



**Pacippini: Writings on Hunger from Tamil South India**  
**August 12, 2018 – Conference Hall, French Institute of Pondicherry**

“Hunger” is a notoriously polysemic and slippery concept which can and is used and appropriated in very different contexts – ranging from dieting to anorexia, from ascetic fasting to famine induced starvation. This workshop is not concerned with the material causes of hunger, the economic reasons for it or the socio-political processes that bring it about. Rather, it aims at illuminating the religious and cultural history of the concept from a *longue durée* perspective, through its literary representations within one vernacular tradition. The choice of texts will shed light on the changing historical meanings of hunger within the vernacular literature. The pivotal period will be the 19th century when British political engagement with India transits from a purely commercial interest enacted through company rule to an imperial engagement that involves the incorporation of India as a colony of the British Empire. The 19th century as the pivotal site for changing perceptions of hunger is no mere coincidence. As Vernon (2010:4) has pointed out, “it was in imperial Britain over the past two centuries that the story of modernity became partially organized around the conquest of hunger, or at least its banishment to lands still awaiting “development”.”