CHAPTER 3
THE PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVES

3.1. Caste Victimization

Caste victimization as a discriminatory process creates agony, pain and harm on the Arunthathiyars who are categorized as the most polluted victims of the caste society. The social, cultural, religious, economic and political dimensions of the society contribute to the process of caste victimization of the Arunthathiyars. This process leads towards making the Arunthathiyars not only victims of the society but also making them unworthy to be respected as human persons. Caste victimization is imposed through various discriminatory processes by pushing them to the periphery of the caste society.

3.2. Statement of the Problem

In this study, the term ‘Arunthathiyar’ is considered to denote persons belonging to the different caste groups which are considered to be part of the ‘Arunthathiyar’ community proposed by the Justice M.S. Janarhanam (2008) Committee. According to this report, the term ‘Arunthathiyars’ also includes Chakkiliyar, Madari, Adi Andhra, Pagadai, Madiga and Thoti. This study also confines to the Arunthathiyars belonging to the above groups living in Virudhunagar District as a single unit.

The very use of words ‘touchable’ and ‘untouchable’ conveys a deep rooted form of caste victimization of the Arunthathiyars. When a person is said to be unworthy of a touch, it reveals that such a person is considered as a low human being with less/no dignity. But when it is believed that a touch of a person pollutes another person, it fiercely communicates the inhuman attitude of persons who believe in the caste hierarchical power.
The Arunthathiyars who are considered the lowest in the caste hierarchy by their very birth in a particular ‘untouchable’ caste, deemed to be impure, forced to do the traditional filthy and unclean occupations, suffer directly from physical, verbal, social, psychological, economical, cultural and political discriminations and exploitations, and are considered as ‘less human’ by the ritual justification of the caste system. And thus, the Arunthathiyars become victims of caste system. As victims of the victimized castes of India, they undergo discrimination, exploitation by the upper caste and class people and are considered as touchables by the caste society as well as by the other Dalit groups. Not only the individuals of the untouchable castes are considered less human persons but the lowest castes as separate entities are also considered untouchable castes.

“Caste Victimization: A study of the Arunthathiyars in Virudhunagar District” is the subject matter of the present study. The researcher would like to attempt to analyse scientifically how the Arunthathiyars of Virudhunagar district are being victimized and study the consequences of such victimization in the Indian caste society.

3.3. Focus of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify various manifestations of caste victimization of the Arunthathiyars and to empirically find out whether caste victimization is reduced or increased in Virudhunagar District of Tamil Nadu. While traditional jobs like cleaning, sweeping, manual scavenging are being continued by the Arunthathiyars in Virudhunagar district, this study will analyse the causes and consequences of caste victimization of the Arunthathiyars.

This study will analyse and verify the assumptions that caste victimization has augmented the psychological impacts like low self-esteem, fear and stress on the
Arumthathiyars in Virudhunagar district. The exposure to education, receiving benefits of reservation and particularly participation in people’s movements have brought in various changes in the lives of the Arumthathiyars in Virudhunagar district and helped them to come out of caste victimization. This study will look into these assumptions and verify the same through qualitative and quantitative analysis.

3.4. Objectives of the Study

The following are the objectives of the study:

- To study the socio-economic status of the Arumthathiyars in Virudhunagar district.
- To assess the various manifestations of caste victimization of the Arumthathiyars in Virudhunagar District through socio-cultural, religious, occupational and political discriminations of the caste society.
- To study the level of caste victimization of the Arumthathiyars in Virudhunagar district imposed by the high castes, the State and the other Dalits.
- To analyse the consequences of caste victimization on the Arumthathiyars in Virudhunagar district.
- To explore various ways and means to empower the Arumthathiyars in Virudhunagar district in the context of caste victimization.

3.5. The Research Variables:

The following variables are identified by the researcher for this study.

3.5.1. Dependent Variable:

Caste Victimization

3.5.2. Independent Variables:

- Union, village and town where the respondents live
- Sex
- Age
- Marital status
- Religion
- Education
- Occupation
- Income
- Land Owning
- Housing Type
- Language
- Membership in other Dalit movements
- Membership in Political Parties
- Membership in the Arunthathiyar Movements

3.5.3. Discrimination Related Variables:
- Socio-cultural Discrimination
- Religious Discrimination
- Occupational Discrimination
- Political Discrimination

3.5.4. Victimization Related Variables:
- High Castes
- State
- Other Dalits

3.5.5. Consequences Related Vulnerable Group Variable:
- Arunthathiyar Women

3.5.6. Consequences Related Psychological Variables:
- Low Self-esteem
- Fear
- Stress

3.5.7. Laws and Policies Related Variables:
- Knowledge of Laws and Policies
- Perception on the Implementing Agencies of Laws and Policies
3.5.8. Empowerment of the Arunthathiyars Related Variables:

- Constructing a new identity
- Free and compulsory education and higher education
- New job opportunities
- Increase in inner-reservation
- Preference to the Arunthathiyar women in education and jobs
- Equal power in making-decision for the Arunthathiyar men and women
- Preference to the Arunthathiyars in government programmes and policies
- Land to all the landless Arunthathiyars
- Arunthathiyar movements coming together as a single movement
- Joining hands with the other Dalits and revolutionary movements
- Supporting inter-caste marriages
- Fighting for the annihilation of caste

3.5.9. Empowerment of the Arunthathiyars Related Variables Making Impacts on Caste Victimization:

- Education
- Reservation
- Movement

In the context of caste untouchability, the researcher would like to study on how caste- rules and caste impunity push the Arunthathiyars to be the most affected victims of caste crime; search why the Arunthathiyars are victims of caste crime and how this crime forces them to be caste victims; explore the different manifestations of caste victimization of the Arunthathiyars and discuss how untouchability is a key tool of caste victimization.