

XII. Libraries, Museums, Botanical Gardens, etc.

Libraries:

The proposal to open a public library in Pondicherry came up only after the final restoration of the establishments to the French in 1816 and it took about 10 years for the idea to take concrete shape. The library was opened on 16 May 1827 during the period of Governor Eugène Desbassyns de Richemont.¹²¹ The **Bibliothèque** was originally located in the premises of **Magasin Général**. The books in the various administrative establishments formed the nucleus of this library which was enriched in course of time with further additions through proper financial allocations in the budget.

Although known as **Bibliothèque Publique** it was open only to Europeans in the beginning. The natives and 'gens de couleur' were allowed only on special authorisation. This restriction however was removed in 1837, following the avowed realisation that the library was an essential means for the natives to acquire a perfect knowledge of the French language.¹²²

The functioning of the library was subsequently regulated by the *arrêté* of 15 September 1846. The *arrêté* of 26 May 1879 constituted a committee to put forward proposals to the government for the improvement of the library. The same committee was also called upon to keep a close watch on the utilisation of funds allotted for the purchase of books and to ensure the maintenance of the catalogue upto-date, etc. In 1890, another public library was opened in Karaikal. A Library Supervisory Committee was formed for the efficient management and improvement of the library by the *arrêté* of 8 February 1917, amplified by the *arrêté* of 30 March 1917. The orders of 1917 stipulated that very old editions, pictorial books, catalogues of pictures and plans and dictionaries should not be given on loan. Journals and magazines were not to be loaned until they were bound. Apart from these two public libraries in the Territory, there were a few run by private agencies, like the Ramakrishna Vasaga Salai, the Vedapureeswarar Vasaga Salai, etc. which catered to the requirements of particular groups in the Territory ¹²³.

At the time of merger, there were only three public libraries run by the government and five libraries run by private agencies in the Territory as detailed below :

| | | | | | Libraries | |
|-------------|----|----|----|----|------------|---------|
| | | | | | Government | Private |
| Pondicherry | .. | .. | .. | .. | 1 | 3 |
| Karaikal | .. | .. | .. | .. | 1 | 4 |
| Mahe | .. | .. | .. | .. | 1 | 1 |
| Yanam | .. | .. | .. | .. | — | — |

Between 1955 and 1961, the library movement in Pondicherry and Karaikal regions received some encouragement under the Community Development Programme. The Local Bodies also seem to have evinced some interest in the library movement in Karaikal. The number of libraries under the Community Development Programme increased from five in 1955 to eight in 1959 and declined to three in 1961. During the same period the number of reading-rooms increased from one in 1955 to 13 in 1959 and declined to two in 1961.¹²⁴

Details of libraries in the Territory according to the 1961 census are furnished below :

| Region | No. of libraries under | | | | No. of reading-rooms under | | | |
|---------------|------------------------|-------------|--------------|--------|----------------------------|-------------|--------------|--------|
| | Government | C.D. scheme | Local bodies | Others | Government | C.D. scheme | Local bodies | Others |
| Pondicherry.. | 1 | 3 | — | 4 | — | 2 | — | — |
| Karaikal .. | 1 | 12* | 3 | 2 | — | — | — | — |
| Mahe .. | 1 | — | — | 1 | — | — | — | — |
| Yanam .. | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |

* Including reading-room also.

Some improvement in the number of libraries seems to have taken place during the III Plan period, especially after 1964.

During the French period the two public libraries functioned in accordance with the provisions of the relevant *arrêté* and their day-to-day working was regulated by *règlements* framed for the purpose. These orders and regulations have not been replaced by any new library legislation, code or rules. A Library Advisory Board was constituted in 1969 for the purpose of selection of books and periodicals for all the libraries in the Territory. According to the government notification the Board was expected to 'give guidelines to the libraries in the matter of maintenance, issue of books etc'.¹²⁵

