Chapter V

Towards Actual Emancipation

The condition of agricultural labourers continued to be bad even in the second half of the 19th century inspite of amelioratory measures introduced by the Colonial administration because caste system in Tamilnadu remained very rigid and caste based inequalities were not seriously challenged. Poets and Philosophers from the days of the Sangam had been advocating an ideal society devoid of distinctions based on birth. But the concept of equality could not take deep roots in a society in which sastric injunctions held an overwhelming dominance.

Early Tamil Poets on Caste

Thiruvalluvar declared that all are equal by birth but they differ among themselves due to their avocations. Thirumular (who is generally believed to have lived in the 6th Century A.D. though some have claimed an earlier and a few a later date) was a severe critic of caste distinctions. Though he declared that there is only one caste and one God he was not against Brahmans. He condemned only Brahmans of a bad character. He states that "they have no truth, special wisdom, bhakti or knowledge of God, but are fools mad after gluttonous eating." Kapilar Ahaval, a medieaval Tamil poem on caste supposed to have been
written by a poet belonging to the pariah caste living between the 9th and 11th centuries A.D holds that it is futile to maintain caste distinctions. It finds fault with the Brahmans for creating the fourfold caste system. It states that "Human life, limbs, body structure and native wisdom are common and show not any differences noticeable."

Nature, says Kapilar, does not show discrimination on anybody.

He states:

Does it rain only for some and not for others?

Does the wind exclude some while it blows?

Does Mother Earth refuse to bear the burden of all?

Does the Sun decline to warm some?

Is the food of the four prosperous castes grown on the plains?

And that of the four low castes in the barren forests?

Wealth, Poverty, blessings of the Virtuous life and

Death are not different to all the earth born

There is one caste, and one community

Birth and Death are one for all

The God we worship is also one.

Kapilar states that only by character man becomes high and low in caste and not by birth as Brahmans think.
Though poets of the Bhakti movement stressed equality among men during the early years of the movement during its closing days Brahmman supremacy was accepted by them.

**Siddhas and Caste**

Tamil Siddhas on the other hand were vehement critics of the caste system. Tirumular claimed as a Siddha by some and a Saivite saint by others criticised caste system though in a mild way. Later Siddhas were severe in their attack on Brahmans. According to R. Venkatraman, "Though a reaction to Brahmanism in Tamil Country is known even from the Sangam period, it becomes more pronounced in the Siddha Cult, which in later period goes a step forward to espouse the cause of the lower classes, especially the Paraiahs."

Sivavakkiyar makes a scathing attack against casteism. He asks, "Is there any difference between the coitus with a paraiah woman and that with a Brahaman woman?" To him temple worship, idolatory, pilgrimages, holy bathings, the chanting of Vedas and rituals of the Brahman Priests are all devoid of use and meaning. He asks, "Why the caste discrimination when every one is born only from the catamenia?" Pambatti Siddhar declares that "We will set fire to the caste discriminations" Baddiragriar yearns for the day when casteism would vanish.

The Gnanavettiyan -1500, a late work fathered by Valluvar, is important because it upholds the position of the lower castes. Its author proudly declares that he belongs to a caste called the Sambhavan which buries the carcass, cremates the
corpses. According to Gnanavettiyan, the Sambhavans constitute the first and the foremost among the castes and to it belong Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. He complains
"When all the castes appear from the yoni (vagina) why do the upper castes call us sneeringly the ‘beef eating’ 'foolish Paraiahs'?" Though the Siddhas made a scathing attack on the caste system they did not succeed in founding a movement to spread their system of philosophy. Moreover the Tamil Society found the Siddha system of medicine more useful than the philosophy.

19th Century Socio- Religious Reform Movements in Tamilnadu

With the passing of years, caste rigidity in Tamilnadu was showing a tendency to grow stronger. As a result of it, reform movements came to be viewed from a caste angle in Tamilnadu in the 19th Century. Nineteenth Century Tamilnadu witnessed two socio-religious movements - one in the far South led by Muthukutti and another in the North led by Ramalinganar, popularly known as vallalar.

Muthukutti (1809 - 1851) was a Nadar by caste. He lived in a period when political, social and economic oppressions let loose against the low caste people in society were the order of the day. The ruler of Travancore state to which he belonged was described by Muthukutti as a cruel tyrant. Caste rules were so strict that Muthukutti’s parents were forced to change his original name of ‘Mudichudum perumal’ as Sat-Sudras were opposed to a low caste man bearing a name associated with their caste.

Nadars and other low castes in Travancore were denied all civil liberties. They
were not allowed to live in tiled houses, prevented from holding umbrellas, wearing slippers, ornaments of gold etc. Their women were not allowed to wear cloth above their waists. The state levied burdensome taxes on them and subjected them to do work for the state free of wages.¹⁶

The Government of Travancore was notorious "in the matter of inventing new items of exactions like enikkanam (ladder tax) talaivilai (head price) mulaivilai (tax on female breasts) etc. which were charges meant for the outcastes. The defaulters of these payments were subjected to inhuman punishments. To show the beastiality of these exactions an instance has been cited of a low caste ezhava lady in Travancore unable to stand the humiliation and rapacity of the high caste tax collectors cut off one of her breasts and presented it to them"¹⁷

Economic and social oppression, legitimised by the state, forced many among the low caste people to become Christians. It was under these circumstances that Muthukutti propounded a new brand of Vaishnavism in which he incorporated the principle of social equality. He opposed all caste distinctions, and advocated interdining.¹⁸ All his followers were asked by him to wear turbans as a mark of self-respect.¹⁹ There was no place for rituals, idols, animal sacrifices in his scheme of worship. He gathered his followers under 'Love Flag' with a flame in white colour in a saffron background.²⁰ He opposed the taxation policy of the Government and warned the king that he would be meeting his doom if he did not desist from collecting taxes beyond 1/6 of the produce.²¹ He predicted that Brahmans would
cease to have any importance.

Muthukutti attracted a large number of people to his place at Tamaraikulam. At the instigation of high caste men the king arrested and put him behind the bars. The king wondered how God could be born in the untouchable Nadar Community avoiding the Brahman Nambudri caste. After subjecting him to torture, the king released him after a period of three and a half months due to popular upsurge. He was asked to confine his religious activities with his own caste. Though Muthukutti preached ideas based on universal brotherhood, there were only a few adherents to him from castes other than his own because people gave more value to caste than to ideas.

St. Ramalingam(1823-1874) was another great socio-religious reformer from Tamilnadu. He believed in universal brotherhood and oneness of God. He criticised the practice of sacrificing living creatures in the name of God. Ritualism had no place in his religion. Puranas and sastras, according to him, are not embodiment of truth. The saint felt deeply troubled to find human beings divided on caste lines. He condemned caste as a bondage to be broken. Only a Suddha Sanmargha (pure righteous path) alone would unite the people. All treatises on four fold castes and orders of life are nothing but child’s play. A great humanitarian, as he was, he shed tears to see poor suffer in this world. He wanted to create a social order in which all people would lead a happy, prosperous and contented life without any semblance of inequality. He opened Dharmasalai to feed the hungry. He advocated
his followers to worship God in the form of light.

