

# 2015 Pondicherry Heritage Festival



Coming together to celebrate Pondicherry's rich diverse heritage

27, 28 February & 1 March 2015

Architecture, Culture, History, Traditions,  
Art in all its forms, Nature & Spirituality.

**Organised by:**



**PondyCAN!**  
Pondy Citizens' Action Network

**Supported by:**

The Government of Puducherry  
Department of Tourism  
Department of Art & Culture

PONDICHERRY HERITAGE FESTIVAL



2015

## THE BACKGROUND:

Pondicherry's Architectural Heritage is an integral part of the spirit of Pondicherry; and its unique characteristic is its harmonious blend of the French architecture as well as the Tamil vernacular architecture. Along with the built heritage, our natural environment is as much part of our heritage as music, dance, theatre, literature, poetry, art, food, customs and spirituality.

Pondicherry, with its beautiful beaches along the Bay of Bengal, its lovely lakes attracting migratory birds from across faraway lands, its ancient temples and churches and mosques, its old Tamil, Muslim, and French colonial architecture, its grid patterned boulevard town, planned by the Dutch and given shape by the French and its thoroughly cosmopolitan population from all parts of India and many parts of the world, give us a rich heritage that dates back far in our history. The Sri Aurobindo Ashram with the Samadhi of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother and the international town of Auroville nearby add to the spiritual depth to Pondicherry's special beauty.

Recently, we lost the Mairie building, an iconic landmark on the beach promenade, due to long years of neglect.

That is when spontaneously a group emerged from the civil society, **People for Pondicherry's Heritage**, and we felt that there are many other private and public buildings in Pondicherry which may suffer the same fate if we do not act NOW.

Not only does Pondicherry depend primarily on tourism because of its unique heritage but it also provides beautiful settings for movies like the LIFE OF PI. We also felt the need to preserve the beauty of our city for OURSELVES, its residents who could take pride in it.

Our collective aim is to make Pondicherry one of the Heritage Cities of the World, which will make it a desired destination. That can only happen if we can protect and project our architectural heritage with absolute commitment.



**This city hall was built in 1870 to provide a premise for the registry office and was used as an office for the Mayor. It was the first large administrative building constructed after more than hundred years.**

**Almost all Pondicherians have had their marriage registered here until it was vacated due to disrepair before it collapsed.**

INTACH, along with the people of Pondicherry, are now doing its best to protect the heritage of our city. In this connection, we had organised a Heritage Festival in Pondicherry on 27 & 28 Feb and 1 March 2105 with the following **objectives**:

**a) to create and strengthen this distinct identity of belonging and being Pondicherian for all its residents,**

**b) to show its unique character in all its variety to visitors who come from all over the country and the world, attracted by the idea of “Pondicherry”.**

**c) to create a platform for experts, historians and old residents to meet and discuss what is special about Pondicherry and how we can preserve our town.**

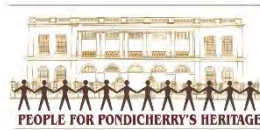
The charm and beauty of Pondicherry represents a different challenge to the government and civil society organisations interested in protecting and restoring its built heritage. Unlike ASI monuments or even National Parks, the architectural style of Pondicherry’s cityscape with its *mélange* of private and government buildings – homes, schools, colleges, hospitals, municipal buildings, courts, government and private offices and the buildings of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram - makes up the unique character and charm of this town on the Coromandel Coast.

Pondicherry has two distinct parts: the French and the Tamil. The French quarter has structures in the European classical style, whereas the buildings in the Tamil quarter are in the vernacular style of Tamil Nadu. The two styles have influenced each other with the result that many buildings in both parts of the town are a harmonious blend of European and Tamil architectural patterns. Pondicherry’s unique architectural blend is an inheritance, of which we are but the custodians today. It is our responsibility that the future generations of Pondicherry’s citizens are not deprived of an opportunity to live, work, enjoy and celebrate the town’s “Pondicherry-ness”, which is, at its essence, the ability of the city to be inclusive and absorb several influences and make it its own.

