

## Chapter VI

### IMPACT ON EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

The terms “minority” and “majority” have a certain numerical significance. The former usually refers to a smaller number of individuals than the member included in the remainder of the population. However, there are instances in which the numerical majority of the population, whether homogeneous or heterogeneous groups, is in the position of a minority, the state being dominated by a numerically smaller group, which imposes its own language, culture, etc. This outstanding definition in terms of power rather than numbers of a political minority comprising a numerical majority set out by the United Nations Organisations in 1950 is relevant to the political history of Madras in the beginning of twentieth century, when a movement of the non-Brahmin majority arose to resist and end the domination of Brahmin minority in the public and political life in the Presidency. The Brahmin and non-Brahmin strength in the Madras Presidency was 3.1 percent and 85.8 percent respectively.<sup>1</sup> This also reflected in the Madras Legislature, educational institutions and employment.

The Brahmins were numerically the smallest group and they got into the government service and the professions were a microscopic minority of the total Brahmin population. Still this minority appeared as a menacing majority because it very nearly monopolised all positions.<sup>2</sup> This influence of Brahmins on the electorate could indeed be decisive, as priests, school-

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<sup>1</sup> *Census of India*, 1911, Part II, Vol.XII, Madras, 1912, p.270.

<sup>2</sup> Gopal Menon,C., 'Early days of the Madras Mahajana Sabha' *Diamond Jubilee Souvenir Madras Mahajana Sabha*, Madras, 1946, p.58.

masters, government servants and journalists, the Brahmins had acquired great influence. This influence coupled with their traditional authority in socio-religious matters apparently gave them a high status and unchallenged leadership.<sup>3</sup>

The progress made by the small Brahmin group far ahead of other groups in various periods during the second decade of the twentieth century, the Brahmin group occupied nearly seventy four percent of positions in the public works department, fifty percent in the revenue, sixty six percent in the judicial and seventy nine percent in the educational departments.<sup>4</sup> The Brahminisation of subordinate government services stemmed from the predominance of that caste in educational institutions. The group wise composition of graduates on the rolls of the University of Madras in 1918, confirmed it.<sup>5</sup>

Thus began the hard political struggle between a small minority occupying a majority and large majority suffering a backward or minority status in the political field. The entire course of modern politics in Madras could be a story of the organisation of the non-Brahmins to diminish and end the political and social domination of the Brahmin and the Brahminised. The year 1916 is a turning point in history of Tamilnadu. For the first time the domination of the Brahmins was challenged and their decline started. Periyar emerged as a champion to establish justice for non-Brahmins in all the fields.

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<sup>3</sup> Saraswathi,S., *Minorities in Madras State: Group Interest in Modern Politics*, Delhi, 1974. p.46.

<sup>4</sup> Go.No.22, Public Department, 27 January 1919.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*,

Between 1920 and 1924, the political ideals of Periyar crystallized and it became clearer that his objects could not be achieved through any of the existing political parties. The political atmosphere sharply divided the Brahmin and the non-Brahmin did not spare the national unity. The Tamilnadu Congress started a separate wing for non-Brahmins, namely Madras Presidency Association to safeguard their interests. Every Tamilnadu Congress Committee meeting during this period witnessed caste conflicts both on policy matters and on organisation or administration.<sup>6</sup> It was on the question of communal representation for non-Brahmins in public offices that Periyar's fight with the Congress led to the emergence of Self-Respect Movement. In 1920, a separate meeting of the non-Brahmins was held under Periyar. It was decided to apply pressure upon the government to introduce communal representation in the elections to the legislative bodies and appointments in government jobs according to population. Somasundaram Pillai, V.O.Chidambaram Pillai, Dandapani Pillai, and a number of advocates supported this resolution. However, the resolution was dropped on the ground that it was not in public interest and that it was irregular.<sup>7</sup>

Periyar was personally averse to accept political or administrative posts during these years but was of the opinion that non-Brahmin representation in the legislature and in offices must be in proportion and equality. This particular programme became a permanent item in Periyar's plans of action throughout his life. Periyar's preoccupation with the idea of

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<sup>6</sup> *Kudi Arasu*, Madras, 28 August 1927.

<sup>7</sup> Saraswathi, S., *Towards Self-Respect Periyar EVR on a New World*, Madras, 1994, p.36.

communal representation earned him a number of Brahmin opponents in the Congress.<sup>8</sup>

From 1920 to 1925, Periyar attempted to move resolutions on communal representation in the Tamilnadu Congress Committee. But it was not accepted by the Congress because of the domination of Brahmins.<sup>9</sup> Politics and political power appeared to him meaningless in a society made up of unequal members. In the then local context, he was convinced that political power had proved beneficial to Brahmins alone and had helped to tighten their control and dominance over the non-Brahmins who contributed the bulk of the resources but deprived of the fruits of their labour.<sup>10</sup> Such was the political atmosphere in Tamilnadu when Periyar in sheer disgust came out of the Congress.

Communal representation is a boon to create a society of equals. For a long time, except the Brahmins all other castes carried on agitations and urged the government to implement this policy. Periyar expected that a powerful and effective method of obliterating caste inferiority of the *Sudras* was to raise their occupational status from manual labour to white collar jobs. He considered this a magic solution to all problems and made it a central point of his action programmes. It was the demand that he made when he joined in Madras Presidency Association in 1917 and the issue over which he

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<sup>8</sup> Interview with .Anaimuthu, V., Madras, 25 December 2006.

