CHAPTER 1

ARUNTHATHIYARS: VICTIMS OF THE VICTIMIZED CASTES

1.1. Introduction

1.1.1. ‘Polluted’ Victims

The third millennium looks forward to India to become one of the super powers of the world. Down the centuries, the Indian sub-continent is known for its diversified caste, class, cultural, religious, ethnic, and lingual groups. Owning one of the most ancient civilizations, and achieving multi-faceted progress since Independence, India continues to be the second largest populous country in the world. Growth in literacy rate, self-sufficiency in agricultural production and development in modern industry have been achieved considerably. The growing marvelous progress in the field of information and technology leads India to become one of the most powerful countries in the world. The essence of the Indian Constitution such as justice, equality and fraternity, and the stand taken by the Indian government against all kinds of discrimination including racial discrimination like apartheid at the international forums (Ramaiah, 2007) reveal its concern for human rights and human dignity. But, it is still under the tight grip and the clutches of casteism, communal violences, illiteracy, unemployment, poverty, gender inequality and corruption.

Among them caste permeates through all walks of life of Indians and distorts by dividing the Indian society hierarchically and unequally. It makes the lowest groups in the caste hierarchy victims of caste system through various forms of caste discriminations. According to the ‘Working Group on Human Rights in India’ (WGHR),
the central feature of caste discrimination is the concept of ‘untouchability’ based on the notion that certain caste groups are considered ‘impure’ and ‘polluting’ other caste groups, leading to social ostracism, economic exploitation and denial of human dignity. The polluted are considered less human persons and forced to be the victims of caste system in India.

1.1.2. Caste System: The Victimizing Hierarchical Order

The caste system which is a unique type of social organization creates inequality, hierarchy, division and exclusion between and among individuals and groups in Indian society. Ambedkar asserts that “caste is not a division of labour; it is a division of labourers”. Caste is neither racial nor economic; but the ideological and religious factors, being the base, have stronger emphasis in the caste system (Omvedt, 2011). Caste system has created a polarization of relationship among human persons. The principle of purity and pollution based on religious faith which divides the relationship among people into higher and lower, touchables and untouchables, and ‘see-ables’ and ‘unsee-ables’. It is based on the birth of a person that her/his social status is determined by reason of the pure/impure occupation traditionally assigned to her/his family and group by the caste system. Thus, the ‘pure’ are privileged to be dominant or caste victimizers, and the ‘impure’ are disadvantaged to be dominated and hence victims of caste system.

Caste system creates three types of social division: the dominant, the dependent and the degraded. Those who enjoy the privileges and control over the lowest castes are called the dominant castes. Those who perform the demeaning manual labour are made to be dependent while those who do the activities of polluting occupations are considered the degraded. The caste system has created a hierarchy and division among them and kept the lowest castes ‘outside the village’ (Omvedt, 1994).
Six main features are attributed to caste system by Ghurye (1950), segmental division of society, hierarchy of groups, restrictions on feeding and social intercourse, civil and religious disabilities and privileges of different sections, lack of unrestricted choice of occupation, and restriction on marriage.

The upper castes want the existence of such a caste system to be continued without any challenge because it gives them social, economic, political and cultural power over the other castes under them. Caste system gives a caste-pleasure for those who are enjoying power over the others. Ambedkar (1987) clearly states that “castes form a graded system of sovereignty, high and low, which are jealous of their status and which know that if a general dissolution came, some of them stand to lose more of their prestige and power than others do. You cannot, therefore, have a general expression, for an attack on the caste system” (p. 72). The Western Sociologist, Davis (1951) observes that “the Hindu social order is the most thorough-going attempt known in human history to introduce absolute inequality as the guiding principle in social relations” (p. 170). Caste system is a most unique feature of the Indian society which is based on ‘social rank’, determined by birth only and it creates a system of institutionalized inequality and the consequent injustices making the lowest groups as victims of caste system.

Caste system which is based on birth ascribes the social, educational, economic, political and cultural status of Indians. The caste hierarchy ensures the high castes prestige, privileges and power and pushes the middle and low castes - the vast majority - to inherit deprivation and exploitation, and forces them to be the working force to keep high castes in comfort. And so the high castes have the vested interest in upholding and perpetuating caste system. The middle castes enjoy prestige, privileges and power over the low castes.
It is the reality that the particular sections of people are pushed to the periphery of the society through the various unjust structures and oppressive value systems. The caste system, a hierarchical order, is related to the web of power relationships across different sections of the Indian society. This power relationship is objectified and legitimized with sanctions in such a way that one caste group could use power, authority and force to victimize the other. Since caste is descent-based and hereditary in nature, the caste based power relationship imposes colossal obstacles on the powerless and oppressed caste groups which disparage their full realization of civil, social, economic, political and cultural rights.

Caste system is basically built on the principles like hierarchy, endogamy, hereditary, occupational division, religious and cultural rituals which propagate the theory of purity and pollution.

According to Dumont, the hierarchical caste system is founded on two basic principles: first, the opposition between ritual purity and position, which defines the hierarchical relationship between the pure Brahmins and the polluted Untouchables, and second, the absolute separation of religious status, personified by the Brahmins, from politico-economic power, which is ideally concentrated in the hands of Kshatriya kings (Burghart, 1996, p. 35).

These principles are the root causes for the inhuman and invidious atrocities and discriminations which affect the relationship among the different caste groups. This conflicting and distorting relationship has been continued for centuries and the ‘lowest caste groups have been the most affected and exploited victims of such unequal social relationship’ (Mendelsohn, 2000), since Hindu religion considers lowest caste groups as polluters by virtue of hereditary ‘polluted’ occupation. By institutionalizing these victimizing principles which are the basic footings of social inequality, the caste system becomes the victimizing hierarchical order in the Indian society.
1.1.3. Casteism: Systemic Form of Victimization

Casteism is an ethnocentric attitude which creates an awareness of one’s own caste whether pure or impure, touchable or untouchable, and privileged or underprivileged. The roots of casteism could be traced in the universal process whereby an individual identifies herself/himself with the group in which she/he is born and brought up and ultimately elects to join (Gupta, 1984a). Casteism may be defined as ‘an organized social attitude which involves caste awareness, caste belongingness and caste prejudices’. The attitudes of the high and low caste groups also substantially affect their cognitive, intellectual capacities (Bhushan & Sinha, 1996).

