit{Ibid.} P. 296.
\bibitem{footnote4} Anil Seal, \textit{The Emergence of Indian Nationalism}. \textit{Op.cit.} P.47.
\end{thebibliography}
Regarding the idea of the dual nationality, Nehru maintained that it had to be fully examined as to how for it was practicable. French cultural programme was converted into a political propaganda. A lot of hope was placed on Nehru’s acceptance of the transformation of the French settlements as centres of cultural extension. In addition Nehru’s repeated statements that India wanted to make Pondicherry “a window open to the west” became highly politicised. Baron carried out his propaganda by pointing out that the various rights and facilities being enjoyed by the French Indian people in the fields of administration, education and politics under the French rule will be lost in the fusion with the mass of four hundred million people without benefits for none. And he maintained that “it was in the interest of French India to remain a democratic country closely united with India and freely associated with France.” He believed that if the whole situation could be handled with “tack, wisdom and broad outlook, it might turn in French favour.” Thus Baron’s political aim defined the preservation of French India within French Union and development of friendship between France and India. Paris authorities therefore emphasized that the enlargement of cultural facilities in the French settlement would allow them to maintain their rights there and thence it became the principle instrument of rapprochement with the Indian government.

Meanwhile, the French authorities in France sent Tézanas du Montcel, the Inspector of colonies, for an on the spot study of the situation. Maurice Moutet, the French Colonial Minister also visited the French settlements and he was preceded by Roux. Their mission was to examine the general situation in French India and they were instructed to take necessary measures to safeguard French interests in India. They met a

---

cross section of the population to ascertain their feelings. On 11th January 1947, The Assemblée Représentative which met at Pondicherry unanimously adopted a resolution demanding the conversion of the Assemblée Représentative into a sovereign assembly and complete autonomy for French India. Following it the Chandernagore members of the Assemblée Représentative met Tézanas at Pondicherry and submitted a memorandum on 12th April 1947, which demanded financial and administrative autonomy for Chandernagore as a prelude to complete independence. They justified their cause by referring to the distance which separated Chandernagore from Pondicherry resulting in the delay of the execution of works, geographical reasons of Chandernagore and the failure of the Assemblée Représentative of Pondicherry to protect the financial interests of Chandernagore. At the very outset the memorandum made it clear that mere administrative reforms would not satisfy the people of Chandernagore.

Later in May Kamal Ghosh, the National Democratic Front leader and the Mayor of Chandernagore presented his memorandum to Tézanas, who visited Chandernagore. The memorandum summarily rejected the plan of French autonomy proposed to be given to Chandernagore and it called upon the French to declare the date when they would quit French India. The Mahajana Sabha Party of Mahe also presented a memorandum similarly to Tézanas demanding immediate independence for French India and the right of joining the Indian Union. The uncertainty about the political future of French India left the French Indian population and the political elite in confusion and divide. Sensing the mood of the people Roux instructed France the need of urgent reforms even to the extent of granting local autonomy which he believed would change the political status of the French Indian settlements. He hoped that the diplomatic rapprochement on cultural programme would go on one side, on the other political and administrative reforms must

101. Ibid. PP.221 - 240.
be undertaken immediately.\textsuperscript{415} Baron also admitted to giving greater autonomy to the settlements and facilitating the effective participation of the French Indian population in the management of their own affairs. He believed that it would check the growing unrest among the people.

Following the recommendations made by the observers the French government granted the Décret of 30th June 1947 which accorded financial and administrative autonomy to Chandernagore.\textsuperscript{416} The feasibility of granting similar autonomy to other four French Indian settlements was studied. Chandernagore was given prior consideration, where the Indian nationalist sentiments and emotions of the Bengal people were at its highest and a movement for merger with India was gaining ground.\textsuperscript{417} However, the internal conditions of the French Indian settlements were far from satisfactory and peaceful. Political turmoil gripped the settlements and resentment brewed. In early June 1947 Mountbatten publicly declared that Great Britain would transfer power to India on 15th August 1947.\textsuperscript{418} While India was marching towards its independence, the people of French India could not remain indifferent.\textsuperscript{419} From the days of freedom struggle in British India, French Indians were influenced by the Indian nationalist politics and anti-colonial struggles. Only the colonial situation separated them from the mainstream of India.

**Political Transformation**

The Third republic’s policy of assimilation was in line with the traditional policy of Republican France.\textsuperscript{420} French India, along with the other colonies namely Algeria (regarded as a part of metropolitan France), Martinique, Guadeloupe, Réunion, French Guiana, Senegal, and Cochin-China was given representation in the French parliament in

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid. PP. 699 - 700.
Accordingly French India was endowed with a Député to the French Chambre, apart from a Sénateur to the French Sénat. The representation was made on the basis of universal suffrage in Algeria; the natives were not granted the voting right in Martinique; in Guadeloupe, and Réunion they held the suffrage on equal terms with Frenchmen; and the same is substantially true of Senegal. In French India and in French Guiana they had a right to vote, but not on equal terms with the French inhabitants. In Indo-China they were almost entirely shut out.

