Chapter 1

FORMATIVE PERIOD OF DALIT AWARENESS
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Long before the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi on the Indian political scene, the question of the uplift of the Depressed Classes or Untouchables had been taken up by some social reformers and reform organisations with a certain degree of earnestness. In the later half of the nineteenth century Jyotiba Phooley in the Bombay Presidency and Sasipada Bandopadhyaya in Bengal made some efforts towards the social elevation of the Depressed Classes. After the formation of the National Social Conference through the initiative of Mahadev Govind Ranade in 1887, the issue of the removal of untouchability could be discussed in its forum. By the beginning of the twentieth century socio-political awakening originated among such advanced sections of the Depressed Classes as the Thiyyas of Malabar, the Mahars of Bombay and the Namasudras of Bengal. In Malabar, in 1903, Sri Narayan Guruswami, a Thiyya socio-religious reformer, formed an association called S.N.D.P. Yogam (Sri Narayan Dharma Paripalan Yogam) for the spread of education among the Thiyyas as well as their sanskritization. In 1905, Vithal Ramji Shinde, the social reformer of the Bombay Presidency, formed the Depressed Classes Mission Society of India for promoting the depressed Classes’ uplift. The society played a significant role in the spread of education among the Depressed
Classes in western India. Dalits in Tamil Nadu also witnessed awakening in the later half of the nineteenth century. Many leaders emerged among the dalits. Many caste associations were formed. Educational institutions were started. Above all, the press also had its role in creating awareness among the dalits.

**Emergence of Leaders**

It is an accepted social phenomenon that the upbringing of the lower castes in a developing country depends largely on the quality of organized leadership made available to the people. For reasons such as illiteracy, ignorance, traditional values and customs, lack of hopes and aspirations, the scheduled castes have generally accepted and in many cases felt contented with the ‘lowest rank’ tagged on with innumerable social disabilities. Leaders like Ayothidasar, Srinivasan, Appadurai, Ayyakkannu and Boosami emerged during this period. They fought relentlessly against untouchability and created awareness among the dalits.

**Pandithamani Ayothidasar**

Ayothidasar was born in the year AD 1845 at Tenampet in Chennai city. His father Kandasamy was an Adi Dravida. He had his education at Nilgiris. He started developing interest in Tamil and mastered Tamil

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literature. He became a good poet. During his days untouchability was in practice in the society in the name of religion and *sastras*. This made him learn more about the religion and *sastras*. He started to learn about the Shiva and Vaishnava concepts. He also began to probe and understand about *Dwaita* and *Adwaita* philosophy. He started arguing against these philosophies as they had no roots. The non-availability of education to the untouchables made him take initiatives to provide them education and started a number of educational institutions. He started publishing books on history of early man and their way of life. This helped to develop courage in the downtrodden who were in constant fear, due to ignorance. He wrote a book named ‘Native Adi Dravidas’ in the year 1906. This book was based on the teaching of Thirukkural and the various historical facts of early Tamils and their kingdom.


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It is a known fact that the Christian missionaries involved in removal of untouchability by establishing educational institutions. The same method was adopted by Theosophical Society founded by Dr. Anne Besant at Adyar in Chennai. Since the policy was same for Ayothidhasar, he got lot of help and encouragement from personalities like Dr. Anne Besant, Arundel and others.

Ayothidasar started the weekly magazine ‘Tamizhan’ in the year 1907 and started rendering service to the upliftment of Tamils. He began publishing important extracts from ‘London Times’, depicting the incidents of atrocities on the untouchables and the Congress politics. He was the editor of the paper till he died. Tamils especially the downtrodden were taught self esteem through this magazine. This magazine was popular among the Tamils of Srilanka, Burma, Singapore and other South Asian countries.

His writings had touched almost all facets of community like politics, economics, religion, literature, history and journalism of his days. His writings revealed him as a multi-faceted personality. His writings, written in Tamil between 1907 and 1914 brought out his signal contribution to Tamil dalits’ cause.

In the name of caste and religion, the dalits were suppressed for many years. The advent of English gave them relief. It was because of the

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4 Encyclopaedia of Dalits in India: Leaders, p. 144.
5 Anbu Pon Ouiyam, Interview, dated 2nd October 2001.
arrival of the English, they got a chance to get into the threshold of education. Ayothidhasar considered the English as the emancipators of dalits from the cruel brothers of their own land. In later days Periyar and Ambedkar also had the same view.⁶

Bharathiyar, the great Tamil poet condemned the newspapers which upheld the view of the Brahmins. He wrote articles in that magazine on topics like Separation of Bengal, Satyagraha in South Africa, Tirunelveli swadeshi corporation and views on freedom. Ayothidhasar looked at these burning topics of the day on dalit’s angle for which he gathered information from various sources.⁷ Bharathiyar severely condemned the partition of Bengal. He afraid that a civil war would broke out on this score.⁸

Ayothidasar had a different view on the partition of Bengal. He held that the governance of a province by a simple representation was tough and difficult. But at the same time if the province got divided into four and four representatives to look after, the administration would be easier, better and a welcome gesture. It was because such a segregation would help the people to bring their maladies and sufferings into the notice of the governance. Further such a separation of a big provinces like Bengal would offer scope and facility to measure land and river regions and maintain

⁶ E. V. Ramaswamy Periyar stressed this point on many occasion in his paper ‘Kudiyarsu’.
⁷ Ayothidasar Chinthanaikal, Palayamkottai, pp. 83-84.
⁸ Ibid. p. 85.
records about the use of such natural resources by the people. The partition of provinces would help to improve the progress of the provinces.

