Chapter I

Introduction

The presence of the French on the Indian sub-continent was perhaps a unique factor in the colonial history of the modern world. The French trading posts in India,\(^1\) scattered around the edges of the subcontinent, were tossed for 50 years between Paris and Landon, after the crashing of Dupleix’s dream and Treaty of Paris of 1763. The French presence in India was reduced to a rump of five *comptoirs* with few other vestiges of his first colonial empire when the French settlements were finally restored to France in 1814. Since then British supremacy in India compelled France to play a subsidiary role in India and the settlements remained nothing more than mere trading posts. This precarious existence notwithstanding, the Indians in the *comptoirs* were subjected to the spirit of French colonialism, in as much as nearly three centuries of French presence (1664-1954) has left its mark on the former French settlements wherein vestiges of the French cultural contact are still visible in the society.

France’s cultural initiatives in various countries of the world between 1870 and 1939 were primarily guided by their Republican policies, when cultural assimilation was incorporated into their expansionist strategies.\(^2\) Thus the years from 1870-1939 was a crucial period in Franco-Indian relations. Indian cultural dynamics and French policies played a decisive role in the evolution of the French political and cultural space in India. The social and political situation of French India during this period can be understood only in the context of the interplay of local dynamics with French colonial policy affecting the social and

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1. The French settlements (*comptoirs*) in the India comprise Pondicherry, Karaikal, Mahe, Yanam, Chandernagore and eight other loges situated along the two coasts of Indian sub-continent collectively called as French India. The settlement in the Indian-subcontinent covering an area about 200sq. miles, having a population of 2,73,185 in 1900 with different climatic and economic conditions contained a maze of different peoples and culture.

political structure of French India. The actual goal of French colonial policy did produce an impact on the social and political structure of French India but far removed from the desired effects.

With the establishment of the Third Republic, French colonial policy in the comptoirs saw an uncompromising commitment to the policy of ‘assimilation’ (both political and cultural) of the colonies to France through institutional devices. Extension of the universal suffrage and parliamentary representation (which have a Senator and a Deputy to the French parliament) attempted under the Second Republic and continued under the Third Republic was the first tangible expression of the desire of France to have a democratic link with the colony. France under the Third Republic, one of the most successful imperialist colonial powers of Europe, regarded the idea of gradual ‘assimilation’ of colonies to métropole France as the true goal of its colonial administration. The higher plan of this mission was to ‘assimilate’ the colonies into the French way of life, or where it is not possible in more primitive communities to ‘associate’ them so that the difference between la France métropole and la France d’outre-mer may be more of a geographical nature and not a fundamental difference. One of the important steps taken in this direction was to give French Indians the right of ‘universal (manhood) franchise’ and towards that end the French comptoirs in India were endowed with a Deputy, a Senator, a General council, Local councils and Municipalities. In addition native Indians were given the right to representation, association, and organisation. Culturally, those Indians who so desired were invited to renounce their personal status (hence become Renonçants) and place themselves under the authority of the French Civil Code.

The Republicans hoped that political assimilation will lead to cultural assimilation. On the one hand, towards the last quarter of the nineteenth century, some Indians (including native Christians, low caste-Pariahs and Renonçants) formed a small Francophile and
sometimes Francophone community, thanks to their capacity for assimilation. On the other hand, the most conservative of the Indian elites, in other words, the Hindu upper-castes, refused their allegiance to the French, rather, organised to prevent the erasing of caste identities and renewed their links with old customs, languages and religion which they have not, in fact, ever completely abandoned. The policy of ‘assimilation’ led to a double disaster for the colonial power: it revived caste conflicts in the French settlements and later gave rise to a nationalist movement for merger with India. The policy of ‘assimilation’, so abruptly introduced by France in India without understanding the cultural traditions and social mentality of the native people of French India in the nineteenth century dragged different ethnic and social groups into conflicts, one between the French and the native Indians and another between the different social groups within the Indian society. Socio-political life in the settlements began to centre on these conflicts headed by small groups of political ‘elite’, who generally commanded social, political and economic influence on the local population and appropriated the newly established institutions to serve their ends. Moreover universal suffrage gave way to large scale violence and irregularities in electoral politics. Even though, the French were liberal in their approach and tried several methods to accommodate themselves to the prevailing cultural ethos in their settlements, the deep-rooted ‘mamoolism’ in Indian society did not permit them to be guided by the liberal principles.

The French policy of ‘assimilation’ and the subsequent agitation came to be a significant turning point in the social and political prospects of French India in the late nineteenth century. The political assimilation and the establishment of the elective institutions helped to accelerate political development in French India, and provided the framework within which Indian nationalism was to grow and to find expression. Initially, Indians exerted little influence on the political situation. As French citizens, they could vote and be elected,

\[3 \text{ Mamool means tradition, also denotes religious customs and caste usages.}\]
and, as the largest group of voters, they could influence the results of elections. By the turn of
the nineteenth century they had become politically conscious and had begun to resent the
political domination of the French colonial rule. The nationalist struggle in French India must
be considered within the context of the colonial crisis that began to develop after the end of
the World War I and reached its climax in the aftermath of World War II. A combination of
factors after World War I - introduction of new and conflicting values, dissatisfaction with
the existing political and social order and the growing demand for new reforms - established
conditions conducive to the growth of nationalism. The nationalist movement in British India
added fuel to the fire. The nationalist upsurge in French India was essentially generated by
the political and social changes introduced in the traditional way of life under the impact of
Western technological and ideological influences, brought into the area primarily by the
French.

**Statement of the Problem**

The present work “Politics and Social Conflicts in French India: 1870-1939”, attempts
to explore the social and political problems of French India, which arose as a consequence of
the interplay of a socially stratified society brought under the impact of French colonial
policy of “assimilation”.

**Scope of the Study**

The present study is restricted to the society and politics of French India from 1870 to
1939, during which period cultural assimilation was experimented by metropolitan France in
her colonies and led to the subsequent growth of communalism and nationalism in French
India.
Hypotheses

The researcher puts forth two hypotheses in the thesis, 1) the French attempt to assimilate Indian society brought to the fore the pre-existing social rivalries in the Indian society and led to the growth of caste ridden and communal politics; 2) the introduction of conflicting values proved conducive to the growth of nationalism in French settlements in India.

Objectives

1. To explore French colonial policy and the subsequent governance of French India in the nineteenth century;
2. To trace the growth of social, political and administrative institutions in French India under the impact of French colonial policy;
3. To analyse the practice of political power, the emergence of electoral politics and the rise of communal politics;
4. To examine the reasons which lead to the political regime of Hindu castes and to narrate its consequences; and
5. To trace the emergence of a labour movement and anti-colonialism due the impact of French political and cultural influence.

Terms and Concepts Used

Some terms and concepts used in the thesis have to be explained in order to make the thesis a source of clear communication of ideas put forward by the researcher. One of the most commonly used terminology “assimilation” means the processes by which two different cultures fuse together, culturally, intellectually and politically so that social assimilation becomes the end result. Assimilation is a process by which the coloniser and colonised become accustomed to each other’s cultural influences. Normally the colonisers being
dominant impart their culture to the colonised. “Political assimilation” in the context of the thesis is used to denote the colony’s relationship with the métropole. For good or ill, granting the natives voting rights and political representation in metropolitan bodies necessitated the French to maintain a relationship with the local population in such a way that the need to be free from their rule was never felt by the later.

The concept of ‘political elite’ is often used in the thesis. The political elite in French India, who were the products of colonial era, aspired for political leadership and dreamed of playing a major role in the affairs of the colony. They came from different social, economic and political background and rose above the masses by placing themselves in the rank of colonial society. They exploited mass voters and manipulated the colonial political institutions to serve their purpose. This concept of elite politics does not preclude the role of ideas; many men were inspired, stirred into action by some great ideas, but they are all aimed at gaining power, if only to implement their ideas. Mamoolists or traditionalists, conservatives, collaborators, liberals and nationalists all denote the kinds of political elite who played an important role in the politics of the period under study.

Review of Literature

The history of the French in India has largely been confined to military accounts, trade histories of the French East India Company, biographies of individuals responsible for creating the comptoirs and detailed micro-histories of the comptoirs themselves. Among the plethora of such literature, special mention may be made of Philippe Haudrère’s, *La compagnie française des Indes au XVIIIe siècle: 1719-1795* (1989),⁴ which provides the background to understand the success and failure of the French East India Company and its successive rulers and their attempts to establishment a colonial empire in India in the

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eighteenth century and S.P. Sen’s *The French in India* (1971),\(^5\) which describes the political history of French in India from foundation of the company up to 1815. Though studies on French India in the 19\(^{th}\) century are meagre, A. Esquer’s, *Essai sur les castes dans l’Inde* (1870),\(^6\) Gnanadicom’s, *L’Inde française-sa régénération* (1894),\(^7\) Moracchini’s, *Les indigènes de l’Inde française et le suffrage universel* (1883)\(^8\) and C. Poulin’s, *Le régime politique de l’Inde française*\(^9\) provide patches of information about the political and social life of the colony. In fact, these nineteenth century works represent attempts of the French scholars to understand Indian society.


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provide comprehensive studies of French India in the 20th century and the decolonisation of the settlements.


Literature discussed above represent a varied mass of scholarship, making it possible to trace the administrative, political, military histories and decolonisation of the French settlements. However, works on the cultural relationship between India and France are few

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The cultural relationship between France and her colonies have been explored in the French context and from the imperial angle and not in the colonial context from the angle of

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\(^{29}\) *RFHO*, 78 (1991), 89-103.


the colonised society. It is in this respect the present research aims to illuminate the study of political and cultural impact of French rule in India by focussing on the hitherto neglected role of the Indian society in the French colonial experiment of cultural assimilation.

**Methodology**

An interpretive and analytical methodology is adopted for this study to argue that France under the Third Republic imposed its colonial policy in the form of ‘assimilation’ (both political and social), which brought long lasting changes in the Indian society. The investigation has been based on an analysis of historical facts and ground realities gauged from an observation of local life.

**Outline of Chapters**

The present thesis consists of six chapters; The *Introduction* which forms the first chapter delineates the nature of the French settlements in India collectively called French India. French settlements in India were an artefact put together piece by piece over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by the French administrators. At first, the potential for an outward and sustained expansion of French influence in India was very high. By the middle of the eighteenth century, this potential reached its peak. During the nineteenth century, the scope for French expansion was drastically curtailed by British constriction of the powers of the French. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the French were restricted to these small territories and compelled to be subservient to the British and later to the Indian administration until their merger with the Indian Union in 1954. Though the settlements were not self sufficient in essential products and lived in a symbiotic relationship with the surrounding Indian territories, French India remained a self sustained settlement, had produced enough economy to feed its inhabitants and even the settlements sent financial aid to metropolitan France during the War of 1870 and that of 1914. In like
manner, France had given financial aid when big natural disasters such as cyclones and food shortages had devastated the colony. The common history of nearly three centuries with political and economic ties thus created individual links of friendship between the inhabitants of the settlements and the French. The chapter also outlines briefly the main social, economic and political contours of French India during the period under study.

The second chapter, **Emergence of Electoral Politics in French India**, is concerned with the salient features of the political institutions which were established in the nineteenth century under the Third Republic. As a result of the aggressive policy of Republican France towards political assimilation, French India was endowed with a Deputy to the French Chambre and a Senator to the French Sénat. Towards the local reforms a Conseil colonial (in 1879 this Conseil was replaced by a Conseil général), Conseils locaux and Municipalities were established in all the five settlements. All the members to these bodies were elected through Universal Manhood Franchise by the two lists of voters, one for native Indians and another for Europeans and their descendants. As a result of cultural assimilation, many Indians became full-fledged French citizens, if they consented to renounce their personal laws.