<sup>9</sup> *Dravidian*, Madras, 14 January 1925.

<sup>10</sup> G.O.No. 37, Public Department, 9 January 1925.

left the Congress in 1927.<sup>11</sup> The government of Madras introduced a communal principle in 1921 extending the Revenue Board's Standing Order 128(2) regarding communal representation to all departments. The inadequate non-Brahmin representation in accordance with their percentage of population of the province led to an argument for the continuation of communal representation in public bodies, so that none of the caste groups could represent more than their percentage in the total population. Periyar in fact advanced this as one of his arguments for the retention of communal representation for backward and scheduled castes. In addition to this, he drew the attention of non-Brahmin politicians who were against reservation of seats, despite their increase in political power. They were powerless to reduce the Brahmin hold on the government administrative machinery.<sup>12</sup>

The administrative report of the Government of Madras for the year 1928-29<sup>13</sup> substantiates Periyar's claim. More than thirty seven percent of the gazetted officers in permanent appointments were Brahmins, while approximately twenty percent in the same cadre were non-Brahmins. In the case of non-gazetted officers in permanent appointments on a salary of hundred rupees and above, more than fifty percent were Brahmins. Only twenty nine percent were non-Brahmins. The non-Brahmins' hold on other cadres was equally weak. All these prompted Periyar to argue for the

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<sup>11</sup> Visswanathan, E. Sa., *The Political Career of E. V. Ramasami Naicker. A Study in the Politics of Tamilnadu, 1920-1949*. Madras, 1983. pp.65-66.

<sup>12</sup> Report on Administration of the Madras Presidency for the year 1920-21, Government of Madras, Madras, 1922.p.102.

<sup>13</sup> Report on Administration of the Madras Presidency for the year 1929-30, Government of Madras, Madras, 1931.p.204.

retention of the reservation of seats not only in representative institutions but also in the services of the government.<sup>14</sup> Between 1920 and 1935, political opinion in Madras among all major parties and groups favoured the assimilation of the depressed people with the rest of the population through legislation and administrative regulation. The Justice Party claimed that it was due to its efforts that the Labour Department was instituted.<sup>15</sup>

Many reasons can be attributed to this state of affairs. The main reason is the lack of higher education among a vast majority of non-Brahmins and their belated attempts to master English, the language of British administration. Brahmins who had these advantages predominated the government services. To prevent the increase of Brahmin concentration in public services, the government issued an order based on the recommendations of the Legislative Council in September 1921. The Communal Order envisaged that the principle of communal representation should be extended not only to principal appointments but to the posts of all grades in public services.<sup>16</sup> In a subsequent order issued by the government, stipulated that the communal representation principle should be adhered to both at the time of the initial recruitment and at every point at which men were promoted wholly by selection or by seniority.<sup>17</sup>

During the time of Dr.P.Subbarayan's ministry, further modifications were made in the Government Communal Order. Accordingly, out of every

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<sup>14</sup> *Revolt*, Madras, 8 September 1929.

<sup>15</sup> *Swadesaimitran*, Madras, 1 January 1926.

<sup>16</sup> G.O.No.613, Public Department, 16 October 1921.

<sup>17</sup> G.O.No.658, Public Department, 15 September 1922.

twelve vacant posts in the provincial services, five should go to the non-Brahmins, the Mohammedans and the Christians including the Europeans on a rotational basis.<sup>18</sup> But in recruitments of the subordinate services the principle of communal rotation was not followed till Subbarayan's ministry issued a government order in July 1929.<sup>19</sup>

When Periyar clamored for special privileges for non-Brahmins in the wake of the publication of the memorandum forwarded to the Statutory Commission, the members of the independent ministry, assured that the non-Brahmins' interests would be adequately safeguarded by strictly implementing the principle embodied in the modified government order on. The evidences indicate that both Periyar and his followers were fully satisfied with this assurance and pledged to support the independent ministry.<sup>20</sup>

Dr.P. Subbarayan's independent ministry enjoyed the confidence of the members of Self-Respect Movement from 1929. It was mainly due to the personal friendship that existed between Periyar and S.Muthaiah Mudaliar the third minister in Subbarayan's cabinet. He was the chief architect who modified the original government order on communal rotation in recruitment for subordinate services.<sup>21</sup> Periyar's arguments in favour of reconstituting the movement into a political organisation, based on socialistic principles were welcomed by a large section of members who had already been exposed to the communist ideology through the trade unions. Trade unionism gained

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<sup>18</sup> G.O.No.712, Public Department, 2, July 1929.

<sup>19</sup> G.O.No.850, Public Department, 27 May 1935.

<sup>20</sup> *Dravidian*, Madras, 22 May 1929, NNPR, April 1929 p.430; *Kudi Arasu*, Madras, 13 April 1930.