In the South African city of Johannesburg, there was a great political turning on the issue of Indians being treated as second class citizens by the British. In his magazine ‘India’ Bharathiyar gave his powerful opinion that those who believed honour and self-respect in India should wage a war against such a racial discrimination. But Ayothidasar held a different view. He sagaciously pinpointed that in India there exists the caste distinction between forward community and dalits.9

There were some places in India where dalits are not allowed to walk on the streets. There were some places in India where dalits should not draw water from the community wells. There were some places in India where dalit children were not allowed to receive their education along with children of higher castes. Such a tendency prevailed in India, thereby disgracing the very objective of unity of the people. If such a grave conduct of separating dalits from others by the high castes, then where would the call for unity of Indians against British in South Africa bore the fruit of solutions to them.10 Without finding a remedy for the existing divisions on the social status between dalits and high castes, Ayothidasar viewed that it was meaningless to fight against racial discrimination in South Africa. He opined that Indians those who gone to South Africa for

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10 Ayothidasar Chinthanaikal, pp. 211-212.
their sustenance should abide by the rules and regulations or British. Had they resented to violence in the foreign land then it was but natural for them to receive physical blows for their misconduct. They must try to love up to the expectations of the law of South Africa and stop resorting to unlawful means, which would invite trouble for their existence.\textsuperscript{11}

Many people had the view that in India, Hindi alone should be given the status of national language. Even Bharathiyar supported this aspect since the language spoken by majority be made as national language. But Ayothidasar had a different view. He considered that only English had all elements to elevate the status of India’s national language. He also opined that almost all Indian languages had taunted out Brahmanism and dirt of religions. Indian languages had in them no scope to come out of this age long dirt pointed on them and become fit and ready to receive the emerging new knowledge trend. It is English and English alone the most suitable language for Indians to come to grips with the new vistas of knowledge of the 20th century. Indians could communicate with those who live on other parts of the world easily. On this scope English was better than Hindi and it alone could be made as national official language.\textsuperscript{12}

The views of Ayothidasar were criticised by many. One such person was V.V.Swaminatha Iyer. In his article called ‘Memory Manchari’, he nicknamed him as Mannarsamy and criticized his views. One retired

\textsuperscript{11} Dalit Murasu - 1999, pp. 16-20.
\textsuperscript{12} Ayothidasar Chinthanaikal, p. 326.
professor and friend of Ayothidasar who met V.V. Swaminatha Iyer explained to him that he was not a person to be made fun as since he was profound scholar in the research of Buddhist religion. He further related him that it was Ayothidasar who came out with concrete views that the existing Siva and Vaishnava temples were once Buddhist and Jainese places of worship.\textsuperscript{13}

Ayothidasar found that in the history of Tamil Nadu written either by Brahmins or by caste Hindus, no effort was made to record the existence of dalits. He moved in the direction of tracing the history for dalits from the remnant historic foot-prints of Tamil history.\textsuperscript{14}

In ‘Tamizhan’ magazine Ayothidasar put his ideas in a detailed manner that spoke about the yester-story of Buddhism and Jainism that slowly waning into brilliant influence of the existing Siva and Vaishnava cults.\textsuperscript{15} He developed a history for dalits, much against the comment of “dalits have no history of their own”.

With regard to his view on God and temples he held that parents are primary gods. Worshipping them is far more greater, better and appropriate than worshipping stone gods. Initially he was a Vaishnavite. Later he decided to look for truth contained in other religions. So he devoted his time to study Christianity, Jainism and Buddhism. He, however, intended

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\item[\textsuperscript{13}] Kavitha Charan, Chennai, September 2001, p. 35.
\item[\textsuperscript{14}] Suba Veerapandian, Peiyarin Idathusari Desiyam, Chennai, 2006, pp. 117-118.
\item[\textsuperscript{15}] \textit{Ibid.}, p. 119.
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to leave out Hinduism, which he thought was based on inequality, unreason and exploitation. He wished to survive Buddhism, based on liberty, equality and fraternity. In the year 1891, Pandit Ayothidasar, along with his followers met Colonel H. S. Olcott and requested him to help in revival of Buddhism in India. Thereupon, Colonel Olcott took Ayothidasar to Sri Lanka, where he was ordained by Ven. Sumangala Maha Nayaka, the then Principal of Vidyodaya College, Sri Lanka.

With the help of Colonel Olcott, Madam Blatvasky and Ven. Angarika Dharmapala, Ayothidasar began his missionary work under the auspices of the South Indian Sakya Buddhist Association established by him in 1900 at Madras. He also established a branch of the said association at Marikuppam in 1907 and yet another at Champion Reef Mine, KGF in 1914. He thought that the untouchables were originally Buddhists and their salvation lay in Buddhism. He felt the need of education for uplift of untouchables. It was because of his efforts that four schools were started in Madras for the Depressed Classes children by Colonel H.S.Olcott.16

This attempt facilitated many dalits gathered themselves under this simple banner. He happened to be the chief vanguard in spear heading the cause of dalits at its initial stage. Further his multi-faceted and multi-dimensional nature of personality earned him an indelible place in the history of Dalits' movement.17

