

GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF LITERARY SOCIETIES BETWEEN 1911- 1967 IN PUDUCHERRY

Dr. N. Dhaivamsam^{1*}

Abstract

The culture of Puducherry was influenced by various rulers from time to time. Literature survey revealed that Puducherry facilitated the transition and transformation of Puducherry culture by thirteen literary societies. These literary societies are *Alliance Francaise*, *Ecole Francaised' Extreme orient*, *Institute francais*, *Historical Society of Pondicherry*, *Societe Progressiste*, *KalaimaghalKazhagam Pondicherry*, *Tamil Talir Kazhagam*, *Alliance educative des vannias Pondicherry*, *Kalvikahazhagam Pondicherry*, *Puthuvai Tamizh Sangam*, *Karai Kalvi Kazhagam*, *Siddha Vaidya Sangam*, *Pondicherry State Sangeetha Nataka Sangam*. The influence of these literary societies on the culture of Puducherry is studied in this research paper. It is understood that these literary societies acted as buffer resisting sudden change in the culture and facilitating harmonization of the Indian and French culture. Further these societies generalized and popularized the fittest culture points and practices.

Keywords: Culture, Literature, Siddha Vaidya Sangam Societies, Socisociet

Introduction:

Puducherry is an irregular stretch of land almost in semi-circle, between 11°46' and 12°03' northern latitude and between 79°36' and 79°53' eastern longitude, bounded by the Bay of Bengal on the east and by the South Arcot District on all the other sides, the region as a whole is 290 Sq. Km.

The ancient name of Puducherry was Vedhapuram or Vedhapuri, which suggests that the place was a seat of Vedic learning and culture. The inscriptions found on the Sri Moolanathar Temple at Bahur (22 Km south of Pondicherry) and on the Shiva Temple at Thiruvandar Koil (12 Km west of Puducherry). According to one inscription found near the Vehapuriswara temple, the presiding deity was known as Agastiswara the Lord of Agastya from whom the sage had learnt the Vedas. Henceforth the place was known as Agastiswaram. Ptolemy, a distinguished astronomer, and geographer, in his work *Treatise on Geography* written in the 2nd century of our era refers to PODUKE as an emporium on the Coromandel coast. Following the Portuguese and the Dutch, the French came here in the next century. By that time the place had come to be known as Puducheri, which in Tamil means 'new village'. In French transliteration, 'U' in the word was mistaken for the letter 'n' and thereafter the new name Pondicherry, a corruption of the word Puducherry was popularized. These mixed cultures of Puducherry were stabilized by the literacy society of Puducherry. The influence of these literary societies on the culture of Puducherry is explained in these research papers.

INFLUENCE OF LITERARY SOCIETIES ON THE CULTURE OF PUDUCHERRY

Various literary societies were established in Puducherry during the period between 1911 and 1967 and they had an appreciable influence on the culture of Puducherry. These societies as per their order of popularity are described as follows:

Alliance Francaise:

The *Alliance française* is an international organisation that aims to promote French language and culture around the world. The *Alliance* was created in Paris on 21 July 1883, its primary concern is teaching French as a second language. The Puducherry Branch of *Alliance Française* appears to have been registered in 1894. When the French quit during 1956, they established an institute "*Alliance française*" to ensure their culture continuity. The institution now arranges regular refresher as well as short term courses for the benefit of children and adults. Students from faraway places come to Puducherry to study the languages, as here alone they have the facility to get familiar with the spoken languages.

Ecole Francaised'Extreme orient:

Ecole Francaised'Extreme orient is a French institute dedicated to the study of Asian societies. It was founded in 1899 in Saigon and then later founded in Hanoi (French Indochina) as headquarters in 1900 and then it transferred to Paris on 26th Feb 1901 to undergo research work in Indo-China and Far East including India.

Corresponding Author: Dr. N. Dhaivamsam

1. Associate Professor in History
Periyar Arts College, Cuddalore

A branch was established at Puducherry in 1964. The Puducherry branch of *Ecole Francaised' Extreme orient* is attached to the Indological section both of which maintain permanent relations on an exchange basis not only with similar Indian Institutions, Research centers and Universities but also with more than 150 scientific institutions in as many as eighty-three countries throughout the world. The French publications help spread the knowledge of Indian culture in the French knowing world.

