



PONDICHERRY, TAMIL NADU AND SOUTH INDIA UNDER FRENCH RULE

**FROM FRANÇOIS MARTIN TO DUPLEIX
1674-1754**

J.B.P More



PONDICHERRY, TAMIL NADU AND SOUTH INDIA UNDER FRENCH RULE

This is a study of the colonization of Pondicherry, Tamil Nadu and south India by the French during the eighteenth century, and their interactions with the Indian rulers and populations in the political, economic, social and religious spheres. French Governors based in Pondicherry since François Martin up to Dupleix never acquired any territory for France through outright conquest. They or their masters in France never had any grand plan to establish a French empire in India. Some Indian rulers were friendly with the French and the English as it served their interests. The study demonstrates that the French colonizers and missionaries would not have survived in India without the collaboration of the Indian dubashes, merchants, certain Indian rulers and military men.

This collaboration was not on an equal footing, as the sepoys, merchants and dubashes were always subordinate and submissive to the Europeans. Even Ananda Ranga Poullé, the most famous of the Indian dubashes had to resort to the art of flattery to be in the good books of his 'master'. European arrival and presence in India heralded the beginning of a cultural clash between the Europeans and Indians, in which the former had the upper hand. There was never any partnership or 'master-bania' relationship between the French and the Indians. Instead, the relationship had all the trappings of a 'master-subordinate' relationship, where the subordinate even though he might be a dubash was always at the mercy of the colonizers. The element of force, aggressivity and violence was omnipresent in European presence and expansion in India, in the political, economic and religious fields.

J.B.P. More, also known as Prashant More obtained his doctorate in history from the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris. He currently teaches at Insec, Paris. He specializes on history, sociology and politics of southern and colonial India. He has authored more than 22 books and 50 articles in English, French and Tamil.



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

Pondicherry, Tamil Nadu and
South India under French Rule
FROM FRANÇOIS MARTIN TO DUPLEIX
1674-1754

J. B. P. MORE

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK



MANOHAR

First published 2021

by Routledge

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge

52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

© 2021 J.B.P More and Manohar Publishers & Distributors

The right of J.B.P More to be identified as author of this work has been asserted by her in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Trademark notice: Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

Print edition not for sale in South Asia (India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan or Bhutan)

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN: 978-0-367-64079-8 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-12206-7 (ebk)

Typeset in Adobe Garamond Pro 11/13

by Manohar, Delhi 110 002



MANOHAR

Contents

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	7
<i>Preface</i>	9
<i>Abbreviations</i>	13
<i>Introduction</i>	15
1. The French in Pondicherry: Early Phase	33
2. French Intolerance, 1706-1721	74
3. Pondicherry Develops and Expands	96
4. Expansion under Governor Benoist Dumas, 1735-1741	115
5. Governorship of Joseph François Duplex: Early Phase	138
6. Rivalries in the Carnatic and the Capture of Madras	153
7. Siege of Pondicherry, 1748 and its Aftermath	167
8. Vedapuriswaran (Shiva) Temple Destruction and Related Events	180
9. Carnatic Wars, Promotion of Christianity and Senji Temple Destructions	194
10. Further Carnatic/Deccani Conflicts and Related Affairs	213
11. Decline of Duplex	228
12. Conclusion	251
<i>Bibliography</i>	263
<i>Index</i>	285



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

Illustrations

(between pp. 144-5)

1. Drawing of Dupleix of the 19th century
2. Dupleix, Governor of Pondicherry, 1742
3. Dupleix statue at Landrecies, France
4. Robert Clive
5. Mahé de La Bourdonnai
6. Dupleix statue in Pondicherry
7. Bussy Castelnau
8. Ananda Ranga Poullé, Diwan of Governor Dupleix
9. Nasir Jung, son of Nizam-ul-mulk
10. Pratap Singh of Tanjore
11. Mohammad Ali Khan Walajah, Nawab of Arcot, 1749-95
12. Plan of Pondicherry
13. Plan of Pondicherry, 1691
14. German Plan of Pondicherry of Prévost d'Exilés
15. Dutch Plan of Pondicherry
16. Carte des Indes Orientales
17. Engraving depicting the death of the Nawab of Carnatic, Anwaruddin Khan at Ambur
18. Image of Fort St. George, Madras, 1754
19. Raghoji Bhonsle, the Maratha General
20. Anwaruddin Khan, Nawab of Arcot, 1744-9
21. Nizam-ul-mulk, Asaf Jah I, Nizam of Hyderabad
22. Nasir Jung, son of Nizam-ul-mulk created in 1745
23. Nizam Nasir Jung being shot dead by a carabine on top of his elephant
24. Muzaffar Jung, successor of Nasir Jung as Soubab of Deccan created in the 18th century

25. Meeting of Dupleix with Muzaffar Jung, the Soubab of Deccan in Pondicherry
26. Portrait of Madame and Monsieur Dupleix, according to a miniature belonging to Madame la Marquise de Nazelle
27. Salabat Jung, Soubab of Deccan, successor of Muzaffar Jung created in 18th century

Preface

IN 2014, I wrote a book called *From Arikamedu to the Foundation of Modern Pondicherry*, the present work is a continuation of that volume. It is a study of French rule and the foundations of colonialism in Pondicherry and the parts of India that came under their control from the time François Martin established a French colony there up to the Governorship of Joseph François Dupleix, the flamboyant French Governor of Pondicherry. The latter was promoted to the rank of *mansabdar* or local lord by the Mughal Emperor and to the rank of Marquis by the French king. The governorship of Dupleix lasted for about thirteen years, from 1742 to 1754.