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16 Encyclopaedia of Dalits in India: Leaders, p. 144.
17 Tamilan Magazine, 1908, p. 16.
In later stages Laxmi Naresh and Advocate Singaravelu came to his help in his social and religious activities. In the year 1910, they were successful in organizing the South Indian Buddhist Conference. He got married to Dhanalakshmi, the younger sister of Dewan Bahadur Srinivasan, who represented the Depressed Classes along with Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar at the Round Table Conference. Pandit Ayothidasar had four sons and two daughters. One of his sons Rajaram went to Natal, South Africa and worked for spread of Buddhism there. Later on, Perriaswamier founded the Natal Buddhist Society in the year 1920. Pandit Ayothidasar was the first Buddhist revivalist in India among the untouchables. He left for heavenly abode on 5 May 1914 at the age of 69.\(^{18}\)

**Appadurai**

Appadurai was born to Gabriel an Adi Dravida and Akhilandeswari on 15th August 1890. After Ayothidasar, many dalits embraced the Buddhism. Appadurai was one such person.\(^{19}\) Forefathers of Appadurai’s parents embraced Christianity, because they could not tolerate the cult of Hindus oppressing them for their low born status. To retain their supremacy, Brahmanism brought division in society on the basis of the labour and caste. But Buddhism is not like that. Buddhism is famous for humanism, humanitarianism, equality and unity.\(^{20}\)

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\(^{18}\) Encyclopaedia of Dalits in India: Leaders, p. 145.
Appadurai was a Tamil Pandit. He served as a high school teacher in Tamil Nadu at Kolar Gold Fields (KGF) till his retirement in 1940. Appadurai’s intellect ever made him to rise queries on matter for which he with his volley of questions on the basis of reason like ‘why’, ‘what’, ‘which’, ‘when’, ‘where’ and ‘how’ approached the problems of matter. Though by birth a Christian, he realized that it was against one’s wisdom to accept fear for God’s mental make-up. Day-by-day science took over him and with the stand of humanism he approached human problems with gusto and found solution to them. He got the power to go beyond the fetter of situation through his skill of absorbing, assimilating and sorting problems and finding solution through his intellect.\(^{21}\)

Buddhist forum at Marikuppam gave him scope to share his ideals with others. From 1907 onwards he was a serious and staunch participant in the deliberation of this forum.\(^{22}\) He presided over the first Buddhist Conference held at Madras in 1917. He also presided over the fourth Buddhist Conference held at Madras in 1945. He represented the Depressed Classes and the Buddhists in the Congress Committee Convention at Belgaum in 1924.\(^{23}\)

He believed and wanted that God, religion, caste were all factors to be removed from the social stream that stand blocked the flow of society

\(^{23}\) Encyclopaedia of Dalits in India: Leaders, p. 198.
on modern lives. Appadurai revealed the people the pseudo divine magical power of certain fake sanyasees and skinned their bogus teachings before the public. He was like the American scholar Inkarsal that he exposed the hoax Hindu sanyasee robbing the innocent public in the name of religion.

Even deprived of formal education, Appadurai, with the help of Tamil Scholar Maduraipillai learnt Tamil and got a diploma in Tamil. He was also an expert in the practice of Sidha medicine.

He hated people for their false sentiments before God, like maya, chanting, black magic, ghost and necromancy. He challenged many Hindu religious leaders and Hindu authors who personified human beings. It was with his powerful Tamil he tapped the Buddhist themes found embedded in Tamil literature. It was he who brought conversation style in Tamil literature.24

He was recognized as a man of high esteem and merit for his equanimity and self-appraisal. In 1908, he brought Ayothidasar to Kolar town and with him he arranged a big public meeting where in he exposed the supremacy of Tamil, the fake and humbling trends in Hinduism and also propagated the ideals of Buddhism.25

At the age of 25, he became the Vice-President of the Marikuppam Buddhist forum. The library of Marikuppam called Vidya Varthini became

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one of the leading libraries in the world for Buddhist literature, thanks to
the efforts of Appadurai.26

In fact Buddhism established its influence over people only after
relating itself from its identification of its impact on other religions
through its emerging significance of socially liberated movement. This new
emergence of this movement drove Appadurai for total surrender before
Buddhism.27

Jesus and Mohammad are apostles. Only those who accept become
Christians and Muslims. On this factor Jesus and Nabi established their
identification. But Buddha did not bring in any element of force for
accepting his identification. He did not enforce any regimentation for his
followers to stay in his fold.

All religions speak of eternal life, the alternative end of human life.
All of them insist on the liberation of the soul as their ultimate aim for the
attainment of heaven. In all religion on many periodic occasion of time,
saints, apostles, divinely great beings, Mohammad and Mahatmas were
born to speak and spread the glory of heaven.28 But Buddha is different
self-liberated individual who tells people that he is down to guide people
not to give them assurance about heaven. His philosophy is subjected to all

27 Minorities in Madras State group interest in Madras Politics, Delhi, 1974, pp.
116-117.
28 P. E. Mohan, “Historical traces of dalits association and its functions in Tamil Nadu”,
analysis of truth and perception. He is not ready to admit into his philosophy about God and godliness. Appadurai brought out this factor and shows clearly how Buddhism is different from other religions.

Appadurai wrote articles in magazines of the day that includes Kudiarasu, Navasakthi and Vilasini. His writings attracted not only the mass of Kolar Tamils but also Periyar and Thiru.V.Ka. He got friendship with them on a dalits’ conference held at Thirupattur by Periasamy Pulavar in 1919. From this time onwards he was regular contributor to Kudiarasu magazine run by Periyar, after his exit form Congress. In Kolar, Appadurai started self-respect forum for dalits. Through the forum he spread the ideals of social equality and fraternity among masses.

One day, a dalit went to take food in the Venkateswara Hotel at Robinson Pettai, Kolar. He was not permitted on the ground that he was untouchable. This matter reached the ears of Appadurai. With the help of Rajarathinam, he filed a case against the authorities of the hotel in the magistrate court of Kolar field. He also wrote about this matter in Tamilan and brought the relevance of the total abolition of untouchability.