This is the environment from which **The Pondicherry Heritage Festival** sought to explore the various facets of the city’s culture- its spiritual heritage, the town’s contribution to the world of letters, art and music, its role in the country’s maritime trade, traditional and contemporary crafts, its coastline and natural environment and much more. Pondicherry has always shown the ability to embrace and be hospitable to those with fresh ideas and energy.



The event was **organised by**



INTACH, Pondicherry

People for Pondicherry's Heritage,

PondyCAN

and was **supported by**

INTACH Head Office, New Delhi

The Department of Tourism and Art and Culture, Government of Puducherry

Alliance Française, Pondicherry

Institut Francais de Pondichery

CGH Earth

Hidesign

Pondy ART

Gratitude-a heritage home

École Française d'Extrême-Orient

Cluny Embroidery Centre, SVARAM-Auroville, Neemrana Hotels

Members of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Sri Aurobindo Society and Auroville and many other individuals also generously opened their houses and participated in the event.

**The Government of Pondicherry** was generous to allow us use of public spaces as well as street corners. There were many volunteers and most participants were local artist and musicians.

Our special **GUESTS OF HONOUR** who wholeheartedly supported the Festival, were



Ms Revathy,

Film actress & Director



Mr. François Richier

The Ambassador of France

The Dhandora...a traditional system of announcing.



Today,  
26th Feb  
this  
person  
will  
go  
around  
town  
announcing  
the  
HERITAGE  
FESTIVAL



## THE EVENTS THAT TOOK PLACE OVER THREE DAYS OF THE FESTIVAL...

**THE CURTAIN RAISER:** In true traditional fashion, a drummer went around town the day before the Pondicherry Heritage Festival 2015, beating his drum, inviting everyone to attend the events of the following three days.

On the morning of 27th February, young **Soham Munim** took the packed auditorium of the **Alliance Francaise** to a whole different realm with his long and deep alap in Bilaskhani Todi, on his sitar. Then accompanied by the equally talented **Raveesh Shet** on the tabla he enthralled them all with beautiful compositions in two other morning ragas before ending with a dhun.

The auditorium of the **Alliance Francaise** was soon filled to maximum capacity.



**Soham Munim**, An aspiring young sitar artist started learning sitar under the tutelage of Sri Basab Sen, a talented disciple of the eminent musicologist and sitarist Pt. Ajay Sinha Roy of Kolkata. During his studentship at SAICE Pondicherry he has received guidance and insightful advice from other musicians including some senior artists like Pt Kartick Kumar and Pt. Shayamol Chattopadhyay.

Making his debut performance at SAICE Pondicherry, Soham also featured in Swar Mouli, his first public appearance in Mumbai and received critical acclaim. He has performed in many other venues in India since then and is the recipient of the prestigious *SURMANI* title conferred upon him by SURSINGAR SAMSAD, Mumbai.

Raveesh Shet started learning Tabla at the age of 10 under Shri U. S. Balaram. A promising talent from the younger generation he has won several state level competitions during his school days.

Currently training under Pt. Anindo Chatterjee and his disciple Shri Rupak Bhattacharya he has accompanied vocalists and instrumentalists alike.



DAY 1, 27<sup>th</sup> February 2015: Conversation with **S MUTHIAH, DEBORAH THIYAGARAJAN & VINCENT D'SOUZA** on **CULTIVATING A SENSE OF HISTORY AND IDENTITY THOROUGH COLLECTIVE EVENTS**

At GRATITUDE, a restored heritage building on 52,Rue Romain Rolland.



**Subbiah Muthiah** is an Indian writer, journalist, cartographer, amateur historian and heritage activist known for his writings on the political and culture history of Chennai. He is the founder of the fortnightly newspaper Madras Musings and the principle organiser of the annual Madras Day celebrations. Muthiah is also the founder-president of the Madras Book Club.

**In 1999, S Muthiah co-founded Chennai Heritage, a foundation for heritage conservation in Chennai**

**Deborah Thiagarajan** came to live in India in 1970 and founded the Madras Craft Foundation in 1984 and the same year became the convenor and founder of the Tamilnadu chapter of INTACH, a position she held for fourteen years. She set up Madras Craft Foundation with the intention of preserving the arts, crafts and architecture of South India. This formed her vision for the promotion and preservation of aspects of everyday art of South India, which has taken shape in the form of

**Dakshinachitra.**

Dakshinachitra is a heritage museum of living traditions set in an authentic 18th and 19th century architectural ambiance of each of the four states of South India.