The third chapter, **The Rise of Communal Politics**, an investigation of the process of communal politics, also points out the all-pervasive influence of the caste system in Indian society and how the attempt of the French to assimilate the natives met with formidable resistance from the caste system. The imposition of universal suffrage turned out to be a double-edged sword, which was effectively used by the proponents of Brahmanism to assert their supremacy in Indian society. Only the low-castes or outcastes were in favour of renouncing their personal status and of acquiring "French ideas". Under the impact of French culture and political institutions a new consciousness permeated the Indian settlements resulting in the emergence of electoral politics. French India witnessed communal conflicts,
one between Francophiles and *mamoolists* and another between the many social groups within the Indian society aiming for supremacy. Political life in the colony began to centre on the conflicts headed by the political elites and subsequently saw many political regimes.

The fourth chapter, *The Regime of Caste*, examines the political participation of Indians, their attempts to manipulate French institutions and the French liberal ideas. This chapter is also concerned with the establishment of the Hindu political regime (1885-1906) and the large scale electoral frauds and violence which occurred as a reaction to the French experiment. As the Indians were more numerous, and consequently, the masters of the electoral corps, it had given them a weapon through the vote to destroy everything that was French in the colony. The conflict between those who accepted the French values and those who resisted them was constantly present in the colony. The *Renonçants*, mostly from the low-castes, rejected Indian system of ‘*mamool*’ and caste hierarchy, adhered to French values and sought to have a reciprocal alliance with Europeans. They collaborated with the French, offered stiff competition to the high-caste political hegemony and were loyal to the French whose benevolence caused their rise in politics. French India saw the renewal of Hinduism and the establishment of a Brahmanic regime, which primarily aimed at triumphing over the ‘French values’ and to restore social order in French India by having an upper hand in electoral politics and capturing the political institutions and thereby checking all the measures which benefited the lower-castes.

The fifth chapter, *Birth of Anti-colonialism*, looks at the political situation in the former French settlements during the inter war period. The local nationalists brought their modest contribution to the liberation of India from British domination. Indian leaders advised them not to do anything hostile to the French as the latter gave shelter to Indian patriots who had taken refuge in the enclaves and who continued the struggle from these secure places. Moreover political and economic ties during the past three hundred years had created links of
friendship between the inhabitants of the settlements and the French. However, during the
First World War, nationalist consciousness was permeating among the students, workers and
the labouring classes in the colony. The growth of consciousness among the working class
population which found expression in labour disturbances in the 1920’s and 1930’s was later
converted into an anti-French movement. The anti-French upsurge was essentially generated
by the political and social changes introduced in the traditional way of life under the impact
of the colonial policy of ‘assimilation’. 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 anti-French feelings. In the early part
of the twentieth century Chandernagore was suffused with the spirit of nationalism which
inevitably spread to other settlements. When independence from Britain became certain, the
local nationalists pointed their guns at French colonialism.

Chapter six, which forms the Conclusion, brings out the findings of the research and
traces the changes that occurred in the society and politics of French India due to the
encounter with the French. When the process of decolonisation of the French comptoirs in
India was started in August 1947, there was great urge for the withdrawal of French
colonial rule from India. At the same time, there were supporters for the continuance of
French possessions in India under the rule of France. The local elite were well knit to France
sentimentally and intellectually that some of the inhabitants of French India hesitated to
support the move to merge with India. Political ideologies and factions were built around
these views and local political movements for ‘pro-merger’ and ‘anti-merger’ gained
momentum during 1947-1954. The roots of the ideological, political and personal
motivations of the faction politics can be traced back to nineteenth century. A series of

32 In August 1947 the governments of India and France issued a joint declaration in favour of a friendly
settlement of problems related to the French settlements in India. On 19th June 1948, the governments of France
and India agreed, by an exchange of letters, to let the population of these settlements decide about their future by
a free referendum.
political experimental measures introduced in French India as a part of the French colonial policy which attempted to link the colony with metropolitan France were largely responsible for the growth these political factions.

Sources

Sources used for the reconstruction of the socio-political history of French India include several collections of documents and manuscripts, from the National Archives of India, New Delhi and National Archives of India, Pondicherry branch, Archives Nationales, Paris, France, Dépôt des Archives d’Outre-Mer d’Aix-en-Provence, Aix-en-Provence, France, Romain Rolland Library (rare-collection), Pondicherry, State Archives of Pondicherry and the collection of documents of the Historical Society of Pondicherry in Pondicherry, India. The above mentioned archival sources have made the bulk of primary sources for reconstructing the facts of history starting from the time of the Third Republic’s introduction of political and social institutions in these settlements in the late nineteenth century up to the time of their formal abandonment because of the intervention of the Second World War.

French India at the Turn of Nineteenth Century

India had excited European interest from time immemorial. In 1600s, the Portuguese, British and French established toe holds in India. A long struggle between the British and French for domination of the Indian subcontinent eventually was won by the British. In the beginning of the nineteenth century the area known as ‘French India’ was largely a mosaic of geographically separated territories. Indeed each consisted of several non-contiguous concessions of land—a difficult and awkward challenge to administration and economic development. Franco-Indian contacts have date back to the seventeenth century. But it was from the eighteenth century that these contacts became regular. The French had at their disposal permanent installations in India with a solid point of support in Pondicherry, which
was occupied by the French in 1683. The French extended their holdings through occupation of other comptoirs, including Chandernagor in 1688, Mahe in 1721, Yanam in 1723 and Karaikal in 1739. These territories changed hands several times between the French and the British, especially in the eighteenth century, and were finally captured by the latter during the Napoleonic Wars. When, as a result of the Treaty of Paris and by the peace treaty of 20th November 1815, France was given back all the comptoirs, loges and factories she possessed in India on 1st January 1792, the French ambitious schemes of building a colonial empire in India were at an end. The French were deprived of the rights of fortifying the place or constructing any kind of defensive works and introducing troops in the settlements beyond the number required for the maintenance of internal law and order. The French were further forced to accept the Commercial Convention on 7th March 1815. They had to authorise English sovereignty over the Indian possessions of the French East India Company. The British had achieved their aims, namely, reducing to nothing all profitable activities of the French, weakening the revenues of the French government and conferring on the French East India Company their monopoly. Gradually the currency of Pondicherry went out of circulation and the currency of the English East India Company was imposed on French India. This restriction had to be accepted in recognition of the reality of the situation in India. There the English had obtained complete mastery over the Indian subcontinent and eliminated the last threat to assert their position. However the French comptoirs in India, like most of the French older outposts, diminished in importance after France began in 1830 the conquest of a new overseas empire. Why did France continue to have a hold on territories

34 Though the Treaty of Paris of 1814 provided for the restitution of all the Indian settlements and loges to the French, actual transfer had to be postponed due the developments in France following the escape of Napoleon from the Elba. Peace Treaty of November 20, 1815 finally paved the way for the restitution of the establishments. The French took over the administration of Pondicherry on 4th December 1816. Chandernagore was restored on 16th December 1816, Karaikal on 14th January 1817, Mahe on 22nd February 1817 and Yanam were returned on 12th April 1817.
that no longer had any value? According to Jules Harmand, “They remain because one does not wish to lose the profit obtained at a discount because of sacrifices made earlier”.36

Map 1 The Former French Comptoirs in India

The French comptoirs in India covered an area about 200 sq. miles and the population was large and growing. The natives greatly outnumbered the Europeans. In 1900, of 2,

73,185 residents, French India counted only 3,000 Europeans. The following table gives the area and population of the settlements in the year 1900.

Table 1.1 Areas and Population of French India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settlements</th>
<th>Communes</th>
<th>Area/Sq. Miles</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Density/Sq. kms.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pondicherry</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>1,74,456</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karaikal</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>56,595</td>
<td>419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandernagore</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>26,831</td>
<td>2,981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahe</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22.85</td>
<td>10,298</td>
<td>542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yanam</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5,005</td>
<td>357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>200(510 sq.kms)</td>
<td>2,73,185</td>
<td>582</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Pondicherry, the erstwhile capital of French India, is situated on the Coromandel Coast. The total area of Pondicherry is 29,145 hectares, including 93 semi-towns and 141 villages. By 1900 Pondicherry was divided into four communes: (i) Pondicherry, (ii) Olgarat (iii) Villianor and (iv) Bahor, surrounded and intercepted by British Indian territories. In the colonial era, the town of Pondicherry (having population 48,333) was divided into two parts, namely, White Town (Ville de Blanche), covering an area of 6,13,873 sq. meters, and Indian Town (Ville de Indien), covering an area of 15,09,818 sq. meters. The Europeans had their settlements in the White Town that was situated close to the seashore. Their houses were built after Roman style and they contained high ceilings, lofty doors, broad windows and balconies. The buildings were quite comfortable and suitable for the hot climate of Pondicherry. The Indian Town was located just west of the White Town and was inhabited by the natives. Ramparts were made combining both White and Indian divisions of the town. But the Indian and French areas were separated by a canal which was extended in 1826 so as to bisect the width of the town. A visitor to Pondicherry in 1866 described the pleasant entry

37 Annuaire des établissements français dans l’Inde, 1881, pp. 4-5 and 1896 pp. 4-5.
into the town through the tree-lined Cours Chabrol. The town itself had wide streets with gaiety and urbanity. The towns were maintained properly, a feature, not found in the British Indian towns. As the French company established its trade and as Pondicherry urbanised, it attracted considerable immigrants. The immigrants were priests, weavers, merchants, financiers, middlemen, entertainers, potters, and other artisans. They settled in different localities and the streets of these localities bore the name of the community that resided there. The names are retained to this day. Class and status distinctions were maintained by the richer section of urban society. The French endowed Pondicherry with a central bazaar, a large, airy place that guaranteed the Indian town regular supply of invaluable commodities. Tamil was the largely spoken language of the people of Pondicherry and Karaikal (90%). In addition, the French influence had left nearly 20% of French speakers dotted around the French Indian settlements. Pondicherry had a good port, and almost all the important commercial firms in the colony were concentrated there.

Karaikal is situated on the Coromandel Coast, covering an area of 13,515 hectares, bounded by the Bay of Bengal on the east and Tanjore District of modern Tamil Nadu on all the other sides just 132 kilometres further south of Pondicherry. By 1900 Karaikal was divided into three communes (i) Karaikal, (ii) Nedungadu, and (iii) Grand Aldeé, which contained 4 semi-towns and 115 villages. Since the region is situated on the Cauveri basin, Karaikal enjoys the reputation for quality rice production, 200 to 250 tonnes every year, that is enough to feed its inhabitants and also to export.

Mahe region lies on the Malabar Coast, 640 kilometres away from Pondicherry. It is bounded by the Arabian Sea on the west and Cannaoore District of modern Kerala State on the other sides. The total area of Mahe is 5,909 hectares. Malayalam is the language of the natives in Mahe (6%).

Yanam lies on the coast of Orissa, 920 kilometres north of Pondicherry. The region is bounded on the east and south by River Godavari that drains into the Bay of Bengal and by East Godavari District of modern Andhra Pradesh all the other sides. The total area of Yanam is 1,429 hectares. Telugu is the language of the people of Yanam (5%).

Chandernagore lies on the banks of the Hoogly in the modern state of Bengal, 33 kilometres by road north of Calcutta and 2,600 kilometres north of Pondicherry. The total area of Chandernagore is 940 hectares. Bengali is spoken in Chandernagore (1%).

The loge located at Mazulipatam was occupied by the French in 1721 and it had a population of 200 Indians. Calicut was occupied in 1721. Surat, the oldest French settlement with one building and two plots of land was founded in 1668. Balassore that had 30 to 40 families was occupied in 1686. Dacca was founded in 1722. Cassimbazar and Patnam that had one building and five small plots of land were occupied in 1727. Jougdia was occupied in 1735. The French factories and small plots of land were located at Frencpett, Boro, Iskitipah, Kirpaye, Copour, Fatoua, Sorguia, Begomsara, Pомнareck, Boincha, Faridpour, Canicola, Monepour, Serempour, Sola, Cittagong, Malda, Silhet, Golpara, and Goretty. These were simple commercial posts, meant to facilitate the purchase of products in the proximity of manufacturing regions.