Appadurai considered that liquor ruined the domestic life of the dalits. He organized a conference on 27th April 1931 for eradication of liquor. In that conference he explained that the practice of liquor would

29 Dalit Murasu, July 2002, pp. 18-19.
30 A. P. Vallinayagam, op. cit., p. 130.
made one sick in mind and body. He also conducted meetings in and around Kolar inviting people to swear against the act of tasting liquor.\(^{31}\)

From the period of Ayothidasar the dalit movement stressed the need of political representation for dalits. Appadurai welcomed the Round Table Conference headed by Mahatma (1930-1932) for the chance that would give dalits political representation in the governance of the states in future. He sent telegram to Ramsay MacDonald, the then Prime Minister of England, that the fittest persons to participate in the deliberation of the conference were Dr. Ambedkar and Rattai Malai Srinivasan. He included in this telegram the name of David Perumal, an important dignitary of Buddhist Forum.\(^{32}\)

He met Dr. Ambedkar, congratulating him for the historic success of separate electorates for dalits, for which they alone have the right to select, elect and sent representatives of their class of choice and distinction to various political bodies. To know all about the Round Table Conference, his visit to Bombay helped him a lot. So also his visit to Chennai to know the full details of the conference from Rattai Malai Srinivasan made him to know in detail the problems relating to this situation. He convened many


\(^{32}\) Aloysius, “Religion as emancipatory identity a Buddhist movement among the Tamils under Colonialism”, Pune, 1898. p. 111.
public meetings in Kolar as well as in Bangalore highlighting the outcome of the Round Table Conference.\textsuperscript{33}

For his outstanding contribution through the Tamilan magazine, the Mysore State honoured him by providing the prestigious chair of Tamil Poet. Annapoorni, his daughter also contributed articles in Tamilan. She dedicated her life for the wellbeing of the dalits. She considered that Brahmanism stood in the way of getting proper recognition for dalits as the first citizen of this land with such rich culture.\textsuperscript{34}

She got involved in all strategic modalities of getting dalits their proper education, along with her father. She also took active part in all deliberations arranged by Periyar for the cause of self-respect. In due course of time she became an indispensable spokes-woman for the country as well as in dalit forums and Buddhists organisations. She emerged as the most dutiful and responsible woman leader in spear heading the cause of women emancipation.\textsuperscript{35}

Her marriage with Rathinasabapathy was signal pointer for intermarriage between dalits and high castes. On 10th April 1932, their

\textsuperscript{33} Government Order 832, Public Department, dated 2nd July 1932 and related papers of the Government of Madras.

\textsuperscript{34} Tamilan Magazine, 1932, pp. 10-11.

marriage was held at Bangalore in the august presence of Buddhist preacher Dharmalingam who granted them Buddhist marital rituals.\textsuperscript{36}

In the year 1934, Appadurai with the help of his son-in-law Rathnasabapathy established a theatre called ‘Forum for Brothers of Equality’, brought out on stage a drama by name as \textit{Kallapu Manam} (inter-caste marriage) in Kolar and in all areas of North Arcot. He used this art as a tool to propagate the ideals of intellectualism and abolition of casteism.\textsuperscript{37} The views propagated by ‘\textit{Kallapu Manam}’ invited conflicts in many places between caste Hindus and socially downtrodden masses who demand equality.

After independence also Appadurai continued to instill awakening among dalits. In 1954, when Ambedkar visited Kolar, he wanted Appadurai to instill true Buddhism from the prevailing atmosphere with Brahminical overtones. Both exchanged their views on this issue that revealed the fact that both were identical on their views of separating degraded Buddhism from the Brahminical violent ideologies found embedded in it. Ambedkar held Appadurai in his esteem and Appadurai’s honour was further raised among Kolar public.\textsuperscript{38}

In 1959, under his leadership a great Buddhist festival was held at Kolar. Periyar presided over this function.\textsuperscript{39} It was on 21st January 1961,

\textsuperscript{36} Ka. Thirunavukarasu, “Kalathil Nintra Kalvalarkal”, Chennai, 1993, pp. 146-147.
\textsuperscript{37} Tamilan Magazine, 1934, pp. 9-10.
\textsuperscript{38} Puthiya Kodangi, September 2003, p. 14.
\textsuperscript{39} A. P. Vallinayagam, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 46-48.
Appadurai died. He lost his breath after revealing to all his enduring plight after truth and progress for which he fought throughout his life for their emergence as future force for Dalits liberation. He believed the energies given him had to be spent for furthering the use of humanism and humanitarianism.\textsuperscript{40}

**Ayya Kannu**

Nandavarathan Ayya Kannu made a great attempt to establish the supremacy of the hoary Tamil and hoary Buddhist way of life. He was born in a village called Ichiputhur, Arakkonam Taluk to Narayanasamy and Alamelumangai in 1875. He had his early education under the tutorship of Vijayappa Reddiar. During his early years itself he became a teacher in Silamanthi and proved to be true to his professional ethics of bringing out the perfect wholeness among students and he used his job as a tool on this score. He believed learning is one’s duty and fundamental right.