<sup>21</sup> G.O.No.114, Public Department (General), 31 March 1933.

importance with the growth of industries in the Madras Presidency. Factories increased three-fold from 511 in 1920 to 1661 in 1930. Likewise the average number of employees in the Co-operatives increased correspondingly from 101, 655 in 1920 to 142,00 in 1930.<sup>22</sup> Workers of the factories organised themselves into trade unions and were initially led by nationalist politicians and later by local communist leaders. Communists infiltrated into trade unions only after the visit of S.Saklatwala, a prominent communist leader and a member of the British Parliament, Madras in 1927.<sup>23</sup>

The communist leaders in the Tamil districts joined the Self-Respect Movement in large numbers, and this group within the movement was led by M.Singaravelu, a labour leader. In 1937, Periyar saw the taxation policy of the Rajagopalachari ministry not as an effort to balance the budget but as a ruse of a political Brahmin in power to crush the economic prosperity of the non-Brahmins. He not only condemned the fiscal policy of the ministry but also its growing tendency to appoint more Brahmins than non-Brahmins in public services. Statistics were collected from government departments regarding the percentage of appointment.<sup>24</sup> Since the Congress Ministry came to power in 1937 statistics about the number of positions held by Brahmins in quasi-government organisations were prepared and published in *Kudi Arasu* and the *Sunday Observer*.<sup>25</sup> Since 1938 these two newspapers published a member of tables showing the relative positions of Brahmins and

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<sup>22</sup> *Census of India*, 1931. Vol. XIV, Part.I, Madras, 1932, p.221.

<sup>23</sup> Baliga,B.S., *Madras District Gazetteers, Coimbatore*, Madras,1966. p.125.

<sup>24</sup> *Kudi Arasu*, Madras, 22 June 1939.

<sup>25</sup> *Sunday Observer*, Madras, 25 June 1939.

non-Brahmins in various public services. For example on 3 September 1939 *Kudi Arasu* published a list of Brahmin officials in the Madras Provincial Co-operative Bank Ltd. and claimed that out of fifty two officials only ten were non-Brahmins and they too held ordinary positions with a salary of fifty rupees or less per month.

These two newspapers also indicated the number of positions held by the Brahmin community in the civil services, the judiciary and the Electricity Department of Madras Province. The Brahmins held over fifty seven percent of jobs in the civil service and the judicial services and about sixty percent in the Electricity Department.<sup>26</sup> The Congress government provided an excellent opportunity to strengthen Periyar's allegations when in 1939 it published the administration report for the official year ending 31 March 1938. Details of appointments in various categories of vacant positions during 1938 were published. It shows that sixty percent of the appointments to gazetted positions were made from the Brahmin caste and the rest from among the non-Brahmins including caste Hindus, scheduled castes, Christians and Muslims.<sup>27</sup> The position was no different in the next two categories either with the Brahmins holding over fifty four percent of the available positions, while over ninety five percent of all vacancies in the lower categories, where the remuneration was thirty rupees or less per month were filled by non-Brahmins.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> G.O.No. 1249,Public Department (Service) , 21 April 1937.

<sup>27</sup> *Kudi Arasu*, Madras, 20 August 1939.

<sup>28</sup> *Madras Mail*, Madras, 21 August 1939.

It is not known about the number of employees directly recruited and promotions of the employees. However, it is assumed that clerks and others for the lower cadres were directly recruited. But for the gazetted and non-gazetted ranks half of the vacancies were largely based on seniority, efficiency and general educational qualifications. The Brahmins by virtue of seniority and merit easily got into the gazetted and non gazetted positions. In the case of direct recruitments, the government ignored the terms of the Communal Order and enforced basic qualification for selection. In technical services, appointments on the Communal Government Order were not applied, as it was essential that the best qualified men alone were appointed irrespective of communal considerations.<sup>29</sup> But in all other cases the Rajagopalachari ministry followed the policy of communal representation in services.<sup>30</sup>

However, as there was no possibility of checking either total number or the relative merits of Brahmins who applied for the direct recruitment of various cadres, it was difficult to ascertain the truth about the rival claims of the Justice Party and the members of the Rajagopalachari ministry. The Justice Party often maintained that the Communal Government Order was not strictly followed for recruitments to government services. On the other hand, the Congress men refuted this allegation as a fabrication.<sup>31</sup> At the Seventh Gobichettipalayam Congress Conference held at Kongarapalayam

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<sup>29</sup> G.O.No.1117, Public Department (Service), 30 June 1938.

<sup>30</sup> G.O.No.2215, Public Department, 18 November 1937; *Madras Mail*, Madras, 11 October 1939.

<sup>31</sup> G.O.No.1462, Public Department, 6, September 1939.

on August 1939 Rajagopalachari, not only rejected the Justice Party's charge that the Communal Government Order was not strictly followed under the Congress Ministry but asserted that it was carefully followed and as a result some Brahmins were disappointed with the Congress government.<sup>32</sup>

The Fifteenth Justice Confederation at Tiruvarur on 24 August 1940 was significant because Periyar was unanimously elected as the leader for a second term. In conformity with its social objective of uplifting the non-Brahmin communities, two major resolutions related to the allocation of separate constituencies to non-Brahmin, and to the provisions of the communal order and alternation were passed.

The communal order was amended in 1947. The Brahmin quota was reduced, and the non-Brahmin quota was distributed among forward and backward communities. According to this order, a unit of fourteen appointments was distributed as two for Brahmins, one for Muslims, two for Adi Dravidas, two for backward castes and six for other non-Brahmins. Again a cyclical order was fixed. Similar reservations were provided in the educational institutions also and committees for selection of students in the colleges were constituted and the powers of the principals were curbed.<sup>33</sup>

However, after a new constitution of free India was made and adopted, the position was settled in accordance with its provisions, whereby twenty percent of jobs in the public services were reserved for backward castes, which meant that out of twenty vacancies, three would go to erstwhile

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<sup>32</sup> *The Hindu*, Madras, 22 August 1939; *Swadesamitran* and *Madras Mail*, Madras, 21 August 1939.