The Philosophy of St. Ramalingam is found in his poems compiled under the title Tiruvarutpa. Since its publication in 1867, it led to a controversy between orthodox Saiva Siddhantins and the followers of the Saint. Saiva Siddhantins refused to accept Ramalingam’s poems as Arutpa or divinely inspired hymns. Arumuga Navalar and Kathiraivel Pillai, two exponents of Saiva Siddhanta Philosophy opposed Ramalingam because Ramalingam was a Karunihar ranking a little lower in the Sat-Sudra order than the Saiva Vellala Community to which Arumuga Navalar and Kathiraivel Pillai belonged. 26

Social Reformers and Caste

Even great reformers like G. Subramania Iyer, the editor of The Hindu perceived changes which occurred in the lives of the Paraiyahs in a different light. Emigration of landless labourers to Plantations abroad, according to Iyer, was due to Pull factors but the Push factors were not visible to his eyes. Christian missionaries viewed it from another angle. One of the missionaries wrote in ‘The Mail’. " The Paraiyahs have found it impossible to live under the old conditions and after years of mute suffering are shaking the dust of their native land from their feet" Social oppression and pressure of hunger coexisted in the lives of the Paraiyahs. G.Subramania Iyer could not appreciate christian settlements where Paraiyahs were trained in non-agricultural occupations. Iyer thought that "they will constitute a loss to the agricultural operation in the country". Christian converts, he thought, lost
touch with society. G. Subramania Iyer says with a mixture of contempt that "The paraiah who was until recently almost a slave, a willing and obedient slave of the high-caste Hindu, has become an important man, and, with the missionary sympathy to back him, puts on airs and defies his former master."27 Iyer was not for any change in the traditional social order.

Even genuine reformers like Pandit Shivnath Sastri could not do anything against the rigid caste system that prevailed in Tamilnadu in the 19th century. In 1880 Sastri, the leader of the Sadharana Brahmo Samaj, visited Madras and Coimbatore and his experiences with the caste conscious fellow Brahmos were shocking to him. At Madras when he was served lunch, no one was allowed to sit with him. When he asked his brahman cook about the absence of others, the cook said "they are Sudras. How can they see you, while you are eating"?28

From Madras, Sastri went to Coimbatore accompanied by Ranganatha Mudaliar, Secretary of the Madras Unit of the Brahmo Samaj. Even before Sastri reached Coimbatore, he was made to understand that he should observe caste practices. Sastri said that he had given up caste long ago. But his friends reminded him that he had to adjust with the customs that were followed in Madras.

Sastri again found Ranganatha Mudaliyar missing when meal was served to him. When he asked his cook to bring a seat for his friend, he was told that 'He is eating elsewhere'. Sastri was crudely shaken when he found 'Ranganatha Mudaliyar taking his meal in a dark cowshed'. The organisers said," Here our
arrangement will stand. Please do not upset them". Even Mudaliyar supported them saying" Please do not intervene. Let it be how it is".29

At coimbatore Pandit Sastri paid a visit to the house of a Brahmo Panchama and took break fast. The news spread like a wild fire. Everybody came to know that Sastri would eat food prepared by any one irrespective of caste. Soon invitation for lunch came from several persons. But in the meetings which were addressed by Sastri after he took break fast at the Panchama’s house, attendance was very thin30. Tamil society remained caste ridden inspite of the fact that there were occasional protests against caste distinctions.

It was in this society that Christian missionaries commenced their work of religious conversion. They soon found out that without accommodating caste in the church, Christianity would have no following in India.

Christianity and caste

With the coming of the Portuguese in India, conversion to Christianity on a large scale began. The paravas were the first community in South India to embrace Christianity ‘en masse’. Experts in pearl and chank fishing, the paravas inhabited the coastal belt from Cape Comerin to Rameswaram. They helped the native rulers to earn a sizeable revenue. With the arrival of the Arabs on the Coromandal Coast in the 9th century, life on the Coast became disturbed. Arabs received all supports from the Pandya rulers and their officials. After the fall of the Pandyas, the coast came under the control of Vijayanagar empire. By this time,
as Dr. A. Krishnaswami points out, the ‘Muslims had practically become the ultimate owners of all the pearl fisheries. They tyrannized the poor paravas, prevented them from fishing without their permission and claimed a monopoly of dealing in pearls.”

As the Muslims resorted to forcible conversion and intimidation of the natives, frequent clashes occurred between the two communities resulting in loss of life. In one such conflict that occurred in 1532, paravas killed a large number of Muslims. Muslims retaliated more aggressively. In their mission, it is said that Hindus living around the coast supported them. At this critical juncture when the very existence of the parava community became precarious, the helpless paravas were constrained to seek help from the Portuguese who had established themselves as a formidable sea power on the West Coast.

The Portuguese defeated the Muslims in 1532 and in return for their help, 20,000 paravas scattered over some 30 villages became Christians in 1533. Thanks to the efforts of Francis Xavier who arrived in that region in 1542, there appears to have been a second wave of mass conversion among the paravas of the fishery coast. Christianity experienced a setback in India when the Portuguese power started declining. Jesuit missionaries made serious efforts to spread their religion among the Hindus. Father G. Fernandez established a mission station at Madurai by 1592. But no new soul was added to the religion expounded by Christ. Thus when Robert de Nobili founded the Madura Mission in
1606, he found that Christianity was not a favoured religion.

Nobili on arrival analyzed the reasons for poor response to Christianity and found out that if a missionary had to succeed, he had to identify himself with the Indian culture discarding his 'parangi' (foreign) image and accommodating caste within the church. The annals of the Madura mission described the situation as follows.

Nobili found that Father Fernandez who had come from the fisheries coast to look after the Christian paravas who were accustomed to meet there to trade. He built a small church and a simple parsonage with the permission of the Nayakar of Madurai. But inspite of his great virtue and his zeal, he had absolutely no influence over the pagan population, because he wore black, was recognized as a parangi and was the guru of a despised class who ate beef and inbibed fermented drinks. As a result, after twelve years of stay he had not converted a single soul, even among the paraias.

Nobili had to transform himself into an Indian in form and content and avoid the company of Paravas, who were considered despised because they did not adhere to Hindu customs. The annals from 1607 to 1611 report his activities.