Romain Rolland Library, Pondicherry : It was seen that the public library in Pondicherry was started on 16 May 1827 with a small stock of books collected from the various government establishments. According to the stock verification carried out in 1839, there were then 5,013 books in the library. While drawing up the first list of books in 1845, it was found that the library had about 6,500 books. The collection was supplemented through purchase of books from budget allotment as well as from donations from the public and the British Indian Government from time to time. The *arrêté* of 23 September 1852 constituted the Archives as an adjunct of the library and the *Conservateur de la Bibliothèque* came to be redesignated as *Conservateur des Archives et de la Bibliothèque*. In due course the library came to possess a significant stock of rare books. In 1935, the library had about 25,000 volumes. A catalogue of books in the library was published in 1941. Again in 1961, another catalogue was brought out by *Madame Gaebelé*.

In order to commemorate the birth centenary (1966) of the great French Savant Romain Rolland, who was a contemporary and personal friend of Mahatma Gandhi, the library was renamed after him on 27 August 1967. ¹²⁶ A children's section was started in 1971. The home delivery service was introduced in 1972. The reclassification of books according to the 'colon classification', the 'open access system' were some of the important improvements introduced in the library after merger.

The site together with the building at No. 3 Rangapillai Street was acquired by the government and a two-storeyed building was constructed for housing both the library and the Directorate of Information and Publicity. The library was shifted to its new building at No. 3 Rangapillai Street in 1974. The very same year the timing of the library was changed by a government order according to which the library was to be kept open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. on all days except Mondays.

Public Library, Karaikal : The establishment of a library in Karaikal was decided upon by a resolution of the **Assemblée Générale** on 23 December 1889. The **arrêté** of 17 February 1892 authorised the opening of the library. The same **arrêté** also constituted a commission to advise the administration on measures to be taken for the development of the library. Subsequently, under the **arrêté** of 4 March 1918, the library came to be administered by a **Comité de Surveillance** which functioned under the control of the Administrator of Karaikal and the Mayor of the town. The librarian was appointed by the Administrator and his salary was met from the local budget.

Originally known as **Bibliothèque coloniale**, it was renamed as **Bibliothèque Publique** in 1952 by the **arrêté** of 11 June 1952. As on 30 August 1974, the library had a modest collection of 5,824 books in all the three languages viz. Tamil (2,646), English (785) and French (2,393). The library was placed under the care of an **Ecrivain de la Bibliothèque**.

Public Library, Mahe : In Mahe, the library was actually started by the 'Association of old students' in 1918. On 15 August 1955, the library was donated to the Government by the Association with 630 books. In course of time more books were added. This library had a radio and a film projector.

Branch libraries : Branch libraries came to be set up in the rural areas of the Territory only after 1964. Placed under the overall control of the Directorate of Education, the branch libraries were the immediate concern of the Deputy Librarian who functioned under the supervision of the Special Officer for French Education. Details of all branch libraries in the Territory as on 31 December 1974 are furnished below :

| Sl. No. | Place | Name of library | Date or year of inception | Building facility |
|---------|-------|-----------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
| (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) |

Pondicherry Region :

| | | | | |
|----|----------------|-------------------|----------|--------------------|
| 1. | Ariyankuppam | .. Branch library | 4-4-1964 | Rented building |
| 2. | Nettappakkam | .. Do. | | Municipal building |
| 3. | Villiyannur | .. Do. | 1964 | Rented building |
| 4. | Muttialupettai | .. Do. | 1965 | Do. |
| 5. | Bahur | .. Do. | 1967 | Do. |

