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**PU secures ANRF-PAIR  
grant as Spoke Institute**

Pondicherry University has been selected as Spoke Institute under the prestigious ANRF-PAIR (Partnerships for Accelerated Innovation and Research) programme, an initiative of the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), in a major boost to its research capabilities. The research cluster is led by Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore which serves as the hub institution. According to an official release, as a category-I spoke institute under PAIR scheme, Pondicherry University will work closely and partner with IISc, Bangalore and other spoke institutes.

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## Pondy professor turns the academic lens on Kambaramayanam

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**G**rowing up listening to his mother recite verses of 'Kambaramayanam' turned Clement S Lourdes into a lifelong fan of the epic. Now, Lourdes, a professor in English at Pondicherry University, has established an endowment at the Subramania Bharathi School of Tamil Language and Literature to promote the Tamil epic and its celebrated writer Kamban.

"Kambaramayanam was never given the recognition it deserves. Neither was Kamban," says Lourdes, director of culture and cultural relations at the university. "There are many endowments on almost all noted Tamil scholars in various universities in India and abroad, but none of the prominent universities has an endowment on Kamban to celebrate his works." He adds that the endowment aims to bring together teaching faculty members, research scholars, postgraduate and undergraduate students to study the epic.

Lourdes says his mother Jaya was a school dropout, but read Tamil literature, particularly the works of Kamban. "She knew the epic by heart. My mother's father, A M Thambusamy, published the Tamil magazine Kavidamandalam and appointed Tamil poet Bharathidasan as its chief editor."

Lourdes adds that the epic stands apart among all classical Tamil poetry for its richness in language, use of metaphors and poetic elegance. "The epic played a crucial role in shaping Tamil Hindus' religious devotion. It popularised Lord Rama's life in Tamil Nadu and reinforced Hindu values and tradition. Kamban succeeded in translating the Sanskrit epic into a local, more accessible language and narrated Lord Rama's life in a poetic form to the Tamil-speaking populace."

The epic, says Lourdes, has several unique characteristics when compared to other versions of the Ramayana.

Central Institute of Classical Tamil vice chairperson Sudha Seshayyan gave the inaugural lecture of the endowment on 'Kamban Entroru Manudan' (Kamban: A human being), delving into the essence of Kambaramayanam. Assistant professor (Tamil) Lakshmi Duttai will coordinate the endowment lecture series. In a bid to encourage students to engage more deeply with the epic, the department organised elocution and drawing competitions for the students and distributed prizes to the winners during the inaugural function.

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**Prof Clement S Lourdes**