INTRODUCTION
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Physical Features of Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu is the southern most state in the Indian subcontinent. It lies in the shape of a rhomboid between the Deccan plateau and the sea, stretching from 8° N in the southwest at Kanyakumari to Pulicat Lake in the northeast at 11° N latitude and lies between 76.15 and 80.20 of east longitude.¹ The state is surrounded by the states of Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and the Bay of Bengal. In the northwest an upland rim divides Tamil land from Kerala and Deccan. The Southern part of Tamil Nadu is washed by the Indian Ocean. It has a coastline of 620 miles and a land boundary of 750 miles with an area of 1,30,000 square kilometres. It is the eleventh state in area representing four percent of India’s geographical area.² The two ranges of mountain, the Western and Eastern Ghats, converge to the west and east coast of the peninsula. The Western Ghats meet the Eastern Ghats in the Kongu country at an altitude of more than 2300 meters in the Nilgiris, a region known for tribals.

The plateaus and plains of Tamil Nadu can be conveniently described in terms of four broad natural regions. The northern plains include Madras, Chengalpattu, eastern North Arcot and the northern parts of South Arcot and Tiruchirappalli. To the west and the south northern plains, between the Cauvery and Palghat gap, lies an extensive low plateau stretching over Dharmapuri, Salem, Coimbatore and Erode districts and reaching upto Dindigul. The Cauvery delta is the most fertile region of the state. The delta mainly consists of Thanjavur district with adjacent areas of Tiruchirappalli and South Arcot district.

Finally, the southeastern plains of Tamil Nadu consist of the districts of Madurai, Ramanathapuram and Tirunelveli.

Tamil Nadu has a number of rivers but unlike the major rivers of northern India, they are relatively small and entirely dependent on rainfall. The river systems of Tamil Nadu can be conveniently described in terms of three broad groupings viz; those to the north of Cauvery basin, the Cauveri and its tributaries.\(^3\) The northern rivers of Tamil Nadu are Araniar, Kortaliyar, Coovum, Adyar, Palar, Poini\(^4\) and Cheyyar. The Cauvery rises in Karnataka. It is joined by Bhavani, the Noyyal and Amaravathi rivers. The Periyar is a west flowing river. The Vaigai rises in Madurai district and has been dammed downstream at the point of its confluence with the Surulliar. The Tambraparani rises in Tirunelveli district and has several tributaries such as Chittar, Manimuthar, Gatana, Karuppanadhi and Ramanadhi. Kodaiyar is the southernmost basin in Tamil Nadu, which irrigates the Kanyakumari district.\(^5\)

**Political History**

The History of Tamil Nadu is traceable from the age of the Sangam which is known for a galaxy of scholars. The Chera, Chola and Pandya dynasties were prominent during the Sangam period.\(^6\) They ruled over the best part of Tamil Nadu in the beginning of the Christian era. The Cholas, who ruled over the Cauvery region, were keen on occupying

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the possessions of the Pandyas. Their rule came to an end by about 300 A.D. The Kalabhras, who ruled Tamil Nadu from 300 A.D. to 600 A.D., occupied the ‘period of Interregnum’ in the annals of Tamil Nadu. On the downfall of the Kalabhras, Kadungon founded the First Pandyan Empire. During the last decades of the eighth century A.D., the Empire of the Pandyas extended all over the peninsula. The imperial sway of the First Pandyan Empire lasted for about four centuries and gave way for the Pallavas of Kanchi. As the Pallavas had suffered in an eclipse during the last decades of the ninth century, the Cholas reasserted their authority. The Imperial Cholas under Vijayalaya, Rajaraja Chola and Rajendra Chola excelled in warfare activities both on land and sea. Disaster overtook the Chola Empire by the end of the eleventh century and fortune again smiled upon the Pandyas.