Despite these dissimilarities, representation rested purely on an arbitrary basis, without rationale or any difference in population, in area or in wealth. Moreover the electoral methods in the colonies were very similar to those in the métropole. For instance, same regulations were used in the compilation of voting lists in the election of Députés and in the local election and the voting took place by written ballot (except in Senegal). Most importantly the colonial representatives were paid out of the national treasury, and they enjoyed in Paris the privileges and legal immunities of the regular French members of parliament. In the chambre they possessed the right to discuss and to vote upon every project along with the metropolitan members.

Towards local reforms a conseil colonial was created by the Décret of 13th June 1872. The conseil colonial, however, was replaced by the conseil général by the Décret of 25th January 1879. At first the conseil général consisted of 25 members to be elected by the voters of two lists, one for Europeans and their descendents and another for native Indians. Then the total number was raised to 30 in 1884 (elected by the three lists of voters) and again it was reduced to 28 in 1899. In 1884 a new list and reservation was

109. Ibid.  P.190.
111. Ibid.  P.400.
113. Ibid.  P.311.
created for Renonçants. In 1899 it was abolished, wherein some of them were included in the first list of voters along with the Europeans and others with the native Indians.\textsuperscript{427} 

**Conseils locaux** was created by the *Décret* of 13th June 1872 in all the five settlements. The strength of the *conseils locaux* varied from one region to another and was in proportion to the population.\textsuperscript{428} At first this *conseil* consisted of 34 members to be elected by two lists of voters. Then the total number of members of the *Conseil* was raised to 42 in 1884, and they were to be elected by the three lists of voters. Again it was restored to the two lists of voters in 1899.\textsuperscript{429} The first attempt at organising Municipal government was made in 1791. However, it was only in 1880 that the Municipal system was properly organized in French India. By the *Décret* of 12\textsuperscript{th} March 1880, the territory of French India was divided into ten communes.\textsuperscript{430} Later on, this was increased to 17 communes in 1908. All the members to these bodies were elected through universal manhood suffrage by the two lists of voters. A separate reservation was maintained for Europeans in the local bodies. This reservation policy lasted till 1945 when a new law passed by France on the 23rd August 1945, abolished this discrimination.\textsuperscript{431}

**Growth of Political Elite**

When French political institutions were established in French Indian the latter half of the nineteenth century, the existing social and political structure ranged widely from some simple, some highly stratified and centralized political systems, where the distinction between “Notables” and “Commoners” was clearly recognized.\textsuperscript{432} One of the results of electoral politics introduced in French India was the rise, in the late nineteenth century, of political elite. The French introduced new political institutions in India within

\begin{itemize}
\end{itemize}
which social action would henceforth take place.\textsuperscript{433} This meant the establishment of a modern political system, which proved conducive to growth of political elite. These elite were the products of the colonial era, which aspired for political leadership and dreamed of playing a major role in the affairs of French India.\textsuperscript{434} These elite consisted of religions men, caste leaders, mercenaries, merchants, land lords, lawyers, administrators, civil servants and educated, representing all spheres of society. They came from different social, economic and political background and rose above the masses by placing themselves in the rank of colonial society.\textsuperscript{435} They exploited ignorant mass voters and manipulated the newly established institutions to serve their purpose. Ajit Neogy describes them as “Satraps” (political bosses), who were not bothered about any political ideology but swore allegiance to Republican France and gave slogans such as \textit{Vive la France, Vive la Republique française and Vive l’ Inde française}.\textsuperscript{436} Their rise and fall always depended on the amount of support they extended to the French administration.