In the year 2000, when I was working on my second book *Freedom Movement in French India: The Mahé Revolt of 1948*, I had met and talked several times with Professor M.P. Sridharan at his residence in Kozhikode (Kerala), not only about the history of Mahé but also about the history of Pondicherry and French rule in India in general. It was he who asked me to take up the writing of the history of Pondicherry and French rule there, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He gave me some guidelines about how to proceed with the research, especially with regard to the sources. He was an inspiration for me not only to write my first book on Pondicherry, but also the present one. I am greatly indebted to him for that and it is really a privilege for me to dedicate this book to his memory. It is noteworthy that Professor M.P. Sridharan hailed originally from Mahé, a former French colony on the Malabar coast.

Unfortunately I did not receive any help or advice for my research from any other scholar who has worked on the subject or some related subject, in spite of me approaching several of them quite earnestly. However, this has been largely compensated by the help rendered to me by the librarians and staff of the Bibliothèque Nationale of France, Paris, Institut des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, Paris, Archives Nationales, Paris, Archives d'Outre-mer, Aix en Provence, Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient Library and the Centre d'Etudes de l'Inde

Library, Paris, Institut Français Library, Pondicherry, National Archives, Pondicherry and the Archives of Versailles, Versailles. I am particularly thankful to Ramanujam, librarian of Institut Français of Pondicherry and Sundari Gobalakichenane, librarian at Bulac, Paris for their cooperation. My thanks are also due to Nalini Persad of British Library, London and Nagendra Prasad of Pondicherry Museum, Pondicherry.

In the course of my research I had the privilege to talk to some well informed citizens about the history of Pondicherry. The most prominent among them were Justice David Annoussamy of Pondicherry, Mannar Mannan, son of the late poet Barathidasan, Cyril Antony, the author of the *Gazetteer of Pondicherry*, Dr. V. Nallam, physician of Pondicherry, hailing from Yanam, the late Yves Perrier, former administrator of Mahé and Pondicherry during French rule, the late Saraswathi Subbiah, wife of the late Communist leader of Pondicherry, V. Subbiah, Veera Mathurakavy, a retired Tamil teacher of Pondicherry, Kulasegaran, social activist of Pondicherry, Prof. Aranga Murugaiyan, Community College, Pondicherry, G.S.M. Mubeen of Pondicherry, Roland Bouchet and Dr. Jacqueline Bouchet, French scholars interested in the history of Pondicherry. I am deeply indebted to them for the knowledge that they were willing to share with me about Pondicherry under the French. My special thanks are also due to Dr. Ezhil Vasanthan for his unfailing cooperation, and to my wife, Dr. Leena More for her enduring interest in my work.

The reader must realize that many of the histories that were written related to the period and subject under study were mostly by Western scholars, including the French. These scholars were or are generally conditioned by their past history and culture. I propose in this study of mine to come out of the trappings of the past, whether racial, cultural, nationalistic, ideological or religious and look at history as an outsider with fresh unprejudiced and unbiased eyes.

In other words, I am an 'uncommitted' historian, i.e. I am not tied up to any school of thought or identity while writing history and I do not look at history from a particular angle. I rely solely on facts to reconstruct history, whatever those might be. If in spite of all my attention, the reader comes across any errors of omission or commission, I request him to kindly point that out to me so that I can get them

corrected after due verification and cross-checking in the next edition. Last of all, I would like to request the reader to take note of certain revisions that I have made in this book about certain historical points and personalities narrated in my earlier works on Pondicherry in the light of new findings

J.B.P. MORE



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

Abbreviations

AMAE	Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Paris
AME	Archives des Missions Etrangères, Paris
AN	Archives Nationales, Paris
AOM	Archives d'Outre-mer, Aix en Provence, France
ARP	Ananda Ranga Pillai Diary (12 volumes)
AV	Archives de Versailles, Versailles, France
BNF	Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris
CS	Conseil Supérieur
Fr.	Français
IOL	India Office Library and Records, England
LEC	Lettres Edifiantes et Curieuses
NAF	Nouvelles Acquisitions Françaises
RHEP	Revue Historique de l'Etat de Pondichéry
RHIF	Revue Historique de l'Inde Française



Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

Introduction

THERE IS A belief in scholarly circles that European traders and Indian merchants were in partnership with one another and were interdependent to carry on their trade profitably during the early phase of colonization.¹ P.J. Marshall thinks that the partnership was based on 'master and bania' relationship. On the other hand, Holden Furber thinks that the relationship between Europeans and Asians was marked by mutual respect and cooperation. However, scholars like Irfan Habib and following him Sanjay Subrahmanyam, think that European trade was dependent on the systematic use of armed force, gun powder and bullets. Scholars like K.M. Pannikar imbued with a greater Indian nationalist spirit denounced European writings and historiography on India as blatantly Eurocentric.²

In the course of this study, we will try to find out how far the assertions of scholars like P.J. Marshall, Holden Furber, K.M. Pannikar, Irfan Habib and Sanjay Subrahmanyam are true. This will be done on the basis of actual facts, backed by solid evidence.

We must not forget that the period under study did not still witness the emergence of industrial capitalists. It was still largely a world dominated by merchants, who indulged in buying and selling of products and accumulating profit thereby. The arrival of the Europeans on the Indian coast in search of products for the European market increased the demand for those products and the Indian merchants played a significant role in procuring those products for the Europeans and in supplying European products to the local market. The merchants were still not the producers of those goods. Neither did they control the production or the means of production. Instead they were mainly buyers and sellers. It was under these economic conditions that the Europeans and the European East Indian Companies established colonies all over the Indian coast, with the singular purpose of trading and creating profit. The French East India Company was no exception to this rule.

