

**Discours de l'Ambassadeur de la France lors de la remise du titre
*Commandeur des Palmes académiques***

Dear Professor,
Dignitaries of the Diplomatic Corps,
Dignitaries of the University and academic world,
Dear teachers of French,
Dear friends,

It is indeed a great honour for me to salute tonight one of the most outstanding figures of the Indo-French scene in India. Professor Madanagobalane's fame and influence reaches far out from South to North and from East to West in India.

He was born in Pondicherry in a family that produced a whole series of talents and vigorous personalities, from his sister who is a famous Tamil writer to his brother and cousin who are famous playwrights.

As a young scholar he went to Paris, met André Malraux, whom he chose to write his thesis about, and experimented with France's impatience with the existing world, since he could observe how the students of Mai 68 were toying with the idea of revolution. His thesis became a landmark for research work in India and created awareness in academic circles of a new oriental continent being born in French modern literature, Nehru's India. Numerous research fellows followed and his inheritors form a long chain of thankful admirers.

It may well be Malraux's inspiration that lead him to fight for the rights of French teaching in this country. He is known for leading battles - and for winning them. In Tamil Nadu for example, as the head of the French Department of Madras University, he saw to it that each University had its French Department, he manoeuvred to get Colleges to maintain French or introduce French. Earlier in

Jawaharlal Nehru University, where he lectured for 17 years, he contributed as a major player in creating French excellence all around, in all aspects. He also organized the French teachers, to assert themselves, to develop skills, to propagate a modern approach to teaching French. He became their captain, their guru. The *Association of Indian Teachers of French* – AITF – is very much his handiwork. He founded it and directed it, firmly serving a broad vision of what French could be in India, from 1984 to 1998. He then became the key figure of the *Centre de Linguistique Appliquée de l'Inde Méridionale*, the *Centre for Applied Linguistics of Southern India*, very accurately known under its short name, the *CLAIM*, organizing year after year in-service seminars, experts encounters, conceptual and practical workshops. He conceived a brilliant textbook for Schools and Colleges, called *Mantra* which helped immensely in bringing about a fundamental shift in French teaching in India.

In fact he is the great Guru of Energy. His powerful MANTRA is and will long be an inspiration to the French teachers and scholars in India. “Intellectuals, said Malraux, are all men committed to one idea”. Your driving idea was French.

For this cherished idea, for your works, for the exemplary role you have played for more than 35 years, the French Government wants to thank you and elevate you to the rank of *Commandeur of the Order of the Palmes Académiques*. On its behalf I will now welcome you into the *Order of the Palmes Académiques*.

His Excellency M. **Dominique Girard**

Ambassador of France in India

September 22, 2003