Casteism was part and parcel of Hinduism where occupations based on one’s birth were strictly followed. From the period of the Pallavas to the period of the Imperial Cholas, casteism with its subsequent outfit untouchability was systematically strengthened through the feudalistic rural society. Brahminism played a primary role in giving ideological support in systematizing and strengthening the caste system. The lowest caste groups were kept out as untouchables from the administrations of temples and the kingdoms (Kesavan, 1994). The untouchables are made to believe to inherit the aptitude that they are created with a low self-image under the caste hierarchy. The idea of victimization is a common phenomenon to the caste system which is explicit through the forms of social exclusion, alienation and fixed order of inherited occupations. Thus, casteism operates as a systemic form of victimization in the Indian society.

1.2. Victims

1.2.1. Meaning of Victim

The concept of Victimology communicates the deep concern of the oppressed people who undergo the experience of agony, torture, fear, anxiety, terror, pain and
helplessness in the society. Since the Indian society is distorted particularly on the basis of caste, power, gender and money, the net result is that the untouchables, powerless, women, children and poor become the most affected victims of the society.

Benjamin Mendelsohn (1900–1998) who is recognized as the pioneer of Victimology, coined the word ‘victimology’ and developed the related concepts when he started gathering information about victims in 1937 (Elias, 1986). The original meaning of victim is reflected in the ‘meaning of sacrifice or scapegoat – the execution or casting out of a person or animal to satisfy a deity or hierarchy’. During the founding of victimology in the 1940s, victimologists such as Mendelsohn, Von Hentig, and Wolfgang used the definition of victims as ‘hapless dupes who instigated their own victimizations’. In 1980s, feminists attacked this notion of ‘victim precipitation’ and replaced it by the notion of victims as ‘anyone caught up in an asymmetric relationship or situation’ (Victimology Theory, 2011).

According to Article 1 of the UN General Assembly Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power (1985), the definition of victims is as follows:

1. “Victims” means persons who, individually or collectively, have suffered harm, including physical or mental injury, emotional suffering, economic loss or substantial impairment of their fundamental rights, through acts or omissions that are in violation of criminal laws operative within Member States, including those laws proscribing criminal abuse of power.

2. A person may be considered a victim, under this Declaration, regardless of whether the perpetrator is identified, apprehended, prosecuted or convicted and regardless of the familial relationship between the perpetrator and the victim. The term "victim" also includes, where appropriate, the immediate family or dependants of the direct victim and persons who have suffered harm in intervening to assist victims in distress or to prevent victimization.
3. The provisions contained herein shall be applicable to all, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, age, language, religion, nationality, political or other opinion, cultural beliefs or practices, property, birth or family status, ethnic or social origin, and disability.

EU Council Framework Decision on the Standing of Victims in Criminal Proceedings (2001), according to which “victim shall mean a natural person who has suffered harm, including physical or mental injury, emotional suffering or economic loss, directly caused by acts or omissions that are in violation of the criminal law of a Member State” (Article 1).

Karmen (1990) in his Crime Victims: An Introduction to Victimology, broadly defined Victimology as "The scientific study of victimization, including the relationships between victims and offenders, the interactions between victims and the criminal justice system - that is, the police and courts, and corrections officials - and the connections between victims and other societal groups and institutions, such as the media, businesses, and social movements" (p. 2). Victimology is an overall scientific study of victims which makes clear who the victims are, their history, social habits, and personality and also presents ideas as to why they were chosen as victims. Victimology deals with the study of characteristics of relationship between the victims and offender (Talwar, 2006).

1.2.2. Caste Victimization

Elias (1986) gives a broader conception of victimization that considers not only common crimes but also corporate and state crimes. This understanding focuses not only individual criminals but also institutional wrongdoing, and that includes all crimes against human society which dehumanize and discriminate the powerless people.
The marginalized communities are imposed discriminations by the powerful groups which lead to wrongdoings or offences against the discriminated. A discrimination consists of “unequal, unfavourable and unjustifiable treatment based on person’s sex, gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, class, sexual preference, age, physical disability or any other improper ground” (Bowling & Phillips, 2002).

Though the advent of modernization and globalization has brought considerable changes in the overall development of the society in the Indian context, the vast majority are being affected by the new models of development which lead them again to the worst forms of poverty, deprivation, and exclusion. Since, the lowest caste groups being the socially untouchables and economically exploited, they fall a prey very easily to discrimination and thus become the most affected victims of new forms of development.

Today, the concept of victim includes any person who experiences suffering, injury, loss, or hardship due to any cause particularly due to the power differentials. All social, political, economic, cultural, religious and ideological powers are geared towards victimizing the Dalits though perpetrating violence against them and justifying them at any cost in favour of the powerful. This process leads to further victimization of the Dalits through denial of access to education, land, water, political power and their right to dignity and livelihood. In short, the caste system therefore perceives the Dalits as those who can be dehumanized not only in principle as per the caste codes but also existentially in day-to-day life as ‘non-persons’ through various forms of discriminatory practices.

The Dalits as untouchables are the victims of the caste system where they individually or collectively suffer harm, including physical or mental injury, emotional suffering, economic loss or substantial impairment of their fundamental rights through
the abuse of caste and criminal power of the high castes. Such victimization which is incurred through the inhuman practice of caste discrimination and untouchability is called caste victimization. In racist victimization, the victimized communities are called ‘collective victims’ (Karydis, 1994). In caste victimization, the victimized communities are collective caste victims.

Caste victimization is the consequential effect of a discriminatory process of the caste society which creates asymmetric relationship as it is inhuman, unbalanced, exploitative and oppressive, and having inherent agony and harm on the lowest caste groups making them sufferers of the society. Caste makes certain sections of people as victims to undergo various forms of victimization and puts them in pain, agony and creating a low self-image. Thus, caste victimization constructs caste as a crime. By imposing untouchability, exploitation, discrimination and oppression on the Dalits, caste becomes a social crime by denying the dignity of persons and by not respecting them as human persons.

1.3. The Dalits

1.3.1. Scheduled Castes

The word ‘Scheduled Caste’ (SC), for the first time appeared in the British Government of India Act, 1935 where it was used to denote those Hindu Castes and their sections converted to Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, who were excluded and exploited for centuries together. On the basis of Census -1931, the Government of India (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1936 made and listed out the “Scheduled Castes” for the purpose of the Government of India Act, 1935. Later, during 1942, the SCs were given reservation in employment (Report of Justice M.S. Janarthanam (2008) One Man Committee of Inquiry for Special Reservation for the Arunthathiyars.
Article 366 (24) of the Constitution gives the definition of SCs. “Scheduled Castes means such castes, races or tribes or part of or groups within such castes, races or tribes as are deemed under article 341 to be Scheduled Castes for the purposes of this Constitution”. Article 341 (1) gives power to the President to specify the castes, races or tribes or part of or groups within castes, races or tribes which shall for the purpose of the Constitution to be deemed to be SCs in relation to that State or Union Territory. The list of SCs can vary from State to State and Union territories and only Parliament can include or exclude any caste from the list according to Article 341 (2).