The Second Pandyan Empire was founded by Kulasekara Pandyan (1190-1216). His brother Maravarma Sundara Pandyan defeated Kulothunga III and took over the administration of the Cholas once and for all. The decline of the Second Pandyan Empire commenced from 1311 A.D. The succession war between the two sons of Kulasekara Pandyan, namely, Sundara Pandyan and Veera Pandyan, paved the way for Malik Kafur’s invasion in 1311. He plundered the Tamil country and took away a lot of booty on his return to Delhi. In 1323, Mohammed-bin-Tughlag, the ruler of Delhi, sent Jalaluddin Ashan Shah to capture Madurai. He sacked Madurai itself and became its Governor. In 1333, he rejected the overlordship of Delhi and

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asserted his independence. It led to the establishment of Madurai Sultanate.\textsuperscript{12} As a consequence, the Tamil country for the first time came under the influence of the Muslims. In 1336, the Hindu Empire of Vijayanagar under Bukka was established. The Vijayanagar ruler sent Kumara Kampana, his younger son, in 1371 against Sikkandar Shah, the Sultan of Madurai, and removed the Sultanate in 1378 A.D.\textsuperscript{13} It led to the establishment of Vijayanagar rule in Madurai. Krishnadeva Raya, the King of Vijayanagar was responsible for the foundation of the Nayakship of Madurai. He appointed Viswanatha Nayak as the ruler of Madurai in 1529. It was the sovereignty of the Nayaks that gave vitality to the Poligari system.\textsuperscript{14} During the Nayak rule, the kingdom was divided into seventy-two Pollams and each was assigned to a Poligar.\textsuperscript{15}

After the battle of Talaikotta in 1565, Vijayanagar Empire collapsed. Thereafter, Madurai under Krishnappa Nayak became virtually independent.\textsuperscript{16} But the Mughals superseded the Nayaks of Madurai in 1736. Ultimately the Mughal rule metamorphosed into Nawab's rule over the Carnatic. The Nawabs of Carnatic had to struggle for their survival against the thirty-four Southern Poligars until 1792 and ultimately failed.\textsuperscript{17} Then the British gradually occupied the territories of the Nawabs of Carnatic. Much of the Tamil region

\begin{enumerate}
\item Clement, S., \textit{Main Currents of Vijayanagar History}, Madurai, 1974, p.28.
\item Satyanatha Aiyar, R., \textit{History of the Nayaks of Madura}, Madras, 1924, p.54.
\item Husaini, S.A.Q., \textit{op.cit.}, p.143.
\end{enumerate}
came under the British rule between 1792 and 1801.\textsuperscript{18} From the beginning of the nineteenth century, Tamil Nadu became a part of the Madras Presidency.\textsuperscript{19} Madras city, the headquarters of the Presidency, along with Fort St. George, became the centre of British East India Company's administration.\textsuperscript{20}

Tamil Nadu in the modern period had undergone a sea change politically and territorially. Firstly, the East India Company and later the British crown created radical changes in India. Unlike in the past, the center of political activity was shifted to Madras, a newly created town. The British traders first settled at Pulicat and then at Armaganon. In 1640 A.D., they acquired the site of Madras on lease from the ruler of Chandragiri and built Fort St. George.\textsuperscript{21} In 1642, it was displaced by Masulipatnam as the chief settlement on the coast of Coromandel. Another fort was built at Cuddalore in 1690.\textsuperscript{22} Thereafter, the East India Company secured a firman from the Mughal Emperor, Faruksiyar, by which a few villages around Madras, namely, Nungambakkam and Thiruvottiyur were donated to the Company. Mohammed Syed, the Nawab of the Carnatic, willingly gifted Sadayankuppam, Perambur, Periamet, Vepery, Pudukkuppam and Ernavur to the British for the invaluable service rendered by them to his family when they were threatened by the Nizam of Hyderabad. The Nawab also gave money and permission to the British to mint coin.\textsuperscript{23}

\begin{thebibliography}{23}
\bibitem{21} Sambandam, M.S., \textit{Chennai Maanagar}, (Tamil), Madras, 1967, p.32.
\bibitem{22} Srinivasachari, C.S., \textit{A History of Gingee and Its Rulers}, Annamalai University, 1943, p. 273.
\end{thebibliography}
Following the British, the French also took interest in trade and political activities in Tamil Nadu in the seventeenth century. By 1672 A.D., they captured Santhome from the Dutch. They settled in Pondicherry from 1674 onwards by building a fort around it. For about a century, French and the British in South India were at war with each other, either in favour of or against the Nizam of Hyderabad or the Nawab of Carnatic and always in quest of more territories or to sustain the already acquired possessions. The advent of Robert Clive proved most successful to the East India Company in India, under whose stewardship, the Company could consolidate its position in Tamil Nadu with more territories coming under their control in quick succession.

