

## REPORT OF MISSION

<b>Partner Institution :</b>	UNIVERSITY OF DELHI, DELHI
<b>Staff/ Expert Name :</b>	DR. ARVIND SINHA
<b>Position :</b>	RESEARCHER
<b>Dates of mission :</b>	02 May to 29 May 2005
<b>Place(s) of Mission :</b>	Pondicherry and Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India
<b>Eurindia Activity N° related to the mission :</b>	ALA/95/23- 2003/77077
<b>Date &amp; Signature</b>	16 August 2005

### **Objective(s) of the Mission :**

*Outline the main objective(s) of the mission.*

The objectives of the mission were :

- a) to survey the nature of the documents on Indo-European trade available at the Regional centre of the National Archives of India, Pondicherry and at Tamil Nadu State Archives, Chennai, and to examine their content ;
- b) from the documents so examined to select sources that provide us information on Indian textiles, particularly their exports to Europe through the French Company or through private traders in the second half of the eighteenth century ;
- c) to look for rare books in archives and libraries of Pondicherry and Chennai that could provide any information on the subject in the form of description of textile variety, trade statistics or illustrations, which could be used for visual displays ; and
- d) to prepare a list of the selected documents out of the diverse material examined, which can be uploaded on Eurindia website, as a part of the research undertaken by Delhi University.

## **Description of the Mission :**

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*Provide an executive summary of your mission*

In the first part of my mission I worked at Pondicherry from 2<sup>nd</sup> till 11th May 2005. At the Regional Centre of the National Archives, I found 556 folders pertaining to the French activities in southern India covering the period from 1701 to 1860. Many of the documents were related to pre-1740 events. In the first 61 folders, I saw some reference of trade and commercial links between India and Indochina (modern Cambodia) and Tonkin. They all are in French language.

Apart from the documents mentioned above, there are some in Telugu language consisting of folder numbers 62, 63, 73, 82, 83,86, 95, 120 and 126. These are the letters Sambhudas Sankardas wrote to Anand Ranga Pillai and refer to commercial matters, such as arrival of ships, agreements of cargo supply, loans, etc. I arranged for a person to read and translate these documents for me but it appears that the script is a mixture of some local languages along with Telugu. Hence, the translation could not be very accurate. Nonetheless, these documents contain some information on Indian textiles.

**Serie –Acte Tabellione** (1718-1898) had mention of the various petitions sent by merchants to the French authorities in Pondicherry but there was no direct reference to textiles. There were several other manuscripts and printed material pertaining to the the French administrative and political deliberations but they are not of much use for the scholars working on textile trade.

The most useful documents from the point of view of textile exports to Europe are located in the serie entitled ***The Eighteenth Century Documents***, particularly in folder numbers beginning with 301. These also include correspondance of Lagenée and Moracin, the two important men in Pondicherry, having a vast trading network of their own. Folder numbers 290, 291, 292, 294,295, 314, 316 and 317 contain their correspondence with different people. These letters deal with matters such as arrangement of funds through major bankers like Pelling de Fries, payments through bills of exchange, sale receipts, money conversions, shipping records, procurement and supply of cotton textiles like salem pores, white Guinees, romals (handkerchiefs) and Bengal textiles. Most of these letters contain individual accounts and personal transactions.

Apart from personal letters and individual transactions, *The Eighteenth Century Documents* provide us with detailed account of some the French ships trading with the Coromandel coast and Bengal. Each ship has a separate folder that provides minute details of its cargo and its destination. These folios and registers reveal not only the commodity-composition of the ships but also provide an insight into price fluctuations of specific cloths and gives us an idea of the scale of private trade. For example, in folder no. 356, there is a detailed listing of textiles going to St. Malo. Many of the items were bought from Bengal and Yanaon (Yanam). The cost price of each type is clearly stated. However, there are many other folders that have nothing

on textiles or have scanty information on the subject. The library of this centre was consulted too but the attempt did not yield much result.

Apart from Pondicherry Archives, I also visited Bibliotheque Romain Rolland by Pondicherry and found it a storehouse of rare books. I had a cursory look at the catalogue. Of the several books I wished to consult, only one book could be located. That was written by Pierre Blancard who was a navigator and a member of the Council of Agriculture, Arts and Commerce. This book was published in 1806 and has a detailed information on Indian textiles. Some of its pages including the cover page has been photocopied and shall be sent in due course.