Separate lists of SCs were prepared by the states and were approved by the President of India through the Constitution (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) Order issued in 1950. The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 lists 1,108 castes across 25 states in its First Schedule. In 2001, there are 322 SCs in South India alone (Ram, 2008). In the wake of the Scheduled Castes (Amendment) Act, 1976 which came into force from 27th July 1977, the Tamil Nadu Government came out with a list of SCs (Annexure VIII).

The Census Commissioner of 1931, Hutton (1933) called untouchables as “exterior castes” placing their disabilities into three categories:

First, that under which they are barred from public utilities, such as, the use of roads and tanks, and secondly, their religious disabilities which debar them from the use of temples, burning grounds, mats and some other institutions. In addition to the above, but arising out of the second of these, there are the disabilities involved in relation with private individuals, such as the services of barbers and the admission to teashops, hotels or theatres owned by private individuals (p. 482).
The people, who are kept as caste victims at the lower category of the caste system, continue to suffer discriminatory, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment with extreme forms of exploitation, deprivation and violence.

1.3.2. Meaning of the Dalit

The discriminated and subjugated people of lower castes are named today as Dalits. The Dalits are given a mixed list of titles or names. Untouchables, unseeable, unapproachable, panchamas, Parayas, outcastes, depressed, oppressed, polluted, exterior castes, Schedule Castes and Adi-Dravidas etc. are other nomenclatures used to denote the Dalits. Such type of naming a group by other groups reflects the control of the powerful over the powerless and is also considered as a part of victimization. According to the Sanskrit-English Dictionary by Sir Monier-Williams, the word ‘Dalit’ has been derived from the root word ‘Dal’ which means to crack, open, split, etc. When the word is used as a noun or adjective, it means burst, slit, broken or torn asunder, downtrodden, scattered, crushed, destroyed, etc. (Williams, 1988). In Hebrew verbal word “dal” means empty, unequal, poor, dried up, not redeemable, irreparable (Perkins, 1986).

Though the word ‘Dalit’ can be referred to any people who are in a similar condition of oppression, the present usage of the term Dalit goes back to nineteenth century, when a Marathi social reformer Mahatma Jyotirao Phule used this term to describe the outcastes and untouchables as the-oppressed and broken victims of the caste-ridden society (Zelliot, 1992). “Phule also described how the Aryan progenitors of the present Brahman race came originally from a region beyond the Indus, attracted by the proverbial wealth of India and the fertility of its land. They met with fierce resistance from the original inhabitants whom they subjugated, and traces of this ancient struggle
were still to be seen in the terminology used to describe the lower castes in the present day” (O’Hanlon, 2002).

Though generally speaking the meaning of the term ‘Dalit’ includes all those who are oppressed and depressed, and particularly refers to SCs, STs and OBCs, in today’s political discourse, the term is confined to SCs. The term ‘Dalit’ describes the state of the exploited and discriminated people on account of their lowly birth. The word explains the condition of the oppression, agony and aspirations of the victimized by the caste society. In the present study, the term ‘Dalit’ refers only to SCs.

1.3.3. The Dalit Identity

*Dalit* is a commonly accepted word today to denote the schedule caste people and constantly reminds their state of age-old oppression and of being a ‘no-people’. This term is not a mere name or title to the Dalits; it has become the expression of hope in recovering their past identity. It symbolizes the struggles for human dignity and human rights of the oppressed community. This very word communicates also a new identity, solidarity, pride and outlook of the socially discriminated people.

The Dalits are named differently in our country, mainly to despise them or to show contempt. *Avarna, Asura, Dasa, Dasyu, Raksasa, Nisada, Pancham, Miletcha, Svapaca, Chandala, Achuta, Harijan, Exterior Castes, Depressed Castes, Scheduled Castes, Untouchables* etc. are some of the names which have different background and history (Massey, 1996). But Gangadhar Pantawane expresses that

*Dalit is not a caste. Dalit is a symbol of change and revolution. The Dalit believes in humanism. He rejects existence of God, rebirth, soul, sacred books that teach discrimination, faith and heaven because these have made him a slave. He represents the exploited man in his country”* (As quoted by Shah, 2001, pp. 22-23).
Though the *Dalits* are neither socially nor economically homogeneous, the *Dalit* identity brings all the sub-castes of the *Dalits* to a single platform as an oppressed caste, cutting across their linguistic, regional, religious and cultural differences to challenge the existing oppressive and unjust caste system.

### 1.3.4. The *Dalits* in Tamil Nadu

According to the Census (Government of India, 2011), SCs constitute 16.2 per cent of the total population of India, who are ‘subjected to inhuman and invidious indignities, exploitations and brutalities, and treated as untouchables even today’ (Ramaiah, 2007). According to the Report of Justice M.S. Janarthanam (2008) One Man Committee of Inquiry for Special Reservation for the *Arunthathiyars*, out of 76 SCs, five SCs viz. *Adi Dravida, Pallar, Paraiyar, Chakkiliyar* and *Arunthathiyyar* together constitute 93.5% of the total SCs population of Tamil Nadu.

#### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Percentage within SCs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Adi Dravidas</em></td>
<td>54,02,755</td>
<td>45.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Pallars</em></td>
<td>22,72,265</td>
<td>19.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Parayars</em></td>
<td>18,60,519</td>
<td>15.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Chakkiliyars</em></td>
<td>7,77,139</td>
<td>6.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Arunthathiyars</em></td>
<td>7,71,659</td>
<td>6.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>7,73,167</td>
<td>6.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total of SCs</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,18,57,504</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thirty five castes of SCs have reported population below one thousand. One in every sixth person in India is considered as an untouchable by the traditional Indian society. The *Dalits*, who are the lowest among the castes, are kept outside of caste system. They are discriminated, dehumanized and considered outcastes and untouchables. The *Dalits* are socially oppressed, economically very poor and deprived of the basic necessities, politically reserved powerless and culturally subjugated for centuries. Throughout the country, socio-cultural disabilities, caste based discriminations, inhuman atrocities, work based exploitations, not allowed to enter into educational institutions and financially dependent on others are enforced on the *Dalits*. And thus they are victimized by all the other castes.