The frequent intervention of Hydar Ali, the ruler of Mysore, had threatened the existence of the British in South India from the last four decades of the eighteenth century. He conquered a few of the British territories in Tamil Nadu and marched towards Madras. The British under Eyre Coote repulsed Hydar Ali’s forces and recovered Vellore, Wandiwash, Chittor and Nagapatnam. After Hydar Ali’s death in 1782, he was succeeded by his son Tipu Sultan who carried on the mission of his father. A series of battles that took place between Tipu Sultan and Cornwallis of the British in Madras, ended in the latter’s favour. The courage and valour of Tipu Sultan could not be a match for the British diplomacy and military superiority. After the fall of the Tipu Sultan, the British concentrated their attention on the Southern Poligars.

At the fag end of the eighteenth century, the Panchalamkurichi Pollam under Kattabomman challenged the British with the spirit of

valour and patriotism. But he was captured and executed on October 17, 1799 at Kayatar. Umaithurai, the brother of Kattabomman, continued the struggle against the British. Marudu brothers continued to be sympathetic towards Umaithurai and gave asylum to the latter. They were also eliminated on October 24, 1801.\footnote{Selvamuthu Kumarasami, L., ‘Marudu Brothers – The Pioneers of Freedom Struggle, in Unite, Vol.2., Virudhunagar, May 1993, pp.81–90.} After this, there was hardly any rival the British had to encounter in the Tamil Country.

The suppressed Poligars were made loyal zamindars and they had to pay regular tribute to the British.\footnote{Velmani, K.S.K., (ed.), Tirunelveli District Gazetteer, Vol.1, Chennai, 2001, p.221.} By actively interfering in the internal affairs of Thanjavur, the British secured the right to administer it in return for the payment of one lakh of star pagodas to the ruler.\footnote{Rajayyan, K., A History of British Diplomacy in Tanjore, Mysore, 1969, pp.109-111.} With the fall of the Carnatic Nawab, the Madurai, Tiruchi and Tirunelveli also fell and their administration too was looked after by the British Collectors. The British even obtained the right to administer the whole of the Carnatic region from its Nawab, Azim-ud-Daula, in return for an annual payment of pension to him.\footnote{Selvamuthu Kumarasami, L., \textit{op.cit.}, pp.168 – 169.} During the British rule in India, the Madras Presidency, comprising the present Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, was formed to facilitate administration in the south of the Vindhyas.

Direct British crown rule over India was established in 1858, following the Mutiny of 1857. The British rulers did not create a separate political unit for the Tamil territory but kept it within a multilingual Madras Presidency. In 1935, some areas of the Presidency were transferred to the newly formed province of Orissa. The erstwhile princely State of Pudukkottai was integrated with the Madras
Presidency in 1948. Incidentally, the Ruler of Pudukkottai was a pioneer in consenting to be integrated with the Free India. On October 1953, the Telugu-speaking districts of Madras Presidency were constituted into the separate state of Andhra Pradesh. On November 1, 1956, the district of Malabar was transferred to the newly constituted Malayalam-speaking state of Kerala and the district of South Canara to the Kannada-speaking state of Mysore (now Karnataka), under the linguistic reorganization of states. Kollegal taluk, which had until then been part of Coimbatore district, was also transferred to the state of Mysore. On the other hand, the district of Kanyakumari and the taluk of Shencottai, which had both been until then a part of the princely state of Travancore – Cochin, were transferred to the newly constituted Madras State. The present state of Tamil Nadu was thus constituted as a linguistically homogeneous political unit only on November 1, 1956. In 1956, when Madras state was formed on the basis of state’s reorganization, there were thirteen districts, viz; Madras, Chengalpattu, South Arcot, North Arcot, Salem, Coimbatore, Thanjavur, Tiruchirappalli, Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Tirunelveli, Nilgiris and Kanyakumari. Its territory has since then undergone only one minor modification, with 317 villages being transferred to Andhra Pradesh in 1959. The State of Madras was renamed on January 14, 1969 as Tamil Nadu. At present, Tamil Nadu has thirty districts.