| (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) |
|-----|------------------|--------------------------------------|----------|---------------------------------|
| 6. | Mudaliyarpettai | .. Branch library | 1967 | Rented building |
| 7. | Reddiyarpalaiyam | .. Do. | 1968 | Do. |
| 8. | Tirubhuvanai | .. Do. | 1968 | Do. |
| 9. | Sedarappattu | .. Do. | 1969 | Model Village Govt. building |
| 10. | Kalmantapam | .. Do. | 1970 | Housed in a school |
| 11. | Kusappalaiyam | .. Do. | 1970 | Rented building |
| 12. | Pondicherry | .. Bharathidasan Memorial Library | 21-4-71 | Govt. building |
| 13. | Muttirapalaiyam | .. Branch library | 1972 | Rented building |
| 14. | Seliyamedu | .. Do. | 1972 | Do. |
| 15. | Laspettai | .. Do. | 1972 | Do. |
| 16. | Pondicherry | .. Bharathiar Memorial Library | 16-12-72 | Govt. building |
| 17. | Tirukkanur | .. Branch Library | 1972 | Rented building |
| 18. | Kalapet | .. Do. | 1972-73 | Model Village Govt. building |
| 19. | Uruvaiyar | .. Do. | 1972-73 | Model Village Govt. building |
| 20. | Erippakkam | .. Do. | 1972-73 | Model Village Govt. building |
| 21. | Tirukkanji | .. Do. | 1973-74 | Model Village Govt. building |
| 22. | Pakkamudiyandpet | .. Do. | 1973-74 | Model Village Govt. building |
| 23. | Settipattu | .. Do. | 12-6-74 | Model Village Govt. building |

| (1) | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) |
|------------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------|-----------------------------|
| Karaikal Region | | | | |
| 24. | T.R. Pattinam | .. Branch Library | | Rented building |
| 25. | Tirunallar | .. Do. | 1968 | Do. |
| 26. | Kottuchcheri | .. Do. | 1969 | Do. |
| 27. | Nedungadu | .. Do. | 1969 | Do. |
| 28. | Niravi | .. Do. | 1969 | Do. |
| 29. | Vilidiyur | .. Do. | 1970 | Do. |
| 30. | Puvam | .. Do. | 1973-74 | Do. |
| Mahe Region | | | | |
| 31. | Pallur | .. Branch Library | 1964 | Rented building |
| 32. | Pandakkal | .. Rural Library | | Housed in the Middle School |
| Yanam Region | | | | |
| 33. | Yanam | .. Branch Library | 1969 | Rented building |

In all, there were 33 branch libraries which included also the libraries attached to the Bharathi Memorial Museum and the Bharathidasan Memorial Museum. Twenty-one of the libraries were housed in rented buildings. Although the libraries in Karaikal and Mahe are known as Public Libraries they are treated for all practical purposes as branch libraries. The library in Pandakkal is known as Rural Library and is housed in a middle school building.

Radio Rural Forum Libraries : A proposal to set up small libraries in the Radio Rural Forums, where the village agriculturists met to listen to the farm programmes broadcast by the All India Radio was included in the IV Plan to serve more as a store house of information for the benefit of farmers. It was further decided to set up such libraries only in villages where the Community Recreation Centres operated in *pucca* buildings. Small cupboards with lock and key were supplied to these Forums, together with selected

sets of books on agriculture, animal husbandry, public health, rural crafts, etc. The Convenors of the Radio Rural Forums were placed in charge of the libraries. The Radio Supervisor and Electrician who toured the villages to inspect the Community Listening Sets, carried out the supervision and inspection of these libraries as well. The libraries were supplied with books apart from other free government publications by the Directorate of Information and Publicity from time to time. As on 31 December 1974 there were 35 libraries located in the following villages :

Pondicherry Region

- | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Sedarappattu | 19. Kalapet |
| 2. Madagadippattu | 20. Kuruvintattam |
| 3. Pillayarkuppam (Bahur) | 21. Odiyambattu |
| 4. Pandacholanallur | 22. Kanuvapet |
| 5. Mangalam | 23. Karaimedu Andipalaiyam |
| 6. Manaveli-Villiyannur | 24. Bahurpet |
| 7. Karuvadikkuppam | 25. Kil Agaram |
| 8. Sanyasikuppam | 26. Anandapuram |
| 9. Nattamedu (Embalam) | 27. Chinna Virampattinam |
| 10. Nellur Kuchchipalaiyam | 28. Sorappattu |
| 11. Manaveli-Kodattur | 29. Muttirapalaiyam |
| 12. Aranganur | 30. Vambupattu |
| 13. Manakuppam | 31. Kommapakkam |
| 14. Vadanur | 32. Karkilambakkam |
| 15. Sembipalayam | 33. Sandai Pudukkuppam |
| 16. Tondamanattam | 34. Vinayagampet |
| 17. Shanmukapuram | 35. Kanakachettikulam |
| 18. Olandai Kirapalaiyam | |