### 1.4. Victimized Castes

The victims of such a horrendous caste system are the Untouchables/SCs of India, popularly known as ‘*Dalits’*, the victimized castes. The practice of untouchability is the major criteria for identifying and listing a caste as SC. There exist tensions and conflicts of values, behaviours and customs between touchable and untouchable castes in the Indian caste society. These tensions and conflicts which are built up on the foundations of one’s birth, and religious beliefs and rituals, are echoed through various forms of manifestations of victimizing of the lowest groups in the caste hierarchy. It further leads to victimize the powerless untouchables by victimizers who are the powerful touchables.

Among the approved list of 76 SC groups in Tamil Nadu, *Pallars, Parayars* and *Arunthathiyars* are the three major *Dalit* groups. *Pallars* who are positioned 49th place in the list, known also as *Devendra Kula Vellalars* and *Mallars* and mostly being agriculturalists, are engaged in wet land farming. *Paraiyars* who occupy 56th place in the
list are also known as *Adi*-(ancient) *Dravidas*, *Thirukkulathar* and *Sambavars*. They are mostly drummers, beating the *parai* (drum) at marriages, funerals, when making official announcements on important occasions and celebrations in villages. They are also engaged in cultivation, grass cutting and weaving.

Pushed to the lowest rank in the caste hierarchy, they are inhumanly treated by caste-Hindus. The touch of the untouchables, sometimes their shadows and even their voices are believed to pollute the caste-Hindus (Shah, 2004).

The *Arunthathiyars*, who are located in the 5th place in the list, are mostly involved in the occupations of sweeping, cleaning, manual scavenging and works related to animal skins. They are also known as *Chakiliyars*, *Madharis*, *Pagadias*, *Chemmans*, *Madigas*, *Thotis*, *Thommans*, and *Adi Andhras*.

Ambedkar (1987) classifies the SCs into three categories. The first ones are the untouchables who are said to cause pollution only by their touch. The second categories of the unapproachables are alleged to cause pollution when approaching others within a certain distance. *Nayadis* – the dog eaters – are group of people who fall in the category of the unapproachables. They mostly live in Palghat and Trichur districts of Kerala, and are also found in the adjoining states of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Being positioned in the 46th place in the list of SCs of Tamil Nadu Government, “they are the most persistent in their clamour for charity, and will follow at a respectful distance. If anything is given to them, it must be laid down, and after the person offering it has proceeded to a sufficient distance, the recipient comes timidly forward, and removes it” (p. 92).

The unseeables, comprising the third category and placed below the unapproachables in the caste hierarchy, are the ones whose mere sight is said to cause
pollution. Describing the abject condition of *Puthirai Vannars*, Ambedkar (1987) writes, “In the Tirunelveli District of the Madras Presidency there is a class of unseeables called *Purada Vannans*. Of them it is said that they are not allowed to come out during day time because their sight is enough to cause pollution. These unfortunate people are ‘compelled’ to follow the nocturnal habits, leaving their dens after dark and scuttling home at the false dawn like the badger, the *hyena*, the *avordvark*” (p. 92).

The SC-communities, mostly local or regional, have followed a wide range of traditional occupations, usually more than one but many of these are now rapidly disappearing. Skin or hide work, carrying carcasses, scavenging, drum-beating, playing music and singing, performing leather picture shows, cloth washing, devil dancing, soothsaying, and preparing traditional medicine are some of the prominent traditional occupations. Some occupations like leather work, scavenging etc., are considered degrading. Certain groups are considered untouchables whereas the same occupational groups are not considered so in other parts of the country. Fishing communities are considered as untouchables in eastern India where as it not so in western coastal areas. The potters are considered as untouchables in Madhya Pradesh or Manipur but not in any other areas (Singh, 1995).

1.4.1. Hierarchy among the Victimized

According to the principles of the caste hierarchical social order, either within caste groups or within the untouchable groups, the characteristics of the caste system or the forms of discrimination are the same with varied degrees. The sociologists like Moffatt (1979), Dumont (1980), Mosse (1994), Kadetotad (1977), Reddy (1952) and Singh (1969) had critically analysed the caste hierarchical system and particularly among
the Dalits of South India. The reason for the hierarchy among the Dalits, Moffatt (1979) argues that this is due to the cultural consensus of the Dalits to the religious principle of hierarchy which classifies the Dalits as the most inferior caste and places them at the bottom of hierarchy because they are inherently impure. Dumont (1980) points out that the hierarchy which is the fundamental feature of the caste system is expressed through the cultural code of ritual purity and impurity. It also creates the graded status where Brahmin at the top and the Dalits at the lowest strata. Moffatt (1979) argues that the acceptance of the cultural code of ritual purity and impurity by the untouchables constructs the hierarchy among them. Untouchables are also hierarchically stratified so much, that they also practice untouchability (Shah, 2001).

Mosse (1994) asserts that dominance and dependency portray the hierarchical relations and the Dalits have the same cultural perception of power and status that keeps the hierarchy among them and as Weber (1958) puts it, the Dalits have ‘internalised’ the Hindu order. According to these scholars, the Dalits have imbibed the same cultural values of the high castes which make them excluded by the high castes. By accepting this principle, the Dalits are also divided hierarchically and have ranked relations among themselves.

The untouchables are, by and large, economically very poor among the Indian population and are divided into many distinct castes with complex hierarchical order. Some of them even practice untouchability and consider others as untouchable castes. The Bhangis (Arunthathiyars) occupy the lowest status among them (Shyamalal, 1997). According to Gadgil (1952), Bhangis are castes traditionally confined to the business of removing night soil. They are on this account considered among the most degraded in
Hindu society. These views are supported by Sahay (1975) in his article, ‘Eradication of Untouchability and the Caste System’. He states that Bhangis are those who are associated with filthy work like carrying of night soil and cleaning of drainage. Issacs (1965) points out that doing such a filthy work which is traditionally the task of the untouchables places this group at the bottom of even the untouchable’s scale.