The political elite in French India can be categorized into two (i) “French elite,” (ii) “Indian elite.” The “French elite” consisted of missionaries, colonial administrators, business men and the settlers.\textsuperscript{437} Most of the “French elite” were not ready to collaborate with the native Indian society. They feared that the European political system was unknown to Indian society and ultimately universal suffrage would give hegemony to the native Indians.\textsuperscript{438} They lived in a separate quarter of the town. Some of them were liberals who fought for the emancipation of depressed class people in India, while a few even collaborated with Indian society through marriage alliance.\textsuperscript{439}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{122} S.P.Sen, \textit{Social and Religious Reform Movement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. Op.cit.} P. 221.
  \item \textsuperscript{124} Anil Seal, \textit{The Emergence of Indian Nationalism. Op.cit.} P.200.
  \item \textsuperscript{125} N.V.Rajkumar, \textit{The Background of India’s Foreign Policy}. Delhi: 1952. P.164.
  \item \textsuperscript{126} F.S.William Miles, \textit{Imperial Burdens-Counter colonialism in former French India. Op.cit.} PP. 48-56.
  \item \textsuperscript{127} \textit{Ibid.} P.59.
\end{itemize}
The “Indian elite,” slow to develop and small in number, began to appear in the late nineteenth century. There were two types of them viz., the “traditional elite” or mamoolist and the “modern elite”. The traditional elite liked the French culture and French people in France but not in India. They accepted colonization to some extent and made only one condition to France that she did not ask them to give up their tradition. They did not welcome la mission civilisatrice with an open mind nor did they allow themselves to pale into insignificance accepting the colonial policy of assimilation. Often, traditional system seemed to survive best within the caste structure, where those with high status in the traditional system could use this advantage to acquire modern political and economic power which could sustain their traditional prestige. The political institutions of power and the new economic opportunities combined to produce the emergence of the “modern elite” in French Indian society. The modern elite liked to apply western principles and ideas to their own society. They had not only adopted the ideas of the west, its techniques, methods of work, culture and education, but also wanted to transform Indian society into a European one. They wanted to cut off from their existing society because it held them in subordination over the centuries. They praised France, for its colonization had brought social, economic and political advantages to their society and they argued that prior to the French rule, the Indian society was living in confusion, disorder and general anarchy. However, they did not admit that colonization had brought equality and happiness to them. Since the Third Republic favoured the assimilation of its colonies, to metropolitan France, the elite demanded that this concept

129. Ibid. P.213.
134. Ibid. P.138.
be applied to India in spirit and in letter. It asked for equal rights with the French and eventually played a vital role in the socio-political life of French India in the first half of the twentieth century.

Some of the modern elite turned to the European way of life by losing their language, customs, respect, and the friendship of their society. In many cases they married French women, spoke the French language, lived with the French community and sent their children to French schools in an attempt to bring them up on the French model. But these “Europeanized” Indian elite were not just a negative factor as they were anxious to play a national role which would change India’s traditional and backward society into a modern and progressive one. An interesting fact about these elite was their admission that colonization had brought certain advantages to their country. Two or three decades later, this attitude was to be looked upon as anti-nationalist. At the same level, they denounced the racist administrators, Governors and high-caste elites, obstacles to progress and modern life.

Still many of the new educated came from groups that were underprivileged in the traditional system. In many cases their new roles called for different kinds of values. Their claim to equality with high castes and traditional elite strained their relations with the latter. If however, the urbanized, educated low castes had some difficulty in locating social advantages, they have had less difficulty in acquiring political advantages. By practicing these political values, they increasingly stratified themselves.

138. Ibid. P. 168.
140. Ibid., P. 217.
142. Ibid. P. 213.
Thus, came into existence small modern elite, who had great prestige and were distinct from the traditional elite, although in many cases they came from low social status. Political membership was obtained through education, as access to education was made available to the lower-caste in the colonial system. Education was translated into occupations, particularly administrative positions, which in turn were the most suitable to enter politics. To this degree, then, the modern elite were a status group in the same sense as the traditional elite. The key difference was that the former laid claim to prestige and position in the urban, rather than the rural as did the traditional one. Political power became available for low castes and converted, provided they could gain control of the political machinery and enact various kinds of legal protection for themselves.

The French policy of assimilation was tried out in French India before being extended to Africa just as the British Indian Presidencies had been the testing ground for Benthamite Utilitarianism. The changing political atmosphere in French India in the latter half of the nineteenth century brought the different social groups into conflict in electoral politics, one between the French and Indians, another between the different social groups of Indian society. Political life in the colony began to centre on these conflicts among the political elite. The policy of assimilation, so abruptly introduced in India without preparing the natives mentally, provoked social imbalance, caste war, communal conflict and French India witnessed an electoral terrorism under the leadership of French Indian ‘political elite.’ Moreover, universal suffrage gave way to large scale violence, irregularities, mockery, intimidation and rigging in the electoral politics.

Already, the same policy of assimilation was introduced by the Second Republic. The idea behind it was that the colonies should be ruled by the same laws and the same government, with the right to send the Députés to France so that they could have a sense of belonging to the French Republic. So in 1848 France asked French India to send two

representatives to the French assembly through universal manhood suffrage. Electoral arrangements were prepared and election was held under the direct guidance and supervision of the Governor. Lecour, a business man of Nantes, who had a secret alliance with the notables of Pondicherry, was declared elected to the Constituent Assembly on 24th April 1848.

Since the Second Republic insisted on equality among their subjects both in France and in the colonies, the pariah-Christians in Pondicherry twisted the arm of the French administration that had not supported their demand for a church for themselves, by resigning en masse from domestic service. The enthusiasm even went more when they claimed the same right to wear sandals as was enjoyed by the members of Vellala community. This provoked violent reaction including the murder of some pariahs and the burning down of pariah villages. Consequently Governor Pujol ordered a return to the status quo anté. The pariahs who wore sandals began to be fined. A new Décret passed on 15th March 1849, suppressing the seat of representation for India and subsequently the policy of assimilation was abandoned temporarily after the installation of Second Empire in 1852 in France. From the time of this first election, the high-castes understood that it was more profitable to make use of universal suffrage then to fight against it. But as universal suffrage recognised equality of the low-caste people they feared that the traditional order would collapse.