Administration

Until the establishment of elective assemblies, under the Third Republic, direct participation of the natives in politics and administration of the colony was impossible. It was by the decree promulgated in February 1701 by Louis XIV that the Conseil Supérieur of Pondicherry was established in Pondicherry for the dispensation of justice to the French subjects and merchants living in French colonies on the Indian soil. While the Conseil Supérieur tried cases pertaining to French citizens, the Tribunal de la Chaudrie was

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39 Annuaire des établissements français dans l’Inde, 1900, pp. 5-6.
constituted to dispense justice to the natives. In 1784 the *Conseil Supérieur* was modified as an advisory council to Governor and some native merchants and notables were allowed to participate in it. In 1784 the *Conseil Supérieur* was modified as an advisory council to Governor and some native merchants and notables were allowed to participate in it. During the British rule from 1793 to 1816, justice continued to be dispensed according to the format and laws followed in the French administration. Nevertheless, on 12th June 1805, the denomination and the competence of the *Conseil Supérieur* were changed. A court of Judicature was instituted in Pondicherry in place of the *Conseil Supérieur* by a decree of the Governor of Madras. It was composed of three judges and of two assessors. The *Tribunal de la Chaudrie* was eliminated in favour of an arbitrating chamber. With the return of the French, on 4th October 1816, the Count Dupuy took care to reorganise the judicial service. By a decree of 8th February 1817, he re-established the *Conseil Supérieur* on the bases of the Edict of 1784 and the Provincial Councils in the secondary establishments. Soon the *Conseil Supérieur* was dissolved on 22nd November 1819 and then it was called as “*Cour Royale*.” In 1787 a *Conseil d’administration* (council of administration) had been established, but its role was purely advisory. The administrative council consisted largely of French officials; Indians were allowed little or no direct participation in its activities. In 1788 a *Consultative Chamber* was established to participate and train the native Indians (notables or prominent personalities) in politics and administration. With the restitution of the French possessions in 1816 by the French, the French replaced the military form of government with the old type of civil administration under a Governor and an *Intendant*. This form of governance continued up to 1829. In 1829 the *Conseil d’administration* was replaced by the *Conseil privé* of the Governor. The members of this council were elected by the Governor from among the French officials and

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inhabitants. Matters pertaining to the revenue department and government lands were discussed in the council.42

The administration of French India was reorganised in 1840. Louis Philippe of France issued a series of ordinances to organise the administration of the colonies on a regular basis. An Ordonnance Organique, dated 23rd July 1840, was promulgated with an aim to centralisation and simplifying the French India administration. Though modified from time to time, the Organic Ordinance remained for many years the cornerstone of the administration of French India. The powers and functions codified in the Ordinance, vested the Governor with full military command and control over the administration of the colony. The Governor was empowered to promulgate laws passed by the legislature in France, executed the Décrets of the King and later of the President of the French Republic and carried out the Arrêtés and regulations issued by the Ministers in France. The colony was divided into five administrative areas; Pondicherry, the capital was administered by a Governor who was in turn assisted by a few administrators who were in charge of the territories (Karaikal, Chandernagore, Mahe and Yanam) other than Pondicherry. The Governor was also assisted by the Chief of the administrative service who was known as the Commissaire de la Marine and by the Procureur-General who was in charge of the judicial functions. A Colonial Inspector supervised the public services and the implementation of the laws and ordinances. The Ordonnance Organique gave way to create a Conseil d’administration, replacing the Conseil privé established in 1829, to assist the Governor immediately in the administration of the colonies. An Assemblée de Notables was created to assist the Governor in maintaining local affairs and to permit the natives to participate in the colonial affairs. Members of this assembly were selected by the Governor from among the residents of French India both Europeans and Indians. A local assembly called Conseil général was set up in 1842 (the

42 Falguyrac, E., Législation de l’Inde, Pondichéry, 1926.
highest institution which the French Government of that time could concede to a colony). This council had jurisdiction over all the French comptoirs in India and consisted of elected representatives of people sitting in Pondicherry’s Assemblée de Notables. Besides this, there were initially two councils called Conseils d’arrondissement, one for Karaikal and the other for Chandernagore. This was later extended to the other settlements too. The members of these councils were elected by the members of Assemblée de Notables.\textsuperscript{43} The above said councils had very limited powers and could not therefore be an effective instrument for protecting the interest of the natives.

Until 1870, the councils in French India were usually nominated by the governors and the natives were considered as rubber stamps. The real centre of power in the colony was the Governor. However the implementation of the decree of 23\textsuperscript{rd} July 1840 and the establishment of the subsequent assemblies where Indians could share seats initiated the first movement of opposition to the presence of the French in India. It was indeed an embryonic nationalist movement, which du Camper himself admitted as the end of his government.\textsuperscript{44} The establishment of these institutions had given rise among the most powerful natives by virtue of their wealth or prominence or education, to ideas which had till then lain dormant in the shadow of laws and customs, and had aroused a competitive spirit and rivalry between two sections of the population: Europeans and the natives. This increased as they became more enlightened. They cast aside the advice of some scholarly Europeans.\textsuperscript{45} These politically privileged groups looked upon emergence of a class of ‘political elite’. They came out in open conflict largely in the later part of the nineteenth century when electoral politics was introduced in French India.

\begin{footnotes}
\end{footnotes}
### Economy

Agriculture, industries and trade are the three components that determined the economy of the settlements. The economic progress of the comptoirs saw declining prosperity in the early 1800s. This was mainly due to gnawing by venality and corruption of the French administrators who were men of the eighteenth century and who were too inclined to sacrifice the interests of the state to accommodate their own selfish interests. They had the advantage of the benevolence towards them. Count Dupuy, the Governor of Pondicherry himself tolerated many abuses of power of his men, the heads of service and the subordinate civil servants. From the middle of the eighteenth century, land-wars and revenue from land became more significant than maritime technology as the land was required to establish modern colonial control. Like the Indian subcontinent, the economy of the French settlements in India primarily depended on agriculture. Desbassayns de Richemont, the Governor of French India (1825-27), when he visited Pondicherry in 1819, felt that political and psychological factors had conspired to make the comptoirs sink into a kind of stupor. Moreover, apart from the British refusal to provide water at the appropriate time to irrigate the paddy fields of Karaikal and Pondicherry, the cultivators found themselves dispossessed of a large share of their harvest by the French government that owned the land and demanded a share of 50 percent of the gross profit. Further, they had to pay a series of duties imposed even on the cheapest goods they produced. When he returned to Pondicherry as Governor in 1827, Desbassayns was determined to help the French India economy to recover, and to create some degree of prosperity. As suggested by the king to Count Dupuy, in order to entice the people who had left the territory to come back to it, they had to provide them with the same resources that they found prior to leaving it. Some firm measures were to be taken to

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develop the settlements commercially and agriculturally. The efforts of Desbassayns, offered state land for sale at low prices, reduced the rates of land revenue, boosted the buyers of land (both Indians and Europeans) and encouraged more cultivation of land. The Second Empire took another credit in breaking with French fiscal policy. Governor de Verniac (1835-1857) changed the status of the miserable Indian into that of a landlord and reduced land tax to 33 percent. Since then, from the labourer to the sovereign, including the multiple servants of the aldées, the farmers and deputy farmers of the lands and many others enjoyed a part of the harvest, that it was difficult to declare that the land was the exclusive property of just one person. At the turn of 1900 the percentage of cultivated areas remained as: Pondicherry-70%; Karaikal-90%; Mahe-92%; and Yanam-49%. Rice and small grains (cereals, leguminous plants, groundnuts, etc.,) were prime cultivation and there was a considerable rise in the cultivation of coconut, palm, banana, betel, tobacco, indigo, sugarcane, cotton, pepper, mulberry etc.

Table 1.2 Agricultural Statistics: Cultivation of Land (in Hectares)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settlements</th>
<th>Total Area Cultivated</th>
<th>Rice</th>
<th>Small Grains</th>
<th>Indigo</th>
<th>Betel</th>
<th>Tobacco</th>
<th>Cotton</th>
<th>Sugar Cane</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pondicherry</td>
<td>29,000</td>
<td>6,839</td>
<td>9,832</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karaikal</td>
<td>13,500</td>
<td>8,313</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandernagore</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahe</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>1,469</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yanam</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>583</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data not available.


In conformity with mercantile principles which revolved on the idea that the colonies existed only to ensure the enrichment of the metropolis and were set on budgetary considerations dictated that all extraneous expenses by the Company should be reduced to

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48 There were two periods of hyperactivity on the part of French Indian administration, one in the 1820s and the other in the 1860s. The first was due to the enthusiasm of the Governor, Desbassyns, and the second to the fiscal liberalism in accordance with the policy of dirigisme of the government of Napoleon III.
minimum. To maximise profits the cargoes of goods imported to France also had to be of a high quality. The development of commercial relations between France and India developed rapidly, as the taste for Indian goods spread among the French. Between 1600 and 1664, in 64 years, the French had sent to India 33 ships, between 1664 and 1719, in 54 years, 209 ships, and between 1720 and 1770, in 50 years, they had sent 533 ships, in spite of the wars which disrupted commerce.\textsuperscript{51} In the eighteenth century Pondicherry had been an \textit{entrepôt} for both international and the country trade. It was ruined in the first half of the nineteenth century by the tariff barrier with which the British crippled the French settlements and by the prohibitions against goods imported from Pondicherry to French ports and French colonies.\textsuperscript{52} This policy created an obstacle for the agricultural, industrial and commercial developments of the French colonies, especially of the French \textit{comptoirs} in India.\textsuperscript{53} The liberalisation of the British and French customs duty under the Second Empire caused some progress of trade activities.\textsuperscript{54} From the mid-nineteenth century with the growth of the French empire in other parts of the world, the free-trade agreements with the Britain (the Cobden-Chevalier treaty of 1861) and construction of railway link with the British Indian railway network the trade and commerce of French India revived. In addition, the decrees of 6\textsuperscript{th} October 1862 and 9\textsuperscript{th} July 1869 had liberalised and improved the trade between Pondicherry and France and its colonies. Pondicherry once again became a trading centre with its own industries. Soon it built a trade network covering France, Britain, Réunion and Mauritius, whereas, Karaikal was connected with Ceylon and Singapore where it imported arrack and areca nut and exported huge quantity of rice. After witnessing a steady progress until 1890, the trade activity in

\textsuperscript{52} During the time of France under the Restoration, Indian cloths including hand threaded silks, silk goods, shawls from Kashmir, fur or woollen clothes, China pottery, paper, furniture and shoes were prohibited from entering into France. More over sugar of high quality produced in Pondicherry was totally prohibited at its arrival at Nantes.
\textsuperscript{54} During this period Pondicherry’s trade with the ports of the Indian Ocean increased considerably from 4140446 francs in 1842 to 9431302 francs in 1872.
French India, once again crumbled, from 1894, due to the renewal of British customs law (Indian Act of 10th March 1894), the French policy of protectionism and the lack of modern port equipments.

**Figure 1.1 Evolutions of Trade Activities in French India**

![Graph showing trade activities in French India from 1846 to 1910](image)

The enclaves maintained commercial relations with only one colony, namely Bourbon. In spite of the prohibitive tariffs on goods from India from 1826 onwards, the balance of trade of the five enclaves seemed even more excessive with this island than with France or with other foreign countries.\(^{55}\)

As the French claimed the monopoly of all commercial relations with the colony, commerce was concentrated largely in the hands of French merchants and little in the hands of native merchants. During the course of realisation of their dream to foster direct trade with India, the French came to recognise the indispensability of intermediaries to provide access to political powers and administrative hierarchies in the States where they were seeking to

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operate and to mediate between them and the local economy. Quite naturally they had to rely on the indigenous merchant community, which came forward to play this role. Moreover, they realised that the presence of wealthy merchants would enhance the prestige as well as the revenue from their territorial possessions. As such, the French invited the local merchant community from Madras, Porto Novo and other places, to migrate and settle in their territories.