<sup>33</sup> G.O.No 2808, Public Department, 11 October 1953.

untouchables and tribal people, five to backward castes while the other twelve were open to all members of the castes who had reservations made for them.<sup>34</sup>

A practice of rotation was already established. It was laid down that the rotation should start invariably at the first term. If qualified and suitable candidate belonging to the schedule castes, scheduled tribes or backward castes was not available for appointment in the turn allotted for them in the cycle, the turn would lapse and no account would be taken of any passed over turns. At the same time, the three groups eligible for reserved seats could contest for the unreserved seats also and if they were selected based on merit the reserved seats could not in any way be affected.<sup>35</sup> The reservation has been modified in course of time: in a unit of hundred appointments, sixteen should go to the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and twenty five for other backward castes and fifty nine should be filled in the order of merit and also prescribed a rotational scheme as before for every twenty five appointments.<sup>36</sup> The turns prescribed in every twenty five appointments are scheduled castes and scheduled tribes: 2,9,16, and 22, backward castes; 4, 7, 12, 14, 19, and 24, open competition; 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15, 17, 18, 20, 21,23and 25. Castes constituting the three distinct groups in the order, the scheduled castes, the scheduled tribes and the other backward castes have been enumerated.

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<sup>34</sup> G.O.No.2432, Public Department (Services), 27 October 1951.

<sup>35</sup> G.O.No2432, Public Department (Services), 27 September 1951.

<sup>36</sup> *Madras Services Manual*, Vol.I, Madras, 1961,pp. 113-114.

The policy of bestowing special treatment to the backward castes was accepted as a constitutional principle in 1951, when the old Communal Government Order was challenged as violating the fundamental right to equality guaranteed in Article 16 (1) of the Indian Constitution. Writ petitions were filed in the Madras High Court challenging the constitutional issue relating to an admission in the medical college.<sup>37</sup>

Champakam Dorairajan, a candidate who sought for admission to the Madras Medical College, filed a petition for issue of a writ of Mandamus restraining the government from enforcing the Communal Government Order by which admission to the Medical College was regulated. A similar petition was filed by C.R.Srinivasan, an applicant to the Government Engineering College where also admissions were regulated in the manner prescribed for state services. Alladi Krishnasami Ayyar, a member of the Constitution Drafting committee appeared in this case on behalf of one of the petitioners.<sup>38</sup> The communal Government Order was generally interpreted as a measure of discrimination against the Brahmins. The Salem Brahmin Seva Sangam sent a petition to the President of India praying for a declaration that the Communal Government Order was ultra vires, illegal and opposed to the Fundamental Rights guaranteed by the constitution.<sup>39</sup>

A full Bench of the Madras High Court heard the case and decided that the communal order discriminated against citizens on grounds of caste,

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<sup>37</sup> Thangavelu, G., and Parthaban, R., *Communal Reservations and Constitutional Safeguards in Tamilnadu*, Chennai, 1999. pp.50-51.

<sup>38</sup> Arunan, *Periyarin Dalithiam* (T) Madurai, 2006, p.139.

<sup>39</sup> *The Hindu*, Madras, 16 April 1950.

community, religion and therefore violated Article 15(1) of the constitution. Holding that the communal order made caste and religion the grounds for admission or rejection, the judgment stated, it denies equal treatment for all citizens under like conditions, both in the privileges conferred and disabilities imposed. In its effect and operation, the Communal Government Order discriminates markedly against the members of a particular caste, shuts out students having high qualifications, solely on the ground of their caste or religion, and lets in others with inferior qualifications on then same ground. The charter of liberties of the student world which the sponsors of the constitution proclaimed that their upright has been so shortened and mutilated by the communal Government Order as to reduce it to a Charter of Servitude for a class of deserving students who have the misfortune of belonging to a particular caste or religion.<sup>40</sup>

The Supreme Court upheld the judgment of the Madras Court. The Advocate-General of the Madras State argued for Article 46 of the Indian constitution authorising the government to promote educational and economic interests of the weaker sections.<sup>41</sup> Article 29(2) clearly stated that religion, race, caste or language should not be the basis for denying

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 28 July 1950.

<sup>41</sup> Article 46: "The state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interest of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and forms of exploitation".

admission to any one in the educational institutions of the government.<sup>42</sup> It was argued that the communal distribution of seats in colleges was tantamount to assisting the weaker sections of the population, nothing more and nothing less. The Supreme Court rejected the argument and declared that 'the Directive Principles of State Policy were expressly made unenforceable by appropriate writs, orders and directions under Article 32 and concluded that the fundamental right is sacrosanct and not liable to be abridged by any legislature, Executive Act or order except to the extent provided in the appropriate article of the constitution'.

The rejection of the petition created a great stir in Madras among the Dravidian circle. The movement declared a struggle on 14 August 1950, a day before the Independence Day, Periyar Movement proceeded with a *hartal* against the judgment.<sup>43</sup> A massive procession was organised and Periyar himself led it. The political parties like the Dravida Munetra Kazhagam and the Communist Party supported this struggle. Periyar and other Dravidian Parties saw in it the Aryan rule and *varnashramadharma* constitution oppressed the Dravidians. On 1 December 1950, Periyar convened the Communal Government Order Conference at Tiruchinapalli. Educationalists like Professors M.Rathnasami, Dr.A.Krishnasami and Dr.A.Ramasami participated. The conference decided that the constitution of

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<sup>42</sup> Article 29(2): "No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds on grounds only of religion race, caste, language or any of them."