He began by learning Tamil to perfection, so much so indeed that he spoke it like his own mother tongue ... with the permission of his superiors, he embarked on a separate life-style, that of sanyasis or Brahman ascetics. He wore their costume, a cotton cord worn cross wise
over the shoulder, and a brick coloured robe here called 'cavi'. He let his hair grow and wound it up in a knot at the back of his head (a 'coudomi'). He adopted the use of earrings, shod himself with wooden clogs and was careful to bathe everyday and to eat neither meat nor eggs nor indeed anything that ever had life and to take his only meal a day at about 4 o’clock in the afternoon. His only food was rice boiled in water, milk, butter and green vegetables. To those who approached him and asked what was his native land he replied that he was a Roman Sanyasi.36

Between 1606 and 1611 he converted 48 Brahmans and high caste Hindus37 to Christianity. He allowed his converts to retain caste divisions and caste practices. Fearing that the higher castes would not come, Nobili excluded the parava Christians from the church he built. Nobili endeavoured thus to organize an Indian church on the basis of caste. He believed that caste was only a social institution and had nothing to do with the fundamentals of Hindu religion and that ‘by becoming’ Christians one does not renounce his caste, nobility or usage ... "38

Nobili’s style and policy of accommodation were followed by Jesuits at Trichinopoly and by 1640 there were two categories of missionaries. Sanniyassi Fathers to work for the higher castes and Pandraiswsamis for the ministry among Paraiah. Even this arrangement did not attract Brahmans to Christianity. As the number of paraiah adherents increased there was a decrease in the number of Brahmans. Brahmans did not want to associate themselves with a religion which admitted Paraiah whom Hinduism had kept out of its purview.39 Nobili’s style of
functioning was criticized by many while a few praised him for having identified himself with Indian culture. As Manickam puts it, "In his attempt to win high caste Hindus Nobili betrayed the cause of Christ in India".  

The early Protestant missionaries at Tranquebar also adopted the method of "accommodation" permitting their convets to retain caste and thus endeavoured to establish an indigenous church. Sudras and Paraiahs had separate seating arrangements in the churches. Great discrimination was shown in the selection of church officials. When in 1741 missionaries at Tranquebar discussed the appointment of a native pastor, an Adi-Dravida by name Rajanaikan was found to be the most suitable choice. But Diogo, a sudra was ordained as the second Pastor of the Tranquebar mission. The missionaries in a letter to the principal at Halle stated. 'Not you only but several of us desired to ordain Rajanaikan to the office of Priest... But we should greatly hesitate to have the Lord's supper administered by him, lest it should diminish the regard of Christians of higher caste for that sacrament itself'.

Christian Frederick Schwartz (1724 - 98) also took a more lenient view on caste. He believed that "with gentle persuasion and gradual dissemination of Christian ideas within the churches, caste would gradually disappear". Schwartz entrusted the work of organising the church at Tinnevelly to Satyanathan who was a traditionalist in matters related to caste. According to Rev. S. Paul, "The missionaries of Tranquebar and Tanjore who went to Tinnevelly very early to preach and to whose hands the superintendence of the church was entrusted for a long time... chose
to make caste friend rather than enemy". 43

In the French territory of Pondicherry Christians observed caste rules. Anandaranga pillai records an incident which occurred there on 16th Oct 1745.

On that day at the St. Paul Church at Pondy, at the instigation of a priest from Karaikal who happened to be there, the Paraiahs of Panni Paracherri, Periya Paracherri, Burning Ground Paracherri, Uzahandai paracherri etc. complained to the senior priest against the practice of segregation being followed in the church. They said, "If we are really your disciples, it behoves your reverence to treat us all alike. The Lord makes no distinction amongst his worshippers. The caste Christians have however thought fit, 'to keep us without the pale and you have acceded to their demand. We submit that this is a partial proceeding, and we request an explanation at the hands of your reverence". The priest having listened to all this, declared that their complaint was just, and immediately ordered the demolition of the barrier wall. Addressing the assembled people he said. "you are all my children; you may at your pleasure, mingle with the rest of the congregation and attend divine worship." 44

An evening service was held in the church. No distinction of caste was made. But this arrangement did not satisfy the high caste men. They went in a body and angrily protested against the new arrangement. When a few people went to the church the following day they found a barrier of chairs was put up to separate the Paraiahs from others. 45 Anandaranga Pillai describes high caste Christians as 'Tamil Christians' while the prefix Tamil is not added to Paraiahs. There was a
tendency among Sudras to regard themselves as Tamils as if low caste people were aliens.

From 1814 onwards Vepery became a centre of caste dispute among Christians. Here Sudras were not willing to mingle with the Paraiahs on equal terms. Reverents like C.T. Rhenius and L.P. Hawbroe tried their best to discipline the dissenters. Sudras showed a tendency to secede from the Church. In fact they organised themselves into a separate congregation. They called themselves as "Tamil Christians". 46

Bishop Heber made an attempt to study the caste question in detail. But his premature death did not allow him to introduce any measure against caste. Even if he had lived for some more time, he would not have removed caste from the church because he was not opposed to the policy of 'accommodation'. 47

Daniel Wilson, the fifth Bishop of Calcutta was definitely against caste. He, in a circular letter of July 5, 1833, stated that "the distinction of castes, then must be abandoned, decidedly, immediately and finally" by those who profess to be Christians. 48 Wilson's view, however did not get universal approval.

The English Wesleyan Methodists were firm in opposing caste practices. They were not worried about desertions from the church on the question of caste. In 1850 the Madras Missionary conference, composed of missionaries of various denominations, in a minute recorded their solid opposition to caste distinction within the Christian Church and pleaded with all Protestant Societies to adopt a similar
policy. In 1858 the Madras Missionary conference in its report stated that it was the duty of all "to spare no pains to expose the absurdities and falsehood as well as the wickedness of caste". However casteism continued to be practiced in churches all over Tamilnadu.

It is pertinent here to cite an example of how caste dominated the minds of Christians throughout the 19th century. Vadakkankulam is one of the villages in Tinnevely District where Jesuits had succeeded in converting a large number of Nadars. Even before 1684 when De Britto appeared in Vadakkankulam there were many Christians among the Nadars of that place. By 1720 they numbered nearly 3000. Vellalas in Vadakkankulam were only a few to begin with. Following the conversion of a few Vellalas many migrants settled there. Jesuits considered "any convert whom they recognized as a Pillaimar or Vellala was automatically deemed pure and priestly." In the mission organization these Vellalas were increasingly associated with responsibility at the expense of others such as Nadars and Paraiahs.

"It was decreed, for example, that only Vellala Catechists could accompany European missionaries on tours, they alone could handle Communion Vessels and other sacred objects, only they could assist the priest in serving the mass. Their families sat in special seats close to the sanctuary during church services and they alone could preside over daily prayers when there was no priest in the village." In the mission organization these Vellalas were increasingly associated with responsibility at the expense of others such as Nadars and Paraiahs.

These ceremonial rights or ‘honours’ were claimed by Nadars who were not
only numerically superior to but also economically advanced than the Vellalas.

During the course of a long drawn out conflict, church authorities were compelled to shift their support every now and then. When separate seating arrangements were made for the Vellalas and other castes, Nadars refused to allow the Paraihas to sit with them. In the conflict for honours between Nadars and Vellalas, Paraihas and Pallas were only spectators and not participants. As Dick Cooiman states, missionaries "viewed high caste converts as a quality and untouchable converts as a quantity."

When in 1872 Vadakkankulam's new Holy Family Church was completed, both Nadars and Vellalas made it clear that they would block all attempts to open the church if it did not contain satisfactory boundary marker. In the new church a massive 20 foot high brick barrier was built running the full length of the nave from the main door to the communion rail. This was not just a wall dividing the two sections of the church. The barricade contained an inner tunnel which allowed the priest to reach the altar without setting foot on the space occupied by any of his contending communicants. The church is a living example of casteism in Christianity.