Unlike pre-European traders with India, like the Chinese and the

Arabs, who indulged in straight-forward trading without the need or thought of establishing colonies on the Indian coasts for that purpose, the Europeans right from the time they penetrated into India for trading sought to establish colonies called factories, where they were generally not bound by the jurisdiction of the Indian rulers and princes in various matters. Very quickly after establishing factories, they went about constructing forts, most of the time with the permission of the Indian rulers, who were more intent upon trading and making profits and finding an outlet for their products or procuring foreign products than about the loss of sovereignty in some parts of the country, however paltry that might have appeared to be.

Conceding some small outposts for trading purposes to Europeans was alright. But allowing the Europeans to construct forts on the lands thus ceded was a strategic error on the part of most Indian rulers, as forts could be used as vantage points for attacking and for defensive purposes. Thus the English built their fort in Madras, once the territory was conceded to them by the Raja of Venkatagiri, the Danes built their fort at Tranquebar, the Dutch had their fort at Nagapattinam and the French following them sought permission to construct their fort in Pondicherry. Once the forts were constructed, it was almost impossible for the Indian rulers to dislodge the Europeans from the territories ceded to them.

Thus the Europeans, right from the beginning, i.e. since the sixteenth century when the Portuguese reached the Malabar coast, were not just traders, but also colonizers, who were always answerable to their respective political and commercial authorities back home, about the happenings in India. They never severed their ties with their homelands and generally received orders and directions on what they should do in India and how they should proceed in order to trade and make profits and control the territories under their rule. In the course of their colonization, they never gave up their religious and cultural identities or their political or ethnic identities in favour of a purely Indian one.

The Europeans in general, right from the Portuguese had one huge advantage over the Indians and others. They had in their possession sophisticated arms, canons and guns, ocean going vessels and warships. They had also developed their navigation and warfare skills accordingly.

Their ships were not sewn with coir as the Indian ships. Besides the latter had no artillery, unlike the European ships, which were made of iron bolts and nails and mounted with bronze canons. Indian and other ships were no match to these European ships. Very quickly they imposed their domination over the oceans. They maintained this advantage all throughout the colonial period and even later.

So the Indians in general and the merchants and rulers in particular had to deal with a new breed of traders of European origin who sought settlements all over the Indian coasts, not just to trade, but also to manage their own affairs, according to their own ideas and values, culture and religion, which meant that there was always a political, cultural, military and territorial dimension to their settlements. The Indian rulers generally were not quite aware of all these implications related to European presence in India or were willing to tolerate for their own economic reasons especially. Right from the beginning of their settlements in India, the Europeans never accepted or adopted Indian values and ideas, in any field of importance. Instead they sought to impose their own ideas and values, which they were accustomed to in their homelands, in the territories that came under their control.

There was no precedent for such a situation in Indian history. All the foreigners who entered India since more than two thousand years including the so-called Aryans, Dravidians and Mughals made India their home by severing their connections with the lands of their origin. But the Europeans were made of a different mould. They would never melt away into India. Instead they always maintained their connections with their homelands. That is why we can term them as 'colonizers' and their rule as 'colonialism'.

During the period of European penetration into India, India was not a united country. The Mughal Empire was crumbling fast and there were a multitude of rulers all over India. There was no sense or feeling that all Indians, irrespective of their linguistic, religious, racial and cultural differences belonged to one nation. In short, the idea of nationalism had not struck root in India, until the eighteenth century at least, unlike in Europe, where nations had emerged on the basis of territory, religion, language and ethnicity since the fifteenth century at least.

Nationalism as such is an imagined idea put together by man's thought. It does not have a factual existence like the law of gravity. The feeling of nationalism is a feeling of oneness felt by a particular people to the exclusion of others. The fire of nationalism is generally stoked by politicians in their quest for power in the name of their idea of nation. When Europeans came to India, they were already imbued by a sense of nationalism, on the basis of language, race, religion and culture. The Indians in general and the Indian rulers in particular did not possess any unified nationalist feeling.

In south India especially and in Tamil Nadu in particular, there was no sense of any nationalism or sub-nationalism, on the basis of religion, culture, race and language. Instead, rulers were fighting and quarelling with one another in their quest for power and domination. It was under these highly favourable conditions that Europeans set foot in India and acquired territories in the Indian soil, since the sixteenth century.

Indian rulers as a rule had two main functions. The first one was the collection of taxes from the villages and the countryside, where more than 90 per cent of the population lived on agriculture. The second was the maintenance of an army, not only to ward off enemies but also to enforce the collection of taxes. They seem to have hoped generally that the arrival and establishment of Europeans in their territories would contribute to the augmentation of their revenues and the prosperity of their traders and producers, not realizing fully that allowing the Europeans to establish settlements or factories, protected by forts and soldiers and sailors with sophisticated weapons and warships, was like sowing the seeds for their own subjugation and colonization by the Europeans in the course of time.

The French, being the last European power to come to India, established their first colony and settlement in Pondicherry on the Coromandel Coast, with the permission of Sher Khan Lodi, the Pathan vassal of the Bijapur Sultan. In 1701, Pondicherry became the capital of all French settlements in India. Its governors were nominated directly from France, with a Council of five members under him. This confirmed the political dimension of French colonies where the French authorities had jurisdiction over the people, both European and Indian inhabiting their colonies.