Institute Francaise:

The Institute Francaise is public institution with commercial and industrial purpose, it works closely with the French cultural network abroad consists of over 150 French institutes in the world. By creating the French Institute, the government has in fact wanted to entrust to a single agency promoting cultural activities outside of France in terms of artistic exchanges performing arts, visual arts, architecture, broadcast worldwide, Book, film, French language, knowledge, and ideas.

Thus, French Institute was established in Pondicherry Dr. K.M. Panikkar, the historian and Dr. Jean Filliozat, the Indologist. It took concrete shape with the agreement of 12th August 1954 which provided for the opening of an Institute in Puducherry for continuing the research of *Ecole Francaised'Extreme orient*. The institute was inaugurated on 21st March 1955. The scope of research activities of the institute was widened in 1956 with the addition of a scientific section devoted to the study of the natural conditions of life of the people of India. The two important sections in the Institute Francaise are the Indology section and scientific section.

Indology Section:

Research work here is mainly centered on different branches of Indology, such as the philosophy and religious traditions and practices in India, with special reference to the Saiva Agamic religion, one of the most developed in India, as well as in South –East Asia. Studies undertaken by the Institute also cover such branches as Indian Iconography, Archaeology with special references to treaties on architecture and image-making, besides traditional grammar and poetry of Sanskrit and Tamil and Tamil Lexicography. The institute is also engaged in the collection, edition and interpretation of agamic and puranic texts.

Scientific section:

The Scientific section covers wide ranging subjects such as Botany, Pollen analysis, and soil the world. By creating the French Institute, the government has in fact wanted to entrust to a studies, bioclimatology and microclimatology, ecology and cartography. The section also maintain herbarium with more than 3,000 species, a collection of pollen grains of 18,000 tropical species with slides, description index cards and sorting cards, a collection of minerals and soil samples, a collection of meteorological data pertaining to 7,000 primary and secondary stations.

Historical Society of Pondicherry:

The Historical society of Pondicherry was founded on 1st May 1911 by Alfred Martineau, it was originally known as *La Societe de l'Histoire de l'Inde Francaise*. To begin with, the Society published in 1912 a compendium entitled '*Lettres et conventions des Gouverneurs de Pondicherry avec les divers princes indiens de 1966*' in order to draw the attention of scholars to the old records which remained concealed in the Archives at Pondicherry. Amidst its other activities, the society organized an exhibition on 'Arts Indous' in 1950 within the premises of the library. Again in 1952, the terracotta findings in Thirubhuvanailoated by P.Z. Pattabiraman, one of its members, were exhibited in the Library Hall. Soon after the merger the institution came to be known as *Societe de l'Histoire de l'Etat de Pondicherry*. Society not only maintains a library but also evinces interest in collecting old books, periodicals and records having a bearing on Pondicherry's history.

Societe Progressiste:

Societe Progressiste de l'Inde Francaise was founded on 25th December 1880 by a group of local people of the propagation of French language and culture among Hindus. This institution was recognized on 1st March 1883. As part of its educational activities, the society started an *Ecole primaires uerieure* known as Ecole Hindou, which later came to be known as *Ecole de la Societe Progressiste*. Although this school had to be closed down in 1914. After some years it was reopened in 1921 with the financial assistance extended by the city Philanthropist, a rich merchant of Pondicherry. It showed great interest in starting a wing for technical training in college calve. The Societe also offered scholarships to Indian children coming from rural areas for their education. Students from all the four regions were eligible for such scholarships. The Society received some grants from the Pondicherry administration. The interest received from the investment of its capital of more than Rs. 30,000 and the rent from a building owned by the Society are its other sources of income.