When, France again invited a Député from French India to the French Chambre des Députés in 1871, two parties were formed in the vicinity of electoral politics: (i) the Gallios-Montbrun’s “Conservative Party” which supported the candidature of

149. Electoral terrorism started in 1848 lasted until the last election held in 1951.
151. Ibid. P.138.
153. Ibid. P. 186.
Ristelhueber and (ii) Emile Hecquet’s “Liberal Party,” which backed Count Desbassayns de Richemont.\textsuperscript{466} There were altogether eight candidates in this election, including an Indian by name Sandou Odear, Professor of Tamil at the University of Paris.\textsuperscript{467} Both the parties had chosen their candidates with the willingness of high-castes from Pondicherry.

Desbassayns managed to get support from the notables of Pondicherry, viz., Ponnuthambi Pillai (a liberal and the leader of Christian community) and Shanmugam Vellayuda Mudaliar (a traditionalist and head of the Hindus).\textsuperscript{468} Voters list was prepared in twelve days.\textsuperscript{469} There were altogether 29,620 voters in the whole of the colony and the right of voting was restricted to only men above the age of 21 and who fulfilled some property qualifications. A newspaper \textit{L’électeur de l’Inde franchaise} was published on this occasion to educate electors.\textsuperscript{470} Election was held on 28th May 1871 under the direct guidance of the Governor. Among the registered (62.45 \%) votes Desbassayns got a majority of 13,597 votes and defeated the rival candidates.\textsuperscript{471}

Meanwhile, differences arose between the Indian leaders Ponnuthambi and Shanmugam, when the former wanted civil registration to be made compulsory for native Christians to claim certain rights equal with the Frenchmen.\textsuperscript{472} France saw Ponnuthambi Pillai’s demand as a symbolic and revolutionary gesture and understood proved that certain Indians desired to assimilate and their expectation should not be disappointed. Shanmugam felt that Ponnuthambi and his friends were moving too fast towards the assimilation of French customs.\textsuperscript{473} He feared that it was dangerous to Hinduism and its traditional values. This move provoked some agitation not only among the French settlers

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{154} J.H. Broomfield, \textit{Op.Cit.}, P. 213.
  \item \textsuperscript{155} N. V. Rajkumar, \textit{Op.Cit.}, P. 186.
  \item \textsuperscript{157} \textit{Ibid.} PP. 140 -1 65.
  \item \textsuperscript{159} Anil Seal, \textit{The Emergence of Indian Nationalism}.\textit{Op.cit.P.216.}
  \item \textsuperscript{160} \textit{Ibid.} P.128.
  \item \textsuperscript{161} Girardet Raoul, \textit{L’Inde coloniale France de 1871 à 1962}, Paris: La Table Ronde, 1972. P. 211.
\end{itemize}
and high-caste Christians but also among Muslims and Hindus. The French elite felt that the policy of assimilation threatened their privileges and eventually would give way to the Indian hegemony. To restrict Ponnuthambi and his liberal attitudes, Shanmugam created an Indian Party and formed an electoral alliance with the Créoles, Choutres (high-caste Christians), and the Catholic mission. This Clerico-Brahmanic coalition contested each and every seat against Ponnuthambi Pillai and Hecquet’s Liberal Party.

Jules Godin a friend of Ponnuthambi, who was holding the post of Député, brought more assimilation into the colony. The Décret of 12th March 1880 provided Municipal administration to French India. The Décret of 24th June 1880 granted the civil registration to the natives as wished by the liberals. Opposing these reforms and making use of this opportunity Shanmugam now learned to mobilize the voters and behold candidates to him rather than to fight against the French reforms and organized the votes of native Indians to poll massively against Ponnuthambi Pillai in the immediate Municipal elections and won more seats to give the Clerico-Brahmanic clique a clear majority.

Commenting on this move Governor Drouhet bitterly observed that, “universal suffrage has became an oppressive instrument in the hands Brahmanism and today, the spirit of our institutions is subordinated to an entire social system which is contradictory to ours.”