At Palayamkottai, Protestant Sudra Christians vehemently opposed the efforts of the missionaries to root out caste from the church. In 1884 a Vellala memorial signed by 25 members requesting the missionaries to preserve caste hierarchy in the church was submitted. The memorial stated that "Unless men from classes which have for generations and centuries been looked up to as the possessors
of all the wisdom, knowledge and religion in India, from classes which possess
cultural and moral stamina came forward to advocate the cause of Christianity and
take service under the banner of Christ, the existing church composed of tribes whose
past experience is nothing, but oppression and submission will stand with any degree
of order or firmness only so long as it is supported by Englishmen and English money
and when they are withdrawn it will give way and very soon become disorganised,
scattered and reduced to insignificance.  

In 1894, E. Muttaiya Pillai published a Tamil Pamphlet entitled ‘Kristavarkalin
acharamum, gurumar potakamum’ with the English sub- title ‘The manners and
customs of Native Christians and the rules and regulations of European Mis-
issionaries’. In the pamphlet Muthaiah Pillai made it clear that missionaries had no
business to interfere with customs governing the Tamil Society. He stated that "if the
goal of the church in Tamil India is survival, then that goal depends upon the
Church’s reckoning with the hierarchical structure of Tamil Society and such
reckoning can only be done by Tamil Christians and not by any others." By Tamil
Christians he meant only the Vellalas.

The London Missionary Society also was not free from the evil effects of caste.
In South Travancore casteism was practised at its worst form. Sometimes as Dick
Kooiman says, "even the most uncompromising missionary had a soft corner in his
heart for a Brahman, provided he appeared in the shape of a Christian convert".  

Vedamanickam, a paraiah was the first Protestant Christian in South
Travancore (1806). Nadars subsequently embraced Christianity in large numbers. They were also showing signs of improvement in the economic sphere. As they grew in number and influence they tried to reduce the importance of the Paraiahs in Church organization. Masilamani, the grandson of Vedamanickam, unable to bear the humiliations heaped on him, left the church in 1886.

Dick Kooiman describes the partisan attitude of the European missionaries as follows:

"During the last decade of the century, Paraiah Christians in South Travancore openly started to express the feeling that they were neglected by the LMS and that the European missionaries were prejudiced in favour of the Nadars. They complained that all high posts in the mission were given only to Nadars; in substantiation of that complaint, they brought forward that among the 18 ordained ministers and 24 evangelists, there was not a single member from the paraiah caste. A few years earlier, Mateer had indeed acknowledged in a letter to the Directors that since Masilamani (1886) had left, all LMS pastors and ministers without exception were Nadars. But nothing was done to eradicate caste dominance from that "sacred enclosure", the Christian Church. This feeling of being subjected to a new variety of old caste hierarchy led many Paraiahs and pulayas to leave the LMS and join other missions, especially the Salvation Army, that had established its headquarters in Nagercoil in 1889". 58

Thus we find that missionaries in their anxiety to catch the high caste men
encouraged casteism in their churches. With the entrenchment of caste in the Christian Churches lower caste men who embraced Christianity to escape from caste oppression again found themselves trapped.

**Colonial Government and Caste**

Besides difficulties experienced by the lower castes due to social regulations, policies of the colonial Government also affected them adversely. During the days of the company rule, pallas and Paraiahs were recruited as soldiers and policemen. But since mid 19th century these men were systematically excluded from recruitment to posts in the army and police. When the Madras police was reorganised in 1859, it was hoped that the Talayaris would be automatically inducted in to the police force. In the 1860s and early 1870s the older elements were weeded out and replaced by men whom the police authorities thought more suitable. Talaiyaris being Paraiahs were excluded because they could not mix with the people freely. It was said that they could not carry out such basic police duties as patrolling or making arrest when these concerned caste Hindus and their quarters. In the 1880s it had become an established principle of police recruitment in Madras that ‘low caste men’ were to be chosen only in areas where other recruitment were unobtainable. Again literacy was given priority in matters of recruitment. As the rate of literacy was low among the lower castes the recruitment policy adversely affected the Paraiahs.

Pandit C. Iyothee Thoss, a great leader of paraiah caste wrote an open letter to the Hon. S. Srinivasa Raghava Iyanger, Inspector General of Registration, Madras
Madras for his remark on the Paraias that these people can make no progress but by becoming either Christians or Muhammedans. In the letter he described how the Government and high caste men were placing obstacles on their progress. He stated that contrary to the proclamation of Queen Victoria and the spirit of the Charter Act of 1833 the Colonial Government was showing discrimination against low caste people. As per section 464 of the Jail Code, Paraias in jails were forced to do the degrading work of a scavenger while high caste men in jail were exempted from such duties. Again sections 428 and 434 of the village officers manual state that only Paraias alone should be put under wooden fetters (called Tholoovoo) for a space of six hours for petty offences committed in the village. The manual exempts other classes of men such as carpenters, gold smiths, blacksmiths etc.

Iyothee Thoss further stated that during the early days of the Company, Paraias joined in the English army in large numbers as high castemen did not volunteer to do so because they thought that it was below their dignity to discharge duties like levelling the ground, making roads, and felling trees. Now the same high caste men by joining in the army in large numbers virtually banished the low caste men from the battalion.

He lamented that "when hospitals were first established, to render medical aid both to troops and civil subjects, the high caste men, thinking it would be quite unbecoming of them as castemen to dissect dead bodies and dress the wounds and sores of men of all nationality, did not try for appointment in hospitals as
apotheers, dressers etc. The members of paraiah community alone offered
themselves for this service ... But now this profession is closed for them ... This is
because the very caste men who once regarded it as unbecoming on their part to dress
sores have entered the medical profession in great majority. 66

Low caste men were moreover denied educational opportunities in schools run
with public funds. Thomas Munro as Governor of Madras (1820 - 25) initiated a
scheme of education according to which it was proposed to start Tahsildari Schools
in each district. Admission to these school was to be free to all classes from brahman
to sudra but pulayas and other untouchables were excluded. 67

In the 1860s the Tinnevelly District Collector found that a large number of
Palmyra trees remained untapped because by that time, climbers from among the
Nadars were not sufficiently available as many of them had improved their economic
position through trade. The revenue conscious administration had a plan to train the
Paraiah in extracting juice from Palmyra trees. They had to drop the plan for two
reasons. First Nadars would not allow the Paraiah to touch their sacred trees.
Secondly there was a problem of selling the palmyrah products extracted by pallas
and Paraiah. 68

Proverbes damaging the reputation of the paraiah caste were current
throughout Tamilnadu.

1. 'The palmyrah tree has no shade and the paraiah has no decency.'

2. 'Only if he is beaten will the paraiah get sense'.
3. ‘Though seventy years of age the paraiah will only do what he is compelled to do’.

Commenting on them Rev. G.E. Phillips says, "That is how India has thought of the paraiah and how India has treated him". 69

There were obstacles everywhere on the paraiah’s way to progress.