Ghanshyam Shah (2001) observes that there are other reasons to consider some communities of the Dalits as superior to other Dalits. Among the Dalits, there are communities which do the ritual occupation of the life cycle ceremonies for the other untouchables, as Brahmin priests do for the other high castes. The Dalits who do the works of village servants, assistants to the village headman and watchmen in the fields of the high caste landlords are considered as superior groups next to the ritual groups. The next in the rank order are the groups who do the impure occupations like scavenging dead cattle, drum beating, eating the meat of dead animals. The Cheri vannars who wash the soiled linen especially, those connected with the menstruation and childbirth are considered lower rank among the Dalits. The Chakkiliyars (Arunthathiars) who do the leather works are considered still lower among untouchables. In Cheris, according to their rank, each group has separate streets to live and the lowest are kept outside the Cheris. All these untouchables do their marriages only within their own ranks.

Balagopal (2005), in his article “Justice for Dalits among Dalits” analyses the hierarchy among the Dalits. He clearly states that there are demarcated sub-groups among the Dalits. They do not inter-marry, and the higher among them do not normally inter-dine with the lower. He emphatically says that some untouchables are untouchables for other untouchables. It is the Arunthathiyars who are considered the Dalits among Dalits in the caste ladder in the Indian society.
1.5. The Arunchathiyars

1.5.1. Why Study on the Arunchathiyars

Although the Dalits are increasingly becoming aware of their status and assertive of their dignity and rights, the Arunchathiyars who are one of the lowest Dalit communities in our Indian sub-continent, are kept to live in the lowest strata and under inhuman conditions of caste system. The following factors have stimulated the researcher in doing this study on caste victimization of the Arunchathiyars in Virudhunagar district.

First, the available researches on the Dalits in Tamil Nadu concentrate on the general socio-cultural, economic, political and religious dimensions of the Dalits in general or analyse the issues of the Dalits other than the Arunchathiyars or without much reference to the Arunchathiyars. This research however focuses on the socio-cultural, religious, economic and political issues of the Arunchathiyars in particular.

Secondly, a cursory look at the sociological data available so far shows that most of the studies on the Dalits in Tamil Nadu are done from the perspective of the socio-cultural analysis of the caste system. Though some of the studies have analysed the untouchability and discriminations of the Dalits, they have not given much importance to the victimological perspective of the issues and struggles of the Dalits. Sociologists have studied the causes and consequences of the caste system on the Dalits in general but not from the point of view of caste victimization of the Arunchathiyars.

Thirdly, the few studies available on the Arunchathiyars are also concentrating only on the sole aspect of manual scavenging of the Arunchathiyars. This research analyses in depth the various discriminations imposed by high castes, the state and the other Dalits on the Arunchathiyars in Virudhunagar district from the perspective of crime and particularly from the perspective of victims of the victimized castes.
Fourthly, any new research, studying the caste victimization of the *Arunthathiyars* will not only provide a new literature on the *Arunthathiyars* but also motivate the *Arunthathiyars* to reflect together intellectually in their struggle for building up their human dignity and rights in the context of caste victimization of themselves in Virudhunagar district.

Finally, this study is aimed at analysing the causes and consequences of caste victimization of the *Arunthathiyars* in Virudhunagar district, exploring effective and valuable ways and means of facilitating the formation of a new identity for them and of pushing forward through concrete actions their empowerment through liberation from caste victimization. This research is an attempt to scientifically study the causes of caste victimization of the *Arunthathiyars* and the victimological impacts on their life struggles to live as human persons.

1.5.2. The *Arunthathiyars* in India

The *Arunthathiyars* are scattered across all over India under different names. The *Arunthathiyars* who are associated with scavenging the drains, septic latrines, sewage pits, removal of human excreta, sweeping, cleaning, leatherworks, and human and cattle corpses etc. are called by various names in different parts of India such as *Bhangis, Madigas, Mathangis, Valmikis, Chamars, Olgana, Rukhi, Ramdasis, Mehtars, Balmikis, Jamadars, and Jatias*.

In Tamil Nadu, *Arunthathiyars* are known as *Chakkiliyar, Pagadai, Madhari, Toti, Chemman, Madigas, Thoman, Adi Andhras* and *Jambavalu* etc.; the *Chakkiliars* are also known as *Kollakkambalam, Kosalvar, Anuppa Chakkiliyar* and *Morasu Chakkiliyar*; *Arunthathiyars* are having surnames as *Vennamuddala, Mallemdugula, Sikal, Velur* and
Kota; Chucklers in Pondicherry and Karaikkal areas (Singh, 1995). Totti is a person belonging to a lowest caste who does all dirty works of the village like removal of unclaimed dead bodies of the sepulcher. Totti is a sub-division of Chakkiliyar, employed as scavengers in municipalities in the Tamil country (Thurston, 1975c). It is an understanding in Tamil Nadu that all these different names are used to denote the Arunthathiyars who are at the bottom of the caste hierarchy.

The Arunthathiyars constitute one of the three major social groups among the Dalits in Tamil Nadu. Along with Pallars and Paraiyars, the Arunthathiyars form one of the largest groups among the Dalits in the state. According to the Report of Justice M.S. JanarthaNaM (2008) One Man Committee of Inquiry for Special Reservation for the Arunthathiyars, the term ‘Arunthathiyar’ includes also Chakkiliyar, Madari, Adi Andhra, Pagadai, Madiga and Thoti.

**Table 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Percentage within SCs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All SCs</td>
<td>1,18,57,504</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arunthathiyars</td>
<td>7,71,659</td>
<td>6.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chakkiliyars</td>
<td>7,77,139</td>
<td>6.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madaris</td>
<td>2,49,494</td>
<td>2.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adi Andhras</td>
<td>40,371</td>
<td>0.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pagadai</td>
<td>13,795</td>
<td>0.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madiga</td>
<td>5,103</td>
<td>0.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoti</td>
<td>3,896</td>
<td>0.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total of Arunthathiyars Community</strong></td>
<td><strong>18,61,457</strong></td>
<td><strong>15.70%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the Statement of the Arunthathiyar Leaders organized by the Arunthathiyar Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam (2009) in Trichy, the Arunthathiyars are present in good numbers in almost all districts, they are more than 90% of the total population of the Dalits in the western Tamil Nadu, consisting of the districts of Coimbatore, Erode, Thiruppur, Dharmapuri, Namakkal, Karur and Nilgris. Of all the sub-sects of the Arunthathiyars mentioned above, 80% the Arunthathiyars speak Telugu, 15% speak Kannada and 5% Tamil as their native languages.