For most of the eighteenth and some of the nineteenth centuries the foreign trade of French India was legally monopolised by French men, but their Indian agents were often shrewd and skilful in exploiting their opportunities within the colonial commerce. Local merchants bought salt and opium and sold these to the British in Bengal. After 1816, this was banned by a British decree. As political instability had made annual trading voyages always uncomfortable, and when after 1819 trade by merchants from France was banned east of the Cape, Frenchmen tended to increasingly leave them to Indian and Créole merchants. While country trade was largely in the hands of Muslim Choulia in Karaikal, it was managed by Hindus in Pondicherry.

The economies of the comptoirs were based on production of goods for the large population and on exports of groundnuts, copra, pepper, onions, tobacco, cotton and indigo; contraband played a large role in local commerce. A peculiar aspect, labour became a prime export of the French outposts after 1848. One of the major achievements of the French Revolution of 1848 was the abolition of slavery. Abolitionists, led by Victor Schoelcher, won a battle against colonial interests in the heady days of revolution and republicanism. It led to the liberation of a quarter of a million slaves. Slaves were also given the vote-henceforth all French men in Martinique, Guadeloupe, Guyane, Réunion and French India, whether white or mixed-blood or black enjoyed the suffrage-but they continued to work in conditions which differed little from slavery, although some acquired small plots of land and became formers.
Labour was the great problem in the post-abolition slavery days in the French colonies. Planters located a new source of labour in India in the form of coolie trade, both in the French comptoirs and in British India. Recruiters took 25,000 Indians to Martinique from 1850 to 1914, 37,000 to Guadeloupe and 8,000 to Guyana; 68,000 coolies arrived in Réunion from India, China, Madagascar and Africa. They added to the demographic complexity of the old French colonies, sometimes through intermarriages with blacks or Europeans. Their labour helped assure the primacy of sugar production in the islands for a century after emancipation.56

Pondicherry was famous for its cloth production. It served as an important warehouse of import and re-export of clothes in French colonial markets for a long time. There were some disappointments in the early nineteenth century, because of the French and British protectionism that created trade barriers for cloth exports. In 1828 pressure from the growing cotton textile industry in France forced the government to impose a ban on the export of Indian clothes to France. Instead the African colonies, especially Senegal market were exclusively reserved for the export of guinées bleus from French India.57 The value of the exported guinées bleus 1988179 francs in 1835 went up to 4564912 francs in 1857.

For a long time export of cloth, opium and spices was the leading commercial activity; but the French India economy was radically transformed, especially from the 1870s, with the extensive cultivation of groundnuts. The groundnuts which were harvested in the adjoining districts of British India viz., Panruti to Tanjore and Madurai were brought to the port of Pondicherry for export. The port virtually monopolised the groundnut export during the last decades of nineteenth century. The value of the exported goods 2231096 francs in 1857 went up to 8398000 francs in 1883 and reached 12902000 francs in 1891. Till 1896,

Marseille was the only markets later were added Nantes and Bordeaux. There was a major setback from 1896 to 1899, due to the over exploitation of the ground and the poor quality of the seeds. After the severe crisis the groundnut export picked up more and more. Marseille which received between 78 and 86 percent of the export before First World War remained the main outlet. The plentiful production of groundnut in Pondicherry stimulated local oil-mills. The produce was also exported to Mauritius, Singapore and especially to Burmese ports.  

Industries also made a contribution to the French India economy and provided more employment opportunities for the native population, mostly to weavers, dyers and artisans. Despite heavy pressure on import of cloth from French India in France, the Méline Laws of 11th January 1892, made some relaxation by exempting duties for the guinées of Pondicherry at their entry in France and products of a French colony exported to another French colony was exempted from undergoing any custom duties. This law struck a happy note in French India and it offered new perspectives particularly in the textile industry. The granting of the colonial market in France and in the French colonies encouraged capitals, especially from British industrialists, to build powerful factories of cotton fabrics in Pondicherry and a jute mill in Chandernagore. Four cotton mills started functioning in Pondicherry: (i) Society Anonyme Savanna or Swadeshi Mill was established in 1828, (ii) Etablissement textile de Modéliarpeth or Enny Mill was established in 1858, (iii) Rodier Mill or Anglo-French Textile Ltd., was established in 1899 (iv) Filature et Tissage Gaebélé at Kossapalayam. Altogether these mills possessed 1,980 looms and 85,376 spindles, and employed about 8,000 labourers. These mills produced 5,000 tonnes of export quality cotton clothes annually and Pondicherry exported 8,210 balls of guinées per year on the average between 1902 and 1913. Usually two

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kinds of cloth were produced in these mills. The first was *Sylas*, exported to south-eastern countries like Malaysia and the second was ‘*guinées bleus*’, made of cotton and dyed with indigo, which had a preferential and protected market in the French overseas colonies in Africa. Apart from this, about 6,968 traditional handlooms in Muthialpet area in Pondicherry produced *Sylas* cloth; there were 120 cloth printing units, 20 Indigo factories, 28 shell factories, 2 ice factories, 1 bone powder mill, 7 oil refineries and 1 Government distillery in Pondicherry. There were several rice mills in Karaikal and the produced rice was exported to Ceylon and Malaya. The jute mill in Chandernagore, with capital from British industrialists, provided about 6,000 employment opportunities for the Chandernagore population. Tinned fish was prepared in Mahe. Yanam was reputed for pickles.

**Society in French India**

During colonial rule, the population in French India was identified in ethnic categories—the Europeans (1,392 (0.52%) in 1870), the mixed community (*Créoles, Métis* and *Topas*, numbered 1,451 (0.55%)), and the Indians, divided themselves into high-caste Hindus and Christians, Muslims and lower-caste Hindus and Christians (the Indians totalled 2,59,955 (98.9%)). Europeans in the settlements are largely landowners, merchants, industrialists, technicians and administrators. By contrast to the British in Indian towns, the sizeable group of Europeans permanently settled in French India, were mostly descendants of eighteenth century worthies. Louis de Charolais was known in Pondicherry “as a rich, intelligent but also a strangely Indianised European, before establishing a house, would look for omens and would get the Brahmans to intervene. A crate had to be placed in an auspicious alignment and in accordance with the state of constellations in the sky. If commerce

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60 A Handloom cloth.  
63 In 1858 the European population numbered 1,345 of which 852 (63.3%) were government service personnel.
prospered, everything would be maintained in the same state; not a single nail would be displaced. If, on the other hand, business were to go bad, one would dismantle everything from top to bottom.\(^{64}\)

The mixed community (Créoles, Métis and Topas) came into being as a result of the contact between the population of autochthones and that of an immigrant group. Such contacts resulted from French colonial expansion which began with the existence of trading enclaves and commercial centres, having as their principal aim negotiating with the natives rather than a desire to assimilate them. Moreover, the French Crown as well as the Company encouraged mixed marriages between the French and the native women with an intention to build up a race of mixed blood, loyal to France, speaking the French language and having their roots in the native soil. Thus, inter-marriage between the French and the Indian women proved to be a major effort on the part of the French to draw the natives near. Though the number of mixed community increased in course of time, they were not looked upon highly by both the French or by the natives. While the former considered them as degenerated, the latter ridiculed them as half-castes.\(^{65}\) The mixed community was socially closer to Europeans than to Indians. They were for most part landowners or ranked as being civil servants. The Créoles (descendants of Europeans) enjoyed aristocracy along with Europeans. As cultivators of cash crops, they enjoyed certain political and commercial rights next to the Europeans. Their status was safeguarded from an ordinance in 1826 which ordered Indians not to dress like Europeans. Desirous of taking the Créoles out of poverty, Desbassayns reorganised, on 24th July 1826, the committee of charity and created workshops of charity. He hoped thus to provide means of employment to individuals, White, Métis or Topas, who had no proper means of livelihood. This was his philanthropic aim, if it was, that aimed at

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alleviating sufferings and poverty. In 1829 a free school also opened specially for the Franco-
Indians. The Créoles of Pondicherry today represent less than 1% of the population of Pondicherry, are bound to adopt themselves to the natural evolution of the Indian society in order to survive, with the exception of those who had chosen to return to France in 1954 and in 1962 after the coming into force of the treaty of Cession.

The Indian society was predominantly Hindu and caste as well as class based, Christians and Muslims being the others. All three categories were internally divided. The distribution of the population according to religious group was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settlements</th>
<th>Hindus 1880</th>
<th>Muslims 1880</th>
<th>Christians Catholics 1880</th>
<th>Christians Protestants 1880</th>
<th>Christians Catholics 1929</th>
<th>Christians Protestants 1929</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pondicherry</td>
<td>1,28,562</td>
<td>2,434</td>
<td>4,499</td>
<td>19,043</td>
<td>12,425</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karaikal</td>
<td>63,973</td>
<td>14,825</td>
<td>5,609</td>
<td>13,801</td>
<td>7,667</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahe</td>
<td>5,315</td>
<td>1,617</td>
<td>3,062</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yanam</td>
<td>4,259</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandernagor</td>
<td>17,469</td>
<td>4,031</td>
<td>2,756</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,19,578</strong></td>
<td><strong>23,080</strong></td>
<td><strong>16,116</strong></td>
<td><strong>33,591</strong></td>
<td><strong>21,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>318</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data not available.

The Hindus showed more solidarity with their caste values and mamool (tradition). Since the French realised that Indians were willing to be partners in political and commercial activities and were generally not inclined to give up their cultural life and embrace European culture, the former had to respect them. In terms of principles of colonisation, it can be said that French practised in India during the eighteenth century, politics of collaboration and of great tolerance and did not at all try to assimilate the natives of India. The French had to accept these principles to earn the loyalty of Indians by respecting their tradition. In other

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67 At the time of The Treaty of Cession signed between France and India in 1962 approximately 2,000 Indians opted French nationality and had link with metropolitan France.
68 But in fact, the French did not evolve any consistent policy till the promulgation of the decrees of 30th December 1769 and of 26th January 1778. These decrees permitted Indians to be judged according to their usages, customs and law, and guaranteed the respect of their personal status.
words, their policy was to adopt as much as possible the customs of the natives. These principles had helped Dupleix to build in a very short time a considerable empire. Neglect of these principles had precipitated the failure of Lally-Tollendal. Since 1819, in committing themselves to respecting the ways and customs of Indians, the French had revived and continued the native policy followed in the eighteenth century, the French government had declared on 6th January 1819 that “Indians, whether Christian, Hindu or Muslim (heathens) will be judged, as in the past, according to the laws, ways and customs of their caste.” Again it was confirmed by a judicial ordinance promulgated on 7th February 1842. It applied in its tribunals, the laws of Manu to the Hindus and the Koranic law to the Muslims and even the Christian missionaries turning a blind eye to the observance of “Malabar rites,” by tolerating the separation of castes in churches and by consecrating the privileges of the Choutres (High-caste Christians). In accordance with the above said decrees, the French administration granted each caste the right to have its own ‘family and domestic tribunal’, the decision of which had, however, to be ratified by a justice of peace. Major conflicts between castes or those likely to provoke confusion among the members of a caste would fall within the sole competence of the governor. As the chief of the colony he would also, according to the customs, made decisions with regard to public ceremonies. A local ordinance of 30th October 1827 set up in 1828 a ‘Commette Consultatif de Jurisprudence de Indienne’. This Committee was established with the aim of helping the government and the Courts in deciding on issues, where knowledge of the laws, usages and customs of the Indians was required. Significantly the provisions in the Code of Hindu laws framed by the Committee

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70 Annoussamy has listed seven books on Hindu law based on the Shastras which were translated into French for guidance of judges. Two of the seven books were Manusmriti translated into French in 1833 and 1893 (David Annoussamy, French Legal System, Bangalore, 1995, p. 150).
71 Certain Hindu rituals entered into Catholic churches such rites called as Malabar rites.
73 The Committee consisted of nine members representing different castes, viz., two Brahmans, two Vellajas, one Yadava, one Pariah, one Cheity, one Dessaye and one Commouy. Members were nominated by the
were applicable only to Pondicherry and Karaikal (both region shares same customs and caste systems) and not to the other French possessions. The reason for this was that customs, particularly those relating to marriage and succession to property were different in Malabar of which Mahe was part and in Bengal of which Chandernagore was a part.