In the course of the first half of the eighteenth century, the French expanded their territorial acquisitions, especially in southern India. As rulers, they had to interact with various segments of the Indian population at various levels: economic, social, religious, cultural and political. In the course of this study, we will go into such interactions right from 1674 up to 1754 when Governor Dupleix was called back to France, after a series of devastating wars, reverses and mismanagement. We have to determine the nature and type of relationship that the colonizers had with the Indians in every way. We have to determine also the special characteristics of every governor in their dealings with Indians.

Of all the governors of Pondicherry during this period, Dupleix alone seems to have captivated the attention of scholars and historians, especially in France and India, much more than the actual founder of modern Pondicherry, François Martin. So we have to conduct a special study of Dupleix and the state of south India, the Tamil country and Pondicherry during his period as Governor.

After Dupleix's recall to France in 1754, there were continuous struggles of the French against the rising English power in India. Besides, there was continuous Anglo-French rivalry in Europe, which led to the Napoleonic wars and the defeat of the French. Pondicherry and the other French territories in India were conquered thrice by the English since 1761. Finally through the Treaty of Versailles in the year 1814-15, Pondicherry and the other early outposts of the French in India namely Kariakal, Mahé, Yanam and Chandernagore were handed over to the French, on condition that they would no more raise an army in these territories. It was a humiliating end to French colonial aspirations in India, which seems to have been unwittingly inaugurated by Dupleix.

Just a few years after the conclusion of peace with the English, French historians and writers began to take a renewed interest in Dupleix's exploits and his legacy. Most French writers and historians began to consider Dupleix as one of the great figures of modern France. Already in 1744, Abbé Guyon had showered encomiums on Dupleix in his work on the history of East India. In 1757, a book on Dupleix's wars appeared under the name of *Abbé Jean Baptiste Le Mascrier*. In 1768, the renowned historian Jean Baptiste Targe started

singing the glory of Dupleix. Abbé Raynal in his *Histoire Politique Et Philosophique* qualified Dupleix as one of the most skilful merchants of Europe, while Voltaire wrote that Dupleix had the qualities of a prince. For the scholar Anquetil Duperron, Dupleix was great in every way. He thought that praising Dupleix for India and Colbert for Europe would contribute to French national prosperity.³

Actually Dupleix was partly forgotten by the French historians during the second half of the eighteenth century due to the accusation by the French East India Company that 'this great man lacked in courage' when he was Governor of Pondicherry, in his fight against the English. But such a perception of Dupleix was gradually changing in the beginning of the nineteenth century. In the year 1818, the Frenchman Le Fèvre Claude-Noël published a short book glorifying the achievements of Dupleix in India.

In 1846, Armand Gallois Montbrun stumbled upon the diaries written on a day to day basis by Ananda Ranga Poullé (Pillai), of the various events, both important and trivial that took place in Pondicherry and elsewhere between 1736 and 1761. Poullé followed no order in the writing of his diary. Side by side important political events, he also noted in the diary the town gossip, family disputes and stories, horoscopes, and social and religious events. Montbrun published a notice of this diary along with a short life history of Ananda Ranga Poullé in the year 1849. Actually the diary went a long way to rehabilitate Dupleix in the eyes of the French.

At the same time British historians starting from Robert Orme to Macaulay, and later from G.B. Malleson and Colonel Wilks to Virginia MacLean Thompson, portrayed Dupleix in glowing terms. Robert Orme was in northern India when Dupleix was Governor of Pondicherry. In 1748, he was just 20 years old. Orme returned to England in the same ship as Robert Clive, the English rival of Dupleix, who was returning home. Ten years later Orme started writing his *History of Indostan*, at a time when the English had gained a stronger foothold in south India and Bengal at the expense of Dupleix and the French. It seems that whenever Orme wanted to gather information on Dupleix and his exploits, he drew inspiration from the work of Le Mascrier on the history of the last revolution in east India, published

in France in 1757, when Dupleix himself was in France. It is believed that Le Mascrier was the pseudonym under which Dupleix wrote this book.

The anti-imperialist historian from Mahé, M.P. Sridharan thinks that Robert Orme's great enthusiasm for Dupleix arose from the realization that Dupleix having been recalled to France in 1754 was no more a threat to English fortunes in India. The trend established by Orme in lauding Dupleix and his achievements in India remained unabated for more than a century, as later is proven by G.B. Malleson's work on Dupleix, published in 1865. M.P. Sridharan wrote: 'Orme and Malleson could afford to lavish praise on Dupleix because the greatness of English victory could be flaunted once the vanquished could be recognized as a genius among empire builders.'

For Malleson, Dupleix worked for the glory of France and wanted to found an empire for France in south India. He thought that the English emulated Dupleix in founding their empire in India. The English went to the extent of erecting a statue for him in the Governor-General's palace in Calcutta. Following this, the Minister of State for Arts in France through a decree dated 29 April 1861, erected a second statue for Dupleix in the Versailles gallery.

Dupleix's majestic larger than life-size statue was installed in Pondicherry in the year 1870 by the French in the middle of the open ground, popularly called Place Dupleix, in front of the pier, mounted on equally majestic pillars with Hindu sculpted religious motifs. These pillars seem to have been brought over from Senji after the destruction of the temples there. The statue was designed and erected to portray the subjugation of India by Dupleix. For Virginia Mclean Thompson, Dupleix was an avowed nationalist. She wrote: 'Dupleix claimed to do anything for the nation in his letters'.⁴

It is significant to note that Pondicherrians including the Tamils and Telugus contributed Rs. 1615.5.17 towards the erection of Dupleix's statue in his native village of Landrecies, in the north of France. This statue was unveiled on 30 September 1888 in midst of great pomp and splendour. It was declared then that Dupleix was the greatest Frenchman of the eighteenth century. Actually the French Third Republic consecrated Dupleix as a front-ranking national figure.