The second part of the mission involved a stay in Chennai from 12th till 29th May 2005 to consult Tamil Nadu State Archives and its library. The Archives possesses diverse material collected and preserved by the English company on Indian textile industry. Some of these sources throw light on the French activities on the Coromandel region. **The Public Consultations series** of Fort St George has 986 volumes covering a period of over two hundred years. These volumes include correspondence between company officials and their superiors, reports, minutes of meetings, regulations from England and company investments on procurement of textiles. It was not possible to examine all these volumes. Hence, on the basis of the Press list, only those registers were consulted that provided information on the French trade or had direct reference to textile prices, manufacturing process, contract system and advances and disputes between the English and the French concerning weavers and merchants. Scattered information is available in volumes from LXXXIV to LXXXVI and from XCIV to XCVII. This series also includes Public Despatches from the Court (volume nos. LIX, LXVIII, LXIX, LXX, LXXXIX) and to the Court (Vol. nos. XXII, XXV).

**South Arcot District Records** was consulted by me as these include letters to and from Commercial Residents. Volumes 107 to 112 (from 1800 to 1804) contains information on cloth exports, freight charges, packing instructions and Cloth Manufacture Inspection Report, the Report of the Committee of Reform to look into the problems of weavers and the state of cloth prices. Similarly, the **Madura District Records** was also consulted and only a brief information was available in volume 115 (1795) from a letter of the Board concerning the plight of weavers.

The library of Tamil Nadu Archives was regularly visited by me during the stay in Chennai. I was told by the staff of the library that many French sources are preserved here but on examining them it was found that most of them were either religious tracts or accounts of the deliberations of the French Council. A rare book was found that was published in 1775 at Paris and is entitled *Instructions Sur la Navigation des Indes Orientales et des la Chine*. It is a narrative account of the entire route from Lorient to China and describes the physical topography and weather conditions, particularly the wind pattern including monsoon. It hardly mentions anything on trade.

I visited Tamil Nadu Museum to identify illustrations of the textile variety from the displayed items which could be used on the website of Eurindia. I also explored Connemara Library in Chennai to locate relevant published material on the subject as this library has a descent collection of very old books though their physical condition is brittle and most of them are on the verge of falling apart.

I was also interested in visiting Coimbatore, one of the principal centres of textile during the British rule. I am told that there is a library consisting of books on Indian textile industry but I am not sure whether some new sources on textile sector of the 18th century could be found there. I am trying to get more information on this.

## Concrete and quantified outputs of the missions

*Describe the main results achieved.*

The following folders and registers were consulted and subsequently a selective list was prepared for the use of Eurindia project.

At the Regional Centre of the National Archives, Pondicherry, I requisitioned and examined the following folders :

Folder no.	Year	Subject
77	1731-1867	ventes
88	1739	Au sujet du livre commerce des toileries
281	1766	Layer-lettres
284	1752-1756	Laperterie-Repertoire des livres de comptes
286	1766	Langlade-livres des comptes
290	1772-1778	Lagrenée-ventes des effets
291	1774	Legras-Etat des marchandise
292	1775-1777	Lagrenée-societe
294	1778	Lagrenée-correspondances
295	1778-1782	Lagrenée-lettres
298	1781	Lagrence- achats faits à Paris
301	1788	Lagrence correspondance
314	1791	Moracin-lettres
348	1789-1791	Trauttmans Dorff-cataloue de la cargaison du vaisseau imperial et pieces
351	1741	Etat de vaisseaux restes à Pondichèry au Bengal
352	1764-1769	Le vaisseaux 'Theodore Elisabeth compte'
355	1775	Le vaisseau 'Les Trois Cousins'
356	1776	Chargement du vaisseau 'Le Printemps'
357	1778	Chargement du vaisseau 'Le Ferme'
358	1779	Chargement du vaisseau 'Les Trois Cousins'
359	1779	Armament du vaisseau 'Le Severe'
360	1786	Le Vaisseau 'La Bayonnaise'
361	1787	Armament du vaisseau 'La Compte de Noe'
362	1789	Chargement du vaisseau 'Victor Aime Compte'
363	1790	Le Vaisseau 'Le Marechal de Mouchy'
364	1791	Le Vaisseau 'Le Marine'
365	1791	Le Vaisseau 'Le Pondichèry'
366	1791	Le Vaisseau 'Le Saint Charles Comptes'
367	1792	Le Vaisseau 'Le Saint Esprit'
62	undated	Letter from Sambhudas Sankardass to Ananda Ranga Pillai- commercial transaction
63	31july 1746	Letter from Sambhudas Sankardass to Ananda Ranga Pillai- passage of three merchant ships to Nagapatnam
73	27 April 1749	Letter from Sambhudas Sankardass to Ananda Ranga Pillai- commercial transaction