Ayyakkannu felt consciously that his dalit community was known for its native intelligence and productivity, but their inherent talents in them were kept in abeyance on account of the social built up on the bedrock on the division of casteism. He spent his entire life time in search of his own community’s development. He used to exhort his brethren to live hygienically, to stop drinking and beef-eating and educate their children.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{40} *Ibid*, p. 49.
\textsuperscript{41} *Encyclopaedia of Dalits in India: Leaders*, p. 159.
On 24th May 1900, he joined as a clerk-cum-accountant in a company of the one of the contractors of Kolar Gold Mine. Ayyakkannu was attracted by the ideologies of Ayothidasar and joined the movement along with his wife Ammai Ammal. He was appointed as a Tamil Teacher on 8th November 1907 in Goutama Buddhist School founded by Murugesau Thamma Daya Ka in Marikuppam in Kolar. He taught Tamil to students in a revolutionary manner making them to build their talents in the most innovative manner. On behalf of Buddhist Forum he taught students Tamil Grammar and literature freely. He also took efforts to make them to acquire awareness in the beautification of Buddhism.

In 1912, he became a Pandit in Tamil. He considered Tamil and Buddhism as his two eyes and his erudition in his poetic talents and merits developed leaps and bounds over the years. He shouldered his responsibility for the propagation of Buddhism along with Rajavar, Murugesan, Gurusamy, Periasamy Pulavar and Appadurai.

He wrote many books such as ‘Bhagavat Mana Bakti Rasa Kirthanaigai’ (1912), ‘Thiru Pasurakothu’ (1912), ‘Buddha Charitra Pa’ (1912), ‘Bhagavata Thotir Panmani Malola’ (1912) and ‘Mysore State History’ (1930). His book on the history of Mysore is “considered original

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42 K. S. Seetharaman, “Koal Thanga Vayal History”, pp. 11-12.
44 Ibid.
throwing fresh insights into the forgotten eras of the State's history.” Maharaja of Mysore honoured him for his work. He supported the demand of separate electorate for the Scheduled Castes made by Dr. Ambedkar. He also held view that conversion was a must for the salvation of the so-called untouchables.\(^\text{46}\)

As a poet he felt the importance of spreading the principles of Buddhism through songs. He wrote many songs that were sung in all Buddhist celebrations. To cater to this purpose he founded a Buddhist Musical Forum and gave chance to second line leaders to take active part in Buddhism propaganda mission. Babu and Naynar Pallayam were the two important second line leaders, who taught to pupils about Buddhism through music and songs. In almost all Buddhist meetings, conferences of Buddhism these two persons welcomed the gathering through their music.

After 6th May 1914, Tamilan magazine was not found on stalls. The reason was the sad demise of Ayothidasar on 5th May at Rayapettai. After Aydhidasar his son struggled to release the magazine and on such a stage Ayyakannu contributed his might and later he served as editor between 1930-1932.\(^\text{47}\)

Among poets to be remembered after him were Mahakavi (great poet), Ramanujam, revolutionary poet Durairajan and poet Ganesan. They brought out the glory of Tamil as the best vehicle for poetical truths in

\(^{46}\) Encyclopaedia of Dalits in India: Leaders, pp. 159-160.
\(^{47}\) Tamilan Magazine, 1934, p. 2.
their works. Ayya Kannu belonged to the hoary Buddhist traditional poets like Cheethalai Sathanar, Elam Pothian, Nagu Thathanar, Buddha Mithra and Perum Thavanar.\(^48\) His tenacity of purpose and sacrificial spirit coupled with his cultured speech, social awareness and keenness of intellect were certain aspects that got him due recognition. Further, his calm, deep and unexaggerated humanistic movement was ever referred constantly for the liberation of Dalits. On his 80th year, that is on 26th September 1955, Ayyakannu entered into the heavenly abode, baring behind a legacy that the entire mankind had a scope and meaning in existence in their social life. For more than half a century Ayyakannu worked hard to fulfil the much cherished and long awaited purpose of creating social awakening among dalit masses.\(^49\)

**Boosami**

Kolar gold mine happened to be the only place where more than 90 per cent dalits got themselves integrated in their social living and among them Boosami was one of the leading progressive social revolutionary in that area. He dedicated his life time to impress his people on the aspect of economic freedom and individuality. He kept on asking what contribution had he done for their progress. He did his work without caring for reward. He spent his life time as a zealous staunch social worker, dreaming, planning and executing them for Dalit emaciation. He

\(^48\) Dalit Murasu, October 2005, p. 37.

\(^49\) Ibid., p. 37.
with the help of Maduraipillai strived hard to educate his masses from shackle and deliver them their much cherished drew of equality. He became the President of the forum of Adi Dravida Dalits of Kolar gold mine. He also made Vadukasan as the Secretary of this forum. He was also instrumental in the release of the magazine Dravidan that contained messages impelling his masses to think about their present deplorable stage and make them act to achieve their glory of existence.\(^5^0\) He appeared before the Montague Chelmsford Commission and revealed the history of dalits that created an impression on the commission. He conducted meetings at Kolar, Beemapuram and Chennai, stressing the need for Adi Dravidar liberation. He also helped conduct meetings of such kind in North Tamil Nadu. Boosami sent telegram to Ambedkar on his way to London for his mission of finding long-lasting solution to dalits.\(^5^1\)

He was a man of few words but stupendous action. He spent his entire riches for the welfare of his community. He died of heart attack on 27th June 1941. Boosami is a unique person who lived for Dalits, led a life for their liberation strived hard for their emancipation and progress.