1.5.2.1. Names of the Arunthathiyars

The Arunthathiyars in Tamil Nadu are known by different names. The Chakkiliyar itself signifies those who are scared of getting beaten up. Chakku means beating and kili means fear. Chakkili expresses the meaning of ‘chicken-heartedness’ which means one who is innately fearful and not daring. ‘Chakkiliya’ is derived from the Sanskrit word ‘Shatkuli’ which connotes eater of dead beef or excessive flesh. Even today eating beef is very common among the Arunthathiyars. But, they feel insulted when they are called by this name, which is identified with their food habit. Thurston (1975a) states that the Chakkiliars are the leather workers of the Tamil districts corresponding to the Madigas of Telugu districts.

Pakadai is a dice which is used in gambling and symbolises conquering enemies with cunningness. The Arunthathiyars are compared with this dice because they are being exploited cunningly by the high castes to achieve their ends. Since this name denotes their substandardness of being without self-esteem, self-assertion and personality, so they do not like this name too. Pakadai also means the producer of leather apparatus to make announcements which again proclaims them as salves to the high castes.
Mathari means useless, proud and arrogant (Thurston, 1975b). This meaning does not match with their behaviour in relation to the high castes. This title is also not acceptable to them because it elucidates their boastful character. Instead of these names, they prefer to call themselves as Arunthathiyars (Mark, 2001). Singh (1995) confirms that the Chakkiliars of Tamil Nadu call themselves Arunthathiyars as this is considered more respectable than the other names.

Thoti is another name used for the Arunthathiyars which means to dig or tott, i.e. to go round, as the Thoti conveys news and summons people to appear before the village council (Thurston, 1975c).

1.5.2.2. Origin of the Arunthathiyars

Historically, there are different types of theories about the origin of the Arunthathiyars of Tamil Nadu by non-Arunthathiyars. There were different groups of Arunthathiyars from the present Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka who had migrated into Tamil area for various reasons. The King Pratab Ruthiran (AD 1295-1322), who had Warrangal as his capital, came down to Thiruchirapalli and won the battle. During that period, the Arunthathiyars who spoke Telugu might have settled in Tamil region. In 16th century, when the Naick kings captured some parts of the Tamil area, together with their army, there were other people who were called Kambalathars to take care of their day-today needs. The Arunthathiyars were one among the nine groups of Kambalathars. These people prepared food, dress, shoes and other materials of the army men.

From Mysore, the King Narasimhan II (AD 1220-1238) of the Hoysala Empire invaded Tamil region. The Arunthathiyars who spoke Kannada from Hoysala Empire had come and settled in Tamil Nadu (Mark, 2001). The Arunthathiyars were brought in by the Naickar invaders of Tamil Nadu during the time of Vijayanagara Empire (Jacob & Bandhu, 2002).
1.5.2.3. Mythical Origin

The name *Arunthathiyar* also has another theory. It is due to the negative connotation associated with words *Chakkili, Mathaari, Pagadai* and *Thotti*, the community has given a common name as ‘*Arunthathiyar*’ using Sanskritization myths of origin from *Arunthathi*, a daughter of a mythical *Brahmin* sage. Singh (1995) writes that there is a belief among the *Arunthathiyars* that *Arunthathi* – the mythical Hindu character - took birth in this community and therefore they associate themselves with her name. Thurston (1975b) records that the *Arunthathiyars* claim that they are the children of *Matangi*, a legendary character.

1.5.2.4. The *Adi-Thamilars*

Since the *Arunthathiyars* speak Telugu and Kannada, Elangovan (2002) points out that there is a misconception that in 17th century, the *Arunthathiyars* migrated from Andhra and settled in Tamil Nadu. Historically, *Vaduganadu* is comprised of various parts of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra. The Tamils living in these Andhra and Karnataka regions learnt the vernaculars. For various reasons those *Arunthathiyars* returned to Tamil Nadu and continue to speak the vernacular Telugu and Kannada but their mother tongue has always been Tamil.

Elangovan, an *Arunthathiyar* writer (personal communication, September 20, 2011) said that due to heavy drought in Tamil land, the *Arunthathiyars* who were the *Adi Thamilars*, migrated into Telugu and Kannada speaking areas of South India and learnt the language of the land and settled there. But they were brought back into the Tamil Nadu five centuries ago mainly as warriors by the *Naicks* from the Vijayanagar empire.
1.5.2.5. Language and Custom

The Arunthathiyars of Tamil Nadu can be divided into three categories on the basis of the language they speak like Telugu speaking, Kannada speaking and Tamil Speaking. In some parts of Tamil Nadu, particularly in Thiruvannamalai area, the Arunthathiyars speak only Tamil. Telugu and Kannada speaking Arunthathiyars also speak Tamil in their contact with others. Thottiyar and Kollar are the two sects of Telugu Arunthathiyars. Anuppar and Murasar are the two sects of Kannada Arunthathiyars. All these four sects have two branches called Jana and Dasari. The members of one branch do not marry among themselves and call one another as brothers, sisters, paternal uncles and maternal aunties and with other branches they have the marital relationships. They are strict in maintaining their sect relations. As endogamy is the main character of caste system, it is also strictly followed among the Arunthathiyars and within their different sects. A Thottiyar does not take bride/bridegroom from Anuppar and vice versa. They treat each other as if they belong to different castes and hence there is a natural enmity among them (Mark, 2001).

For ages, a substantial number of Arunthathiyars are involved in the occupations of menial works particularly manual scavenging, cleaning toilets, drainages in public places, cobbler works and serving as bonded labourers in farmlands in villages. Most others in the community are involved in agricultural and construction works.

The Arunthathiyars are the least educated when compared to other Dalits belonging to other sub groups. 65% of males and 80% of female among the Arunthathiyars are illiterates. 90% of them have no basic facilities in their living places. Less than 1% of the Arunthathiyars are working in Government departments. Above all
90% of the *Arunthathiyars* live below poverty line and 70% of them are suffering under the clutches of money lenders (*Arunthathiyar Makkal Munnetra Kazhagam*, 2009).

**1.5.2.6. Warrior Caste**

The leaders of the *Arunthathiyar* community state that they are the *Adi-Thamizhars*, the original inhabitants of the Tamil land. The *Arunthathiyars* were the descendants of ‘*Athiyars*’ one of the sects of ‘*Velir*’, which ruled over the *Vadugan* area comprising *Thagadur*, which is now known as Dharmapuri. Over the years, ‘*Athiyar*’ had undergone transformation and became ‘*Arunthathiyar*’. Adhiyamaan Nedumaan Anji was one of the celebrated kings of *Athiyars*. He ruled over the Thagadur region which comprises most part of the western part of Tamil Nadu where even today the *Arunthathiyars* are predominantly found. Since Adhiyamaan gave the eternal *amla* (*Nellikani*) to the great Tamil poet Avvaiyar, Adhiyamaan was revered as one of the seven philanthropist kings of Tamil Nadu. Maathiyar is another well known king of Athiyars. The fact that the *Arunthathiyars* are known as *Maathiyar* corroborates the fact that the *Arunthathiyars* are the descendants of Athiyars (Elangovan, 2002). In his Report of the Enquiry Committee on Scavenging Conditions, Malkani observes that “The *Bhangis* of today are those who were warriors made captives after they fell to the enemy” (As quoted by Shyamlal, 1997, p. 38).