**Vincent D'Souza** is a journalist and a media entrepreneur based in Chennai. He is the editor and publisher of two community newspapers, the Mylapore Times and the Arcot Road Times in the city. He is also the executive editor of the largest neighbourhood newspaper in Chennai, the Adyar Times. The three newspapers have a combined circulation of over eighty five thousand copies a week. He also promotes two major events in Chennai, the Mylapore Festival held in Mylapore on Pongal eve and the Madras Day celebrations held to celebrate the city.

**To get inspired by Vincent's community building efforts, one just needs to read his blog: <http://vincentsjottings.blogspot.in>**



That afternoon, in the courtyard of the beautifully restored old house of **Gratitude**, people listened enthusiastically to **S. Muthiah** the Chennai historian, **Deborah Thiagarajan** the creatrix for Dakshinachitra, and **Vincent D'Souza**, the journalist who started the now famous Mylapore festival as they spoke about **“Cultivating a sense of history and identity through collective events”**.



They emphasised that any activity which centres on heritage conservation must involve the people of the city to take pride in their heritage. They stressed on the importance of involving children and

schools in campaigns for heritage conservation. “Children will bring heritage forward” said Deborah Thiagarajan. They all agreed on heritage extending beyond built heritage to include cultural, environmental and spiritual heritage.



**The Crafts Bazar** next to the Gandhi Thidal came alive with the vibrant paintings of 15 young and talented painters of Pondicherry brought together by recognised painter **Ejournale**, whose painting of a door has now become the logo of the festival. They exhibited their works, for the duration of the festival. There were also a few local artisans, who demonstrated their skills in leather, papier-mâché and terracotta. We hope the Craft Centre will continue to be used the way it was, during the festival.





The **INAUGURATION event** started with local artists performing through the town. Two groups of dancers, the **Therakoothu group** in one van, the **Silambattam group** in the second and **Auroville's Svaram drummers** in a third, stopped at a few locations and performed their wonderful acts, much to the amazement of the people gathered on the streets. They assembled at the location of the inauguration at the **Gandhi Thidal** performing amidst a wide circle of people and setting the tone of the Festival, calling the residents of Pondicherry to participate in large numbers.



**Cultural heritage in general consists of the products and processes of a culture that are preserved and passed on through the generations. Some of that heritage takes the form of cultural property, formed by tangible artefacts such as buildings or works of art. Many parts of culture, however are intangible, including song, music, dance, drama, skills, cuisine, crafts and festivals. They are forms of culture that can be recorded but cannot be touched or stored in physical form, like in a museum, but only experienced through a vehicle giving expression to it. These cultural vehicles are called "Human Treasures" by the UN.**



As the dancers and the drummers faded away, from the stage, strains of the traditional Nadaswaram filled Goubert Avenue as the guests started arriving.



On either side of the stage were four panels each of prints of paintings of Pondicherry, done in the 1940's and 50's by two artists of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram, the late **Krishnalal Bhatt** and the late **Jayantilal Parekh**, who started INTACH in Pondicherry over 20 years ago.



**The INAUGURATION event with special guests & Sathya, the young poetess**



**Traditionally, the Murasu was used as a war-drum, calling people to arms. Later, it became a community tool to call people to rally together for a cause.**



**The organisers...**





The special guests at the inauguration consisted of the **French Ambassador**, the **Tourism and the Art & Culture Minister**, the **local MLA**, the **French Consul**, famous **actor and director Revathy** and the **convenor of INTACH Pondicherry**.

They inaugurated the festival by striking boldly on the Murasu, the big traditional temple drum. One by one, they struck, as if each stroke was a promise that Pondicherry's heritage will be cared for and protected.



**It has been said that, at it's best, preservation engages the past in a conversation with the present over a a mutual concern for the future.**

-William Murtagh

Young **Aneesh Raghavan**, then took the audience to truly inspiring heights singing three of Mahakavi Subramania Bharati's famous and apt compositions in the Carnatic style, to the accompaniment of the violin and the mridangam.