The caste system had become the determining factor of Hindu life in the colony, as it was elsewhere in the subcontinent. Sociologists generally distinguished caste system into two: ritual hierarchy and secular hierarchy. The first, the Varna system was based on sanction from religious literature such as the Shastras, very loosely divides caste society into four orders, or Varnas, often called castes. At the top of the hierarchy came the Brahmans, the priests and religious teachers; next came the Kshatriyas or warriors; and third came the Vaishyas, farmers or traders. These three upper castes were ‘twice-born’ or ‘clean’. Below them came the fourth Varna, the Sudras, artisans and labourers, whose function was to serve the three higher Varnas. These people were considered impure and polluting but still within caste society. Still lower came a category that was considered extremely polluting namely the untouchables who are addressed as ‘Scheduled Castes’ in the modern society. Moreover, the operative units of social life were much smaller groups called Jatis. Since these too, like the Varnas, were mutually exclusive, determined by birth, endogamous, and hierarchically ranked (though not as unambiguously as the Varnas), the Jatis formed a caste system. Some social anthropologists translate Varna as ‘caste’ and Jati as ‘sub-caste’, but most prefer to use ‘caste’ for the Jatis.

The second, i.e., secular hierarchy was generally based on economic criteria. In rural India, a crucial determinant of an individual’s position in the secular hierarchy was the extent

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Governor. And one fourth of the members were to retire every ten years. Their services were honorary and they could carry a golden cane, ‘Canne a Pommeau d’or’, the President sported a medal with the image of the King.

of land owned. In the urban situation wealth acquired through mercantile or commercial activities, pursuit of the other professions such as government service, political office, law, medicine, etc., conferred social prestige and status. Depending on the local situation, there could be symmetry between the two hierarchies; but more often the secular or economic hierarchy cut across the ritual hierarchy.

In south India (French India part of it) the Hindu society generally was categorised into Brahmins at the top and with absents of second and third Varnas, namely Kshatriya and Vaishya, all others grouped under Sudras.\(^75\) Scholar writings on social division in south India into Brahmins and non-Brahmins point out that social status in south India was linked up with the belief in the ‘Aryan’ origin of the local Brahmins, while the non-Brahmins believed themselves to be descendants of the ‘Dravidians’.\(^76\) However, the caste-based society comprised a number of communities possessing distinctive social characteristics and functions, kept each one of them in its place and away from each other, criss-crossing the social fabric. The mutual animosity between the Brahmins and non-Brahmins did not exist from time immemorial even though there was no social cohesion among the various castes that composed the population of the region. Racial and social conflicts occurred on a vast scale in south India due to its occupation by the Europeans. What the European conquest did was to reduce all the castes to the position of subjects to an alien power in the region.

The French academicians in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries compiled lists of Indian castes in the appropriate hierarchy, together with their symbol and banners (see Appendix I).\(^77\) These studies reveal that both Indians and colonial rulers were much attached

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\(^75\) Arjun Appadurai, “Right and Left Hand Caste in South India” in Indian Economic and Social History Review, Vol.11, No.2 & 3, 1974, p. 228 and Burton Stein, Peasant, State and Society in Medieval South India, Delhi, 1980, p. 47.

\(^76\) Eugene Irschick, Tamil Revivalism, in the 1930’s, Madras, 1986, pp. 106-223.

to caste system and its ranking. However several observations need to be made with regard to
the lists provided by each scholar. For instance, caste is by definition an endogamous group,
but in Vinson’s observation it is not clear how many of these occupational groups were
endogamous. In another instance, while discussing the caste hierarchy in Pondicherry, both
Vinson and Esquer mentions that among Hindus, the Vellajas ranked after the Brahmins.
They also stated that the Pariahs, who were considered highly polluted, ranked very low.
However, with regard to relative ranking of the numerous other castes they did not provide
much information. The important information gathered from the works of the above said
scholars was the functioning nature of each caste and its rationale.

Traditionally as in other parts of India, the Brahmins claimed a superior social
position in relation to all other castes, including the ruling Kshatriya caste. Brahmins as a
whole, except a few landlords, remained as priests and religious teachers. It was not a
commanding position, either politically or economically, in French India, a peculiar aspect
considering their predominance in colonial administration of British India. The non-Brahmins
at this time were divided into a number of mutually-exclusive groups, each performing a
particular type of function and no one was willing to lose his separate identity in spite of his
socio-economic status. Outside all these caste groups stood the ‘Outcastes’ who were denied
access to public places and were generally oppressed by all caste groups.

During the nineteenth century the caste society in French India was identified with
occupational groups combined with deep religious, social and cultural conservatism. The
Brahmins were divided into Vaidika who were priests and ritual specialists and Loukika who
were lay people comprising landowners, interpreters, diwans and messengers. In the
perception of the coloniser, the Brahmins were the top ranking caste in the ritual or religious

hierarchy among Hindus. Therefore, as a matter of policy they decided to consult Brahmin pundits to interpret Hindu law.

Vellajas ranked after the Brahmins. In Pondicherry and Karaikal, the Vellaja caste enjoyed a higher status among the non-Brahmins. In Pondicherry and Karaikal under French rule, the Vellajas were the leading caste. The French decided that it was in their best interest to rely on this caste for tax collection and for the smooth running of the government. In the town the Vellajas were engaged in the police, the magistracy and the administration, though most of them were conservatives, a number of them were attracted by western ideas and were often converts to Christianity (Catholicism). In the rural areas the Vellajas continued to be the traditional land holding caste, traditionalist Hindus and conservatives. The Vellaja caste was not homogeneous was divided into several sub-castes.78 The [Modeliars], a prominent Vellaja group emerged as a dominant community in the French Indian society. Perrin wrote in 1807 (Voyage dans l’Indoustan, Vol. I, Paris, 1807, pp. 298-300) “intelligence is more developed in the Modeliars (e.g. Vellaja) than in other Indians,” he adds “they also have more practical talents, more cleverness to deal with business...they observe the laws of their country with more vigilance and accuracy. Contempt towards foreigners is more deeply rooted in them, as well as the idea of the excellency of their entire country.”79 Most of them were land lords, educated and some took to administrative service. They offered the strongest resistance to the Europeans.

The Cavare caste people from the Telugu country, mostly soldiers and traders of jewellery, were employed in police and also flourished as merchants of precious stones. The Yadava caste was identified as shepherds and milkmen. The Chettys were bankers and

78 The main subdivision of the Vellaja caste represented in Pondicherry and Karaikal were the Tondamandalavellaja, the Sojyavellaja, the Karkattavellaja, the Tuluvavellaja or Modaliars, the Agamadsovellaja, the Kondoekattivellaja and the Savalavellaja.
merchants. The Chettys in the town were involved in international trade, banking activities and always ready for bold speculation and had the qualities of handling coolies and fishermen who worked on the trading ports. The Commouty were merchants. There are two groups of Commoutties viz., the southern sector and northern sector. The Retty's most of whom were engaged in agriculture and extensive land holders, shared a superior position in the villages along with the Vellajas. Like the Vellajas, the Retty's were conservatives and had the ability and were quick to adopt any technical innovation which would help them to improve their harvests. The Canaker or Kanakka were identified as writers and accountants. Senecode or Ylevanier were also agriculturists growing betel, garden crops and fruit merchants. The Nattaman and Maleaman were cultivators in general; in Pondicherry they were mostly merchants. The Maleaman add the caste suffix of Odayar to their names.

The Vanouva or Vaniya or Ennevaniyer were fabricators of oil and oil merchants. Both the northern and southern groups of Vaniya carry the suffix of migrants from neighbouring districts. Due to their occupation of extracting oil from seeds and coconuts, this group was rated low in the Hindu religious hierarchy. Wealth came their way as they sold their oil to the growing urban population in Pondicherry. Having become wealthy, the Ennevaniyer insisted on travelling in the palanquin, a privilege reserved for those who were socially and politically high. In recognition of their new economic status, the French rulers granted to Ennevaniyer the privilege they asked for. The Tisserands were weavers.

The Pally or Vannia were cultivators, represents more than 30% of the population of Pondicherry in the nineteenth century. The Pally or Vannia are also known as Padayachi, Nainar, Naiker or Koundar although a majority of them are known as Padayachis. By and large, Vannia Padayachis appear to be more prosperous than Naikers and Kounders. The

caste stratification in the French Indian settlements and elsewhere was never rigid. To effectively substantiate a claim to higher status in the hierarchy it is necessary to have strength of numbers as well as economic strength. The Pally or Vannia, for example, claimed Kshatriya status, adopted the community name ‘Vanniya Kula Kshatriyas’ and a few of them adopted the Brahmin customs of vegetarianism and rituals. They formed an association to fulfil their status and political goals. However, except in a few areas where they owned considerable land, most Vannias were either small landowners or agricultural labourers.

The Kammalar or Panchalatar were artisans containing diverse castes, including Thattar, Thatchar, Karunar, Kannar, Kalthatchar, Pathar, etc., ranging from carpenter to coppersmith. Asari are goldsmiths by tradition and called themselves Pathar. The Asari are also engaged in black smithy and carpentry. The Moutchy were artists and intellectuals. The Souraires or Shannar, divided into the southern and northern are mostly toddy tapers. The Sattany were makers of garlands for temples. The Bayanderes or Devadasi were temple dancers. The Nattuder or Nattava, Malakkara and Muttukkara were musicians and dance teachers. The Boy or Boe were palanquin bearers. The Cossaver or Kusava were pot makers. The Macouas or Mukkuvar or Sembadavar (fishermen) community had assumed the title of Nattar, formed a considerable portion of the population in the coastal areas and their role in the colony was a significant one.

The Panichaver were those who rendered last rites to the dead. The Navida or Ambatta were barbers. The Vannar or Vanna were washer men and were divided into several endogamous sects on territorial basis. The Maraver or Marava and the Kaller or Kallar were grouped together as those who indulged in stealing. Vinson refers to them as people who “exercised the profession of stealing.” He also cites Abbe Dubois to say that theft was their

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“birth right” and “legitimate heritage”. The Sakkily were cobbler. The Toty were scavengers.

The Kurava (nomads), the Sanaper (manufacturer of saes) the Tomber (janglers and acrobats), the Noker and the Vily (hunters) were engaged in nomadic life. However, through millennia some tribes were absorbed into the Hindu caste system. Even so, it is not certain if a group like Kurava were a nomadic tribe or a caste. The Valluvan were priests of Pariahs. Vettian were custodians of the burial ground. They also regulated the flow of river water into the fields. Jogi were pig rearers and agricultural labourers. The Odder were mostly engaged in digging wells, tanks, etc. The Kamma, Reddiyar (Kapu) Balija and the Odder were migrants to this place during the Vijayanagar rule and settled mostly as agriculturists.