<sup>43</sup> *Viduthalai*, Madras, 14 August 1950.

India should be amended with the provision of reservation of seats in educational institutions and in jobs for the backward.<sup>44</sup>

The vehement criticism and agitation led to the amendment of the constitution. The vision, fairness and justice made an impact on the state as well as the Central Government. The first amendment of the constitution in the constitutional history of free India was made on 18 June 1951, by which Article 15 (1) and (2) of the constitution, forbade discrimination on caste, religion and like differences were amended by an additional provision that nothing in the Article would 'prevent the state from making any special provision for education, economic, or social advancement of any backward castes of citizens or for the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes.' Special assistance to the backward castes has thus become a constitutional right in India.<sup>45</sup>

It appears to be a political decision and had no general acceptance as a necessary welfare measure. A section of the press criticised the injustice involved to a large number of individuals.<sup>46</sup> The grave danger to efficiency and public interest, and the impropriety of amending the constitution led to reverse judicial interpretations.<sup>47</sup> It is said, the retention of the communal order was actuated not by any urgent desire to promote an equalitarian

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<sup>44</sup> G.O.No.218, Public Department, 29 January 1951.

<sup>45</sup> Padmanaban,A., *Dalits at the Cross Road: Their Struggle Past and Present*, Madras, 1996, p.78.

<sup>46</sup> *The Hindu*, Madras, 31 May 1951.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 14 April and 15 May 1951.

society, but by the obvious anxiety of the party in power not to lose a political advantage.<sup>48</sup>

The Dravidians widely resented and Rajagopalachari had to face bitter opposition from Dravidian parties on the scheme of elementary education. However, Periyar Movement achieved a dramatic change in the leadership of the Congress from Rajagopalachari to Kamaraj in 1954. The government under K. Kamaraj's rule is termed a *Pachai* Tamilan Government, which responded to the movement on the subject of proper communal representation in appointments to jobs and enrolment in educational institutions. The list of backward castes, eligible for concessions for education and employment rapidly increased.<sup>49</sup>

The principle of distribution of public offices, of elective and appointive positions among various castes in proportion to their relative size in the total population is a generally accepted principle in governmental operations. In the Madras Civil Service of 1962, there were sixty seven deputy collectors who were Brahmins, twenty-two non-Brahmin Hindus, six members of the scheduled castes, twenty-one members of the backward castes, two Christians and two Muhammadans.<sup>50</sup> It shows that while non-Brahmin Hindus occupy forty-three out of sixty posts, 'the backward castes were nearly equal in number to the non-Brahmins. Among the several thousands in the lower grades of public service, the backward castes have done much better and it

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 and 26 May 1951.

<sup>49</sup> G.O.No.1059, Public Department (General), 9 July 1954.

<sup>50</sup> *Madras Annual List*, (list of Government Officers), Madras, 1962.

may be expected that with the increase in education, their proportion in the higher services increased correspondingly.

Periyar Movement carried on a ceaseless campaign through the journals and in speeches for achieving proportionate representation of the non-Brahmins in educational institutions. It is because of the Movement's propaganda, a convention was established in the Tamilnadu Cabinet that it should not contain more than one Brahmin and the High Court Bench not more than one Brahmin judge. By a calculation, the Brahmin should not be given more than three percent of the posts, this was applied for all positions from the cadre of peon to the top rank. Periyar was very emphatic that until all castes reached the level of the Brahmin, there should be a halt on employment of Brahmin in public offices. He, however, limited the application of this principle to admission in schools managed on public money and allowed others to study on private philanthropy.<sup>51</sup>

The principle of communal representation was the cause of disagreement between the Brahmin and non-Brahmin groups. Constitutional guarantee of non-discrimination between castes was interpreted by Periyar as distribution of employment and posts among various castes in proportion to their strength.<sup>52</sup> Periyar Movement forced the Madras Government to issue an order abolishing castes, and held that without abolishing castes it was meaningless to put down the demand for communal representation as an expression of casteism.<sup>53</sup> The Movement felt that representation in

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<sup>51</sup> Presidential Address at the Dravida Kazhagam Conference at Tuticorin, 1948.

<sup>52</sup> *Kudi Arasu*, Madras, 5 March 1969.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, *Viduthalai*, Madras, 9 April 1950.

employment in proportion to their number was the yardstick of the progress of Tamil and a mark of the achievement of Self-Respect. It was very averse to introduce tests of merit, efficiency and standard for admission to educational institutions, and to them these were the tricks of Brahmin to counter proportionate representation. The movement wanted to remove terms such as qualification, efficiency and quality.<sup>54</sup> The policy of the Movement is that Tamilians should get proportionate rights. In addition, it is the duty of the Movement to oppose everything against the non-Brahmins.<sup>55</sup> A vigorous campaign was launched against the requirements of comparative qualification and efficiency, and argued that integrity in discharging public duties was not linked to paper qualifications.<sup>56</sup>

### **Periyar's views on Education and Employment**

The term *kalvi* in Tamil, meaning education denotes to teach or to inform, implying in the words of Periyar, and teaching the character of the world and the nature of humanity. All other things imparted in the name of education, were said to be skills. Speaking at a Conference of Elementary School Teacher's Conference in 1927.<sup>57</sup> Periyar said that the aim of education was not to provide a job for livelihood but to impart knowledge, and it should inculcate knowledge necessary to lead a life with freedom and self respect without doing any harm to anybody, and promoting love and mutual

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, Madras, 18 July 1972.