In terms of religion, the population of Tamil Nadu consisted of 88.9 per cent of Hindus in 1981. Christians, Muslims and followers of other religions (mostly Jains) formed 5.8 per cent, 5.2 per cent and 0.1 per cent respectively.

per cent respectively. While Christians and Muslims were more or less equally important religious minorities numerically speaking, Christians in Tamil Nadu were more than twice their proportion in the country as a whole (2.4 per cent) whereas Muslims were less than half (11.4 per cent). Christians are present as a sizeable minority in Kanyakumari and Tirunelveli districts while Muslims tend to be concentrated in North Arcot and in some of the coastal districts, especially Thanjavur.33

Sources of Information

To prepare an account of the “Struggle for Temple Entry in Tamil Nadu, 1872 – 1955”, both primary and secondary sources were tapped. The Tamil Nadu State Archives furnish primary source of information of extraordinary value. The temple entry bills, legislative debates, proceedings, the administrative orders, the government orders and the department files have been extensively used as primary source.

Among the list of other source materials, the gazetteers, the manuals, the different reports of the government like census reports, handbooks and administrative reports are of special significance and they throw much light on the changing condition of the depressed people in Tamil Nadu. The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, The Writings and Speeches of B.R. Ambedkar, The Collected Works of Periyar E.V. Ramasami (E.V.R), and the various accounts of dedicated social reformers in the cause of eradicating untouchability have been used in this study. They record the thought-provoking speeches and writings of the national leaders. Government Publications related to temple entry by the outcaste people have also been consulted.

In addition to these, newspapers and Journals, both in vernacular and English, offer much information. The Hindu, Madras Mail, 33. Madras Institute of Development Studies, op.cit, p.9.
Navasakthi, Kudi Arasu (People’s Government), Viduthalai (Freedom), Arivu (Knowledge), Pagutharivu (Rationalism), The Modern Rationalist, Dravidian, Revolt and Dalit Voice constitute full details regarding the backward conditions of the depressed people and their relentless struggle for temple entry.

The important publications related to socio-economic problems of Tamil Nadu, written by Indian and foreign scholars, are also consulted. C.J. Baker’s The Politics of South India, Eugene F. Irschick’s Political and Social Conflict in South India, 1916 – 1929, D.A. Washbrook’s The Emergence of Provincial Politics: The Madras Presidency, 1870 – 1920, David Arnold’s Congress in Tamil Nadu 1919 – 1937, provide details of the south Indian political awakening and people’s awareness in the social, political, economic and cultural fields. P. Rajaraman’s The Justice Party – A Historical Perspective, 1916-1937, eulogises the contributions made by Justice Party for the welfare of the backward and depressed classes in Tamil Nadu. This study proposes to show the real motive behind the Justice Party, for the upliftment of non-Brahmin community. S. Saraswathi’s Minorities in Madras State: Group Interest in Madras Politics is a study of politicised caste groups in the Madras State. In the fifth chapter of her study on “The Political Role of the Fifth Varna”, she traces the role of individual leaders and other depressed class associations in the fight for social justice. P. Venugopal’s Social Justice and Reservations and K. Veeramani’s The History of the Struggle for Social and Communal Justice in Tamil Nadu reveal the disabilities of these historically disadvantaged sections of the society.

Some of the books related to temple entry are note worthy. P. Chidambaram Pillai’s Right of Temple Entry, K. Kandasami’s Freedom Struggle in Madurai District, M.E. Naidu and Suchindaram
Satyagraha, by P. Ramachandran, Temple Entry Legislations by S.R. Venkataraman, The Temple Entry Problem by V.P. Krishnamacharya, M.K. Gandhi's Removal of Untouchability and P. Nagoorkani’s Struggle for Social Justice in Tamil Nadu 1916-1939 (Ph.D., Thesis), B. Sobhanan’s Temple Entry Movement and the Sivakasi Riots, C. Paramarthalingam’s Religion and Social Reform in Tamil Nadu, and Social Reform Movement in Tamil Nadu, and Joshu Fazal-ud-Din’s The Tragedy of the Untouchables deal at length with the problems of the depressed sections, the caste divisions and social segregation. They also portray the agitation for temple entry in Tamil Nadu. Besides, souvenirs, periodicals, recent dailies, articles in various journals, pamphlets and unpublished theses and dissertations are also used occasionally with a view to filling the gaps. To attain cogency in the discourse, care is taken to ensure the relevance and authenticity of the data to the extent possible and for an objective approach. In order to ensure the validity of both primary and secondary sources, they are checked and cross checked with one another while analysing the different facts and facets of the movement. A comparative study of all these data gives a complete and wholesome account of the subject and paves the way for framing a historically relevant perspective.