Generally he was considered as a genius who wasted his youth and his wealth in the service of France and its ungrateful king, who repudiated him in the end.

However, there were no statues for him in Paris where he died a pauper's death in 1763. But a Paris metro station is named after him. After the integration of Pondicherry with the Indian Union in 1954 when nationalist opposition grew to Dupleix's statue standing atop Hindu religious pillars, the statue was removed discreetly to the French Consulate premises in Pondicherry. After a few years, the statue once again was re-erected at the southern corner of the Pondicherry beach, most certainly with the permission of the Pondicherry government, just besides the public toilet and a guest house belonging to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram which blocks the Pondicherry beach from being extended further southwards for the benefit of the local people.⁵

In the year 1870, the Frenchman, F.N. Laude brought out a translation of some extracts of *Ananda Ranga Poullé's Diary* during the inauguration of the statue of Dupleix in Pondicherry. He claimed that Ananda Ranga Poullé had done justice to him, contrary to the French East India Company.⁶ Dupleix became a cult figure for the French henceforward.

In 1859, Charles Darwin propounded his theory on the origin of species. Many French thinkers, scholars and historians like Ernest Renan, Arthur de Gobineau and Jules Ferry thenceforth started to justify colonialism and the conquest of the non-white world by the white Europeans as something natural and not shocking at all, as it was in conformity to the Darwinian principle of evolution and the selection of the fittest in the struggle for survival. Thus Dupleix, one of the foremost of European conquerors was rehabilitated in their eyes as a torch-bearer of modern Western civilization and progress.

For Tibulle Hamont, Dupleix was one of the greatest geniuses of the eighteenth century. He believed that the stagnant Oriental societies have to be destroyed or absorbed by the progressive societies of Europe. This was in line with the general Western thinking. For Hamont, Dupleix seems to be a sort of precursor for the destruction and absorption of the archaic Oriental and Indian societies.⁷

French scholar, Julien Vinson brought out his own translation of some extracts of Ananda Ranga Pillai's diary in 1894. Thenceforth

many French historians and writers starting from Prosper Cultru in 1901 up to Jouveau Dubreuil and Jacques Weber, with some rare exceptions, began to sing the praise and glory of Dupleix. They hold almost unanimously that Dupleix had contributed to the greatness of France. For Lionel Moreel, he was a magnificent almost unique model of France's national history. Chevalier de la Farelle described Dupleix as: 'the most gallant of men and the most polite in the world'.

In the year 1881, Tibulle Hamont wrote: 'Dupleix invented and put in place a vast and sound political system, which the English copied in a servile manner which permitted them to subjugate India'.

For Donneaud du Plan, it was Dupleix who conceived the idea of founding an empire for France in India.⁸

Julien Vinson thinks that India would have progressed better under 'the lovable and generous French' rather than under the business-minded monarchical English, if Dupleix had won his wars. He was of the view that the English copied the designs of Dupleix and conquered India. He further opined the following: 'The civilising role that Dupleix dreamt for France has fallen upon England; it is through her that India has been initiated to the progress of ideas, to the modern life, which would bring about its national unification'.⁹

For Castonnet des Fosses, Dupleix wanted to subject India to French domination and also desired to become a feudatory of the Mughal Emperor. He portrayed him as a patriot who only thought of France. For Cultru, Dupleix, in spite of everything, was a great man who had demonstrated for the first time the weaknesses of the Hindus. He asserted that Dupleix just after arriving in Pondicherry was already thinking about the conquest of India. He described Dupleix as follows: 'The historian sees in him one of the greatest geniuses of the eighteenth century'.

In 1908, Guérin produced a work of unadulterated adulation of Dupleix. Later in 1931, Guenin wrote: 'The English who wanted to destroy him (Dupleix), value him more than the French. The English saw him as the most capable among Frenchmen who could undermine their Company, by promoting that of his nation.'

Alfred Martineau, the former Governor of Pondicherry, with his four volume work on Dupleix created nostalgia for Dupleix in the French official circles which persists even today. For him, Dupleix

was a precursor who inspired Europe to dominate the world. For Henry Bionne, Dupleix showed the way for the English to conquer India. He wrote: 'Dupleix founded in India a grand colonial empire... Here is the man that ungrateful France had forgotten for a long time. One century had to go by before France could remember the genius of the Governor, by erecting a sorrowful statue in Pondicherry. ... Before the English Dupleix and Jeanne Begum possessed the Indian Empire, conquered by Dupleix'.¹⁰

For a staunch colonialist like Jouveau-Dubreuil, Dupleix was the one who invented the concept of *Nabob*, which was copied by Clive and Hastings later. He goes to the extent of claiming extravagantly that he was the founder of the modern Indian (European) empire and an icon of world stature and history. More recently, Jacques Weber had written that Dupleix was called back to France when he was at the peak of his glory.¹¹ In short, no Frenchman who served in India has received more praise and fame than Dupleix, Governor of Pondicherry, from 1742 to 1754.