**Awakening through press**

To create awakening among the people of their own community, the dalit leaders published articles in various journals. They have also

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\(^{50}\) D. Gopal Chettiar, Adi Dravidar Varalaru, Chennai, 1920, pp. 36-37.

published magazines to arouse consciousness among them. Some of them are listed below:

1. “Suriyothaiyam” (Sun Rise), 1869
2. “Panchama” (The Out-Caste), 1871
3. “Dravida Pandian” John Rathinam (Ed), 1885
4. “Andror Mitran” Vellore Pandit Munuswamy (Ed), 1886
5. “Maga Vikata Thoothan”, T. I. Swamikannu Pulavar (Ed), 1888
6. “Paraiyan”, Rettamalai Srinivasan (Ed), who was given Rao Bahadur title later, 1893
7. “Illara Vozukkam”, 1893
8. “Bhoologa Vysan”, Dasavathanam Poonjolai Muthuveera Pulavar (Ed), 1900
10. “Dravida Kokilam” edited by the Association of Scheduled Caste converts Christians of Madras, 1907

Magazines like Hindu Matha Prakasikai (1883), Vaitheeka Siddantha (1884), Deepikai Brama Vidya (1897), Upanishartha Deepika (1898), Upanishat Vidya (1898) highlighted only the growth and development of

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Brahmanism. But literature of dalits at this period moved much against the ideologies of the above mentioned magazines.53

Poet Rajendram Pillai happened to be a dalit who produced anti-Brahmanical magazines. Some of his publications are *Ulagam Oru Neethi Kathi* (1868), *Pariester* (1870), *Inbamum Thunbamum* (1875), *Uzeipa Selvathil Perithu* (1884), *Ilamiyl Kal* (1889) and *Esorebeca Thirumanam* (1895). All of them speak about social justice. There was another one like him by name Muthuveera Navalar, a Dalit Scholar. He brought out a journal called *Magavikata Dhoothan*. In this he attacked socio-political domination of Brahmins and criticized Brahmanism as well as propagated principles of equality.54

Through their works, dalit writers established their connection with the citizens of this country. Soorotham (1869), Panjaman (1871), Sukirtha Vasani (1877), Pandiyar (1885), Mahavikata Dhotam (1886), Paraiyan (1893), Vikata Thootham (1897), Ellara Ozukkam (1899), Madras Temperance Herald (1899) and Bhooloka Vyasam (1900) were some of the magazines and newspapers that took up strategies to propagate the ideals of dalit liberation. a century before.55 The dalits released books and magazines that proclaimed their averse against the adverse of casteism and Hindu ideologies.

54 Ibid., p. 51.
55 S. Perumal, op. cit., pp. 67-68.
One Paisa Tamilan

The year 1907 was a signal year in the growth and development of Buddhism. In this year Ayothidasar brought a magazine called ‘One Paisa Tamilan’. With the help of logicians, philosophers, natural scientists, mathematicians and literates of high order he brought articles in this magazine that tried to awaken an awareness among dalit masses about their supremacy of status.\(^{56}\) The ‘One Paisa Tamilan’ was definitely a Buddhist magazine. It was a magazine coordinating the activities of the Sakya Buddhist Forum across the country. For freshers it taught Tamil Buddhist rules and regulations, codifications, principles to be followed in one’s life time. Further it informed all progresses made in Buddhism in other regions and information about the overall development of Buddhism. It also tried to separate history of Indian peninsula and the history of Tamils and in so during it trained to cull out from the history of Tamils, their faith in Buddhism.\(^{57}\)

This magazine was one of the signals in promoting Tamil’s contemporary awareness of social history. In that magazine information regarding weather, market price of essential commodities any new scientific invention, news affecting the general life trend of people and government polices on different issues were found. Matters related to

\(^{56}\) Ibid., pp. 68-69.

\(^{57}\) Tamilan Magazine, dated 19th November 1930, p. 16.
internal and external political affairs of the country published in the magazine aimed to create awareness among marginalized people.  

Ayothidasar’s Forum and Tamilan magazine alone fight against the systematic marginalization of the natives of south. The forum of Ayothidasar and Tamilan magazine earned the displeasure of Christian and Hindu religion.  

Pattabiram, son of Ayothidasar, after his demise on 5th May 1914, took-up the task of running the magazine. After him, with the help of Murugesan, Appadurai published the magazine. Appadurai wrote a letter in Tamil on 24th December 1934, with the title ‘Open letter to Lord Paramasiva in Heaven’ (Paramandalathil Irukkum Paramasivam). This letter became a book after sometimes. In this letter he brought all the ills and weakness of Hinduism that incited wroth among Hindus. Mysore King Samraj Udayar was not able to bear the bitterness of the writing. As a result he banned the publication of Tamilan and order to that effects were sent to Appadurai, editor and Rajarathinam, its publisher. It had its own repercussion in north Tamil Nadu. Periyar was shocked to hear about the ban on this paper. He sent a telegram to Udayar to revoke the ban. He constantly wrote in Kudiarasu condemning the act of ban.  

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59 P. E. Mohan, op. cit., p. 114.  
Appadurai and Rajarathinam tried to get orders from the court for its redemption. But judgment was pronounced in a different manner. It allowed them to run the magazine not in the name of Tamilan, but in some other name. They appealed in higher court. The Judgment on their appeal also forbid them not to publish the magazine in that name. Both of them had no inclination to run the magazine in some other name. They were left with no option except to stop permanently the publication of Tamilan. Appadurai felt shocked on account of this affair.