The paraiah Question

The closing decades of the 19th century, however came more under the influence of humanitarianism. Missionaries such as Rev. Andrew and Rev. Goudie and administrators like J.H. Tremenheere took up the cause of the downtrodden and earnestly examined ways and means to ameliorate their condition. Consequent on their efforts the paraiah question drew the attention of the House of Commons in England, News papers and social orgaanizations at home and finally the Colonial Government was forced to intervene on behalf of the depressed.

A change of attitude on the part of the Christian missionaries was discernible in the last quarter of the 19th Century. Till then the missionaries according to Goudie, "Seem to have argued that if only the Brahman citadel could be captured all the rest would fall to them by natural process. Let us win the intellectual and spiritual hierarchy, and with the rest our task will be easy" ... 70 When missionaries found that it was impossible to convert the high caste to christianity, they were "compelled by force of circumstances rather than led by any deliberate design to turn to the paraiah"71 Once they realized that their work was to pull up the untouchables from the gutter, they were earnest in achieving their goal.
An enquiry of 1887-88 revealed that the mass of the (Chingleput) people, who are chiefly agriculturists live from hand to mouth and in adverse seasons are seriously hampered... The wages of an agricultural labourer's family are put at about Rs 10 a month all told.  

At the same time Rev. Andrew made enquiries into the condition of the paraiah population and soon discovered a state of affairs which he said 'We missionaries should not tolerate'. He wanted that missions should expand their educational programme among the Paraiahs. He also sought Government’s aid in this respect. After further investigations made in 1889 Rev. Andrew drew the attention of the Government by sending a statement on the Paraiah’s condition. Disappointed to see his findings ignored by the government he left for England in 1890 and stepped up his efforts to highlight the problems of the oppressed. He discussed the paraiah problem with Samuel Smith, the Liberal member from Flintshire. He also met Sir John Grost the under secretary of state for India and convinced him of the need to introduce amelioratory measures.

In the meantime, Tremenheere the collector of Chingleput reported in March 1891 that a large proportion of them (Paraiahs) are always badly nourished, clad, if at all in the vilest of rags, eaten up with leprosy or other horrible diseases huddled together like pigs, untaught, uncared for and unpitied. On April 1891 at the request of the Madras Missionary conference, Goudie presented a paper on 'The Disabilities of the paraiah'. He stated "It is my purpose to show that the general state of the
Paraiahos in this presidency is so helpless and the oppression they suffer at the hands of the upper classes so grievously unjust as to call for the thorough investigation and judicious intervention alike the Missionary Societies and of a humane and Christian government".  

Goudie observed that although slavery was legally abolished, it was more or less continued in practice and that everywhere the caste people aimed at keeping the paraiah in bondage. Goudie pleaded for the intervention of missionaries and government. "Intervention is necessary, I maintain, said Goudie, "in the interests of humanity alone i.e. to abolish flagrant injustice and relieve human suffering, apart entirely from the consideration of leading the people to an outward profession of Christianity ". On behalf of the Missionary conference a memorial was presented to the Government. The memorial suggested that among other things the Government should deal with" the illegal practice of agrestic slavery", provide secure house sites, make Paraiahos equally eligible with others for obtaining waste lands, forbid mirasidars and others from hindering the establishment of schools and increase government grants for education. The disabilities of the Paraiahos now started receiving more public attention. ‘The Hindu’ dated 3rd June 1891 stated that the condition of these castes is truly miserable ... The Hindu religion has done nothing for them except to prescribe a most abject slavery as the lot for which alone they are fit" Praising the Philanthropic efforts of the Christian Missionaries ‘The Hindu’ further stated that "Apart from the help of the missionaries, the Paraiahos have no chance of rising above their present condition of extreme poverty and degradation. An effort is now being
made by these benevolent foreigners to move the Government to interest itself in the condition of the low castes. We most heartily sympathise with their efforts and hope that it will lead to good results".  


The Native news papers took a keen interest in discussing the paraiah question through its pages. ‘Arya Jana Paripalini’ in its issue dated 1 Feb. 1892 after describing the wretched and illiterate condition of paraiahs, praised the decision of the Chingleput Dist Board dated 17th Dec. 1891 to open three local fund schools for the benefit of the downtrodden. The paper also suggested places where such schools should be located.  

‘Vikata Dutan’ of Dec. 17, 1892 after praising Tremenheere for convincing the Government that "mirasidars look upon the paraiah as an animal fit only for menial work and take care that he does not own land "suggests that the Government should spare no pains to reform the Acts relating to the acquisition of land. allow the Paraiahs to acquire waste lands and make special arrangement to educate the Paraiahs."  

‘Arya Jana Paripalini’ of Oct. 1, 1892 suggested that the "Government should start industrial schools exclusively for the use of the Paraiahs in all the districts of the presidency". ‘Shamsul Akbar’ dated
Feb. 1, 1892 in its editorial condemned the Brahmans and Sudras for oppressing the Paraiahs and found fault with he Government which "does not adopt any effectual measurers to remedy the above evil",

**Tremenheere’s Proposals**

Tremenheere firmly believed that the only way to raise the material condition of the Paraiahs was to make them owners of land. He proposed the following amelioratory measures.

**A. Grant of land to depressed castes and Amendment of Land Application Rules.**

1. An amendment of the Land Application Act of the Madras Presidency so as to put all the residents of a village on the same footing as the existing pattadars. Priority to acquire waste land in the Mirasi villages was given to the Mirasidars while in Non-Mirasi villages, Pattadars were given that right. If this rule were to be amended the way would be made clear to the Paraiahs.

2. In Mirasi villages, the preferential right of mirasidars which he thought was the main obstacle to the acquisition of land by the Paraiahs should be required to be exercised either once and for all or in the first month of each year.

3. According to Tremenheere the state had at its disposal the following four kinds of land not affected by the mirasi preference. (1) It had 19,500 acres in non-mirasi villages in Chingleput District which it could throw open to the resident paraiahs. (2) Some mirasi land was acquired every year by the Government through arrears in revenue. The mirasi preference no longer existed regarding such land. (3) A similar remark could be made about land held by non-mirasidars relinquished by them or acquired by Government
through arrears. (4) Whenever large blocks of arable waste existed, the forest department was authorised to constitute them into reserved forests, provided that the land had not been occupied for 18 months. In Chingleput 18,000 acres came under this category. Tremenheere recommended that out of these areas some favourable locations should be set apart for paraiah settlement.

B. Protection for the tenants

Tremenheere proposed that Madras Tenancy Act should be passed immediately to protect the Paraiah as ryots under zamindars. To protect the tenants cultivating under ryot pattadars he suggested that if a tenant under a pattadar occupied the land for more than 12 years he should be given occupancy rights for the land.