The inaugural party was then invited to the stage and greeted with strings of roses and jasmine and a t-shirt with the beautiful logo of the Festival. After the speeches, came the highlight of the evening, the young poetess **Sathya**, in her wheelchair, made a powerful appeal through a poem she specially wrote for the occasion.





**Sri Aurobindo Ashram Library**



The **second day** began at the **Library of the Sri Aurobindo Ashram**, a beautiful building, constantly being maintained with care. In a room filled with books from floor to the ceiling, **Jhumur Bhattacharya**, who came to Pondicherry as a very young girl in the early 1940's and is now among the very few people left here who had seen Sri Aurobindo, spoke about what heritage meant in the light of the writings of Sri Aurobindo. **Richard Hartz** who studied Philosophy, Asian languages and literature has been working in the Ashram Archives since 1980 and has published a book of his essays recently. He touched upon what Sri Aurobindo foresaw then as the clear and specific role of Pondicherry, which continued to be governed by the French after 1947.



**Aurofilio**, born and brought up here, and an expert in tropical coastal zone management, talked about our natural heritage and how nature and spirituality are so linked. **Aneesh Raghavan** who has done research on Sri Aurobindo and Subramania Bharati during his just completed higher studies, spoke about Pondicherry's spiritual heritage which sprang out of the 10 years they spent together each in his own spiritual quest starting with the ancient Vedas.

**“The links with French culture will be retained and enlarged but also, inevitably a much larger place will be given to our own Indian culture. It is to be hoped this autonomous French India will become a powerful centre of intellectual development and interchange and meeting place of European and Asiatic culture and [a] spiritual factor of the world unification which is making its tentative beginning as the most important tendency of the present day. Thus French India will retain its individuality and historical development but will at the same time proceed towards a larger future.” - Sri Aurobindo (Published in June 1947 Ref CWSA Vol. 36 p 488)**

## **THE YIN AND YANG OF HERITAGE, THE TANGIBLE AND THE INTANGIBLE....**

a panel discussion by conservation experts was held on 28th February 2015 at **Institut Francais de Pondichery**, 11 Rue Saint Louis



**Tara Murali** has been a practicing architect for more than forty years. She is the Managing Trustee of the Citizen Consumer and civic Action Group (CAG) a non-profit organisation that works on consumer and environmental issues and good governance. She is also an executive committee member of INTACH.

She has earlier been secretary, Indian Institute of Architects - Tamilnadu Chapter, vice president of the Palani Hills Conservation Council and director of Chennai Heritage.

**P. T. Krishnan** is an eminent architect known for his brilliant achievements in the field of architecture. He has been a visiting faculty member at the School of Architecture and Planning, Madras for M.Arch. program and was responsible for developing the curriculum for new courses like Environmental Design and Planning and Historical Preservation and Conservation. He has years of experience behind him, enriched by long stints with companies in India and abroad and is currently the Managing Partner of PTK Architects, a company that he founded in 1997. He has held key positions like convener, INTACH, Tamilnadu chapter; member Heritage Committee of Chennai Metropolitan Authority; convener, working committee of restoration of Madras University Senate House among many others.



**KT Ravindran** is Dean Emeritus at the RICS School of Built Environment. He was earlier a Dean and Professor and Head of the Department of Urban Design at School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi for over two decades. He is also the Founder and President of the Institute of



Urban Designers - India. Prof. Ravindran is a member of the academic boards of a number of universities in India and teaches classes such as "Urban Morphology" and "Humanizing Cities". His work focuses on the development of cities, and more specifically on the inclusion and conservation of heritage buildings in modern urban spaces. As the former Chairman of the Delhi Urban Art Commission, KT Ravindran found himself at the intersection of the aesthetical, environmental and sociological ends of architectural endeavours. He is now nominated as Member of the Advisory Board for the United Nations Capital Master Plan, a five member committee drawn from around the world, advising the Secretary General of the United Nations on the ongoing UN project in New York. Chairman of the Architectural Heritage Advisory Committee of INTACH, he is also a Founder Trustee of the Indian Heritage Cities Network Foundation.