Ponnuthambi shared this pessimism too and was convinced that only a modification in the constitution could bring him back to power and therefore conceived a two stage plan. First

165. Ibid. P.142.
167. Ibid. P. 168.
168. As a barrister he had gone to the court one day wearing European-style shoes. This innovation had caused commotion among the French administration and his countrymen, on the one hand because his caste had the custom of wearing slippers and on the other, the low-caste were not permitted to wear European-shoes. The French administration felt that his attitude threatened the social order. So Governor censured Pillai and forbid him admittance to the courtroom. Disappointed, Pillai pleaded his case to the Supreme Court in Paris, through his advocate Jules Godin and won his case. This incident which fetched him fame of glory happened in his life when he had a quarrel with the French administration in 1872 and came out victorious (Le Progrés, 4 and 25, July 1886).
stage: to secure for the Indians the right of renouncing their personal status and placing themselves under the rule of French civil code.\textsuperscript{481} In this way certain Indians would become more French than others in the colony. Second stage: to obtain the right of vote only to Indians who renounced personnel status. To the benevolence of French Indian society, the act of \textit{Renonciation} was passed on 21st September 1881.\textsuperscript{482} The process of \textit{on Renonciation} enabled the inhabitants of French India to become \textit{Renoncants} by adopting the French civil code and customs in all aspects. In addition, it was compulsory for the \textit{Renoncants} to choose a new name.\textsuperscript{483} A good number, mostly from the low-castes, conscious of their own degradation, willingly opted to become French \textit{citoyens}, so as to attain equality, status and position.\textsuperscript{484} Attracted by the political and social advantages, many Christians, Muslims and even a number of high-caste Hindus became \textit{Renoncants}.\textsuperscript{485} But these measures of Pillai earned him the enmity of not only the Hindus under Shanmugam Vellayuda Mudialiar but also the French elite who feared that their privileged status stood threatened by the emergence of a new class of citizens.\textsuperscript{486}

Four days after the signature of the \textit{Renonciation} decree, Shanmugam, the champion of tradition and the rampart of caste managed to get his own \textit{Député} elected to the French \textit{Chambre des Députés}.\textsuperscript{487} Pierre Alype, editor of the Parisian Journal \textit{France d’outre-mer} defeated the liberal candidate Jules Godin with a huge margin\textsuperscript{488} and got Jacques Hebrard elected as \textit{Sénateur} in the election which was held in 1882. Both \textit{Député} and \textit{Sénateur} accepted every whim of their political patron (Shanmugam) and promised him that their respective office will prevent further assimilation of French Indian

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{170} \textit{Ibid.} P. 168.
\bibitem{173} \textit{Ibid.} P.63.
\bibitem{175} \textit{Ibid.} 217.
\bibitem{176} Anil Seal, \textit{The Emergence of Indian Nationalism. Op.cit.} P.295.
\end{thebibliography}
society.\(^489\) Having lost all his influence, Ponnuthambi Pillai *La Porte* now felt that even though he and a section of society were culturally assimilated to the French way, they are politically cornered by the traditional elite.\(^490\) He prevailed upon France to inscribe the *Renonçants* on the first list of voters along with the Europeans.\(^491\) Keeping in mind that this demand would crush the influence of the French population in the colonial affairs the Supreme Colonial Council finally agreed to establish a three list of voters, one for Europeans and their decedents, one for *Renonçants* and one for non-*Renonçants*, each list having one-third of representation in the local bodies.\(^492\) The *Décret* of 26th February 1884, which divided electors in this fashion made the liberals indignant. \(^493\)

**Constitutional Reforms in French India**

The French settlements in India had rallied to de Gaulle’s free France movement in 1940 and in 1946 became a *Territoire d’outre-mer* and thus came under the responsibility of the Ministry for Overseas France, formerly called the Ministry for the Colonies.\(^494\) In all the Overseas Territories proper; there was a representative of the French government, a Governor General. He was responsible to the government in Paris for the administration of the Territory and for its defence.\(^495\) He was assisted by an advisory council comprising the heads of the different services and selected native leaders, and by the elected assemblies. The French parliament legislated for the overseas territories and reserved the right to apply legislations to the territories, either by legislative enactment or by decree.\(^496\) In the former case, the Assembly of the Union was to be consulted; in the latter case, the constitution required that it shall be consulted. In addition, the government might make

\(^177\) *Ibid*. P. 290.
\(^180\) Paris., P. 217.
decrees applicable directly to individual territories. In such case, the decree was signed by the President of the Republic and only after consultation with the Assembly of the Union.\textsuperscript{497} In short, the French Union was still partly a fiction. In reality the French government was supreme, legislation belonged solely to parliament, and in the colonies the administration had the real authority.\textsuperscript{498}

In keeping with the Fourth Republic’s policy towards the colonies, in French India the French Governor and the authorities followed a policy of introducing a series of administrative reforms during October 1946 and September 1947.\textsuperscript{499} France under the Fourth Republic had, Baron said, “proclaimed the death-knell of colonialism and all men and women whether they belong to Paris, Quimper, Tananarive or Pondicherry, are free and equal. That all men and women have the same right and can also be freely elected, without distinction of caste or race or colour, representatives who should faithfully express the idea and wishes of the electors.”\textsuperscript{500} This he thought would give the French authorities ample time to adjust them to the changing political scenario in Asia, particularly in the Indian sub-continent and to fulfil aspirations of the French Indian population.\textsuperscript{501}