Survey of Relevant Literature

The Present study entitled 'Struggle for Temple Entry in Tamil Nadu, 1872 – 1955' is selected by the scholar due to the following reasons.

1. It is purely a study on the struggle for social justice.

2. In the recent years, a number of works were done in this subject matter. But they do not describe in detail about the temple entry agitations covering the whole of Tamil Nadu.
The following works are available on this subject. But they do not touch on all the issues as the scholar has done against a broader perspective, i.e., social, political and legislative aspects.


The scholar included a chapter in his thesis on temple entry issue. He has cited certain legislative bills related to temple entry.


The scholar has made an elaborate attempt to describe the Madurai temple entry campaign alone. This work lacks historical background to temple entry campaign.


This author in his work traces the temple entry issue against the political background alone. He does not make an attempt for a deep study.


The work mainly deals with the early temple entry agitation of the Nadars in Sivakasi region alone.


This work slightly touches on the temple entry issue in the erstwhile Travancore State.

This work also attempts to focus on the rights of the depressed people to enter the temple. It also describes the problems of temple entry.


This work was written on the basis of the legislative bills and the prevailing laws of temple entry.

All these works partly touched on the temple entry issue and did not elaborate the issue fully. No complete and competent work has so far been carried out at the Ph.D. research level covering the ‘Struggle for Temple Entry in Tamil Nadu from 1872-1955’. Under these circumstances, the scholar has selected this topic for his Ph.D. research. The scholar has made a sincere effort to expound the concept, including the field survey and combined it with the experience of some strugglers of the movement to make this research academically meaningful and socially relevant.

**Choice of the Study**

The pivotal role of caste and the increased importance of social issues since the turn of the second half of the nineteenth century in the social history of the Tamils have created certain inhibitions among local scholars to embark upon scholarly work on contemporary socio-political history. On the contrary, most of the studies of both Indian and western scholars are centered round national movement. Proper projection and due treatment is yet to be given for the movement for social equality and acceptance. No scholarly work has been published so far on the struggle waged by the temple entry agitators in Tamil Nadu for the cause of the prohibited classes. The scholar felt that an
analysis of the temple entry events would bring out the important aspects of the social history of Tamil Nadu in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Objectives of the Study

The proposed study is concerned with social movement. The temple entry events in Tamil Nadu during 1872-1955 form the nucleus of the study. The study aims to realise the following objectives.

- To focus the nature of social stratification which was in vogue in Tamil Nadu during the last quarter of the nineteenth, and first two quarters of the twentieth century.

- To examine the caste ridden society and practice of social inhibitions and prohibitions observed by the caste-Hindus, and their adverse impact on the depressed class people in Tamil Nadu.

- To delineate the role of social reform movements, communal organizations, divided ideologies of regional and national political parties and leaders which directly or indirectly had a bearing on the temple entry agitations and subsequent riots for social acceptance.

- To illustrate and examine the struggles waged for temple entry at various orthodox centers and the simultaneous obstructions by the sanatanists in Tamil Nadu.

- To trace out the minute details of temple entry events in order to prove that the temple entry movement is the climax of the anti-untouchability campaign.

- To evaluate the legislative and ameliorative measures initiated and incorporated by the Justice Ministry and the Congress
Ministry in the erstwhile Madras Presidency for the removal of social disabilities, improvement of socio-economic conditions of the depressed people and ultimate realisation of temple entry.

The following assumptions and surmises formulated by the scholar at random require thorough research:

**Hypotheses**

The study attempts to test the following hypotheses framed by the scholar.

1. The temple entry agitation was initiated at first by the Nadars in Tamil Nadu in the second half of the nineteenth century.

2. The advent of Christian Missionaries, the rise of social reformers and the spread of western education provided the background for the social transformation, and struggle for temple entry.