The concept that the *Arunthathiyars* were once warrior castes particularly from *Kshatriyas* is developed by Shyamlal (1997). The view of scholars that the present-day *Bhangis* (*Arunthathiyars*) were from the warrior castes is accepted then, it can be easily seen that *Kshatriyas* were reduced to the status of the untouchables. And therefore, we can safely draw conclusion that historically known *Bhangis* (*Arunthathiyars*) were at one
time *Kshatriyas*. Shyamal (1997) also observes that this process of social change has occurred in almost every part of the Indian subcontinent.

### 1.5.2.7. Historical Personalities

According to different legends, in 17th century, Madurai Veeran was one of the generals under Thirumalai Naick, Madurai (Elangovan, 2003; Mark, 2001); in 18th century, Ondiveeran was a pioneer of Indian Freedom Movement and a freedom fighter at Nelkattumseval near Tirunelveli (Elangovan, 2010; Mark, 2001); Kuiyeli (an *Arunthathi* woman warrior), Kandhan Pagadai, Potti Pagadai, Muthan Pagadaiu, Kattaian Pagadai and Mottaiyan Pagadai were some of the pioneers of the Indian Freedom Movement. They were the chieftains of the army of the king Kattabbomman of 18th century and were experts in guerilla warfare. The most notable warrior classes like Chamars, Jhatia, Mathigas and Chandalas also belong to the *Arunthathi* community. At some point of history, a class of people who were soldiers and military commanders were forced into submission to do menial works due to political and social changes. This resulted in the community’s devolution to the low status in the Indian caste system as it is being today (Elangovan, 2002; 2010, Mark, 2001).

### 1.6. Political Profile of Virudhunagar District

Virudhunagar which is one of the southern districts of Tamil Nadu where the *Arunthathiyars* are thickly populated has been chosen as the area for this study. Virudhunagar district is more prone to caste victimization of the *Arunthathiyars* for centuries. However, no systematic research of significance has yet been done on the *Arunthathiyars* in Virudhunagar district. Consequently, lack of any material available on the study of the *Arunthathiyars* is an added reason for the researcher to take up this study.
Virudhunagar is one of the administrative districts of Tamil Nadu. It covers an area of 4232 sq. km. and is divided into 8 taluks, namely Aruppukottai, Kariapatti, Rajapalayam, Sattur, Sivakasi, Srivilliputur, Tiruchuli and Virudhunagar. The district headquarters is Virudhunagar which is a town and a municipality in the district, is located at a distance of 45 km South-West of Madurai. There are 6 Municipalities Aruppukkotai, Virudhunagar, Sattur, Sivakasi, Srivilliputur and Rajapalayam, 11 Panchayat Unions, 10 Town Panchayats, 450 Village Panchayats and 598 villages of which 506 are inhabited and 92 are uninhabited (Virudhunagar District, 2010). According to Census (Government of India, 2011), Virudhunagar has a population of 1,943,309 persons of which male and female number 967,437 and 975,872 respectively.

### 1.6.1. Caste Atrocities - Prone District

Though the economic condition of Virudhunagar district is sound by its industrial development, most of the marginalized people live in acute poverty as coolie workers, landless laborers and indebted farmers. Number of cases registered in the district reveals that Dalits in Virudhunagar district is more vulnerable to different forms of violence.

In 1997, the total numbers of cases registered under SC/ST (POA) Act 1989 all over Tamil Nadu were 757 out of which 101 (13.34%) cases were registered in Virudhunagar district (Britto, 2007). According to the District Statistical Handbook of Virudhunagar District 2008-2009, 79 cases are registered under the SC/ST (POA) Act 1989 in Virudhunagar district (Government of Tamil Nadu, 2008-2009). Most of the Dalits are not only marginalized but also treated inhumanly as outcastes by other high caste groups.

One of the elected Panchayat presidents, Karuppan from Kottakatchiyenthal Panchayat in Virudhunagar district, was not allowed to sit on the chair of the president.
just because he belongs to the untouchable – Arunthathiyar community (2012). The victimizing caste atrocities happening at T.Veppankulam near Kariapatti in the district is one of the many instances of caste victimization.

In a petition submitted to the Divisional Revenue Officer, Veeran, a Dalit ward member of T. Veppankulam village panchayat, says they have to pick up their footwear in their hands while walking along the streets of the caste Hindus. If they are on cycle or other two-wheelers, they have to get down and walk. This applies to even small children walking to their anganwadi schools under the hot sun.

Sexual harassment of the Dalit women is a major concern of rights activists. Jayamma (23), a Dalit woman who has studied up to class VIII, is vocal on the issue. She says that she has to pay the price for giving a tongue-in-cheek reply to a high caste man who wanted to know what she was doing at the PDS shop. “He grabbed both my breasts and pushed me down and beat me mercilessly.” Such incidents happen frequently, other women echo her. High castes do not like to see the Dalits well dressed, Jayamma says. Women have to tie their saris above their ankle, with the ends tightly tucked into their hips. In the event of any death in a high caste family, one woman per Dalit family has to go up to the cremation ground sounding the kulavai. If they fail, a meeting is convened by the panchayat the next day and they have to prostrate before the assembly as punishment.

The petition says the two-tumbler system still prevails in the village albeit in a modified form. While caste Hindus are served tea in a steel tumbler, it is plastic cups for the Dalits. Interestingly, panchayat president Malarkodi, is a Dalit, who was put up by the high castes for the reserved post. During meetings, she either has to stand or sit on the floor. The villagers say that sitting on the chair by the elected Dalit president is not at all possible (Samathain, 2009). The Arunthathiyars in the district are treated as the most polluted victims by high castes and also considered low by the other Dalits.