Municipal elections which were suspended during the war years, was to be held on 23rd June 1946, on the basis of universal suffrage and a single electoral list.\textsuperscript{502} In the history of French India women were first time allowed to vote and participate in electoral politics. The National Democratic Front won a sweeping victory in the Municipal elections. It captured power in all the 22 Municipal Councils of French India, winning 101 out of the 122 Municipal seats and its candidates were elected as Mayors and

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{Ibid}. P.137.
  \item \textit{Ibid.}, P. 216.
\end{itemize}
Assistant-Mayors. 503 In the past French settlements in India unanimously voted for selected candidates of the French administration. Now they reacted differently and registered the votes for opposition against French authorities. 504 This situation was created by the National Democratic Front consisting of Communist and Congress men. The National Democratic Front, as expected, won in Pondicherry and Karaikal. 505 In Chandernagore, people overwhelmingly voted for the National Democratic Front’s candidates. 506 The NDF also registered its success in Yanam where the French Governor had not set his foot since past 10 years. In Mahe to the NDF won, though the victory was not an emphatic win, as the Mahajana Sabha had won 5 seats and the NDF won only 7 out of a total of 12. 507 While observing these radical changes Baron himself admitted that the French policy was largely responsible for the separatist tendency manifested by the settlements. 508 The trend of defiance continued in the subsequent years until the settlements were finally merged with the Indian Union.

The members to the Assembly were to be elected on the basis of universal suffrage and a single list of voters. 509 This Assembly met twice in ordinary sessions of 30 days duration and twice in extraordinary sessions of 15 days. It was called either by the Governor or by two- thirds of the members, if necessary on the prerequisite. The President of the Assembly was selected on the basis of seniority by age. The Assemblée Représentative was permitted to deliberate and give its opinion on matters referred to it. 510 The Governor or head of the French Indian administration assured the implementation of

194. Ibid., P. 89.
196. Ibid. P. 267.
the decisions or opinions of the Assembly. The budget prepared by the Governor and his council was discussed and it was implemented by his order. In fact the Assembly and the Governor shared the initiative of incurring state expenditure. The *Assemblée Représentative* elected a *Commission Permanente* of 9 members with one year office. In short, the Assembly was nothing more than an approving body as the Head of French India was endowed with the power of overriding the decision or opinion of the Assembly. In reality, it could not take up or discuss matters which were not submitted before it, and from that point of view its scope was very restricted.

**Electoral Politics in French India (1946-47)**

According to the new Constitution of 27th October 1946, French India was endowed with a *Député* to the *Assemblée Nationale* in Paris, two *Sénateurs* to the *Conseil de la République* and a member to the *Assemblée de l’union française*. In the election held to elect a *Député* to the *Assemblée Nationale* on 10th November 1946, the National Democratic Front supported Lambert Saravane and placed its candidate against the candidates like Armand Gallios Montburn and D.Zivarattinam of Pondicherry, Savarinathan of Karaikal and Anandan Calcatta from Mahe. The National Democratic Front’s manifesto proclaimed in favour of French India remaining as an autonomous unit within the French Union. The French administration fully supported Saravane, since he was emerging as a new leader of the labour community other than the Communist leader

---

201. *Ibid*. PP. 655-658
V. Subbiah. The Governor of French India hoped that Saravane would abandon V. Subbiah once he was elected with his support. Saravane came out successfully.

Lambert Saravane served his masters loyally, when he addressed the French Constituent Assembly at Paris in 1946, he stated “In French India, French domination is a myth rather than a reality.” Indians from French India have remained attached to France by bonds of true friendship. We do not know what is subjection or oppression” He added “we are all the spiritual sons of France and without France we, educated and leading men of that country, would be nothing at all.” He remarked, “Your fate and ours are bound up together. That is why the French Union must become a reality.” He further stated, “While riots and disturbances prevail everywhere in neighbouring territories (British India), French India is peaceful. Harmony between communities has been maintained we live in brotherhood because France has kept up their complete democracy.”

Supporting Saravane’s speeches, Governor C. F. Baron said, “Our territories, freely handed over two hundred years ago by local sovereigns to the Compagnie des Indes are like small properties in the immense Indian domain. Their raison-d’être is to constitute natural links between two great peoples, two great cultures,” and he concluded that “It is in the interest of French India to remain a democratic country united with India and freely associated with France.”

New reforms were introduced by the Décret of 12th April 1947 which replaced the Conseil privé du Gouverneur by a Conseil du Gouvernement (Government Council)

---

208. Ibid. P.138.
210. Ibid. P.113.
consisting of 7 members of whom 5 were nominated by the Governor and 2 were chosen from the *Assemblée Représentative*. The following was the composition of the *Conseil*.