<sup>55</sup> *Viduthalai*, Madras 11 May 1966.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, Madras, Periyar EVR's 88<sup>th</sup> Birth Day Special, *Thaguthi, Tiramai, Mosadi* 1967.

<sup>57</sup> Venu,A.S.,(tr.) *Reform of Education*-Speech delivered by Periyar on 24 April 1927 at the *Teacher's Conference at Polur*, North Arcot District.

regard in society.<sup>58</sup> In addition, he expressed a desire that the teachers should first inculcate in the students the values of Self-Respect, manliness, equality, love for the people and love for the country and observed that such education was not provided in schools and colleges. He considered the scholarship acquired by the degree-holders was a kind of skill only and not education in the true sense. For he pointed out that, many of them were selfish and lacking in Self-Respect while there was probability of uneducated being kind, intelligent and self-respecting.<sup>59</sup>

Even as early as in 1928, Periyar discarded the existing system of education as very unsuitable for development of human qualities and intelligence. He condemned it as a system suited only to an irresponsible ruler, who had no confidence in his subjects, as a tool for making them ignorant and traitors, for keeping them suppressed under his feet and rule permanently as he pleased. Further, he declared that the contents of education imparted were favourable for the domination of the dishonest group that wanted to flourish on the labour of others without exerting themselves. Therefore, he felt, the system should be changed from its foundation itself.

One of the basic changes in education advocated by Periyar was to remove all lessons on devotion to God, devotion to religion and devotion to the king. They were the obstructions to knowledge and inculcated among the students a slavish mentality. Such teachings, he thought, should not be

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<sup>58</sup> *Kudi Arasu*, Madras 1 May 1927.

<sup>59</sup> Anaimuthu, V., *Periyar EVR Chinthanaigal*, (T) Vol-II, Tiruchinapalli, 1974. pp.1233- 40.

allowed to enter the educational institutions. Periyar in 1920 raised his voice of repeated opposition to education imparting political, social, and religious devotion.<sup>60</sup>

Education obtained in schools and colleges is useful to produce slaves, who helped the foreign domination according to Periyar. It is nonsense that devotion to religion and devotion to king should be taught in schools. His ardent wish was that no education be imparted to the communities from which the intelligentsia of the land had sprung up. He liked to see the existing schools and colleges closed at least for a period of fifteen years and said this is the first duty of any good government and all sincere reformers.<sup>61</sup>

Periyar thought that the educational system was not geared to stimulate intellectual growth but useful only to get jobs. He advocated total reorganisation of the system and provision of vocational education to everyone.<sup>62</sup> Knowledge, thinking ability and skills were the ingredients of true education, not the information imparted in schools and colleges, and their retention tested by written reproduction at the end of course. He suggested that in the place of thousands of schools and colleges established in the name of education, schools inculcating pure thinking ability without any bias should be established. This only would lead to conserving of a good deal of money, brain-work, energy and time and result in the development of

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<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol.11, pp.1235-36.

<sup>61</sup> *Revolt*, Madras, 12 December 1928.

<sup>62</sup> *Viduthalai*, Madras, 9 May 1972; Tantai Periyar, *Arivurai* (T), Tiruchinapalli 1949.p.7.

standard of living, conduct, integrity, good will, humanism, love and mutual help.<sup>63</sup>

Periyar gave several concrete suggestions to the government for re-ordering the educational system. The existing system, which was found long and expensive, was said to be suitable for the rich only and so he recommended compulsory education and higher education should not be imparted on public expenditure.<sup>64</sup> He was very critical of the examination system which tested only the memory power and reproducing capacity in which only the *purohits* excelled. The real test, according to him, should be the ability for rational thinking, physical strength, knowledge of the world and rational conduct. Examinations should not be the basis for promotion from one class to a higher class, but promotion should be automatic based on attendance in a class and completion of the course. It was only for appointments, a system of examination was found necessary.<sup>65</sup>

To Periyar Movement education did not mean bookish knowledge. He desired the power of thinking and understanding and the spirit of helping others were the indicators of true education. Rational lessons to be introduced from the foundation and people with rational sense were to be appointed as teachers. Rationalism must be a subject for examination and the qualification required for jobs. Periyar's equalitarian philosophy found its support from the communist schools but as he had a specific object of pulling down racial degradation, he had his own platforms to carry on his struggle.

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, Madras, 16 December 1969.

<sup>64</sup> *Tantai Periyar Arivurai*, (T), pp.8-9.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11.

He certainly wanted to end the economic domination exercised by princes, *zamindars*, capitalists, big proprietors, businessmen and agents. This task went further to dismantle the social system under which a large majority were denied equal economic rights by birth and forced to do menial works.<sup>66</sup>

In the land of plenty where production of raw materials and trade were flourishing, Periyar pointed out that a large majority of the people were living in poverty. He gave considerable thought to this phenomenon and found that much of the wealth and people's hard earned money were wasted in rituals, temple worship and extravagant marriage and other ceremonies. He observed that the standard of living has raised because of the contact with the west but unlike the western countries, it was not accompanied with growth in income. The economic system helped the accumulation of wealth in a few sectors.<sup>67</sup> Periyar believed that the economic backwardness of the large majority of the non-Brahmin population was due to the belief in *varnashramadharma* and the superstitious beliefs about *karma* and re-birth compelling the people to spend their earnings on unproductive religious activities. To improve Indian economy and the economic conditions of the people, *varnashramadharma*, religious thoughts and preoccupation with temples, festivals and rituals should be eradicated.<sup>68</sup>

Periyar was an advocate of industrialisation and mechanisation. He perceived that the only hope for removal of poverty was increasing the production. He advocated that the object should always be more production

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<sup>66</sup> *Viduthalai*, Madras, 18 March 1970.