Along with Dupleix, his wife Jeanne too became an object of glorification for the later day French historians and writers. She was almost unanimously lauded for her glorious role in Pondicherry by the side of Dupleix, in spite of the fact that Ananda Ranga Poullé, Dupleix's *dubash*, had a visceral hatred for her, arising probably out of the traditional misogynistic dislike for women involving themselves in public and political matters or out of a personal animosity and hatred that he might have developed due to the mixed ethnic origin of Jeanne and her religious leanings.

It was first Louis Guet who wrote an article about Jeanne Begum in 1892 in the *Revue Maritime et Coloniale*. However, it was left to Yvonne Robert Gaebelé who put Jeanne on a high pedestal, more than any other French or European woman in India, through her two works entitled *Créole et Grande Dame, Johanna Begum, Marquise Dupleix* (1934) and *Marquise Dupleix, 1706-1756* (1956). They were most certainly a belated attempt to paint a somewhat rosy picture of the life of the 'Great Lady' of Créole origin, who was consecrated as 'Begum Johanna' and as the 'Marquise of Dupleix'. Her reputation had taken a beating due to the coming to light of the Diary of Ananda Ranga Poullé in the second half of the nineteenth century and the

publication of an English translation of it in 1912. Ananda Ranga Poullé had copiously run down Madame Dupleix in this Diary written between 1738 and 1761. It was left to Yvonne Robert Gaebelé to rehabilitate the tarnished image of Jeanne Dupleix. It is also noteworthy that it was Yvonne Gaebelé who attempted first to write a systematic biography of Ananda Ranga Poullé in French. She was most certainly conscious of the fact that it was Poulé's diary which contributed largely to the rehabilitation of Dupleix. Before her a Tamil biography of Ananda Ranga Poullé was authored by Tecika Pillai in the year 1941.

However, the French East India Company had run Dupleix down more than anybody else, for their own reasons, which finally cost Dupleix his life, before he could be shut in the Bastille. For the Directors of the Company, Dupleix who was their prime employee in India was a failure as he had mismanaged the affairs of India during his tenure as Governor, incurring heavy losses. Voltaire changed his opinion about Dupleix. For him, Dupleix was just an adventurer who sought to make fortune and had spoilt the name of France in India. Legoux de Flaix in his *Essai sur l'Indostan* dismissed Dupleix's territorial acquisitions as a 'political monstrosity'. He painted Dupleix as a frustrated person, ignorant of political realities with very little knowledge of the art of war.

However, generally historians of European origin were largely Euro-centric in their attitude and portrayal of colonized societies. They floated ideas like the 'White Man's Burden'. The French literally thought that they had a civilizing mission in the world of the uncivilized and less civilized people and that colonization itself was a sort of service to humanity. Even Indology developed by the Europeans, was made subservient to European interests. There were many Indian nationalist historians like K.M. Pannikar who were highly critical of Dupleix and his policies and actions in India and of the Eurocentric nature of most Western historians of India.¹²

It is therefore necessary for a neutral historian, to find out the truth about the preceding assertions, glorifications or derisions of Dupleix, in the light of actual facts and evidence. This is what we propose to do in this work not only of Dupleix, but also of every governor of Pondicherry since François Martin, within the limited pages of this book. We would have to see also if the French trading company

representatives in India were in partnership with the Indian merchants and bankers in enslaving Indians or not. But before that, it would be useful to peep a little into the historical background prior to the establishment of the French in Pondicherry.

It has been established historically that the Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas were the three politically independent royal dynasties that ruled *Tamizhakam* (present Tamil Nadu and Kerala states together) since the ancient times. They were Tamil-speaking dynasties. For reasons into which we will not go into presently the Cheras and the Cholas disappeared from the Indian political horizon during the twelfth or the thirteenth centuries. The Pandyas with their capital in Madurai lingered on as a political power in Tamil Nadu during the fourteenth century. They were dealt a body blow by the Delhi Sultan's army under the command of Malik Kafur, a convert to Islam. This resulted in the establishment of a Turkish sultanate in Madurai, which heralded the extinction of the last major Tamil dynasty ruling over large parts of Tamil Nadu. Tamils were for the first time in their long history being ruled by foreigners or outsiders.

The Sultanate lasted for about fifty years. To make matters worse, Tamil Nadu was then overrun by the Telugu speaking Vijayanagar kings and their troops and Nayaks (generals) from the north. There was no more any Tamil dynasty to resist them. Since then Tamil Nadu became part of what came to be known as the Vijayanagar Empire. So it could be said that since the fourteenth century, Tamilians lost their political independence and became subject to Telugu rule or the *Vadugar* or northerner's rule as the Tamilians would have it.

Along with the invaders came a whole lot of Telugus – administrators, soldiers, farmers, musicians and priests. The Tamil country was divided into three divisions by the Vijayanagar king. They were Thanjavur, Madurai and Senji. All the three were put under the control of three different Telugu Nayakars or Nayaks. Thus started the rule of the Nayaks in Tamil Nadu.¹³

It seems that for some time the Vijayanagar Empire acted as a bulwark against the further expansion of the West and Central Asian Muslim rule into southern India. But the Vijayanagar troops were defeated by the combined troops of the Bahmani Sultanates of the Deccan in the year 1565 in the famous battle of Talikota. The

Vijayanagar Empire was considerably enfeebled by this defeat. Its hold on its vassals in the Tamil country too slackened considerably. Even the throne of Vijayanagar was transferred to Penugonda. However, the Nayaks of the Tamil country continued to send tributes to Penugonda until the close of the sixteenth century or the first decade of the seventeenth century.¹⁴ The most prominent of the Bahmani sultanates were Bijapur and Golconda.