82	2 November 1745	Letter from Sambhudas Sankardass to Ananda Ranga Pillai- details of commercial transaction
83	22 June 1746	Letter from Sambhudas Sankardass to Ananda Ranga Pillai- regarding the arrival of European ships
86	4 October 1745	Letter from Sambhudas Sankardass to Ananda Ranga Pillai- commercial transaction
95	undated	Letter from Sambhudas Sankardass to Ananda Ranga Pillai- exports of various merchant goods to Europe
12, Ref.no. 2979	1767	Petition by merchants of old company to Governor of Pondicherry

Some of the folders mentioned above provide information on textile varieties that were in demand among the European traders. The commodity pattern of trade is discernible from the detailed list of cargo mentioned in these documents. However, it is not possible to form a full picture of the textile trade between India and Europe only the basis of the above-mentioned documents. These sources need to be complemented by the documents preserved in Paris Archives.

An attempt was made to search the libraries of Pondicherry to locate some useful source material for the subject. Only one book could be located by Pierre Blancard. This work throws light on the textiles of the late 18th century and the prevalent prices of each variety. This book shall prove useful for the researchers on this subject.

During my stay in Chennai, I consulted a large number of English manuscripts from the Public Consultation series (volume numbers 116-124, 147-162, 169-179), Despatches from England (1786-1792), Despatches to England (1786-1792) and District records of South Arcot and Madurai, which are available at the Tamil Nadu State Archives. These sources complement the French sources by providing information on the actual state of affairs of the Indian textile industry.

Information on the manufacturing process of different cloths, the tools employed by the artisans, bleaching and dyeing processes, etc. can be obtained from secondary sources like *Cotton Painting and Printing in the Madras Presidency* by W.S.Hadaway(vol. 71, 1917), *Journal of Art & Industry*, vols. VII-IX,1831, *Monograph on the Cotton Fabric Industry of the Madras Presidency* by Edgar Thurston (1897)- all these works are available in the Library of Tamil Nadu State Archives. I visited the museum of Tamil Nadu to select textile items which could be photographed and used as an illustration for visual display. Unfortunately, the textile gallery of the museum was closed due to repair works. Connemara Library is located within the same premises. I discovered that a large number of maps are kept in the rare book section of the library. They are on diverse themes and some of them were prepared during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Another useful rare book is by J.F.Royal's *Essay on the Productive Resources of India* (1840).

On the whole, in this mission to Pondicherry and Chennai, I was able to go through diverse sources, both primary as well as secondary, pertaining to textile trade between Southern India and Europe. A list of relevant documents and published material is prepared for the purpose of downloading it for Eurindia website.

## **Concrete and quantified contributions to Eurindia project**

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*Quantify activities and outputs .*

Please see the **annexure 1** (pages 1-5) in which a detailed description of the useful material is arranged.

## **Possible problems met during the missions**

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*Hightlight and justify any divergence and difficulty encoutered*

- 1.The condition of most of the rare books is quite brittle in Bibliotheque Romain Rolland in Pondicherry, in Connemara Library in Chennai and in Tamil Nadu State Archives Library and they need immediate attention. Their arrangement on shelves need improvement.
- 2.The procedure of consulting manuscripts in Tamil Nadu State Archives is very cumbersome and time consuming. This has been brought to the notice of the Commissioner and he has assured that the system would be soon changed.

## **Other issues**

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*Mention any other issues you deen relevant.*

Someone from the Eurindia team should also tap material from the Andhra Pradesh State Archives as the District Records possess some information on the French textile trade during the 18th century.