<sup>67</sup> *Kudi Arasu*, Madras, 18 January 1931.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, Madras, 13 September 1931.

in less time and adoption of modern methods to achieve this. Promotion of cottage industries, therefore, came under severe criticism as a mania, as Gandhian, as Brahminism, and as *varnashramadharm*a philosophy intended to keep the Sudra and Panchama in permanent poverty. He abhorred the intense manual labour involved in cottage industries for small income particularly in the context of the *varna* system which reserved all manual labour to the Sudra. Gandhi's basic education scheme was discarded as irrelevant in the age of technological and scientific progress. Periyar rejected it as a device to keep the Brahmin as the superior, non-labouring caste dominating the political, economic and social fields and the *Sudra* as the servile menial castes.<sup>69</sup> For the same reasons, Periyar denounced Rajagopalachari's Elementary Education Scheme as a plan to reintroduce *varnashramadharm*a.

Periyar considered mechanisation was necessary, convenient, and suitable for progress. He refuted the argument that mechanisation would result in unemployment and questioned the basis and need for the existence of a group as workers and another as owners and differentiations in human society as the labourer and the lazy, as one who toils and the other who enjoys, as one who cheats and the one who is cheated. The workers, owners, farmers, *zamindars*, *mirasdars*, etc., represented different levels in the hierarchy established by *varnashramadharm*a.<sup>70</sup> Expressing his views on a graded society, Periyar remarked, as there were many inequalities by birth

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<sup>69</sup> Anaimuthu, V., *Periyar EVR Chintanaigal*, (T) Vol. III, Tiruchinapalli, 1974, pp. 1674-75.

<sup>70</sup> *Kudi Arasu*, Madras, 14 December 1930.

under which they were perennially suffering, they had failed to notice the levels in occupational life. To attain genuine equality, *samadharmā*, he wanted to do away with the inequalities by birth as well as by occupation.<sup>71</sup> To Periyar, the wage-earning workers and caste workers and maintained that they all belonged to non-Brahmin castes. Attempts for upward mobility in the caste hierarchy among certain castes like Viswabrahmins would be of no avail unless accompanied with change in occupation.

In championing the cause of labour, the object of Periyar was to abolish the hereditary nature of labour and to obliterate the distribution between the owner and the worker and to give a share for workers in the profit and in management. He declared the Dravida Kazhagam as a worker's movement since most of the members of the labour classes were from castes other than the Brahmin. The practice of hereditary occupations sustained by the caste system is to be buried in total along with the caste in the socio-economic order. It was one of the fundamental ideals of Periyar that a labourer's son should not be a labourer. Herein he saw an effective way of destroying the caste and was therefore, opposed to the occupational division contained in the varnashrama theory proposed by Gandhi. His great faith in communal representation in jobs was born out of a methodical calculation for dismantling the occupational structure of castes.

Periyar closely examined certain industries like *khaddī*, handloom and the match industries. He considered *khaddī* as a wholly uneconomic proposition and very backward industry that would keep the villagers in

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<sup>71</sup> Anaimuthu, V., *Periyar E.V.R. Chinthanaigal*, (T) Vol.III . Tiruchinapalli, 1974. p.1673.

poverty. He described handloom as an industry of barbarian age, an industry that must die or must be killed as it involved loss of time, enormous labour, and poor income. As there was no fixed working hour and no age prescription for the work, he cautioned that handloom denoted a kind of slavery. He emphatically stated that handloom and handloom weavers could never make any progress in the society. He concluded that handloom industry contained half the foolishness and barbarity of the *khaddi* industry and should not be revived.<sup>72</sup> He considered the match factories useful and a flourishing cottage industry and recommended reduction of enormous excise duty that was thrice the cost price.

Periyar was not in favour of labour unions. He thought that they were only serving some leaders to accrue popularity. He was of the opinion that the workers were the wage earners and not really workers in the sense of persons trained in a work. In his concept, a wage earner working under a master for daily or weekly wages without having any freedom in the work and without receiving the benefits of that work is a slave and not a worker. Such wage earners have no connection to the work or to the outcome of that work. He advised such workers to keep away from politics and to prevent external leadership over their unions for he held that while those in politics had no idea of freedom, rights, *swaraj*, and worker's freedom, the workers were not aware of their own conditions, problems and rights. The leadership of the unions should be held by the workers and not by any political leader, Periyar emphasized. He used a crude statement that fools were better than

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<sup>72</sup> *Viduthalai*, Madras, 1 February 1969.

dishonest people. He thought that they should trust the masters until they could form unions with leadership from among themselves rather than entrusting their unions to politicians.<sup>73</sup>

Periyar thought the worker's problem was people's problem as ninety percent of the people could be labelled as labourers. He complained that it was not being treated as a people's problem but as that of a separate class because of the dominance of the non-labouring classes and conspirators. One of the reasons for the failure of many great men to relieve the people from their miseries, poverty, slavery and injustice, was their inability to get at the root of the problem to understand the mischievous role of a group of people. However, Periyar gradually developed the aims of the worker's agitation from 1920s to 1950s. In the beginning, he advocated that the object of the workers' agitation was not mere rise in wages but abolition of the phenomenon of ownership and eradication of the distinction as owner and worker. According to him the main target of the workers' agitation was to remove the very thought of treating the workers as low and owners as high in a hierarchy. In 1950s, Periyar exhorted the workers to fight against the government rather than the owners as the government was giving support to owners and ownership.<sup>74</sup> The ultimate goal of agitation of workers was the attainment of their rights.<sup>75</sup>

It was with a view to protecting the agricultural workers who were said to be mostly Dravidians, the Dravidian Agricultural Worker's Association and

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<sup>73</sup> *Kudi Arasu*, Madras, 30 May 1926.