3. The London Privy Council’s verdict was significant because it halted the temple entry of the Nadars, declaring them as unclean caste and not eligible to enter the temples.

4. The temple entry issue in the neighboring states had its impact on Tamil Nadu.

5. The All India Harijan-oriented tours of Gandhi in 1934 softened the hearts of the caste- Hindus in favour the temple entry of Harijans.

6. The Madurai temple entry led by A. Vaidyanatha Iyer was the first successful event in the temple entry agitation.

7. The Queen’s Proclamation of Travancore heralded the era of opening of the temples throughout India.
8. In the first half of the twentieth century, the temple entry agitation was purely the movement of the Harijans, backed by the social-minded caste-Hindu leaders.


11. The Untouchability (Offences) Act of 1955 pronounced severe punishment to the offenders connected with the offence of untouchability.

The present study aims to prove the above hypotheses with sources of information judiciously selected for the purpose.

**Period of the Study**

The period of this study covers eighty-three years. In order to have a thorough study of the temple entry campaign with all their socio-political aspects, the period of the study has been chosen between 1872 and 1955. For a long time, the Brahminical temples were monopolised by the high caste people, and the depressed and untouchable classes were prohibited even to approach the streets where the temples were located. Due to the social awakening and economic empowerment, for the first time, the Nadars, a low caste group of the southern districts of Tamil Nadu, attempted the temple entry. In 1872, the Nadars attempted to enter the Lord Subramanya Temple at Tiruchendur in the erstwhile Tirunelveli district. This attempt marked
the commencement year of this study. The Untouchability (offences) Act of 1955 declared severe punishment to the offenders who are connected with the practice of untouchability. This Untouchability (offences) Act of 1955 marks the end of this study.

Significance of the Period

The period witnessed the manifestation of two parallel movements, namely "Political Freedom Struggle" and "Social Liberation Struggle". The elite Brahmins dominated the former while the non-Brahmin caste-Hindu leaders of all communities, and social-minded thinkers, led the latter. The political freedom was delayed due to the non-attainment of social liberation of depressed people from the clutches of the evils of the caste-system. Realising this drawback, Gandhi actively involved himself since 1920s in the upliftment of the depressed class people. He initiated Constructive Programme of Congress, which advocated removal of untouchability and the entry of the untouchables into the temples.

For the first time, after the introduction of the provincial autonomy, the dominant Congress ministry in Madras Presidency was able to turn its whole mind to the temple entry issue and enlisted the mass support for the cause of the entry of the depressed classes into temples and paved the way for the opening of the major temples to all in the subsequent years. Many big temples in Tamil Nadu were thrown open to the untouchables. When the untouchables attempted to enter the village temples, it resulted in success in some cases and ended in communal riots in other cases in the post-independence period. However, those issues related to the temple, awakened the untouchables and unified them. This resurgence of the depressed castes marked the stage of the present scenario in the temple entry movement.
Statement of the Problem

Struggle for temple entry in Tamil Nadu is one of the protest and reform movements initiated during this period, basically to prohibit many customs and rituals imposed over the outcaste people by the caste-Hindus in the name of Hinduism. Temples are considered the abodes of gods and goddesses and they played an important role in the Hindu way of life. The Hindu caste system, being both hierarchical and stratified, prohibited several low caste people from entering temples to worship gods and goddesses and other centers of public activities. The prohibition of the low caste people from entering temples in the Hindu society is being practiced for a long period. Since the later part of the nineteenth century in Tamil Nadu, many low caste people rose up in protest against the existing established social order. The right of entry into the temples was sometimes considered a symbol of prestige and social status. The privilege of entering temples was linked to social recognition and denying entry imposed a social disability on larger section. The claims of the low caste people for entering the major temples of Tamil Nadu, located in Thanjavur, Madurai, Srirangam, Erode, Aruppukottai, Kamudi, Sivilliputtur, Sivakasi, Tirunelveli and Tiruchendur, aggravated caste consciousness which led to temple entry riots. These riots marked not only a setback to the dominant caste-Hindus but also to the Brahminic ideology which preaches and perpetuates caste discrimination.