The Pariahs who were considered highly polluted and untouchables were mostly agricultural labourers. The agricultural labourers called Padial in Pondicherry had a population of about 8,000 to 10,000 and were “faithfully attached to their masters who had the right of life and death on them.” Though most agricultural labourers belonged to the low-caste Pariah, some belonged to other castes as well (e.g. the Vannia). At the level of the village, the Pariahs lived in a separate hamlet called Paracherry away from the main village site and were prohibited from approaching the high-caste houses or streets.

The socio-economic hierarchy in Malabar of which the society in Mahe was a part, Nambudri Brahmins were of the highest ranking caste. They were ritual specialists and land owners. The Nayars who ranked next to the Nambudris in the hierarchy were dominant in the sense that they controlled most of the land in Malabar. They were internally differentiated as some of them were tenants of the Nambudris or of other Nayars. The Nambudris had an

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84 Called Panial at Karaikal.
alliance with Nayars and this was cemented through marriage ties. The Nambudri Brahmins had a marriage rule whereby only the eldest son could marry a Nambudri woman. The other sons either married or co-habited with Nayar women. Moreover, the Nayars of Malabar were matrilocal and matrilineal. Other than Nayars, Nambiar, Kurup, Panikkar, Adiyodi and Menon were engaged in temple services. Next in the social hierarchy were the Tiyyas or Izhavas, toddy tappers and agricultural labourers. The Tiyyas like the Nayars were matrilocal. The Vaidyans were practitioners of native medicine. The low castes known as Pulayans, Cherumans and Parayans constituted the bottom of the social order. The Pulayans who were considered very polluted had to maintain a distance of 96 steps from Nambudris, 64 steps from Nayars and 52 steps from Tiyas. The Malabar society also included the Muslim community known as Moplahs who were decedents of the union between Arab traders and local women or converts from Hinduism. Moplahs were merchants; some were land owners; a good many of them worked on the land owned by Nambudris or Nayars, as tenants. The above said caste structure of society had almost crumbled, although the association of certain castes with certain professions is still very much evident especially in the rural areas of Chalakara, Pallur and Pandakkal. Tiyas were associated with agricultural labour although they engaged as traders, shop keepers, physicians and civil servants. But with the spread of the teachings of Sri Narayana Guru and the temple entry movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi there is a change in the outlook of the people.

In Yanam, the Brahmins who were ritual specialists and land owners remained on top. Reddys and Kammas were the other dominant land owning castes. The Vaisya or Kommatti and Ballija form the next predominant community. Trade was their principal occupation. Artisans were in the middle level, Kammalar were predominant among them. Followed by

the service castes and finally the untouchable castes called *Malla, Yerukula, Palli, Yerragoll* and *Madiga* were at the bottom of the hierarchy. *Kapus* topped the list of low-castes, constituted the major cultivating community and wielded considerable influence in the region. According to Esquer, there were as many as 32 sub-castes among the low-castes. The *Reddy* was an ‘open’ category, as those who acquired land with other forms of wealth and influence started calling themselves as *Reddys*. Broadly defined *Reddy* also meant a leader.

In Chandernagore, the high-castes were *Brahmins, Kayasthas, Baniks* and *Baidyas*. The *Kulin Brahmins* ranked very high in the social hierarchy. The *Banik* were generally traders and merchants and were further divided into *Subarnabaniks, Gandhabanik* and *Tamulibaniks*. Some of them made money from salt trade and many were engaged in the legal profession. An important agency for legitimation of status for lower castes who claimed higher status in Bengal society was *Kulinism*. Since the *Kulin Brahmins* ranked very high in the social status, the lower castes were anxious to give their daughters in marriage to a *Kulin Brahmin* even if the latter was already married and had more than one wife. Hence the *Kulin Brahmin* married several wives from lower castes and the institution of *Kulinism* helped in the upward social mobility of lower groups. 88

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, French policy toward the indigenous people of French India relied on the *mission civilisatrice* (mission civilisation) of the natives to French religion and culture. This policy of *francisation* (frenchification) was based on a paternalistic vision of cultural difference: the French officials viewed the native Indians as “savages,” socially, economically, and culturally inferior to the Europeans. 89 As such, they had to be converted to Christianity, educated and brought to civility. Thus the declaration of


Louis XIV made in August 1664 for the establishment of the East India Company stated in its 30th Article that it will impinge on the Company to establish churches in the said islands of Madagascar and other places that it would have conquered and in such number and such quality that it will find appropriate for instructing the people in the Catholic religion. This policy remained the official native policy employed throughout the period of the French regime in India despite the internal tensions and contradictions displayed by French officials. The conversion of native Indians to Christianity was undoubtedly an important part of the policy of francisation. The missionaries supported and encouraged by the French administrators, vigorously involved in conversion of savages to Christianity and teaching them the French language and culture. The influence of French colonial policy helped the spread of Catholic community in the settlements. The existence of French settlements and missionary authority under the protection of French rule induced converted Catholics from adjoining British Indian territories to migrate and settle in French Indian settlements in order to earn their livelihood and to practice their religion without hindrance. At the same time the French did not encourage the settlement of Protestants and spread of Protestantism in their settlements. In the year 1703 the total population of Pondicherry was only 30,000 out of which there were only 2,000 Christians and their number rose to only 3,000 in the year 1725. Conversions were not many but migration increased the population of the Christians. In the year 1724-25 only about 600 Christians were newly baptised. On 18th June 1741, a declaration was made to educate slaves in the Catholic religion: the order prescribed to all the employees of the Company who were owners of slaves to baptize and to raise them in the

91 The Capuchin missionaries established their mission in Pondicherry since 1660 and the Jesuits arrived at and started their activities in 1675. While the former took care of the religious needs of the Europeans and their descendants, the latter were entrusted with the evangelical work among the natives. Later, *les Missions étrangères*, (the Foreign Missionaries) too joined the fray.
Catholic religion, failing which they would be subject to confiscation and fines. Dumas, Dubois Rolland, Miran and Goland signed the order in Karaikal.\footnote{Edmond Gaudart, \textit{Catalogue des manuscrits des anciennes archives de l'Inde française}, Tome 4, p. 7.}

The Christians were largely drawn from the lowest castes. The Catholic community occupied 10 to 15 percent of the Pondicherry population.\footnote{In south India as a whole the proportion of Christians was only 1.5 percent. The relative importance of its Christian community won Pondicherry the pompous title of the 'Rome of the Coromandel'.} Forty percent of them were \textit{Choutres} (upper-caste), who showed more solidarity with the Hindus of their own caste values and carried with them the Hindu concept of hierarchy based on purity of the higher castes and impurity of the low. Ananda Ranga Pillai in his Diary has stated how the Catholics had kept all the caste distinctions of the Hindus, the \textit{Choutres} insisted on erection of a wall in the church to ensure that during church services they avoided contact with the low-castes converts.\footnote{Dodwell, H., (ed.), \textit{The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai}, New Delhi: AES reprint, Vol. I, 1985, pp. 284-287.} This caste segregation persisted not merely in the church but even in the graveyards. The high-caste Christians also retained the Hindu custom which required married women to wear a \textit{tali} (sacred thread) round their neck as a symbol of marriage. To avoid social boycott by high-caste Christians, the Christian priests were unwilling to administer the last sacrament to the dying low-caste \textit{Pariah} Christians. Thus Christianity had been profoundly “Indianised”. Most low-caste Christians were poor. Among the \textit{Choutres} there were different economic strata consisting of the rich and influential and the less well to do.
### Table 1.4 Divisions of Catholic Christians in Pondicherry in 1860

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Localities</th>
<th>Other Caste Christians</th>
<th>Pariah Christians</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pondicherry (town)</td>
<td>2,468 (52.6%)</td>
<td>2,218 (47.3%)</td>
<td>4,686 (38.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nellithope</td>
<td>1,160 (55.5%)</td>
<td>930 (44.5%)</td>
<td>2,090 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olgurat</td>
<td>329 (23.5 %)</td>
<td>1,071 (76.5%)</td>
<td>1,400 (11.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ariankuppam</td>
<td>960 (58.9%)</td>
<td>669 (41.1%)</td>
<td>1,629 (13.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muthialpet</td>
<td>558 (77.7 %)</td>
<td>189 (22.3%)</td>
<td>847 (6.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courousoucoupam</td>
<td>353 (100%)</td>
<td>353 (2.8%)</td>
<td>353 (2.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savariatchery</td>
<td>650 (100%)</td>
<td>650 (5.3%)</td>
<td>1,300 (11.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dupuiett</td>
<td>450 (100%)</td>
<td>450 (3.6%)</td>
<td>1,900 (16.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,575 (46.1%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>6,350 (53.9%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>12,105 (98.75%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Villianor         | 60 (57.1 %)            | 45 (42.8%)        | 105 (0.8%)  |
| Babor             | 48 (100%)              | 48 (0.4%)         | 48 (0.4%)   |
| **Total**         | **5,683 (46.4 %)**     | **6,575 (53.6%)** | **12,258 (100%)** |


In French settlements, the Catholic property owners had progressively become city dwellers. While some enriched themselves thanks to commerce, others, owing to their intellectual accomplishments, attained high administrative or judicial positions. Curious about everything, they took interest in French civilisation, gave up some of their customs, and became non-vegetarian and ended by converting themselves. Their fellow beings, who dominated the rural regions, remained on the contrary the most solid defenders of Hindu values.

The Muslims formed nearly 1/20 of the whole population of the settlements. The Tamil speaking Muslims were known as *Labbais*. They were not numerous in Pondicherry representing 10% of the population, divided by castes and sects, such as *Vettalaikaran*, *Panjikutt*, and *Sonavar*. As for Muslims in Pondicherry, they believed themselves to be mostly descendants of those who came with the conquering armies from North India. A good number of them are *Moppilas* who migrated to Pondicherry from Malabar to serve in the native army organized by the French to fight the British. Notable among them were Sheik Abdul Rahman and his brother Sheik Hassan whose valour and courage brought victory to

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the French in the battle of 17th August 1749. Karaikal had more Muslim population than Pondicherry (see Table 1.4); they were known as Choulia and were descendants of Arab merchants and Indian women. They were divided into two main groups called Marakayar and Ravuthars. The Marakayar lived on maritime trade and the Ravuthars were betel leaf cultivators and local traders. The Muslim population in Pondicherry and Karaikal also included converts from Hinduism. There were two types of hierarchy among the Muslims. First, those Muslims who claimed they were of ‘pure blood’ and descendants of the original Arab traders or Turkish immigrants and not of mixed decent claimed to be higher than those to mixed descent or the converts. The Muslims claiming ‘pure’ origin were known as Sayeds. Those of mixed descent and converts were called Sheiks. Second was the economic differentiation between merchants who were wealthy, the less well to do and poor Muslims. The Muslims of mixed descent observed some customs prohibited by Islam. These included playing music at festivals and seclusion of the mother and child after childbirth. Thus the two communities, both Muslim and Christian, seduced by the religious exuberance of the Hindus, had thus adopted certain “Malabar rites”. Far from maintaining a certain cohesion, which is often indispensable for minorities, they had fractured themselves into numerous groups resembling the caste system.

**The Colonial Situation and Social Stratification**

In rural areas, the control of resources, particularly land, played a major role in social stratification. It conferred dominance of power. Lower castes (e.g. Vellajas and Rettys) which acquired this vital resource were able to lay claim to higher socio-economic position. In French India, the French introduced novel changes in the rural areas by giving pattas and titles to landowners and by firmly relating land ownership to revenue payment. Thus the

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traditional systems found little solace in the colonial ideology. However the traditional groups did not decline to an insignificant role. Often, traditional structures survived best in rural areas, where those with high status in the traditional system could use French rule. Since the colonial state was committed to protecting the existing pattern of dominance and land control as it was the headman from the dominant caste who was responsible for revenue payment, the traditional groups utilised this to acquire this modern economic power which could sustain their traditional prestige.