<sup>74</sup> *Viduthalai*, Madras, 7 October 1952.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 20 September 1952.

Dravida Vivasaya Thozhilalar Kazhagam were formed in 1952. Dravida Kazhagam activities were extended to the problems of agricultural labourers and declared that it was the problem of Dravidians. To him, the communist, socialist and other parties fighting for the cause of labourers failed to understand the major labour questions. The basic issue was the caste based occupations and their conditions.<sup>76</sup>

In the equalitarian economic order as a strong critic of begging, he desired, that begging and alms giving were to be prohibited by law. Those who violated were to be punished. Periyar thought that even kindness and charity were born out of selfish motives for self-contentment and were injurious to the sense of human Self-Respect. According to Hindu philosophy, since wealth is the creation of God, it follows that the rich and the poor are also god's creations, and the activities of giving and receiving and distributing rewards for giving in *moksha* are said to be God's doing. To remove the sense of defeatism among men, Periyar thought that the very concept of charity should be eradicated. Charity was atrocious, an anti-social activity and a device of the rich to cover their dishonest deeds.<sup>77</sup>

In the quest for an equalitarian society, Periyar wanted to uproot rural-urban differences and to develop the entire territory of the nation equally. In a speech delivered at the Erode London Mission School Literary Society in July 1936, he pointed out that villages were expanded by towns, and spoke against the very concept of village industries as distinct from urban industries.

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 22 March 1952.

<sup>77</sup> Periyar EVR, *Suyanalam, Peranalam*,(T), Madras,1949, pp. 11-16.

He called upon the villages to give up superstitions, become rational, realise their plight and leave villages.<sup>78</sup> He formulated a plan for villages in 1944.<sup>79</sup> Consistent with his theory of destroying diseased portions and parasitic growth in the society, Periyar advocated that the plan for village reform should start with the destruction of villages and there should be no villages anywhere. He strongly advocated that the word 'village' should not even be retained in dictionaries. For, he said that no reform of villages would make any change as long as the distinctions as village, town and city were kept, and any reforms attempted would only make a village a better village but would not change a village into a town. He drew an analogy that the Paraya and the Chakkili by assuming the names Harijan and Adi Dravida had not changed their status. Village reform would not bring about the rights and amenities available in cities to villages as the structure of the two were different.

The status of the village was described as similar to that of the Panchama and the Sudra bound to serve the other three *varnas* under the *varnashramadharma*. He argued that the villagers toil and the benefits go to the city dwellers and the villages remain in the state of a Sudra 'untouchable caste', and traders and businessmen in towns flourish and villagers continue in poverty. Periyar described a village as a place without schools, hospital, court, police station, parks, roads, light, water or culture and people in

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<sup>78</sup> *Kudi Arasu*, Madras, 2 August 1936.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 November 1944.

villages have no facilities to increase their earnings, have no leisure or any means to make progress.<sup>80</sup>

Under this condition, projects like village uplift, appeared to be a mischievous propaganda which only meant cleaning the village off and on and making one or two literate. The long term effect of this was found to be a plan to keep the villagers in a degraded status. Even Gandhi's village uplift programme was interpreted by Periyar as a kind of *varnadharma* intended not for lifting the villages to the level of cities but to make the inhabitants of villages serve the city dwellers and fulfill their needs.<sup>81</sup> Periyar had given considerable thought for re-organisation of villages to integrate towns and villages by removing the vast differences between them in the occupational pattern, level of amenities, educational conditions and style of life. He gave an action programme for modernising villages, which includes. (i) mechanisation of agriculture that is, ploughing, sowing, digging wells, harvesting, and by machines, (ii) reformulation of agricultural land to facilitate mechanisation and separation of land unsuitable for growing other crops, (iii) marketing of agricultural products, through farmers, co-operatives so that the profits would go to the agriculturists, (iv) combining several villages as a small town for provision of a school, hospital, park, cinema, drama, reading room, library, radio station, roads, bus transport, police station, a well-educated judge and shops, (v) organising mobile exhibitions, (iv) establishing

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<sup>80</sup> Periyar, E.V.R. Grama Chirthiruttam, (T) Madras, 1945. p.12.

<sup>81</sup> *Kudi Arasu*, Madras, 22 September 1940.

appeal courts and providing for field camps of officers for redressal of grievances and (vii) establishing small industries.<sup>82</sup>

Periyar desired to remove the usage of terms like 'village', 'villager', 'country' and 'rural' and his concept was based on what he perceived in the western countries. He felt that the country's progress lay in the progress of the people in the lower strata engaged in hard manual work. At the same time, agricultural work should also be shared equally by all without caste distinctions and without any notion of superiority or inferiority. His object was not merely to raise the economic standard of the villagers but to remove the disparities between villagers and townsmen.

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 23 September 1940.