Methodology

Due to the non-availability of a complete scholarly work on temple entry movement in Tamil Nadu and due to the unexplored nature of the present subject, it became essential to collect as far as possible all reliable data accessible. Historical methodology has been adopted to
trace and unfold various phases and patterns of social reform activities and temple entry events in Tamil Nadu. Further, the study also adopts analytical approach to the problems and concerns of the depressed classes and the various agitations, the depressed castes, along with their sympathisers launched against the sanatanists in the Brahminical temples and against the caste-Hindus in the village temples in Tamil Nadu as part of the socio-religious reform movement. Besides, an analytical study of the source materials serves the purpose of reconstructing the past in a spirit of free enquiry and with view to presenting as objective an account as it is humanly possible.

**Chapterization**

This thesis entitled "Struggle for Temple Entry in Tamil Nadu, 1872-1955" is divided into ten chapters, besides an Introduction and Conclusion.

"Temple and Society" forms the first chapter. In this chapter, an attempt is made to trace the role and influence of the temple in the Tamil society in the past. Temples were arbiters of social status in the locality. The right to enter certain parts of the temple and participate in certain ceremonies are reserved to certain communities alone. Low caste groups have agitated for admission to temples as part of their campaign for improved status. Based mainly on local traditions and customs and the dharmasatras, the temple authorities dispensed justice. The temples also carried out some other philanthropic activities in times of natural calamities. At this juncture, the temple authorities had ignored the caste restrictions and other social disabilities and mingled together freely which enabled them to integrate the people socially.
The second chapter is entitled "Status of Classes". It deals with the socio-economic conditions of the people in Tamil society during the nineteenth and early half of the twentieth century in Tamil Nadu. During this period, the Tamil society was divided into three classes. The Brahmins occupied the upper strata. Next to them were the caste-Hindus. They were Mudaliars, Vellalas, Naidus, Naickers, Kammalas and Thevars. The Nadars and the Scheduled caste people were treated as depressed people. The Brahmins and caste-Hindus were economically sound and fully enjoyed social, economical and religious rights and status. The depressed people were denied the social and civic rights.

'Social Awakening and Change' forms the third chapter. In this chapter, the factors and forces, which were responsible for the enlightenment of the depressed people have been traced out. In this connection, the introduction of the western education, reorganization of the judicial system, administrative measures of the British government, yeomen services of the Christian missionaries, the works of the many voluntary agencies, the services of the socio-religious reformers, the communal leaders, and the role of the press media are analysed.

The fourth chapter is entitled 'Temple Entry Attempts in the Nineteenth Century'. It deals with the agitation of the Nadars for temple entry and social equality. The Nadars were treated just above the Adi-Dravidas in the social ladder. The Nadars were denied social rights. Their economic condition compelled them to fight for their rights. In order to attain the right to temple entry, they agitated at different places in Tamil Nadu. They were involved in the agitations at Tiruchendur (1872), Madurai (1874), Thiruthangal (1876), Golappati (1885), Kalugumalai (1895), Sivakasi (1897), and Kamudhi (1898). The caste-Hindus suppressed the agitation of the Nadars with the assistance
of the police. In 1908, the London Privy Council declared a caste-Hindu-biased decision that the Nadars were not eligible to enter the temples of caste-Hindus because they were unclean caste people.

'Temple Entry in Neighbourhood States and Its Impact In Tamil Nadu' forms the fifth chapter. In Tamil Nadu, the depressed people were not allowed to worship the deities in the temples. In the neighbouring States of Tamil Nadu like Kerala, Karnataka, and Bombay, the depressed people were allowed into the temples because of the mass agitation and continuous satyagraha for the temple entry. In this connection, Vaikom Satyagraha, Suchindram Satyagraha, Nasik Satyagraha, Guruvayur Satyagraha, M.R.Jayakar's Bombay Bill and the Travancore Queen's Proclamation are vividly depicted.

The sixth chapter entitled 'Central and State Legislative Measures' describes the legislative bills passed both in the Central and Madras Legislatures. The bills were aimed at eradicating untouchability and allowing the depressed people into the prohibited temples. As the temple entry issue of the depressed people encompassed the entire India, it required a Central legislation. Hence C.R.Renga Iyer introduced 'Temple Entry Disabilities Removal Bill' in the Central Legislature. But due to the compulsions of election strategy, Congress had withdrawn its support in order to win the support of caste-Hindus, who alone had the voting rights.