Since Virudhunagar is one of the districts which is the worst prone to caste based violence and untouchable practices, the researcher felt that it would be a better choice to do a study in depth on caste victimization. It is a proof that caste atrocities and cognizable offences (Table 3) are continuously happening and this fact confirms that caste power overrules the political power.
Table 3
Cognizable Offences under Indian Penal Code in Virudhunagar District
(Including Attempts)-Year-2008-09

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Number of Cases reported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Murder</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rape</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kidnapping and Abduction</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Burglary</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Thefts</td>
<td>419</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Riots</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Criminal Breach of Trust</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Cheating</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>3400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Cognizable Crime Under I.P.C 4271


1.7. Victims of Untouchability

1.7.1. Victims of the Victimized Castes

In his article Untouchability among Scheduled Castes, Ramaiah (2008) affirms that Pallars, Parayars and Arunthathiyars are the most visible castes among SCs. Pallars are primarily engaged in agricultural activities as coolies. In South Tamil Nadu, Parayars are considered below Pallars in the caste hierarchy and Parayars continue to do the role of beating drums on both auspicious and inauspicious occasions of the high castes and Pallars as well. Chakkiliyars (Arunthathiyars) are considered below Parayars and have to serve Parayars and Pallars, and other high castes and do the occupations which are considered dirty, defiling and polluting. Hence, the Arunthathiyars are looked down upon as untouchables of untouchables.
Chakkiliyars are considered the lowest in the social hierarchy; their settlements are on the outskirts of the village. They do not have any social occasion to mingle with the other castes. They do not have any service caste of their own (Thurston, 1975a; Pillai, 2007). Ramaiah (2008) emphasizes the disparity prevailing among the Dalit groups. Pallars and Parayars are considered superior to Chakkiliyars. They have to do the traditional occupations like sweeping, scavenging and removing the dead animals, tanning and making foot wear. Chakkiliyars sweep the streets of the other Dalits and, in turn, get food from them. The Arunthathiyar community as an untouchable caste becomes a victimized caste by the same caste system and all those who belong to the Arunthathiyar community become the caste victims.

The Arunthathiyars are the untouchables among the other untouchables and the high castes. This reality makes the Arunthathiyars undergo the experience of fear of other Dalits and terror from the high castes: both physical pain and mental agony; and feeling exploited and powerless before the powerful high castes and powerful other Dalits. It is therefore clear that caste system has not only made the untouchables as victims of the system but also made the Arunthathiyars as victims among the other victimized. They become the community doubly dehumanized and victimized by the caste system.

1.7.2. Traditional / Hereditary Caste Victimization

Traditional victimization is the one in which the high castes who are touchables exploit the Arunthathiyars and feel that it is their birth right to victimize them as untouchables and so it is to be justified. In turn the Arunthathiyars are forced to accept such caste victimizations as a traditional or hereditary curse on them without questioning or resisting the impunity of high castes. Why such exploitations on the
Arunthathiyars continue unabated for centuries is a question which pushes the social researchers to go for a deeper study on the root causes of the systemic manifestations of caste victimization. Why such victimizations are being justified as if it were part of their caste tradition? Ambedkar (1979b) in his analysis found out that the traditionally imbibed caste prejudiced mindset of Hindus was the cause for such traditional or hereditary caste victimizations.

Caste has killed public spirit. Caste has made public opinion impossible. A Hindu’s public is his caste. His responsibility is only to his caste. His loyalty is restricted only to his caste. Virtue has become caste-ridden and morality has become caste-bound (p. 56).

According to this understanding of the impacts of caste, the traditional or hereditary victimization is being strengthened throughout the past history and caste thus becomes part and parcel of the entire life of people in the traditional Indian caste society.

The caste system has its own strategy of victimizing the Arunthathiyars through different forms such as deprivation of basic rights, oppression while demanding their rights, exploitation by forcefully taking away the rights from the Arunthathiyars and exclusion from the rest of the society denying human dignity and respect considering them as untouchables. The caste victimization of the Arunthathiyars is rooted in the social, educational, economical, political, cultural and religious dimensions of the Indian society.

1.7.3. Caste Victimization and Untouchability

In caste system, the Arunthathiyars or the Avarnas (outcastes) are placed as the lowest in the social order, and are considered to be the most ritually impure; as such they are treated as the most vulnerable group. Thus, the dominant caste theory of purity and
pollution denies the Arunthathiyars their basic human dignity and rights, and marks them as the rejected of society who can easily be made ‘caste victims’ through a process of dehumanization, exploitation alienation and oppression. On the other hand as traditionally or hereditarily being the victimized outcastes, the Dalits particularly the Arunthathiyars are forced to imbibe the "unconscious aptitude for being victimized" (Mendelsohn, 1963). As traditionally and hereditarily being the high castes, they also acquire the unconscious aptitude for being victimizers. This fact is clearly spelt out by Gopal (2008). The people who belong to the upper crust of the hierarchy of the higher castes unconsciously aim to maintain and perpetuate their clinging to the corridors of power which they enjoy for hundreds of years. This has resulted in the consolidation of the caste victimization of the lowest and oppressed sections of the Indian caste society.

The persisting forms of caste victimization of the Arunthathiyars increasingly receive the attention of human rights activists and sociologists with concern for the principles of social justice and equality. Caste untouchability and violence on the Dalits as a group were discussed and documented earlier by most of the researchers. But not many references are made to the Arunthathiyars who are the lowest among the Dalits. Little research exists on the caste victimization of the Arunthathiyars as victims of the higher castes.

In the above context, the present study, namely, ‘Caste Victimization: A Study of the Arunthathiyars in Virudhunagar District’ is done with the aim of analyzing the phenomenon of various forms of caste victimization of the Arunthathiyars in the context of Indian caste system and the impact of such caste victimization on them. This study also attempts to analyze the causes and the consequences of caste victimization of the Arunthathiyars, and to find out ways and means to come out of caste victimization through various empowerment measures and identity formation of them.
1.8. Chapterisation

The chapter 2 on Review of Literature deals with the theoretical perspective of the concept. Characteristics of the caste system and caste victimization are analysed from the understanding and perspective of the Dalits, particularly of the Arunthathiyars. Various studies are highlighted regarding the different kinds of discriminations, consequences of caste victimization and the process of empowerment of the Arunthathiyars. Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 present in detail about the methodology adopted in this research. The results and analysis are elucidated through socio-economic profile of the Arunthathiyars and analysis and findings of the study in Chapter 5. Chapter 6 deals with the summary and conclusion, and suggests recommendations to empower the Arunthathiyars against caste victimization and to assert their right to be human persons with dignity.