A discussion on **The Yin and the Yang of Heritage, the tangible and the intangible** with **Tara Murali, P. T. Krishnan, and KT Ravindran**, was held at the beautiful conference room of the **Institut Francais de Pondichery**, to a packed audience of Pondicherians, including the local MLA, architects, and many students of architecture from nearby colleges, some from as far away as Chennai. The room had to be rearranged to fit everyone.



They touched upon infusing humanity in planning, introducing a calming in the cities where today speed is power, including urban renewal as part of planning, making engineers employable through training, remembering the importance of legends which are often linked to physical spaces the disappearance of which, causes them to disappear and alienate people from their very culture; the importance of people being custodians of their culture and working towards resolution of all issues to the larger public good. They spoke of the importance of participatory planning which though mandated through the 74th amendment, is rarely practiced anywhere in our country. It is unfortunate that social aspects are missing in planning, when at the end for the day, planning is and should be for people. Land today is only an economic asset, we need to bring back its value by mapping what happens on it, the artisans, and the traditions. The intense session with an extended interaction with the audience went over the allotted time of two hours by a full forty-five minutes.



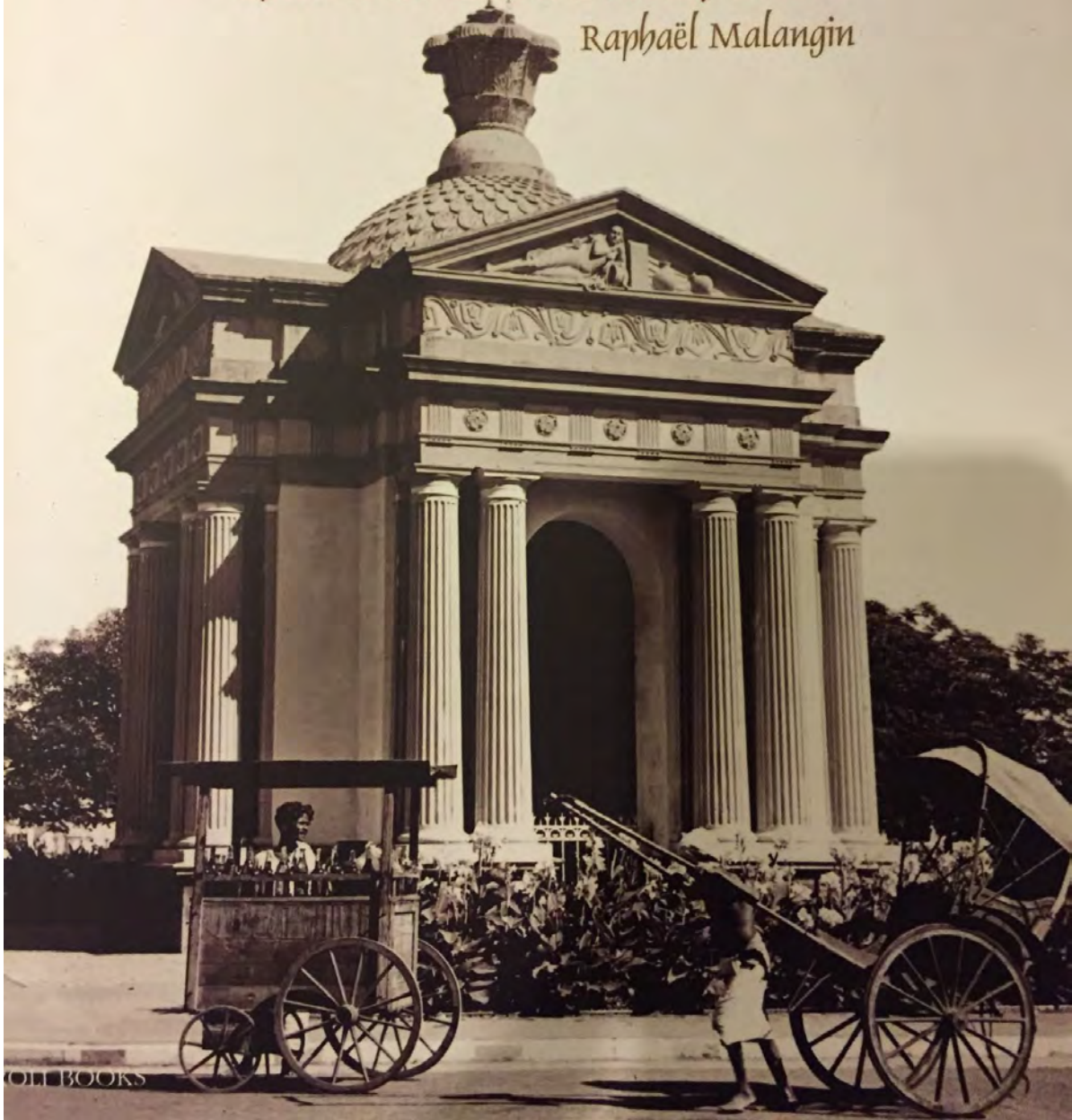
**Overwhelming & active participation of the audience (which consisted of locals) showed that Pondicherry civil society really cares for its Heritage Architecture and are keen to find ways to preserve the same**