Though it was described by the Governor as a great innovation but was only a consultative body and had no executive or legislative power.\footnote{525} It was to advice the Governor on such matters that the Governor puts before it. Moreover, the majority of this body consisted of government officials and contained only two elected members.\footnote{526} They were made members of the *Conseil* in order to ensure a close co-ordination between the *Conseil du Gouvernement* and the *Assemblée Représentative* on the one hand and the affairs of public administration on the other.\footnote{527} Baron, himself admitted that “I know that there are many of you who worry and consider the powers of this Assembly as still insufficient.”\footnote{528} The Décret of 12th August 1947 abrogated the above arrangement into 6 members of whom 3 were officials and 3 were chosen from the *Assemblée Représentative* invested the *Conseil du Gouvernement* with enlarged powers.\footnote{529} In due course of time all the members of the *Conseil* were selected from the *Assemblée Représentative*. With that the *Conseil du Gouvernement* became the most powerful administrative body in French India.\footnote{530}

However, these measures did not divest the power of the Governor who remained the ultimate executive power and could over-ride or cancel any measures or resolution adopted by any one of the elected bodies in French India.\footnote{531} On 20th August 1947 the

\begin{footnotes}
\end{footnotes}
French Governor styled himself as *Commissaire de la République*, instead of ‘Governor,’ which was a new colonial connotation invented by the ‘French Union.’

**Political Violence in French India: The Referendum Deferred**

Meantime, on 4th January 1950, the Overseas Territory Commission of France had adopted a resolution proposed by Lambert Saravane, the *Député* of the French *Assemblée nationale* from French India urging the French government to negotiate with the Indian government to draw up a statute for the four settlements and submit the statute to the inhabitants in a referendum. Saravane said that the statute of the four town settlements should be taken into account both “French traditions” and “needs,” particularly economic and social, “which oblige these establishments to share very closely the life of the great Indian Community.” The resolution said that the four settlements “should constitute the affirmation of link between France and Indian Union.” At the same time, it passed a resolution sponsored by the French government for the immediate holding of the referendum. These two apparently contradictory resolutions suggested that France was in two minds with regard to her overseas possessions in India.

India was concerned over the situation prevailing in French Indian settlements and the desperate condition of the pro-mergerists. N.V. Rajkumar was very active in the French Indian affairs since October 1949. He took charge of uniting all the pro-merger groups in French India to organize a pro-merger movement. He was visiting Pondicherry and Karaikal with a view to consolidating the pro-merger groups much to the chagrin of the French Indian authorities. Concerned over political violence in French India, N.V. Rajkumar observed that the situation prevailing there was charged with intimidation and

---

People were living under the shadow of threat and rowdyism was particularly directed against the suppression of all pro-Indian elements in view of the coming referendum and thus no free and fair referendum could be possible. Moreover, the pro-merger groups were completely frustrated and disorganised and they looked to New Delhi for security and protection against terrorism by the supporters of the French India Socialist Party before any Movement for integration of the settlements could be launched. Ménard, the new Commissaire of French India strongly refuted the allegation made by N.V.Rajkumar and told the press that N.V.Rajkumar’s information had been obtained from unrepresentative sources in French India and that there was no “naked rowdyism” in these settlements as he alleged and everybody lived in peace without any fear of his life or property. He also expressed that the referendum was a purely French affair but in order to ensure absolute impartiality in its conduct France had agreed to its supervision by neutral observers appointed by the highest judicial tribunal in the world. This prompted India’s doubt of the fairness of the referendum in French India to be held under the administration of Ménard and they were feeling shaky and feared that a referendum held in present conditions would go against India’s favour. R.K.Tandon who succeeded S.K.Banerjee as Consul General of India at Pondicherry (on 10th June 1950) reported to New Delhi.

The referendum is bound to loom large in the discussions among the French circle and it is not impossible that the French might try to cash in on their present strength by announcing an early date. There can be no doubt that a referendum held in present conditions would go against India. I have also no doubt that if democratic conditions are allowed to exist and there is freedom of association and speech followed by an

227. Ibid.P.167.
228. N.V.Rajkumar, The Background of India’s Foreign Policy. Delhi, 1952. P.143.
impartial referendum, the decision would be in favour of India.\textsuperscript{544} We should however be under no delusions that the French authorities would allow democratic and fair conditions to exist as their power is founded not on any genuine love or admiration emanating from the people but on fear and force.\textsuperscript{545} They have attempted to cater to the weaknesses of the people. Thus the smuggler is openly encouraged and there are at present one to two ships a week in Pondicherry harbour whereas during the Customs Union in 1948 not more than about eight ships arrived in a year. The goods are hardly to be seen in Pondicherry and soon disappear obviously into the Indian Union. Similarly there is an abundance of cheap liquor.\textsuperscript{546}