However, many other journals were published, these magazines carried on the protest and crusade against untouchability and caste tyranny. The weekly ‘Tamilan’, perhaps played a notable part in the protest movement. Articles and editorials in these magazines by Pandit Ayothidasar, Periasami Pulavar, Narayanasamy Pillai and other Scheduled Caste leaders, condemned and castigated Casteism, Brahminism, Hinduism and its scriptures, Manucode etc. These have aroused the Scheduled Castes particularly in Madras, Chingelput, North Arcot and South Arcot districts. They started asking for Civil rights. Several incidents were published in the papers. Their agitation for Civil rights in 1902 in Orathur Village in Maduranthakam taluk in Chengalput District was for taking water from a public tank and for allowing their cattle to graze in village grazing grounds. Pandit Ayothidasar took up this cause and approached the government for redressal. He published the details of the incident in his
Besides awakening through press, they also formed associations.

**Formation of Caste Associations**

Individual efforts in order to gain certain advantages or overcome certain problems would go very often in vain. Because, individual approach lacks collective strength and bargaining power. But, if the individuals organize themselves into a group and then try to achieve their objectives or goals, greater success than expected would be possible. Therefore, several castes have organized their own associations, to take care of their educational, economic and cultural problems. Caste associations play a vital role in political campaigns. These are also influenced by democratic rights and privileges. Caste association plays a vital role in uplifting the backward classes and castes. It serves the common interest of the group.

The first Adi-Dravida Mahajana Saba was established in 1890. This was registered under the rules and regulations of 1860 law. For this organisation Subramanian Pillai became the President. The important objective of this forum was to unite the tribal people into single fold and then make them realise their state, then drive them to fight for fraternity.

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The forum had decided to start journals, publish books and special souvenirs in order to make the sons of the soil become aware of their social and political rights. They decided to start night schools, so that the sons of the soil could study all fundamentals and improve their mental make up by means of getting knowledge from books about all foreign matters, common general knowledge and scientific improvement. They also decided to open libraries. Further the most important objective of this organisation was to select suitable candidates to capture power in the government and at the same time keep them under their check.

Following persons helped a lot for the growth of this organisation. They were: John Rathinam, Chinnathambi Pillai, Bala Gajendara Navalar, Sahajanantha Swamigal, Vidwan Maduravasagan Pillai, Kalathur Munisamy, Advaidanantha Swamigal, Munisamy Pillai, Desikananda, Palanisamy Pillai, Venkatapathy Navalar, Sattanathan Gangadara Baladesikar, Rathina Pillai, Balagurusivan, Perumal Pillai, Mylai Divya Kaviragava Dasar, Mudumda Pillai, Ongaram Pillai, Ragarathinam Pillai, Thiruppugash Amman and Venugopal. All these persons either occupy the post of President or speaker or lieutenant or munificent minded person or excellent supporter for the development of this forum.  

Adi Dravida Saba supported the consorted efforts of individuals, but it never acted for the decisions taken by individual alone. It did not give

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room to hero-worship practice. Nor it considered the apex leadership a haloed or heroic or avatar of heraldry of station. Its view and principle about movement was consorted effort of all. The arterial tendency of the Saba was united action and unified thought.

'Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha' was the most important association which fought for the rights of the dalits. They represented to Mantagu and Chemsford during their visit to Madras in 1917 that they should be called Adi Dravidas. M.C. Raja, the Secretary of this Mahajana Sabha with the assistance of Dr. Natesan and others got this approved by the Legislative Council in 1922, when he became the Member of the council nominated by Lord Wellington, the Governor. Henceforth "the untouchables in Tamil Nadu were called Adi Dravidas". The untouchables in Andhra and Karnataka later became 'Adi Andhras' and 'Adi Karnatakas' respectively.

In the year 1891, the untouchables founded an organisation called 'Dravida Mahajana Sabha' and held conference under its banner on 1st December 1891, at Ootacamund. This conference deliberated on the Civil Rights, Educational Concessions, Economic advancement, appointment in Government services, political rights etc., concerning the Scheduled Castes. It also passed resolutions, putforth the following ten demands and sent them to the Government. Copies were also sent to National Congress and the Muslim Organisations.

1. An Act may be enacted with provisions that whoever expresses or addresses as 'Paraiah' to ridicule the depressed classes should be deterently punished.
2. To ameliorate the Depressed classes, education is important. Hence separate schools may be established in every village with teachers belonging to depressed class. Half fee concession must be given to these students.

3. Three students among the students who passed the matriculation may be selected and given scholarships for graduate studies.

4. All those students who have passed Matriculation may be helped by giving appointments in Government Offices.

5. There should not be any obstruction in giving appointments in various Government Offices according to the education and good conduct.

6. Proper representatives of the Depressed classes may be appointed to make representation of the grievances of the Depressed classes, in the Village Panchayats, and the Municipal Councils in all the Districts. Depressed Class persons may be appointed irrespective of the qualification of Tax payment, to the above posts, but they may be selected on the basis of educational qualifications and good conduct. Equal respect and treatment should be given to the depressed class members in running the administration of the Panchayats and Municipalities.

7. Rule 464 of the Jail Manual empowering authorities to make the ‘Paraiahs’ to discharge all the menial jobs in the Jails should be repealed.

8. Without any obstruction the depressed Classes should be allowed to take water for drinking purpose from all the public wells and tanks.
9. The existing restrictions preventing the depressed classes from entering or sitting near the premises of the courts and offices where Hindus were employed should be abolished. These restrictions are not enforced where Englishmen are holding posts. Further the petitions of the depressed classes should be heard immediately and disposed of quickly.

10. The Depressed Class persons who are having good conduct may be appointed in the post of Village ‘Munsiff’ and ‘Maniakaran’ in the villages which are predominantly occupied by the depressed classes. Further whenever the Collectors visit the village, they must meet the depressed class people directly and hear their grievances and do justice.