'Temple Entry Campaign of Self-Respecters' forms the seventh chapter. In this chapter, by Periyar's followers attempts to enter temples at Madurai, Tiruvannamalai, Tiruchi, Erode and Varagoor are highlighted. As the judgment was in favour of caste-Hindus, E.V.R and his followers, thereafter, boycotted the Hindu temples and advocated Hindu temple reforms. They propagated atheist principles
and strongly attacked Brahminism which they considered to be the main factor responsible for the practice of social discrimination.

The eighth chapter entitled ‘Major Temple Entry Events’ describes Madurai and Srirangam temple entry events. For a while, Rajaji was the Premier of Madras Presidency. His close lieutenants were A.Vaidyanatha Iyer and T.S.S.Rajan. After visiting the Tranvancore State to witness temple entry and the passage of the Malabar Temple Entry Bill successfully, Rajaji decided to conduct temple entry of Harijans in Tamil Nadu. As a sequel, Vaidhyanatha Iyer, along with the depressed class members, entered the Madurai Meenakshi Amman Temple amidst great opposition. Following it in the same year, T.S.S.Rajan entered the Srirangam Renganatha Swami Temple with great difficulty. To save them, Rajaji passed ‘Temple Entry Authorization and Indemnity’ Act in 1939.

The ninth chapter is entitled ‘Period of Smooth Temple Entry and Anti-Untouchability Measures’. After the successful Madurai and Srirangam temples entry, a number of temples were thrown open to the Harijans. The important temples, where the Harijans entered, were at Thanjavur, Tirunelveli, Courtallam, Valayapatti, Tirumohur, Srivilliputtur, Palani, Karaikudi, Coimbatore, Hosur and Ettayapuram. Jagajeevanram, the then Harijan Labour Minister of Central Government, along with a number of Untouchables, entered the Thiruvarur temple. To solve the practical difficulties of temple entry, T.S.S.Rajan introduced ‘Temple Entry Authorization Bill’ in 1947. On the day of the implementation of the Bill, 148 temples were opened. In 1949, K. Madhava Menon, a legislative member of Madras Legislature introduced another bill. It became ‘Temple Entry Authorization (Amendment) Act’, 1949. After India gained her independence, in the articles 17 and 35 of the Constitution, it was noted that untouchability
was legally declared abolished. At last the Government of India passed the ‘Untouchability (Offences) Act of 1955’. It prescribed more stringent punishment for all offences connected with untouchability.

The last chapter is entitled “Present Scenario.” In the post-independent period too, the untouchables are not allowed in some of the temples. The temple entry acts of 1947 and 1949 removed all the barriers to the temple entry by the untouchables. However, the law is not strictly implemented eventhough the Untouchability Offences Act 1955 removed the practice of untouchability to some extent. But in many private and village temples, still the untouchables are not allowed to enjoy the rights envisaged in the Constitution. The untouchables are allowed to enter the big Brahminical temples at Chidambaram, Madurai, Srirangam, Tenkasi and Tirunelveli but their entry at village temples resulted in communal riots at many places in the last three decades of the twentieth century. In about 7000 villages in Tamil Nadu, untouchability is observed against the depressed class people. The unequal structure of the society led to the caste clashes and communal riots over the temple related issues between the caste-Hindus and the depressed classes at Vellaiyarpuram, Ilangunni, Karapattu, Kandadevi, Siruvachi, Uraiyr, Ganapathiyapuram, Nanguneri, Unjanai and so on. In this way, the present scenario also raises the eyebrows, even though the Constitution has ensured protection against discrimination in the name of race or caste or creed, and the Fundamental Rights ensured equal rights between the communities because still the practice of untouchability is observed in the villages or in rural Tamil Nadu.

In Conclusion, research findings are given in a sequential way. The role of socio-religious reformers, voluntary agencies, the political leaders and depressed class leaders for the cause of temple entry are portrayed. Besides, an attempt is made to trace out the activities of the
depressed class organizations, the Harijan Sevak Sangh, the National Congress and the Self-Respect League for the establishment of a balanced society. The temple related issues like temple car festival, mud horse festival and similar festivals at various villages resulted in the caste clashes. The spread of communal violence is also analysed. Further in this concluding part, suggestions and ideas are incorporated to solve the problems related to temple entry events.