Day by day the political situation in French India got worsened in the absence of V. Subbiah, the Communists had either been crushed or driven out or gone underground,\textsuperscript{547} Goubert and Saravane involved in a rivalry of building their workers union in the three textile mills of Pondicherry, whose workers numbered about 10,000. The labourers in the three textile mills were drawn into three Workers’ Syndicates by Goubert. The May Day celebration of 1950 was an indication of Goubert’s success in this field. A mammoth procession consisting of about 4,000 mill workers flying the French flag and the red ensign of labour marched through the town and gathered at a \textit{maidan} where a public meeting was held with Goubert in the chair.\textsuperscript{548} At the meeting Goubert assured the workers that his heart was with them and that he would do all in his power for

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{232} \textit{Ibid.} 188.
  \item \textsuperscript{234} It was possibly in the face of this protest that the French Foreign Ministry announced its intention on 15th December 1950 to grant an amnesty by presenting a bill in the forthcoming session of the French \textit{Assemblée nationale}. Time and again, the government of India asked the French Foreign Ministry about the bill, but unfortunately the bill was never presented before the \textit{Assemblée nationale}. An appeal was also made to the French Court of Causation, the highest legal court of appeal, but the court rejected the appeal because the counsel for defense failed to pursue the appeal. By April 1954, all the convicted persons had almost served out their sentences in full and had been released at the expiry of their respective terms of imprisonment (File No: D. 1538/50, (35 -R&I) R&I Branch, Ministry of External Affairs, N.A.I., New Delhi).
  \item \textsuperscript{235} Anil Seal, \textit{The Emergence of Indian Nationalism. Op.cit.} P.271.
\end{itemize}
their lot. Ramaswamy Naicker, the *Dravida Kazhagam* leader from India had been specially invited by Goubert to address the meeting. Naicker told his audience that the condition in French India was much better than that of the people in India and that they must thank Goubert for that. He also told them that there was no question of French India merging in India.  

Goubert and Saravane involved in a rivalry of building their workers union in the three textile mills of Pondicherry, whose workers numbered about 10,000. The labourers in the three textile mills were drawn into three Workers’ Syndicates by Goubert. The May Day celebration of 1950 was an indication of Goubert’s success in this field. A mammoth procession consisting of about 4,000 mill workers flying the French flag and the red ensign of labour marched through the town and gathered at a *maidan* where a public meeting was held with Goubert in the chair. At the meeting Goubert assured the workers that his heart was with them and that he would do all in his power for their lot. Ramaswamy Naicker, the *Dravida Kazhagam* leader from India had been specially invited by Goubert to address the meeting. Naicker told his audience that the condition in French India was much better than that of the people in India and that they must thank Goubert for that. He also told them that there was no question of French India merging in India.

Lambert Saravane, still a *Député* of the French *Assemblée nationale* from French India, founded a new party called the Republican Party with an eye on the next elections to French parliament which was due in 1951. He was also reported to have the support of Camouilly, former *Commissaire* and present Secretary General of French India, who attempted to curb the power of Goubert. The declared policy of his party was to restore democratic conditions in the settlements - “to make the French settlements safe for democracy” and end corruption in French Indian political life. The party demanded immediate transfer of power to Indian Union without referendum. Since his party found

---

no real foundations outside of Pondicherry, his success in the elections largely depended on the Pondicherry mill workers. His Communist lineage enabled him to make a dent among the working class population of Pondicherry. This was done to provoke the ire of Goubert who with great difficulty had destroyed V.Subbiah’s unchallenged supremacy over the working class population of Pondicherry.

Political rivalry in French India was allowed to degenerate into terrorism and poor and illiterate people were exploited by the political parties to serve their narrow interests.\textsuperscript{550} There was demand for an early settlement of the question of merger as otherwise the present situation was likely to lead to bitterness and serious consequences.\textsuperscript{551} Moreover the French Indian authorities were really getting tired of the rowdy behaviours of political parties. Apart from the prevalence of a reign of terror, the authorities were concerned over the misuse of public funds by ministers and other members of the ruling clique, steeped in corruption. It is said that top ranking politicians including ministers indulged in smuggling and men of little means have amassed wealth within a short period, building houses and keeping motor cars. Actually this short-cut method of growing rich lured others including Indian citizens and induced them to join the ranks of ruling party. Many people were engaged in this trade and even some Indian sympathisers favoured the continuation of Goubert’s regime for their benefit.

The anti-merger movement emerged as a force because of the intention of the anti-mergerists to protect French influence and maintain a separate identity with French collaboration. Therefore the decision to join India was far from being unanimous among the local population. After seven years of resistance since India’s independence in 1947, the French yielded to India’s economic and political pressure and withdrew their administrative and security apparatus from the country.\textsuperscript{552} France took another eight years

\textsuperscript{239} \textit{Ibid}. P.121.