This was the time when Muthu Krishnappa Nayakar was ruling from Senji. It seems that it was during the Nayakar period which started more than one century earlier that the hill-fortress of Senji was constructed. The Nayakars also constructed many temples and temple structures which included the Senji Nayak temples.¹⁵ The Pondicherry region was part of Nayakar territory.

At the turn of the fifteenth century, the great Arab navigator, Sulaiman al-Mahri had referred to Pondicherry as Bandikari in his accounts. He has also mentioned Cuddalore and Chidambaram alongside Pondicherry. Thus it is certain that Pondicherry had existed as a small port-town or village in the fifteenth century itself. We do not have evidence for its existence before this period. Arikamedu was not Podouké or Pondicherry, as claimed by Jouveau-Dubreuil, a high school teacher and following him many others, like Jean Deloche.

It has been demonstrated in my last book on Pondicherry that Arikamedu was at the most a seasonal port located at about 4 km to the south of Pondicherry at the mouth of the Ariyankuppam River. I have also demonstrated in that book how Bandikari would have evolved from *Vandichery* and *Pandichery*. *Pandichery* of the Tamils was corrupted as Pondichéry by the French and Pondicherry by the English. However, the name itself is of pure Tamil origin.¹⁶

Later, by the middle of the sixteenth century, Pandichery seems to have acquired a new name called Puducheira as noted by the Portuguese. Puducheira was obviously the Puduchery of the Tamils, which simply meant 'new town'. It was an appropriate name as the town would have come into existence recently. In any case, the names Pandichery and Puduchery seem to have co-existed among the people of the area since this period. It is noteworthy at this juncture that several maritime towns of India came into existence after the arrival of Arabs in India. Bandikari or Pandichery was one of them.¹⁷

Before we proceed further, it is interesting to note that Jouveau-Dubreuil was not without his critics while he was in Pondicherry, with regard to almost everything that he wrote on Pondicherry especially. Gabriel Monod Herzen, the manager of the Government distillery, who knew him in Pondicherry had written that nobody was actually interested in his works in Pondicherry and that he had to leave his findings with regard to Arikamedu and Pondicherry to the Madras Museum. French administrators like Mr. Josselin, Chief of the Education Department simply dismissed his works as 'whimsical'.

At the turn of the sixteenth century, Muthu Krishnappa Nayakar was the ruler at Senji. During his rule, he seems to have allowed the Portuguese to have a settlement or rather a godown (*pandasalai* or *pandikasalai*) in Pondicherry, in order to develop trade in the region and find an outlet for local products. The Portuguese were followed by the Danes and the Dutch. The Portuguese, having withdrawn from Pondicherry, the Danes established a settlement there in 1624, with the permission of the Senji Nayakar. Pondicherry was ideally situated at the cross-section of two routes. One route ran from Cuddalore through Pondicherry towards the north, while the other one ran from Pondicherry towards Senji. It was accessible by sea and was defended by the fort of Vazhudavur, on the road towards Senji.¹⁸

By the middle of the seventeenth century, the Nayakar rule in Senji and Pondicherry was drawing to a close due to the invasion by the troops of the Bijapur Sultans. The troops of the Sultan were made up also of a good number of Marathas. Thus Senji territory came under Bijapur rule. It was first put under the control of Shahji, the father of the famous Shivaji. He was a general in the Bijapur army. Shivaji broke away from his father's *jagir* in 1656. He defeated and conquered the More family lands in Maharashtra, by eliminating Chandra Rao More and the More brothers, who were vassals of the Bijapur Sultan. The More clan were *Kshatriyas*.¹⁹

Later Nasir Mohammad Khan, a Deccani, ruled from Senji as a vassal of the Bijapur Sultan.²⁰ It was thus that Senji fort and treasury fell into Bijapur hands. Senji was renamed as 'Badshabad'. Sher Khan Lodi, related to a Pathan general in the Bijapur army was nominated as Governor of Valgondapuram which included Tiruchirappalli in

Tamil Nadu. Pondicherry too was under his jurisdiction. The Dutch had retreated from there. So Sher Khan Lodi decided to invite the French to fill up the vacuum and promote trade in the region.