The Congress General Secretary acknowledged the receipt of these resolutions and demands. But no reply was sent on behalf of the Congress to the Dravida Mahajan Sabha. The Muslim Associations also did not care to give any reply. Commenting on this, the renowned Scheduled Caste Leader Pandit Ayothidasar had criticised the attitude of the Congress by calling it a ‘Bengalis Caste Congress’ or ‘Brahmin Congress’. He also criticised the Mohamedan Associations,

Even the casteless Mohamedans who received the copy of the resolutions sent by the caste less Dravidians have not done anything even to the demands of the common nature. Existence of these two Associations viz., Congress and Mohamedans were neither useful nor helpful to the Depressed Classes.
The activities of these Associations bore fruit. In 1892, Madras Government appointed Dewan Bhagadur Srinivasa Raghava Iyengar, Inspector General of Registration, to enquire into the progress made by the Scheduled Castes in Madras Presidency.

At a conference of Caste-Hindus held in 1892, the resolutions moved by Pandit Ayothidasar and other Scheduled Caste members requesting Government to establish schools for Scheduled Caste children in every village and assign poromboke land to the Scheduled Castes wherever land was available were passed. In the same year, Rao Bahadur Rettamalai Srinivasan organised a conference of Scheduled Castes reiterating the resolutions passed at the conference of the Caste Hindus. The Government of Madras accepted these demands and passed orders for assignment of lands to the Landless Scheduled Castes and Ex-Servicemen and also to open schools for their children.\(^{65}\) A large number of conference and meetings were held by the Scheduled Castes for a long number of years from 1891.\(^{66}\)

The Pariah Mahajana Sabha sent a petition to the government requesting some agrarian concessions for the pariahs. In 1898, it made a specific request for lowering in the case of pariahs the standard of the qualifying test prescribed for admission to subordinate medical services.\(^{67}\)

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\(^{66}\) A. Padmanaban, pp. 4-7.

\(^{67}\) G.O. 33, Education, January 25, 1899.
It complained that admission to pariah pupils in the schools in Madras city was difficult and the school fee concessions were not being given effect to in several institutions. In 1914, the panchamas of South Canara requested admission to schools which were closed to them.

In 1916 the Depressed Classes Society held a conference and requested the government to enquire into the exact condition of the depressed classes and to make recommendations for measures which will secure freedom and justice for the depressed classes. The question attained political importance on the eve of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms and led to a coalition between the 'panchamas' and the 'non-Brahmins' of the Justice movement against the Brahmins and Home Rule. References were made frequently to the deplorable condition of the depressed castes in the Non-Brahmin Conferences and the need to improve their conditions was stressed.

In October 1917, Dr. Nayar, one of the leading members of Justice Party, addressed the panchamas at the Spurtank in Madras at their own request when he made a stirring speech inspiring them to assert their equality with other castes and shed the habit formed by long submission to social injuries. He explained how the proposition of immediate Home Rule was as harmful to panchamas as to non-Brahmins in general.

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69 G.O. 1144, Home (Mis), November 6, 1917.
"Our contention is that until all the members of your community and the educated are brought to a condition when you can realise what is going on, realise your responsibility and use your votes in a discriminating manner, the British power must continue to hold the scales even between classes and classes instead of leaving you to the tender mercies of the so-called superior castes in this country... You must at least have the courage to resist all attempts on the part of the small oligarchy in this country to snatch the powers of government in their hands," he said and exhorted them to organise themselves and establish a committee of representatives from various areas so that the 'Non-Brahmin Party' and the 'Panchama Party' could move in line in politics. On behalf of the Madras Dravidian Association, the Raja of Panagal presented an address to the Viceroy and the Secretary of State for India when they visited Madras in August 1917, pointing out the educational backwardness of the lower castes and the need for the continuance of the British rule to protect them against suppression by the upper castes. The political association of the panchamas agreed broadly with the stand taken by the South Indian Liberal Federation as regards constitutional changes and a delegate representing its case before the Joint Parliamentary Committee demanded election instead of nomination of panchama candidates to the legislatures. Due to the collective action dalits got many concessions.

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71 The HINDU, October 7, 1917.
Educational Institutions

To arouse the Depressed Classes, schools, hostels and Educational Institutions were started by several dedicated and selfless workers. John Rathinampillai of Wesleyan Mission, Col. Henry Steel Olcott of Theosophical Society, Chellappa Maistry, M.Y. Murugesan, R.A. Das; Swami Sahajananda, P.V. Subramaniam, L.C. Gurusamy, B.S. Moorthi, M. Palanisamy, Rathinam and Veeraswamy were some of them. There were many more. In 1937, North Arcot District Adi Dravida Educational Association was founded by Jamedar Adhimoolam, the then M.L.A. from Ranipet, P. Ethiraj, D. Anandam, D. Thandavarayan, Thambuswamy, T. Munuswamy Pillai and others. In 1938, a hostel was started in Vellore which is now known as Ramdas Hostel in memory of R.A. Das’s father. Rettamalai Srinivasan Hostel was started in Ranipet in North Arcot District as a result of selfless service and devoted efforts by A. Jayaraman, former member of Parliament, A. Sundaram, V.L. Mohanan, G. Jaganathan, J.V. Raghavan, Gangadharan, R.T.S. Moorthi, K.P. Arumugam and others. Krishnaswamy. J.J. Doss, K.M. Swami, V.S. Subbiah, Ratnam, Adimoolam, Subramaniam and others had done their best to serve the depressed classes. These educational institutions and hostels promoted education among the depressed classes and they got political awakening.

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