Karaikal Region

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Talatteruvu | 9. Sembriankal |
| 2. Niravi | 10. Puvam |
| 3. Vilidiyur | 11. Palayam |
| 4. Varichchikudi | 12. Tirumalarajanpattinam |
| 5. Kottuchcheri | 13. Melaiyur |
| 6. Tirunallar | 14. Tiruvettakudi |
| 7. Salaitheru | 15. Nedungadu |
| 8. Nallattur | |

Library of Vedapuriswarar Temple : The library of Sri Vedapureeswarar Sri Varadaraja Perumal temple which is open to the general public, is run with the help of private donations and contributions. The affairs of the library are managed by a committee of eleven members constituted for the purpose. Located in a spacious building, the library is frequented by both Shaivites and Vaishnavites.

Other libraries : It may be mentioned here that there are two libraries in the French Institute, one attached to the Indology Section and the other attached to the Scientific Section. The **Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient** in rue Dumas is also well provided with a library. The **Alliance Française** is yet another cultural institution in Pondicherry which provides library facilities to its members.

The Archives, Pondicherry :

Attention was paid for the preservation of records from the early days of the French India Company. In 1761 when Pondicherry fell, all the official records were removed to Tarangambadi. Before taking them away a list of the documents seems to have been prepared.¹²⁷ All records except those relating to the dispute between Count Lally and the **Conseil Supérieur** seem to have been brought back to Pondicherry in 1773. When Pondicherry fell a second time in 1778, the records were left under the care of one Blin de Grincourt. For about twenty-five years since then i.e. until his death, the

records were under his personal custody and then under the care of his two sons. In 1816 all records except those relating to the revolution, were handed over to the **Inspecteur de la Colonie**. In 1852, those pertaining to the revolution were entrusted by the **Juge de Paix** who then performed the functions of the Mayor, to the archives. Between 1816 and 1841 some records are reported to have been eaten away by white ants due to neglect. In 1844, M. Edouard Ariel, a student of Eugène Burnouf, the famous indologist, came to Pondicherry and was instrumental in getting an order issued by Governor de Verniac to organise the archives as an adjunct of the **Bibliothèque** and for preparing a catalogue of all records.

It may be recalled here that the Royal Edict of June 1776 constituted a depot in France for the preservation of all public documents of the colonies. Steps were also taken to ensure the deposit in the Public Library of all publications brought out in the Territory. This was known as '**dépôt légal**'. As many as three copies of every ordinary book and five copies of lithography and engravings had to be deposited in the library.¹²⁸ In 1885 instructions were issued to the Governor making it obligatory to despatch two copies of all publications so deposited to the national collection in France.¹²⁹ In 1908, some restrictions were placed in the matter of furnishing copies of public documents.

After the death of Ariel, Vinson became the **Bibliothécaire**. After Vinson's departure, the archives was left in a state of neglect. In 1910, Governor Alfred Martineau, himself a historian, realising the importance of the records took steps for their proper preservation. In an attempt to make them available for research, he founded the Historical Society of Pondicherry in 1911. Edmond Gaudart, a retired Governor who succeeded Martineau as the President of the Society, brought out an eight-volume catalogue of the documents pertaining to the period from 1669 to 1855, the last of which appeared in 1936.

Sometime before merger, some of the records in the archives packed in 19 cases were despatched to France in three consignments.¹³⁰ After 1963, the archives remained almost closed. However in 1973, a fresh attempt was made to prepare a new catalogue of the records in the archives.