Kalaimaghaland Tamil Talir Kazhagam, Pondicherry:

Since 1911, the Kalaimagha Kazhagam which functioned in Pondicherry was closely connected with cultural and literary activities. Sometime after its inception, the Kazhagam started a journal entitled 'Kalaimaghal' to work for the revival of Tamil language. Besides articles on religious themes, the journal also published short stories and serialized novels. One of the novels entitled 'Ramani' serialized in the journal sought to condemn the practice of child marriage as well as marriages between persons of incompatible age. The Tamil Talir Kazhagam was started in the year 1918 and its spread of education among the underprivileged especially, it was the motto of this institution.

Kalvikahazhagam, Pondicherry:

Although the origin of Kalvikahazhagam can be traced back to 1912 it came to be officially established only in the year 1926 by some ardent lovers of Tamil language. Besides maintaining a library, a reading room and a night school, the Kazhagam also held examinations and awarded prizes to those studying the Kazhagam. Courses in Tamil Literature and free Tamil classes were also conducted by the Kazhagam. In an attempt to improve the financial position of the Kazhagam, famous French dramas were translated into Tamil performances were held in Pondicherry and Thirupathiripuliyir.

Alliance educative des Vannias, Pondicherry:

This was founded in the year 1919 by members of the Vannia community for the promotion of education among the vannias, besides conducting a primary school, the Alliance granted scholarships to deserving students belonging to the Vannia community for pursuing higher studies. Most of the Vannias are agriculturists formed a very substantial part of the city's Hindu Population.

KaraiKalviKazhagam:

The KaraiKalviKazhagam was started in Karaikal on 9th February 1945 to organize Indo-French cultural changes and to promote the spread of Tamil and French languages, besides arranging talks from time to time. The Kazhagam maintained a library. The Kazhagam also conducted night classes for coaching up students for *Brevet Elementaire* and *Brevet D'etudes Suerieures de langue indigene*.

Siddha Vaidya, Puthuvai Tamizh and Pondicherry state Sangeetha Nataka Sangam:

The Siddha Vaidya Sangam of Pondicherry was established in 1950 in accordance with the French law and was subsequently registered under the Societies Registration Act following its extension to this Territory. It was started with a view to popularizing and encouraging the Siddha and Ayurvedic systems of medicine and treatment in the territory. It is affiliated to the Central Siddha Medical Council of Madras. The Puthuvai Tamizh Sangam has had only a spasmodic existence. In the thirties of this century, the Puthuvai Tamizh Sangam published a literary journal entitled 'Thamizh Magavu' which however did not have a long lease of life. In 1966, the Puthuvai Tamizh Sangam became a registered body. The Pondicherry State Sangeetha Nataka Sangam was constituted as a registered body in the year 1967 under the ex-officio President ship of the Lieutenant Governor of Pondicherry for the encouragement of music, dance drama and films in the territory. The affairs to the Sangam were managed by a ten-member executive board and a general council. Until 1970, the Director of Public institution and the Finance Secretary were respectively the ex-officio Secretary and Treasurer of the Sangam.

Conclusion:

The culture of Puducherry has transformed down the ages under various rulers especially under the French. The major impact on Puducherry culture was from the French. The French image of Puducherry was marked by its reliance on the spiritual and religious aspects of India and its antiquity. The French derived more national pride and less economic sustenance from these colonies especially Puducherry. Puducherry was used as a showcase for French policy of assimilation later association.

Five French literary societies viz, *Alliance Francoise*, *Ecole Francaise d'Extreme orient*, *Institute francais*, *Historical Society of Pondicherry*, *Societe Progressiste* have helped in the harmonization of the French culture with that of the Indian.

Also, Eight Indian (Puducherry) literary societies viz, , *Kalaimaghal Kazhagam Pondicherry*, *Tamil Talir Kazhagam*, *Alliance educative des vannias Pondicherry*, *Kalvikahazhagam Pondicherry*, *Puthuvai Tamizh Sangam*, *KaraiKalviKazhagam*, , *Siddha Vaidya Sangam*, *Pondicherry State Sangeetha Nataka Sangam* have played a vital role in the generalization and popularization of the fittest culture points and practices of Puducherry.

These literary societies have played a silent role in the transformation of Puducherry culture to the present one.

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