C. Re-Casting the Breach to Contract Act

The Breach of Contract Act was applied if labourers violated terms of ‘man mortgage bonds’. Tremenheere pointed out that most of these bonds were non-enforceable by law. But ‘the padiyal does not know this and lived in dread of legal action. He therefore suggested to enact a proper and intelligible Breach of Contract Act, which should include provisions directed against quasi-slavery and limiting all labour contract to one year and perhaps requiring their registration.87

D. Free home for the Depressed Castemen

Tremenheere suggested that Paraiah be given unquestionable ownership of their homes. This had to be done because some mirasidars claimed proprietary rights over even the house plots of the depressed caste members and whenever they were
dissatisfied with the conduct of the labourers, they threatened to evict them.\textsuperscript{88}

E. Other Measures

Tremenheere further suggested that state-aided emigration be considered, that the number of liquor shops be reduced to discourage labourers from drinking too much, that the government make concerted effort to spread education among the Paraiahs and that the sanitation of the paraiah hamlets be improved.\textsuperscript{89}

Tremenheere’s report was placed before the Board of Revenue’s consideration. The Board declared that the remedies suggested by Tremenheere were for the most part impracticable. According to the Board of Revenue, "Any attempt to bolster up the paraiah or any other labouring classes in the way proposed by Tremenheere can only lead to an increase of pauper holdings without any advantages either to the cultivator or to the Government." Mirasi rights the Board held were not at all a stumbling block in the way of the Paraiahs to acquire land.\textsuperscript{90}

The Madras Government, however, decided to give some concessions to the depressed classes. On 30th September 1892, two G.Os 1010, 1010A were issued by the Revenue Department. As per these G.Os the Government decided to give opportunities to the Paraiahs and other non-mirasidars to obtain land for cultivation by making small allotments available to them out of areas which had been freed from preferential rights by purchase at sales for arrears of revenue and which were at the absolute disposal of Government.\textsuperscript{91}

As regards the provision of village sites for Paraiahs, when tenants were
expelled from their houses by mirasidars and were left homeless, the Government would direct the collector to provide them with housing plots either by assigning them as poromboke from the waste or by acquiring by purchase. Such cases of eviction should be reported to the Government for court action. The Government expressed its willingness to forward the cause of education of the paraiah. 92

While Tremenheere regarded that "direct connection of the paraiah with the land is the main lever with which we can raise his material condition", the government held the view that "the education of the Paraiah is the means by which the greatest and most lasting benefits may be effected". 93

**Education to the Depressed classes 42**

Christian missionaries knew well that it was futile to preach Christianity to men steeped in ignorance. Educating the Indians was as important as converting them to Christianity. Mission schools were preparatory ground for preaching the Gospel. Low caste boys, therefore found easy admission to Mission Schools. Special Schools for the depressed classes were also started in the Mardas Presidency. Thus in 1717 there were three schools exclusively meant for the depressed classes. Rev. John Anderson, a missionary attached to the Church Scotland started in 1837 what was known as the General Assembly School. Everyone irrespective of caste was admitted. Having found his experiment a great success, he opened a school at Kanchipuram in 1839, at chingleput in 1840 and at Triplicane in 1841. The London Missionary Society had by 1830 established schools for the
lower castes in places like Madras, Kumbakonam, Salem, Coimbatore, Nagercoil and Nagoor. The Church Mission Society had established 107 schools in the Tinnevelly District for the benefit of students including those belonging to the lower castes.\textsuperscript{94}

The census report of 1871 has this to say about the services of the missionaries to paraiah education.

"The British administration had freed them (slaves) as a community, from the yoke of hereditary slavery, and from the legal disabilities under which they suffered. In public passenger boats, a paraiah does not show his face, and in Government schools, or schools helped with public money, it is pretty much the same. The Christian Missionaries, to their undying honour be said, have as a rule, preserved in breaking through the time-honoured custom of treating the paraiah as dirt; and have admitted him to equal rights and privileges in their schools and churches, and whatever may be the present position of the paraiah community in regard to education, intelligences, and ability to hold a place for themselves, they owed it almost wholly to the Christian men and women who have given up their lives to win souls for their Great Master". As per this report, by 1871 there were 1384 boys and 493 girls studying in schools run by missionaries.\textsuperscript{95}

In the last decade of the 19th century, Missionaries evinced a keen interest to bring more boys and girls of the depressed classes under the influence of education. Tremenheere in his report stated that the Government had done nothing even for the
primary education of the Pariahs. He argued that "even a low standard of instruction will, to some extent, safeguard them against becoming victims of fraud, oppression and teach them to make the most of their opportunities". T.B. Pandian, an Indian Christian Baptist Missionary and author of the 'Condition of the Pariahs of South India' deplored their intellectual darkness and addressed that they could be emancipated from slavery only through education and land ownership. He suggested the establishment of one or more industrial schools in each district for teaching them the ordinary trade of the country or a number of elementary schools for teaching them rudiments of vernacular education and model or normal schools in certain centres for training pariah teachers, inspectors etc and positive encouragement for Pariahs becoming landowners.

The Madras Government after having taken into consideration the suggestions made by the missionaries and the proposals of the Director of Public Instruction announced a series of concessions in its G.O No 68, Education, Dated 1st February 1893. Reverent Andrew rightly described it as the Magna Carta of the Pariah amelioration. The G.O. sanctioned the following proposals of the DPI.

1. Payment of additional stipend of Rs. 2 per mensem to pariah students in training schools under public management.

2. Payment of higher rates of stipendiary grants provided for in the Grant - in-Aid Code to pariah students in training schools under private management.

3. Opening of special schools for Pariahs by local bodies in all large pariah villages and suburbs not having such schools.
4. Free grant of poromboke lands as sites for paraiah schools.

5. Payment of result stipends at the maximum rates for paraiah students attending salary result school.

6. Special development and encouragement of the night school system for the education of paraiah and other labouring classes.

7. Payment of result grants for paraiah pupil at 50 percent higher than the standard rates etc. 99

The DPI also uniformly advised the local boards to close schools at places where aided schools had sprung up and to utilise the savings in the establishment of paraiah schools in localities where they were much needed and where schools under private management were not at work.

Report of the Public Instruction of Madras Presidency for the year 1893 - 94 stated that "there was fairly substantial increase in the condition of Panchama education". Schools as per the report rose from 1437 to 1805 or by 26 percent and pupils from 31,659 to 41,920 or by over 32 percent. 100 Panchama schools increased in number in 1894 - 95 also but it was not substantial. Schools rose from 1805 to 1968 and enrolment from 41920 to 45965. 101 The Director of Public Instruction in his report regretted that the attitude of the high caste men towards the Paraihys was hostile to the expansion of Panchama education.

Director of Public Instruction lamented that "I regret to say that not with­standing the orders of Government, the greatest difficulty occasionally in obtaining school sites even where land for the purpose is available. And if obstacles are placed

178
in the ways of Europeans when trying to obtain a site for a village school, it may be inferred that greater obstacles are laid on the path of the paraiah who seeks to acquire a small bit of land for cultivation or in some other way to better his condition. But nothing is more certain than this that education unaccompanied by improvement in their material condition will not ameliorate the lot of these hitherto downtrodden classes.  

Every year panchama school and enrollment in them continued to increase inspite of the fact that high caste people placed many obstacles. The Madras based Newspaper, ‘Paraiyan’ published a report against the Local Fund Mission School at Kaverippakkam in Walaja Taluk in its issue dated 8 Dec, 1894.  