# PONDICHERRY

*that was Once French India*  
Raphaël Malangin



**The cover of Raphael's new book on the history of Pondicherry which was published soon after the HERITAGE FESTIVAL**



The last session of the day was in the library of the **Ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient**.

The Centre houses a collection of about 1633 palm-leaf manuscripts, most of which transmit vaishnava texts in Sanskrit, Tamil, and Manipravalam, which is a mixture of both these languages. In recognition of the importance of the manuscript holdings of the EFEO and of the French Institute of Pondicherry, the "Shaiva Manuscripts of Pondicherry" were in 2005 deemed a UNESCO "Memory of the World" Collection. A project aiming to catalogue this collection is presently underway.

The historian **Raphael Malangin** started his presentation with old photos of the sea-front of Pondicherry and the history of the Town Hall, or the Mairie, the building which had collapsed in November 2014, and what brought so many Pondicherians together to be part of the movement the People for Pondicherry's Heritage.



**Prof. Vijayvenugopal** then shared his twenty years of painstaking research on the history of Pondicherry through inscriptions found in temples, churches, bazars, buildings, and cemeteries. These weave an interesting history from the Chola period through the other rulers to the colonial rulers. **Meenakshi Devi Bhavnani**, an American by birth and now a long time Indian citizen spoke of the history of Pondicherry from the time Agastya Rishi came here across the Vindhyas, through a series of *sidhas* some of whom established *madams* which exist to this day.



**The true spirit of Pondicherry...a spectacular performance of Odissi, a Hindu dance form, being performed by Aneesh Raghavan, a Pondicherian, at a venue owned by the nuns of the Cluny Convent, at their equally spectacular embroidery centre, on Rue Romain Rolland.**



As evening fell, everyone gathered in the impeccably maintained courtyard and veranda of the **Cluny embroidery** section to be totally captivated by **Aneesh Raghavan's** Odissi rendering of Dashavatara, followed by a story of Krishna and ending with a spectacular dance to the sun god Surya. People managed to fill every nook and corner of that compound to watch this electric performance.



The sisters of Cluny received the VMF Plaque in recognition of their excellent maintenance of a historic building.



On 28th February  
8:00 pm to 8:45 pm  
MUSICAL PERFORMANCE  
by

**Adishakti**

at

Academy House  
(Selvaraj Chettiar Mansion)  
North of Old Distillery



Adishakti Laboratory for Theatre Arts & Research is a site on the outskirts of Pondicherry, and a performing arts company engaged in creating performances, researching enres and disciplines and creating processes and performance methodologies.



**The grand Selvaraj Chettiar Mansion, also known as Academy House, where Pandit Nehru stayed in 1936 during a visit to Pondicherry.**

It was time then to rush to the **Selvaraja Chettiar Mansion**, in the fishing village of Kuruchikuppam, past the northern end of the boulevard town.



The lit pathway showed the silhouette of the crumbling but magnificent building. People entered the traditional Tamil room with the open to sky inner courtyard and filled in every single centimetre of space they could find, including in an around the drummers and singers and musicians from **Adishakti**. It was definitely a performance which had the audience clapping their hands and whistling and clamouring for more.