Museums :

The Historical and Archaeological Museum, Pondicherry : Although following the excavations carried out at Arikamedu by Jouveau Dubreuil and Brother Faucheux between 1936 and 1940, some of their most interesting findings like sherds of pottery, baked clay, intaglio, etc. came to be preserved in the library. The Historical and Archaeological Museum as such came to be formed only by virtue of the Governor's decision of 16 December 1942.¹³¹ This museum was placed under the care of the **Conservateur de la Bibliothèque**. The order provided for the acceptance of donations and exchange of articles. Pending the constitution of a **Commission de Surveillance de Musée**, all matters regarding the inclusion of new items or their transfer were left to be decided in consultation with Brother Faucheux. To this collection were added some of the findings of R.F.M. Wheeler, the then Director General of Archaeology in India who carried out further excavations in Arikamedu between April and June 1945. Some of the findings of Suttukanni were also handed over to the administration on 31 March 1958. Since then, however, the Museum had not undergone any change except that in 1972 a Museum Assistant was appointed to take care of it. A 13-member Advisory Committee was constituted in February 1976.

The Geological Museum, Tattanchavadi : In pursuance of the decision of the Government of India, a Geological Museum was set up in Tattanchavadi on 28 February 1972.¹³² A representative collection of geological specimens numbering over 500 which included 250 minerals, 200 rocks, 10 fossils and 50 industrial products were kept on display here.

Aquarium-cum-Museum : The Directorate of Fisheries maintained for some years a Fresh Water Aquarium-cum-Museum within the campus of the Botanical Garden, Pondicherry. In 1972, the aquarium was transferred to the control of the Directorate of Education. It now forms an adjunct of Jawahar Bal Bhavan. It will be of interest to note that there are three regional Aquarium-cum-Museums attached to the Offices of the Inspectors of Fisheries at Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam

Botanical Gardens :

Botanical Garden, Pondicherry : According to the old maps of Pondicherry drawn in 1705 and later, there were several gardens in and around the town. However it is difficult to say when exactly the present botanical garden was developed. But it was definitely there in 1825 when the **Ministère de la Marine**

authorised the administration to promote the cultivation of sugar-cane and indigo by utilising its surplus revenue. According to the **decision** of 26 June 1827, **Jardin du Roi** was placed under the care of one Belanger, **Botaniste Directeur du Jardin du Roi**.¹³³ Subsequently it came to be known as **Jardin Colonial** (colonial garden).

In 1835, Perrottet* took charge of the garden. Within a short period of four and a half years, a number of new varieties of plants like tobacco, cotton, sugar-cane and mulberry were introduced in the garden. According to the **Annuaire** of 1842, the garden was provided with pathways and an elliptical pond. While a plant-house was built in the south-west, a circular pond was erected at the centre. Perrottet obtained on exchange basis a number of new varieties of plants from the botanical gardens in Calcutta, Madras, Ceylon, Ile de la Reunion, etc. He himself went to places like Shevroy Hills and brought new species of plants. In 1850, Perrottet introduced the cultivation of Vanilla plants for the first time in the garden. Three years later he tried to develop a silk worm nursery. According to the catalogue prepared by Perrottet in 1867, there were about 500 varieties of plants in the garden.¹³⁴

In 1861, it appears there were two gardens, one **Jardin colonial** (founded in 1827) covering an area of 18 Ha ** and another known as **Jardin d'acclimatation** (developed in 1861) covering an area of 331 Ha.¹³⁵ As the soil of the former was not found fit for cultivation, it was relegated as **Jardin d'expérimentation**. The **Jardin d'acclimatation** was developed as a fruit and vegetable garden. An artesian well was put into operation in 1879. Somehow or other, the area of **Jardin d'acclimatation** had come down to 8 Ha. 18 ares by 1884.¹³⁶ In 1885, was added a **station agronomique** (Agronomic station) which started publishing a bilingual (Tamil & French) bulletin entitled '**Bulletin de la Station Agronomique**' carrying meteorological data and articles on agricultural topics for the benefit of agriculturists in the Territory.¹³⁷ In 1904, two more artesian wells were put into operation.¹³⁸

According to Madame Gaebelé, a portion of '**Parc Colonial**' is reported to have been sold to Savana mill in 1924 on the express condition that a '**Cité Ouvrière**' (workers colony) should be built within a period of ten years.¹³⁹ Apart from this no other information is available to explain as to how the garden got reduced to its present size of 12 Ha. 40 ares.