"While the school is open for all classes of people, the school authorities do not allow paraiah boys, however anxious they may be to read even to step into the school premises. Why not the Local Fund authorities pay heed to this." The same newspaper in its issue of Dec 15, 1894 complained that brahman Sub-Assistant Inspectors of Schools made it a habit to inspect the paraiah schools by standing at a distance from boys. Director of Public Instruction was requested by representatives of the depressed classes to appoint paraiah Sub- Assistant Inspectors for Paraiah schools. But the DPI negatived such requests.  

Besides missionaries as well as individuals like Col. Henry Steel Olcott, the founder of the Theosophical Movement also were interested in the welfare of the depressed classes. He himself speaks about the reasons for entering that the field
of education and adds that "education and education alone is the evident panacea for all this social disorder. Teach the paraiah that he is a man with rights like any other man; that he must win them himself by raising himself; show him how to go to work, and then leave results to him and to time; That is the way the paraiah problem forced itself on my attention; and what I have done has been along these lines I had no interested object of converting them to any religion, no money to pay their debts, no business opening to offer them, no wish for their help or even gratitude no self-seeking motive of any sort. They were all about me a great multitude of downtrodden, wretched human beings crying out for help, and I just set to give it them in the only form in which I believed it would do them permanent good".105

In June 1894 the first of the five Olcott Panchama Free Schools was opened near the Theosophical Head Quarters, Adyar, for the benefit of the children of the poor outcastes in that neighbourhood. The H.P.B Memorial School at Kodam-pakkam was established in 1898. The K. Mavalankar Damodar School was opened on Oct 2, 1899 at Teynampet. The fourth School was inaugurated at Mylapore in September 1901. The fifth school called the Annie Besant School was opened at Krishnampet in May 1906.106 John Rathinam, a social worker of Madras between 1886 and 1889 established a middle school, three elementary schools and one students’ hostel in Madras city.107 T.B. Pandian started an Industrial school, a day school and a night school for the depressed classes in Vepery.

Among individuals who evinced great interest in the welfare of the depressed
classes, the service of T.B. Pandian deserves special mention. His pamphlet entitled ‘Slaves of the Soil in Southern India’ described by ‘The New ZELAND’ Herald as ‘a thoughtful contribution to social reform, and is intended as an appeal to the large - hearted classes in Great Britain and Australia, to aid in the work of ameliorating the hard condition of the pariahs and raising them in the intellectual, moral and spiritual scale”.

In England T.B. Pandian’s pamphlet and his addresses made the English aware of the problems of the lower castes. Two societies for promoting the welfare of the pariahs were established in England in 1894.

1. The Society for the Education of Pariahs
2. The British Women’s Paraiah Emancipation Society.

Eminent English men and women, were associated with these associations.

**Impact of Education on the Pariahs**

Education definitely is a catalyst inducing social change. The mental outlook of the depressed classes widened to a great extent due to the effect of education. They now became aware of their conditions and realised that only through organized efforts they could find solution to several of their problems. Thus in 1891 the Pariahs of the Madras Presidency formed the Dravida Maha Jana Sabha. Pandit Iyothee Thoss was its first secretary. Erattamalai Srinivasan was another important personality associated with the Sabha. The Sabha held its conference on 1st December 1891 at Ooty. Ten resolutions demanding civil rights, educational
concessions, removal of certain rules in the Jail Manual, economic advancement, share in the appointment in Government service including the village officers and political rights were passed by the conference. They are:

1. An act may be enacted with provision to punish whosoever expresses or addresses as 'paraiah' to ridicule the depressed classes should be decently punished.

2. To ameliorate the depressed classes, education is most important. Hence separate schools may be established in every village with teachers belonging to depressed class. Half fee concession must be given to those 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. These 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 qualification of tax paying to the above posts but they may be selected on basis of educational qualifications and good conduct of the person. 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 of the present days empowering authorities to make the Pariahs 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 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 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 wherever the collectors visit the village, they must meet the depressed class people directly and hear their grievances and do justice.112

In 1892, the Dravida Maha Jana Sabha was split into two and a Pro-Hindu group under the leadership of Erattamalai Srinivasan founded the Adi-Dravida Maha Jana Sabha. In the annual conference of the Madras Maha Jana Sabha held in 1892 at Madras, Dravida Maha Jana Sabha was invited to participate. A small delegation under Pandit C.Iyothee Thoss not only participated but also moved a resolution. The resolution was passed by the conference. It read as follows:

'Request the Government to establish schools for the children of Dalits in every village. Assignment of Poromboke lands to Parayas wherever land is available'.113
Under the banner of Adi Dravida Maha Jana Sabha Erattaimalai Srinivasan convened a meeting of his people at Wesley Mission College Hall on 23rd December 1893. On behalf of the conference, a petition 112 feet in length with 3421 signatures was submitted to the British Parliament through General Sir. George Chesney, member of House of Commons against the holding of Civil Services Examinations simultaneously in India. The argument put forward was that if the examinations were conducted in India, only Brahmans would get through and become collectors, judges and administrators. Under them the condition of the untouchables would deteriorate further.\textsuperscript{114} Dravida Maha Jana Sabha had branches all over Tamilnadu.

In the year 1892 the Dewan of Travancore State sent a question to the Dravida Maha Jana Sabha, Nagercoil requiring information regarding official positions held by Paraiyahs. The Nagercoil branch of the Sabha passed on the question to its headquarters at Madras. Pandit Iyothee Thoss, the secretary of the Sabha stated that "By this time Adi-Dravidas of the Madras Presidency occupy positions in bureaucracy such as sirasthars, engineers, surgeons, inspectors, managers, registrars, head writers, guards to the English men’s houses etc".\textsuperscript{115}

Besides these two associations, T. John Rathinam started an association known as Dravida Kazhagam with the aim of promoting the welfare of the depressed classes.

Under the influence of Col. H.S. Olcott, Pandit C.Iyothee Thoss leaned towards Buddhism. He established the Sakkya Buddhist Association at Royapettah, Madras in 1898. Iyothee Thoss and P. Krishnaswamy, the head master of Olcott Panchama
School embraced Buddhism at a big function held at Colombo in 1899. The Sakkya Association soon had four branches in the Madras city. A few Adi Dravidas embraced Buddhism. Iyothee Thoss, like Ambedkar understood that the only way for the untouchable to live with dignity was to get out of Hinduism. Iyothee Thoss had made a deep impression among members of his caste and this is brought out from the following poem written by V.V. Murugesar:

... Can we walk with heads high if not people like Ayothis dasan?

The withering shoots regain rains He said

He told us that this country is ours

He wake us from our sleep

He roused the lazy

And all those lived

On the fat of the land

By what right do you

Sleep on cushions or use gold.

And silver ware? He asked.