In the urban context the Indian social structure where the distinction between ‘the noble’ and ‘the commoner’ was clearly recognised, underwent mutations as French rule imposed its value system within which social action would henceforth take place. This meant the establishment of a modern educational system and freer play allowed to missionary activity. These factors produced the emergence of non-traditional elites. Since agriculture under the French rule proved unavailable to all sections of the society, many unprivileged sections found in the French system of education an alternative source of livelihood; however, as education was the key to employment and status for a section of the society (lawyers, teachers, doctors), there emerged differentiated professional classes linked to trade and commerce. The service sector soon grew as a well-to-do section of the Indian society. As in British India, the starting of educational institutions contributed to the emergence of an educated class in the French Indian settlements. Due to the colonial educational reforms, the traditional system, which was largely based on heredity and caste, was replaced by the modern system of education. Even before the administration took the initiative, the Christian Missionaries were active in starting educational institutions in the settlements. In 1703, the Jesuit fathers opened up a college where Latin, Philosophy and Theology were taught. Students came from different parts of the world: from Bengal, Madras, Philippines, Surat,
Ispahan and one each from Paris and London. Dumas was quite interested in women’s education and in 1738, a convention was signed with the Ursulines de Vannes to open a convent school in Pondicherry for girls, irrespective of caste and creed. Eight nuns were to come to Pondicherry to instruct the local girls, whose education was totally neglected by the native society. Pigneau de Behaine started the Collège Malabare in 1771 at Pondicherry. During the Governorship of Desbassayns de Richemont (1826-28), some firm measures were taken to improve education and it got its momentum in the later half of the nineteenth century. On 25th October 1826 the Collège Royal which later bore the name of Collège Colonial was inaugurated in Pondicherry. The Collège Royal, initially reserved only for Europeans and Créoles, was later opened to all. Desbassayns endowed Pondicherry and Karaikal with free schools for Indians (orders of 1st February 1827). A primary school for the education of girls was started in 1827. Finally, on 21st July 1828 he opened, at Pondicherry, a free school for the Pariahs, showing that his concern extended to all classes of the population. Desirous of making French culture accessible to the greatest number of people, he ordered, on 16th May 1827, a regulation for the establishment of the public library of Pondicherry. Under the Third Republic, the laicisation of the educational institutions was carried out in spite of opposition from the Missionaries. Schools were set up in both the urban and rural areas of the settlements. In 1877 all the educational institutions were brought under the control of the Commission l’instruction publique. In 1884 a teachers training institute was established and in 1903 a medical college was also started in Pondicherry. The introduction of professional education attracted many students and provided more employment opportunities. Nearly 12% to 15% of the colonial budget was spent for the improvement of education every year.

Among the classes that thrived on account of the French policy, the foremost was the civil servants. The colonial masters were able to ensure the exploitation and the protection of its colonial domain with small number of Europeans as it largely made use of native personnel. In India, based on some scattered information, one can estimate that the number of natives employed in the administrative and commercial services was considerable. In the early days, among the native employees the primary place was occupied by the writers, known as the Modeliar or dobachi, to whom the councils sometimes gave important responsibilities while the interpreters played a crucial role in the relations between the Europeans and the local population. The very large number of “peons” often reaching the figure of more than two hundred was used in diverse domestic chores, especially in the transportation of mail. By an order of 29th October 1927, Desbassayns created an institution, under the name of “children of language,” this institution which was destined to become the breeding ground for the government, for the tribunals, for the police and so on. In the absence in France of a colonial school or of an institution similar to the British “Civil Service”, “children of language” were meant to remedy the insufficiencies and deficiencies of the workforce. But this institution rapidly became obsolete. It finally disappeared in 1838.

The following tables show the proportion of European and Indian employees in the colonial government:

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Table 1.5 Proportions of the European and Indian Employees in the State Administration in 1838

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Settlements</th>
<th>European Functionaries</th>
<th>Indian Employees</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pondicherry</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>708</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>81,616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(68.8%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(48.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karaikal</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>44,191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(17%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(26.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahe</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3,355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.4%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yanam</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>7,339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.7%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(4.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chennamagore</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>31,235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(18.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,041</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,141</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,67,736</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td>(100%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 1.6 Repartition of Employees in Different Departments in 1838

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Number of Employees</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Europeans</td>
<td>Indians</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colonial Government</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>37(2.58%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commissariat of the Marine</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>76(5.31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police (civil)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>250(17.49%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>91(6.36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration of Finance</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>554(38%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil construction</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>35(2.45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Instruction</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>42(2.93%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious service</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5(0.34%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health service</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15(1.04%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ports</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23(1.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendents, Geoliers…</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>282(19.73%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different agents</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19(1.32%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>107</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,322</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,429(100%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The above statistics suggests that while European population retained higher level administrative positions, other jobs were assigned to the Indian population. Indians were recruited in the earliest civil duty of inhabitants that of police duty in defence of the settlements. Indians were also recruited in the collection of land revenues and other taxes. During the course of time as French rule became stable and the administrative system was widened, more and more natives were employed in various administrative departments. Apart from the administrative services there was indirect jobs and a numerous population was employed as coolies, contractors etc. With the establishment of Municipalities and other administrative departments in the late nineteenth century, considerable employment
opportunities were left open for the local public civil service. Nearly 45 to 50 percent of the colonial budget was allotted to the salaries of civil servants every year.

Closely associated with these civil servants were the lawyers whose profession also became lucrative on account of the French laws and legal system which were generally favourable to the well-to-do people. On 17th July 1838, law colleges were introduced in Pondicherry. Later in 1876, a three years course in law was initiated. Since the study of law provided first class professions like judges, administrators and officers in administrative departments in French India as well as in other French colonies many were attracted to law. The people who moved into the legal and other modern professions like journalism, teaching and the public services, mostly hailed from the families in urban areas.

Social stratification in French India became more complex as Pondicherry modernised due to starting of modern industries. The origin of the modern industry can be traced to the introduction of the first textile mill in 1828, soon to be followed by many. The cloth manufactured in the mills was exported to French colonies in Africa. The starting of these mills led to the emergence of an industrial working class in Pondicherry. There was steady increase of migration from rural to urban as well as population from British India. These industries recruited 8,000 to 10,000 labourers at the turn off nineteenth century and the working class population was largely concentrated in Olgarat, Mudiariarpet and Kossapalayam (outskirts of Pondicherry town). A good number of working class populations were found at Chandernagore as well, where a Jute mill was situated. Most of the mill workers at that time belonged to the low-castes and untouchables. The high-castes ignored the mill jobs which were considered as polluted whereas the deprived castes having no other

104 In 1883, the student strength of the law college was 73 of which 58 in the first year, 8 in the second year and 7 in third year. Among them 15 were Christians and 59 other Indians (Julien Vinson, L’Inde française et les études Indiennes, p. 25).

source for the survival took up mill jobs. While the modern textile mills came into existence and grew in number, the weavers and the artisans who depended for their livelihood on handmade textiles declined. As in British India, the French rulers dumped the machine made textile on the Indian market. The consequence of this was disastrous for the Indian weavers who consequently suffered downward mobility in the economic hierarchy. These contradictions helped in enhancing opposition to French colonial rule and subsequent participation of working class population in the nationalist struggle.

The French and Native Christians

One of the aims of the French Crown in establishing the Company to trade with India was to bring the heathens of the eastern hemisphere into the Christian fold. Through conversion, the French attempted to create a section of society, which was almost totally dependent on them for their social status and economic well-being. This dependency, the French believed, would ensure their loyalty and in times of need they could bank on the religious affinity of these neo-converts.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the attempt of the colonial masters and the Christian missionaries at converting the Indians went on assiduously. The low-caste as well as some high-caste people took refuge from a caste-based society into a class society and many became the followers of the religion of the conqueror. The converts were keener to accept the benefits which flowed from such conversion. As such many converted Christians benefited from modern education. Economic, political and social status proved easier when compared with the plight of the non-Christian population. The French government always encouraged the Catholic community and recruited its bureaucrats and government servants from the French medium literates, people practising Catholicism and other favourite sections (e.g. Pariahs) of Indian society and the Christians were the most liberate and trained.
government servants. The Christians and low-caste Pariahs were the main stock from which the French government drew its clerical and secretarial assistants. Slowly this landed the Christians in high administrative and social positions and invested them with considerable influence in the colonial society. The Catholic community formed the second largest population in French India (see Table 1.4) but constituted only 15% of the total population. They continued to enjoy certain benefits from French rule, remained as a privileged section and virtually dominated the whole population. This made possible the fact that from 1736 onwards a separate register of birth, marriage and death for all Catholics, no matter what their origin, was maintained in Pondicherry.

The episode of missionary opposition to Ananda Ranga Pillai demonstrated the attachment of French to the Catholic religion. The administrators preferred to have people of their own religious faith as their subordinates. It was in the nineteenth century when educational institutions were started in French India that many Christians got educated in French and got some preferential treatment in respect of Government employment. The Collège Colonial in Pondicherry provided higher education. The strength of students as in 1879 is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hindus</th>
<th>Christians</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Other Indian Christians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Julien Vinson, L’Inde française et les études Indiennes, p. 20.

Although Ananda Ranga Pillai occupied the topmost post of chief Dubach from 1747 to 1754, the missionaries were not in favour of appointing a non-Christian to the post. They were opposed to the appointment of Ananda Ranga Pillai as chief Dubach.
Graduates among the population of French India as follows:

**Table 1.8 Divisions of Graduates in French India by Race and Religion**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division of Population</th>
<th>In 1901</th>
<th>In 1902</th>
<th>In 1903</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europeans and their Descendants</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Christians</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindus</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Table 1.9 Divisions of Scholars in French India by Race and Religion in 1903**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division of Population</th>
<th>Government Schools Boys</th>
<th>Private Schools Boys</th>
<th>Total Boys</th>
<th>Government Schools Girls</th>
<th>Private Schools Girls</th>
<th>Total Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europeans and their Descendants</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>361</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Christians</td>
<td>1,188</td>
<td>920</td>
<td>2,108</td>
<td>1,018</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>1,578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>735</td>
<td>1,143</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindus</td>
<td>3,768</td>
<td>6,366</td>
<td>10,134</td>
<td>2,210</td>
<td>577</td>
<td>2,787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td><strong>5,563</strong></td>
<td><strong>8,183</strong></td>
<td><strong>13,746</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,510</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,642</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,152</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In 1910, students’ strength in public and private schools in French India was 13,500.

Of which scholars among the Europeans and their descendants 4.08 percent, Christians 13.05 percent, Muslims 9.74 percent, *Pariahs* 6.76 percent and Hindus 66.37 percent. The above statistics reveals that the percentage of educated among the Europeans, mixed race, Christians and Muslims in French India was relatively high when compared to the proportion of their population. While French medium was preferred, there was also encouragement for teaching vernacular languages like Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Bengali and English as well.