NOTES

1. P.J. Marshall, *East India Fortunes: The British in Bengal in the Eighteenth Century*, Oxford, 1976, pp. 44-5; Holden Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient, 1600-1800*, 1976, pp. 315-16.
2. Holden Furber, 'Asia and the West as Partners before Empire and After', pp. 711-21; P.J. Marshall, 'Masters and Banians in the Eighteenth Century Calcutta', 1979, pp. 191-215; Marshall, *East India Fortunes: The British in Bengal in the Eighteenth Century*, Oxford, 1976; S. Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce, Southern India*, 1990, Ch. 5; Habib, 'Merchant Communities in Pre-colonial India', 1991, p. 399; K.M. Pannikar, *Asia and Western Dominance*, 1959.
3. Duperron, *L'Inde en rapport avec l'Europe*, II, Paris, 1798, p. 360; Abbé Guyon, *Histoire des Indes Orientales*, Paris, 1744; Le Mascrier, *Histoire de la Dernière Révolution des Indes Orientales*, Paris, 1757; Abbé Raynal, *Histoire Philosophique et Politique des Etablissements et du Commerce des Européens dans les deux Indes*, 1770; Voltaire, *Précis du Siècle de Louis XV et Fragments sur l'Inde*, *Œuvres Complètes*, Tomes xxvii et xxxvi, Paris, 1826-8.
4. *Annuaire des Etablissements Français dans l'Inde*, Pondichéry, 1939, p. 124; G.B. Malleson, *Dupleix*, 2001 (re-edition), pp. 89, 92, 119, 159-60, 165; M.P. Sridharan, *Papers on French Colonial Rule in India*, 1997, pp. 35-7; Cyril Antony, *Gazetteer of Pondicherry*, II, Pondicherry, 1982, p. 1196; Robert Orme, *History of Indostan*, 2 vols., Madras, 1913; Le Mascrier, op. cit., V. Mclean Thompson, *Dupleix and His Letters, 1742-1754*, New York, 1933, p. 898.
5. Sridharan, *ibid.*, pp. 35, 37; *Annuaire des Etablissements Français dans l'Inde*, Pondichéry, *ibid.*; Marc Vigie, *Dupleix*, 1993, pp. 10, 526, 530-41, 547.
6. F.N. Laude, *Dupleix. Le Siège de Pondichéry en 1748*, Pondichéry, 1870, p. 6.
7. Vigie, op. cit., 1993, pp. 542-6; Sridharan, op. cit., 1997, pp. 38-9; Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, Cambridge, 1966.
8. La Farelle, *Mémoire et Correspondances du Chevalier et du Général de la Farelle*, Paris, 1896, p. 45; L. Moreel, *Dupleix, Marquis de Fortune et Conquérant de l'Inde*, 1963, p. 150; T. Hamont, *Un Essai d'Empire français dans l'Inde aux XVIIIème siècles*, 1881, pp. i, ii, 15; Donneaud du Plan, *Histoire de la Compagnie Française de l'Inde*, 1889, p. 536.
9. J. Vinson, *Les Français dans l'Inde, Dupleix et Labourdonnais*, 1894, p. 9;

- Julien Vinson, 'Pondichéry Sauvé', *RHIF*, 1920, p. 66; J. Weber, 'La Vie Quotienne dans les Comptoirs', 1995, p. 90.
10. Marc Vigie, op. cit., 1993 p. 555; M.P. Sridharan, op. cit., 1997 p. 38; E. Guérin, *Dupleix*, d'après les documents inédits. . ., Paris, 1908; Castonnet des Fosses, *L'Inde Française avant Dupleix*, Paris, 1887; Castonnet des Fosses. *L'Inde Française au XVIIIème siècle*, Paris, s.d.; Alfred Martineau, *Dupleix et l'Inde Française*, I, II; P. Cultru, *Dupleix, ses plans politiques, sa disgrâce*, Paris, 1901, pp. viii, 584f; H. Bionne, *Dupleix*, 1881, pp. 12, 165, 308-12; Thompson (ed.), *Dupleix from his Letters*, London, 1933, p. 901; G. Guénin, *L'Épopée Coloniale de la France racontée par les Contemporains*, Paris, 1931, p. 158.
 11. Jouveau-Dubreuil, *Dupleix ou l'Inde Conquise*, Pondichéry, 1941, pp. 125, 131, 187; J. Weber, *Les Etablissements Français en Inde au XIXème siècle*, I, Paris, 1988, p. 2.
 12. Marc Vigie, op. cit., 1993 pp. 528, 557; Legoux de Flaix, *Essai sur l'Indoustan avec le tableau de son Commerce*, Paris, 1807, 2 vols.; Castonnet des Fosses, op. cit., s.d. p. 451; Sridharan, op. cit., pp. 38-9; Edward Said, *Culture Imperialism*, London, 1994; Cf. J.B.P. More, *Freedom Movement in French India: The Mahé Revolt of 1948*, Tellicherry, 2001; K.M. Pannikar, *Asia and Western Dominance: A Survey of the Vasco Da Gama Epoch in Asian History, 1498-1948*, London, 1959; Yvonne Robert Gaebelé, 'Enfance et Adolescence d'Anandarangapoullé', *Revue Historique de l'Etat de Pondichéry*, 9^e volume, 1955, pp. 1-134; Louis Guet. Les Origines de l'Inde Française. Jeanne Begum (Madame Dupleix), *Revue Maritime et Coloniale*, Numéros d'Août, Septembre et Octobre, 1892.
 13. J.B.P. More (ed.), *La Civilisation Indienne et Les Fables Hindoues du Panchatantra de Maridas Poullé*. Pondichéry, 2004, p. 59; K.P. Aravanan, *Tamizh Makkal Varalaru. Nayakar Kaalam*, Chennai, 2013; J.B.P. More, *Rise and Fall of the 'Dravidian' Justice Party 1916-1946*, Tellicherry, 2009, pp. 18-19.
 14. M.A. Nayeem, *External Relations of the Bijapur Kingdom (1489-1686 A.D.)*, Hyderabad, 1974, pp. 23, 118-26, 142; K.P. Aravanan, *ibid.*; Narayana Poullé, *Histoire Détaillée des Rois du Carnatic*, Pondichéry, 1939, pp. 36-8; C.S. Srinivasachari, *A History of Gingee and its Rulers*, Annamalaiagar, 1943, p. 11.
 15. Sridharan, op. cit., 1997, p. 35; Narayana Poullé, *ibid.*, pp. 20, 23, 30, 32, 34; Srinivasachari, *ibid.* pp. 9, 40; Jean Deloche, *Senji (Gingee) A Fortified City in the Tamil Country*, Pondicherry, 2000, p. 54; W. Foster, *History of the East India Company*, London, vol. 12, 1925, p. 90; N. Karashima, *South Indian History and Society: Studies from Inscriptions AD 850-1800*, Delhi, 1984, pp. 104-5.