Without fear he waged war

Let this brave man be remembered.116

The depressed classes were no longer ignorant about the burden of oppression heaped on them by high castemen. They voiced their protests against caste
exploitation through News Papers and Journals which began to appear since 1870s. ‘Suriyothaiyam’ appeared in 1869. Other News Papers and Journals like ‘Panchama’ (1871), ‘Dravida Pandian’ (1885), ‘Andror Mitran’ (1886), ‘Mahavikata Thoothan’ (1888), Paraiyan (1898) were responsible for awakening the panchamas from their deep slumber.117

Erratamalai Srinivasan, the editor of ‘Paraiyan’ was a dedicated leader of the paraiah community. In his brief autobiography, he narrates the circumstances which led him to start the Newspaper as well as the Adi Dravida Maha Jana Sabha for ameliorating the condition of the downtrodden. From this auto-biography we get the following information. Srinivasan was born in 1860 in one of the villages of Chingleput District. When he was studying at a College in Coimbatore, there were only 10 non-brahmans among 400 students. Caste rules were strictly followed. He used to avoid friendship with other boys lest they would know his caste, family and residence. He was afraid of disclosing his caste identity because it would lead to ill-treatment. Out of fear he used to enter in to his class room only when the bell was gone. Like wise he used to reach home in the evening as fast as he could so as to avoid the company of students. When he was working in the European Companies as an accountant for nearly 10 years he was always thinking about the way by which untouchability could be done away with.118 Srinivasan spent three years to find out a scheme for the elevation of the Paraiahs to the level of other castes. Finally he started his newspaper called ‘Paraiyan’ in 1893.
"Unless a member of the paraiah caste comes forward and declares that I am a paraiah, he may not be able to preserve his freedom and he will be always subjected to a life of poverty. Hence I started my newspaper under the name Paraiyan"\textsuperscript{119} The newspaper espoused the cause of the paraiahs, exposed the oppressions of other castes, sought the sympathy of the Government and expounded the value of good conduct. At one time it had a circulation of 500 copies. Though it had a life of only three years it made a deep impact on the paraiah community.\textsuperscript{120}

Education no doubt made the depressed classes to understand the value of self-respect. It helped them to identify themselves as a class of exploited people and oppose the evils of a caste society. But as Goudie puts it "education is only one aspect of a problem demanding a more comprehensive solution". He suggests, "What is needed before and along with education is alternative means of making a living ... Make another way possible, and the old labour itself becomes free and honourable and the labourer is in a position to command proper value for his work."\textsuperscript{121}

Thus by the close of the 19th century the depressed classes recognized their rights and started voicing their protests against economic and social exploitation.
### Notes and References

1. Thirukkural 972, " пунарвак्ते सदृशा द्विप्रकाष्ठ केसुपपु \\
     नित्याय विभुगी निधिनास्मातियः \\
2. Thirumanthiram, 2066, "तत्तत्त्वं कार्यम, सत्त्वतित्व विचारम, \\
3. Ibid, 231. "सत्त्वबल तिनित्री कर्तित्वादं तिनित्री कुत्थ \\
     सिन्धे निपित सुनम २ एकतत् सिन्धे \\
     पक्षबल तिनित्री पायं २ एकतत्व तिनित्री \\
     यक्षायुक्त रटितम विल विश्वासवत्कर्तनम्. \\
     वसुम, पालकंदिनी २ अर्थीकीलिं \\
     समाहम दुसुदम विमा मुख्य। \\

---

Talk in the Tamil language (transliterated):

पाकालम कविकोत अकालिका मातिक
कविकोत कविकोत विचित्रः विनिवितः
पाकालम कविकोत पाकालम करगभिः
कविकोत कविकोत करगभिः करगभिः
पाकालम कविकोत पाकालम करगभिः
कविकोत कविकोत करगभिः करगभिः
पाकालम कविकोत पाकालम करगभिः
कविकोत कविकोत करगभिः करगभिः
पाकालम कविकोत पाकालम करगभिः
कविकोत कविकोत करगभिः करगभिः
पाकालम कविकोत पाकालम करगभिः
कविकोत कविकोत करगभिः करगभिः
6 Ibid, p. 107

7 K.V. Zvelebil Considers Tamil Siddha cult as "one of the most important and interesting off-shoots of the Pan-Indian Tantric yoga movement" cited in R. Venkatraman, A History of the Tamil Siddha Cult, (Ennes Publication, Madurai 1990), p. 24. (The cult is supposed to have originated in the 10th A.D. and continued up to the close of the 19th century.)


9 Ibid, p. 149 'வாய்க்குண்டா வசமிகால் வரற்களின் வரண்ட ஊழியின் புராணம் வரண்டை'

10 Idem.

11 Idem.

12 Idem.

13 Ibid, p. 150.


16 Ibid, p. 31.


19 Idem.

20 Ibid, p. 70.

21 Ibid, pp. 75.


23 Ibid, p. 59.


28 Ibid, p. 52.

29 Ibid, p. 53.

30 Idem.


33 Ibid, p. 22.

34 Ibid, p. 25.


38 S. Manickam, opt. cit., p. 39.

39 Lemercinier, opt. cit., p. 255.

40 S. Manickam, opt. cit., p. 41.

41 Ibid, p. 45.

42 Ibid, p. 46.


46 S. Manickam, opt. cit., p. 47.

48 Ibid, p. 49.
49 Ibid, p. 54.
51 Ibid, p. 412.
52 Idem.
54 Susan Bayly, opt. cit., p. 412.
57 Dick Kooiman, opt. cit., p. 176.
60 Idem.
61 Idem.
63 Srinivasa Raghava Iyengar, Memorandum on the Progress of the Madras Presidency, during the last fifty years of the British Administration, Madras, 1893, p. 154.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid,
    T.K. Ravindran,
    and N. Subramanian,
68 Tinnevelly Collectorate Records.
71 Ibid, p. 102.

72 G.O. Nos. 1010, 1010A, Revenue, Sept. 30, 1892. p. 5.


74 Idem.

75 G.O. Nos. 1010, 1010A, p. 4.


77 Ibid, p. 140.

78 Memorial of the Madras Missionary Conference May, 1891, Contained in G.O. Nos. 1010, 1010A *opt. cit.*,.

79 ‘The Hindu’, 3rd June, 1891.

80 Idem.


82 ‘Vikata Dutan’, Dec. 17, 1892.


84 NNR, 1892, Page 33 - Para 33. ‘Shams Ul Akbar’, Feb. 1, 1892.

85 G.O.Nos: 1010, 1010A *opt. cit.*,.

86 Ibid,

87 Ibid,

88 Idid,

89 Ibid,
90 Ibid,
91 Ibid,
92 Ibid,
93 Ibid,
95 Census Report of 1871.
96 G.O. Nos. 1010, 1010A, m opt. cit.,
100 Report on Public Instruction of Madras Presidency for the year 1893 - 94.
101 Report on Public Instruction for the year 1894 - 95.
102 Ibid,
103 P. Radhakrishnan, ot. cit., p. 516.
104 Idem.

107 Ibid, p. 54.


109 Ibid, p. 185.


111 Ibid, p. 42.

112 Ibid, pp. 42 - 43.

113 Ibid, p. 46.


115 T.P. Kamalanathan, *opt. cit.* p. 44.


117 Ibid, p. 47.


120 Idem.