**In 1981 the late Veenapani Chawla established ADISHAKTI near Auroville. Although we lost her in 2014, her team has continued to engage in research towards creating a performance methodology based on old knowledge. This methodology involves a physical craft to facilitate the actor's vocal, bodily and psychological expression**



PONDICHERRY by NIGHT,,



For those ready to brave it, the night ended with the **cycle rickshaw ride**, a lit and guided **night tour** of the heritage buildings in the French precinct ending up in a legendary private house where they were welcomed with light refreshments.



### **PONDY ART: USING PUBLIC VENUES TO BUILD AWARENESS OF THE ISSUES CHALLENGING INDIA TODAY...**

**Institut Francais de Pondichery (IFP)** and **PondyART** joined forces to give the public the opportunity to enjoy a sample of the photographs so far collected, observe the styles of Tamil Nadu photography studios utilized for the printed images and reinforce the importance of preserving this visual record of the local heritage. This exhibition, called **Heritage of Family – Tamil Studio Portraiture 1880-1980**, displayed on the wall of the IFP on Goubert Avenue, ran from February 25<sup>th</sup> for a month to coincide with the Heritage Festival.



On 1<sup>st</sup> March the events started at Judge David Annousamy's house which he had graciously opened up to the public for the discussion on **“What keeps people in Pondicherry, what bring them here and what bring them back”**. Anitha Pottamkulam moderated the lively discussion with **Dr. Nallam, Mannar Mannan (poet Bharatidasan's son), Judge David Annousamy, & Dilip Kapur.**



The beautiful room of his traditional Tamil house was filled with the complete spectrum of Pondicherians, those here since generations, those born and brought up here, those here since a young age, or those who married into Pondicherry and made it their home, or those who came here to study and never left, to those who went out to study and came back, and those who keep coming here, not knowing why, or those who just can't stay away. They were from all parts of India and the globe. A truly diverse group so representative of Pondicherry. The discussion ranged from what to call the French part of town as no one liked it being called 'white town' all these many years after independence, to whether the residents of Pondicherry wanted to attract more tourists or were they adversely affected by the crowds that came here every weekend and cluttered our peaceful Pondicherry.



Judge David brought it all back by asking almost everyone in the room why were they here and the single common factor was because of the way of life and the quality of life here.

SA Kandaswamy surprised everyone by saying that when one travelled along the coast of Tamilnadu, one could tell the difference when one entered Pondicherry as the people were always friendlier. Hospitality is an Indian virtue and Pondicherry has a good dose of it.

Another interesting point which came out of this discussion was that it was equally important to save and conserve the **Tamil heritage** including the many temples in and around the town, many of them in a very sorry state, with damage being done to them, some of them 300 to even 800 years old. Another point was the need for the residents to engage in the **planning and development** of their town. After all it is their lives that are affected directly, and they must have a say.

### OPEN HOUSE....

**Deborah Smith** and **Ray Meeker**, the legendary **Pottery artists** of **Golden Bridge Pottery**, who have made Pondicherry their home and have trained many a potter across the country, opened their house on Rue Dumas to visitors to share their work and meet and talk to them.

**I learnt by apprenticing at Golden Bridge Pottery for over 3 years. GBP, run by Americans Ray and Deborah pioneered glazed pottery in South India...**

**Angad Vohra-MANTRA POTTERY**



**Ananda Ranga Pillai (30 March 1709 – 16 January 1761), was a dubash in the service of the French East India Company. He is mainly famous for his set of private diaries from the years 1736 to 1761 which portray life in 18th century India.**





The next discussion was a talk by **SA Kandaswamy** on **Ananda Rangapillai**, at the **Rangapillay House** on Rangapillai street, right across from the entrance to the main market. One had to wade carefully through onion peels strewn across the entrance way, and enter this rather non-descript doorway that led to a wonderfully carved traditional door which opened out into this large wonderful space. The talk was well attended, with Judge David Annousamy and Shri

Lakshminarayanan adding to the expert's points. This is one historic heritage house which is in desperate need of preservation, although looked after to the best of their capacity by the descendants of Ananda Rangapillay.