* Although a Swiss by birth, he became French through naturalisation.

** It is mentioned as 17 Ha. in the **Annuaire** 1884, p. 110.

Soon after merger some sheds were erected within the campus to locate the Directorates of Agriculture, Industries, Fisheries and the Office of the Registrar of Co-operative Societies. New species of plants (60) and crotons were also introduced in the garden.¹⁴⁰ All species of trees and shrubs numbering more than 250 were indentified and labelled. There were more than 200 species of herbaceous plants.

In 1965, Dr. Sen, Deputy Director, Botanical Survey of India, submitted a report suggesting measures to improve the garden. His scheme envisaged the setting up of a nursery with an attached glass-house, a laboratory, a conservatory, a students garden, a herbarium and a library, the construction of boundary walls and roads, a rockery, a fountain, the development of landscapes, hedges, shrubberies etc. Besides suggesting amenities for the public his proposals took into account the requirements of water and the provision of facilities for aquatic cultivation.¹⁴¹

The Jawahar Bal Bhavan is also located within its campus.

Botanical Garden, Yanam : This garden which is attached to the Catholic church in Yanam has been in existence since the twenties of this century. It took shape in the course of twenty-five years through the efforts of Father Gangloff. The garden is said to have been so designed as to combine the features of British, French and Moghul gardening.

The marble slab commemorating the death of Madeleine Barbe le Bon de Beausang and the grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes are the two landmarks in the garden. In 1950, there were in all 169 species of local as well as exotic plants and trees belonging to 47 families.¹⁴²

Nehru Yuvak Kendra, Pondicherry :

This Kendra (temporarily housed in a leased building at 27, Muthu-mariamman koil Street) was started in January 1973. Placed under the care of a Youth Coordinator, the Kendra functions under the administrative control of the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare. Designed as it was to organise out-of school education for youth in the age group of 15-25, the Kendra provided facilities for creative activities through youth participation in performing arts, folk dance, folk music, sports, games, competitions and community services.

The programme of the Kendra covered non-formal education, social services, sports and games, vocational training and cultural activities. The Kendra is also the recipient of books from the Raja Ram Mohun Roy Library Foundation. The State-cum-District Organising Committee of the Nehru Yuvak Kendra functions as an advisory body and finalises its programmes.

Regular classes are conducted in French, General English and Hindi. Candidates are sponsored for vocational training under the Self-employment Scheme both in private as well as public industrial establishments. Under the Functional Literacy Programme, the Kendra sponsors youngsters from rural areas for training in the Krishi Vigyan Kendra.

Jawahar Bal Bhavan :

Located within the campus of the Botanical Garden*, the Bal Bhavan was declared open on 24 March 1972. There are different sections for dance, drama, music, creative arts, physical education besides a library and a science club. The Bhavan is under the direction of a Unit Supervisor. The introduction of Children's train on 3 December 1974 was an added attraction. The train named after Poet Subramania Bharathi consisted of one engine and two trailers and the station was named after Jagjivanram. The track runs to a distance of 0.75 km.

XIII National Cadet Corps

It appears that the first N.C.C. Unit in the Territory was raised during the year 1961 when 45 students from Collège Calvé were enrolled.¹⁴³ However, the Pondicherry N.C.C. Group Headquarters came into existence in this Territory on 24 July 1964. The same year Senior Division Army Wing N.C.C. Units were raised in three institutions viz. Tagore Arts College, Motilal Nehru Polytechnic and JIPMER and the Junior Division Army Wing troops in High Schools at Pondicherry, Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam. Enrolment which was compulsory at the beginning was made voluntary from the academic year 1968-69. The N.C.C. Group Headquarters, Pondicherry, under the command of a Lieutenant-Colonel, functions under the overall control of the N.C.C. Directorate (Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry).

* The building which formerly housed the aquarium accommodates the Bal Bhavan as well as the aquarium.