When French medium of education offered employments in the government, the Christian community mostly preferred French medium and got employment opportunities and virtually

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108 In 1900 out of 401 classes conducted in public and private schools, of 231 classes were conducted in Indian languages and 171 in French. In public schools out of 215 classes, 109 were conducted in French and 106 in Indian languages. Hindus generally avoided the public schools, since there is no religious and caste barriers and they did not study along with the low-castes and untouchables.
dominated others. A census in 1916 brings out this domination: Pondicherry had a population of 1, 84,840 in 1916, among those, Europeans numbered 810, Christians 7,125, Muslims 6,321, *Pariahs* 12,650 and other Hindus 1, 57,740. Among this population, merchants and mill owners among the Europeans were 9, Christians 1, Hindus 105 and the *Pariahs* 6. The First class government employees, Europeans and their descendents 22, Christians 2; Hindus nil and in secondary grade civil services 70 Christians had received 42,207 rupees as salary and 29 Hindus received 13,733 rupees. Pondicherry received 12, 55,939 rupees revenue from the collection of taxes. The tax payers among Europeans and their descendents were 45; Christians 330, Muslim 40, *Pariahs* 75; Hindus 70,490. Among them 30 Christians received 37,137 rupees in form of subsidies (i.e. free education) and 3 Hindus enjoyed 2,019 rupees.109

The European contact with Christians was looked down upon by some section of the Hindus. A section of Indian society for a long time resisted the domination of Catholic community and the French. A dissident’s party headed by Piramassamy and Vayaborry, belonged to the *Vellaja* caste, having “declared itself against the Catholic church in the most violent manner” often tried to provoke an insurrection against the French rule. In 1845, the anti-Catholic group achieved their goal in Karaikal. They instigated the public against the French. When the later, for hygienic reasons, were ordered to shift the funeral pyre from the township of Karaikal, the dissidents argued vehemently that it was against their *mamool* and evoked a profound echo of support among the population, which rose up in rebellion. For several days, rioters controlled Karaikal. Being terrorified, the Europeans barricaded themselves in their houses. The French had to call in the British *ciphai* (police) detachment from the neighbouring Tanjore to quell the disturbance and to liberate the French *comptoir*.110

Since then the French were more conscious about the Indian society and had to sacrifice their

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109 Sukhabhaviridhini, 1916.
laws and values for respecting Indian *mamool*. Generally, a harmony prevailed among
different religions and castes in French India and this was continued until electoral politics
was introduced in the late nineteenth century.

**The French and the Depressed Castes**

The untouchables in India (e.g. the *Pariahs*) were suppressed from time immemorial in social organisation, and were economically impoverished. They had degenerated in their culture and religion. The theocratic element in Indian caste system imposed many humiliating restrictions on the untouchables like forbidding from appearance in the high caste streets, denial of drinking water from the public consumption, and the stigma of pollution of the high-caste Hindus. The most numerous castes among the untouchables in the French India were mainly *Pariahs*, *Pulayans*, *Cherumans*, *Malla* and *Madiga* who lived on agriculture or on service to high-castes since long ago.

Due to the humiliation and disabilities that the untouchables suffered at the hands of the high-caste Hindus, by the beginning of the European colonisation, the untouchables were attracted to the Europeans who had not been observing any such taboos, but over and above it paid them regularly for their service. In some respect both are equal, since the high-castes Indians were very conscious about incursions of *Pariahs* and Europeans in their streets and considered the mere presence of Europeans was enough to “induce a flow of impurity which defiled all it touches.” Members of the upper strata of Indian society showed antipathy towards Europeans and used the word ‘Franguis’ with contempt as much a word of contempt as *Pariahs*. Dupleix himself shared this pessimism, Ananda Ranga Pillai noted in his Diary on 4th April 1753 and told him “Though the Tamils have long lived with us, still they say it is

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against their custom and speak ill of us comparing us in their brutal ignorance to Pariahs.”

This outburst of Dupleix reveals that in French India both Pariahs and Europeans shared the bond of pollution. Moreover they physically identified closer, since the Pariahs and low-castes hamlets like Chunnambukkalvaipet, Kurichikppam, Dupuypet and Savarirapet were situated very closer to the European settlements in the town of Pondicherry. Many Pariahs were found in remunerative jobs in the big European or Créole houses. Consequently the contempt that Indians had towards the Pariahs extended towards the French, and had continued since then. However the sensitivity of Indians to this issue did not bother the European population who continued to live in India as they would live in France, England and in Holland, without refraining oneself and without coming to terms with the customs of the native society.

The relationship between Europeans and the Indians of low-castes developed over a relatively long period and the French relation with the low-caste Indians was significant. “The closeness that the Indian would exhibit towards the French had on many occasions been remarked upon by devoted civil servants who would explain it by the affinities which existed between these two people namely having the same liveliness of spirit, the same softness of style, the same sense of humanity and of the primacy of spiritual values, while other European people were more dogmatic and tentative. The Frenchman was equally more informal, more accessible than the Englishman for whom the Indian remained the “Native” not admitted to his clubs and very rarely to his receptions.”

The Indian was very sensitive to the distance between him and the British colonizer. The Pariahs were the most collaborative along with the Christians, undoubtedly because many adopted French values. In 1828, the head of the Pariahs, Tandavayaren, explained to Desbassayns that those of his

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caste were more inclined and willing to serve the French nation; because in their service with
the Whites they were not discriminated against, but were brought up and treated like their
children, so that they had always desired the good of European gentlemen. That was why
other castes were constant enemies of the supplicant as well as of his caste because he had
always differed from their expressed views against the Whites.\textsuperscript{114}

From these developments, the French realised that their presence was in some degree
odious to certain sections of the natives and the best policy was to endeavour to lessen this
.aversion.\textsuperscript{115} Moreover, they had to depend on the native population in the pursuit of their
political and economic ambitions, as they could not be assured of a steady outflow of
migrants from their own country. All these forced the French to follow a cautious as well as
conscious two-pronged policy and action towards the natives. On the one hand, the French
attempted to assimilate some among the native inhabitants with them, thereby creating a thin
layer of Franco-Indian society between themselves and the majority community.\textsuperscript{116} On the
other hand, they made a deliberate effort to minimise the aversion between the two
communities by adopting local customs and traditions as far as possible or by being tolerant
or indifferent to them at the most. Both these policies were followed simultaneously
according to the exigencies of the situation and the preference of those who were at the helm
of affairs at any given time.

The Jesuit missionaries, who came to Pondicherry in 1675, often persuaded the
French government to control Hindu practices. The intolerance of the Jesuit missionaries on
Hindu practices culminated in the desecration of the Vedapuriswarar temple on 8\textsuperscript{th}
September

\textsuperscript{115} Abbé Raynal, A Philosophical and Political History of the Europeans in the East and West Indies, Vol.2,
\textsuperscript{116} Arasaratnam, S., “Indian Intermédiaires on the Trade and Administration of the French East India Company
in the Coromandel 1670-1760” in Les Relations historique et culturelles entre la France et l’Inde XVIIe – XXe siècles,
Association Historique Internationale de l’Océan Indien, Archives Départementales de la Réunion, Le
1748, taking advantage of the siege of Pondicherry by the English army. They could not tolerate the existence of the temple on the same street where the Catholic Church stood. The temple was destroyed and the idols were broken. For this purpose the depressed caste Christians and the African Coffres were used by the French. This resulted in a mass exodus of Hindus from Pondicherry which was a great blow to the commercial activities of the French. In November, 1773, Jean Law de Lauriston, the French military Commandant then Governor of French India, created a ‘fusiliers’ company wholly consisting of the Pariah Christians. This innovation, however, was abolished by a Royal ordinance of 20th January 1776 which stated that men “of all religions shall be admitted into service without any distinction or pre-eminence of one sect over another. His Majesty desires that never shall any separation by sect or caste be made in the Company, but that they be mixed up indistinctly as loyal soldiers of one and the same King.” The loyalty of the untouchables to the French can be proved from the above evidence. The French benefited from the low-castes, made big fortune in slave trade in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Slaves and coolies mostly belonging to the low-castes were sent to the French plantations in Africa and a good many were recruited in French military service in French colonies as well. At the same time, the French sometimes acted as strangers of their own consciousness, had recognised the Indian caste system, kept the low-castes at the bottom of the society and authorized the punishment of the rod only for the low-caste delinquents.

The French, most of the time had to suffer abdication of the western values in favour of the laws of Manu and the scrupulous respect of the ‘mamool’ thereby implied won for France, if not the loyalty of the population, at least their indifference. It was understood in Paris that this was the price to be paid for keeping the Indian settlements. Sometimes the

French government was determined to spread the supremacy of its culture over the social and cultural aspects of Indian life. The French policy not only paved the way for building up a kind of inter-caste tension within the Indian community, but also encouraged some chosen caste, especially the Pariahs to conduct a spate campaign for their sectional advancement. For instance in France, the revolution of February 1848 had put an end to the July Monarchy and established the Second Republic. The provisional government immediately resumed the policy of assimilation which declared in the words of Boissy d’Anglas “let the colonies be a part of our indivisible Republic; let them (colonised people) be controlled and ruled by the same laws and the same government; let their deputies called to this precinct be mingled with those of the entire people... There can be only one good way to administer and if we have found it for European countries, why should those of America be deprived of it?”

In accordance with this on 5th March 1848, a decree allowed the colonies representation in the French national legislature. Election of representatives was based on universal suffrage irrespective of race, religion and caste. The only pre-requisite was five years residence in any one of the five French settlements in India. Opponents of assimilation, led by Eugene Sice, a civil servant, pointed out that the decision to allow Indians to vote was prejudicial both to French national sovereignty and to the ‘mamool’, and consequently, dangerous. The high-caste, he insisted, were not likely to accept republican institutions without demur, and in particular, they would object to universal suffrage which made Pariahs their equals. In July 1848, grave incidents supported Sice’s thesis. Some Pariahs being convinced that the egalitarian Republic was going to raise them to the rank of high-caste Vellaja claimed the privilege of wearing slippers. This evoked violent reactions. ‘Paracherries’ (Pariah villages)

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were burnt down and some of their inhabitants were killed. In the face of such violent turmoil, Governor Pujol ordered to return to the *status quo ante*. A proclamation posted everywhere in Pondicherry reminding the populace that the ‘mamool’ and the privileges of the high-castes could not be questioned. The *Pariahs* who wore slippers began to be fined. Thus the attempts at assimilation ended up in a fiasco. Later the *Pariahs* were granted permission to wear European shoes.

The French rule contributed little to the benevolence of low-castes. Access to education was available to low-caste persons in the colonial system, albeit not in absolute proportion to their numbers. Keeping in view the caste hierarchy and caste consciousness in Indian society, on 21st July 1829, the first free school for members of the *Pariah* castes was opened in Pondicherry. Later in 1834 more schools were opened—one for the *Créoles*, one for the caste Hindus and a third for *Pariahs*. Education was translated into occupation, particularly administrative positions, which in turn were the most stable and one of the most lucrative sources of income. The social stratification was such that there was little upward mobility to be achieved, through the educated among them were absorbed in the civil services in the lower ranks in the towns. In 1860, 4,031 *Pariahs* lived in the Pondicherry town, among them, 1,380 men practiced the following professions:
Table 1.10 Classification of Pariah Population in Professional wise in 1860

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Number of Person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>3 (0.21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Teachers</td>
<td>5 (0.36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Merchants</td>
<td>60 (4.34%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police</td>
<td>11 (0.79%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peons in Police</td>
<td>4 (0.28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediators</td>
<td>65 (4.71%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailors</td>
<td>2 (0.14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacksmith</td>
<td>2 (0.14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooks</td>
<td>36 (2.33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riders</td>
<td>8 (0.57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>washer men</td>
<td>3 (0.21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beggars</td>
<td>45 (3.26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without profession</td>
<td>172 (12.40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other occupation</td>
<td>44 (3.18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coolies</td>
<td>908 (65.79%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,380 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The above observation reveals that 8 (1%) from the Pariah caste were engaged in the noble professions of medicine and teaching; nearly 3% employed in government services; 5% were business men and rest of the population rendered other secondary services, offered service to European population and some were employed by the missionaries. During the last part of the French rule, the untouchables and the low-caste Christians had many opportunities of employment in the French military service and other occupations. They had become more prosperous. It must be mentioned to the credit of the missionaries that it was due to their efforts that the untouchables and low-caste Christians were well off economically than their counterparts among the Hindus in the French Indian settlements. In general the condition of the Pariahs in the town of Pondicherry was slightly better when comparing to the British India and rural areas of French Indian settlements. However, the plight of the socially depressed castes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries remained unchanged though it was stated that much progress was achieved in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries in accordance with the French colonial policy. When France offered renunciation (to give up their Indian nationality in favour of French law in their actions) to native Indians at the end of the nineteenth century, a large number belonging to the caste of Pariahs willingly opted for this.