SA Kandaswamy, Judge David and Shri Lakshminarayanan at the RANGAPILLAY HOUSE, talking to his family & the audience





The Late AJIT KOUJALGI, Co-convener of Intach Pondicherry and the Late FRANCIS WACZIARG, Co-founder of the Neemrana Group, together infused fresh energy to the conservation of built heritage in Pondicherry with the restoration of the Hotel de l'Orient (below).

We miss them both and hope to keep their legacy alive.





The **Hotel de l'Orient** hosted a presentation on the attempts of architect **Kamalhasan** to preserve the wonderful heritage of his village and the surrounding rich area of Chettinad. He has painstakingly documented parts of this region, which is fast losing its beautiful neighbourhoods as the owners live in the cities and their children often overseas. So few are interested in caring for the ancestral homes of their enterprising forefathers who went across the Bay of Bengal and traded far into the East.



**Philippe Toussaint** the president of VMF, the biggest heritage organisation in France, presented their work in Pondicherry and in Chandernagore. He also showed interesting examples of how there was an Indian influence on architecture in France and added that we were not the only ones fighting to save our heritage, 'we are fighting every day in France too, stones don't shout when you murder them'. He added that in France, the area of protection around heritage extends to the landscape and also to the arts and crafts.

The Vice Chairperson of INTACH **Tasneem Mehta** reminded everyone that colonial buildings may have been built by the colonial powers, but they were built by Indians, for Indians and adapted for India. Her presentation was on the renovation of the erstwhile Victoria and Albert museum in Mumbai, now named the Bhau Daji

Lad museum, a project on which she worked from 2000. Today it is a very successful example of a building that can be repurposed, modernised in its contents, and become a public space that educates and entertains people. They involved the local community in the project, the local government, and local philanthropic organisations, and were able to raise enough funds to not only renovate and restore its collection, but also acquire new things that harmonised with existing works of art. The project is so successful that they have raised enough funds to build a new extension. She made an interesting observation, that today, the concept of artisans is disappearing and replaced by just labourers, and this has to be reversed. She commended the work of the Pondicherry chapter of INTACH.

Though it was her first visit she made it clear that she wanted to come again. She felt that the kind of movement we have begun, was very encouraging and would definitely yield results. **Aman Nath** of the Neemrana group concluded that in spite of there being parallel priorities, we owed it to our children to leave something tangible for them from our lives, and built heritage is something that everyone can recognise, and therefore important to preserve. India is a living civilisation, and here we have new ways of doing things. Sometimes we don't care as we believe in the impermanence of things but unless we do something, there will be nothing left.



**Preserving INTANGIBLE HERITAGE through classical dance forms**





While one part of the crowd then walked over to **Gratitude**, to hear **Aurelio's singing stones**, another group headed to the northern end of the boulevard where **Dr.A. Susairaj** and party performed songs of **Subramania Bharati** followed by a combination of **classical dance performances** by fifteen students to the music compositions of Pondicherry's great poets.

At Gratitude, the evening echoed with the solid yet elusive music, of the polished granite singing stones and then sounding their gongs and their other instruments, Aurelio and the Svaram musicians led the whole crowd to the **Maison Columbani** for the concluding ceremony. This started with a mime performance by **Drupad Gaonkar**. VMF then gave awards to beautifully restored buildings and announced the starting of their work to restore the park of Joan of Arc opposite the Eglise de Notre Dame des Anges Church which was restored by them earlier. This was followed by concluding remarks from Tasneem Mehta, the French Consul and the MLA. Then the Jazz duo of **Mishko** on base guitar and **David** on violin did renderings of Ave Maria followed by Vivaldi and finished with a popular piece of jazz music.



Sunaina Mandeem and Kakoli Banerjee wrapped up the festival by announcing that this was going to be an annual event and that the circle of the People of Pondicherry's Heritage was ever widening, and there was also support from the local government to start the restoration of listed buildings.

The festival ended with the elevating and innovative singing of **Mahesh Vinayakram**, blending his Carnatic style with tracks of music from different parts of the world.







## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

We would like to thank every single individual who helped in making this event so rich and successful.

They worked tirelessly not for money or personal glory but FOR THEIR CITY.

This is what makes PONDICHERRY special.

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Thank you. See you at the 2016 Pondicherry Heritage Festival.



