INTRODUCTION

Overview

The composite state of Madras was a home of conservatism and orthodoxy where caste had taken deep-root and its ramifications were numerous.¹ The word caste was first used in the year 1563 A.D. when Garcia De Orta² wrote “no one changes from his father’s trade and all those of the same caste of shoemakers are the same.”³ Risley has defined caste as “a collection of families or group of families bearing a common name; claiming a common descent from a mythical ancestor, human or divine; professing to follow the same hereditary calling, and regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming a single homogeneous community.”⁴ According to Nesfield “caste is a class of the community which disowns any connection with any other class or can neither inter-marry nor eat nor drink with any but persons of their own community.”⁵

² Garcia De Orta was a Portuguese physician came to Goa, Portuguese India, where he settled, employed as a physician and trading in spices and precious stones. In 1563 his “Colloquies on the Simples and Drugs of India” was published.
It is difficult to say when the institution of caste originated in the southern region. Ancient Tamil works such as *Tolkappium* and *Thirukkural*, present a society that differs from the classical caste system. The five fold natural divisions of the land made by the sangam poets were *Kurinji, Mullai, Marutham, Neithal* and *Palai*. One poem in *Purananuru* affirms that there were only four castes viz. Tutiyan, Panan, Parayan and Kadamban.\(^6\) According to Tolkappiyar there were Anthanar, Arasar, Vaisyar and Vellalar.\(^7\) In support of the view of Tolkappiyar, Nilakanda Sastri viewed that while a large number of Brahmins came from the north, some were indigenous people, elevated socially in order to occupy the position of Brahmins.\(^8\) Perhaps the conquest of southern India by the Aryans and the consequent fusion between them and the inhabitants of the land could have been the possible cause of the birth of caste system.\(^9\)

A.L. Basham, while discussing caste system in Tamil Nadu writes that early Tamil literature gives no evidence of caste, but the growth of Aryan influence and the development of a more complex political and economic structure produced a system in some ways more rigid than that of the north. By the Chola period an important feature of south Indian caste structure had appeared, and this has survived to the present day.\(^{10}\)

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\(^8\) Nilakanda Sastri, K.A., *History of South India*, p.75.


\(^{10}\) Basham, A.L., *The Wonder that was India*, (Delhi: Rupa & Co., 1975), p.151.
As per the Brahmin caste system, a person born in a particular caste either enjoyed the fruits of it or carried its burden for the whole of his life. In course of time innumerable castes and sub-castes came into existence, obviously because of violation of caste rules and various other reasons. The evil brought in by the caste system reached its climax when it condemned a set of hapless people as outcasts and untouchables, treating them sometimes worse than the filthiest animals. The so-called untouchables who were originally outside the caste system came to be known as depressed classes and formed the lowest caste. Whose touch and even sight was treated as despicable to the caste-Hindus.

They were the worst exploited and oppressed people. According to James Massey, unlike other communities, the depressed classes have lost everything such as land, culture, language, religion, political and social rights. Their story of oppression is also much longer than that of the others. For them, everything must begin anew.

They were made to live separately and often were barred from sharing common village amenities such as well, tank, river, temple etc. The degree of pollution varied from caste to caste and region to region. The stigma of untouchability was attributed to the traditional occupation of the caste and

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14 Sanjay Prakash Sharma, *Dalit society and Upliftment*, p.43.
affected all members of the caste irrespective of whether they were engaged in that occupation or not. Those caste who cleaned up after other people, dealt with dead animals or ate their meat, were ritually considered unclean and beyond the pale of minimal respectability. They were very poorly compensated for their labour and were forced to live on the brink of starvation. Their diet was poor; their cloths were few and rarely clean; their homes were small, fragile and unhealthy; and they were hopelessly in debt. Poverty and indebtedness led them to bondage, living at the beck and call of the landlord, rather than as an independent, self-respecting person. Vast majority of them were actually engaged as agricultural labourers of one sort or another. For many of their traditional occupation was simply a supplementary task in addition to their main job of agricultural labourer.¹⁶

Thus this pernicious system that has brought more corruption into Indian society in general, and into the Tamil country and its culture in particular, dividing man from man and placing an impassable barrier between different classes of the same society.¹⁷ However, the broken men who were deliberately degraded as untouchables by the Brahminical forces had never accepted their position. They had been protesting against it from the beginning itself.¹⁸ It necessitated them to quit from the hold of Hinduism. Conversion to Islam and Christianity proved to be good, but only to a limited extent. It was a kind of

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¹⁸ Sanjay Prakash Sharma, *Dalit Society and Upliftment*, p.43.
protest blow to orthodox Hinduism, which caused necessary apprehension in the minds of caste-Hindus and compelled them to rethink over the religious orthodoxy. While it changed into a movement they were ready to change the existing system into another form which also oppressed the depressed inhumanly. Depressed classes movement, obviously contemplates change in the social structure and change in social values of the society. Its objective is to reform the society on the sublime principles of liberty, equality, justice and brotherhood.\textsuperscript{19}

**People under Depressed Classes**

In the beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century some section of people were identified as depressed classes in British records. This category covered three groups of people such as Aboriginal and Hill tribes, Criminal tribes and Untouchables.\textsuperscript{20}

**Aboriginal and Hill Tribes**

The aboriginal and hill tribes were largely concentrated in the Nilgris and its surrounding districts in the Tamil region. The chief tribes in Nilgris were the Badagas, the Kotas, and the Todas who were found almost entirely on these hills, and the Irulas, Paniyas and Kurumbas most of whom lived outside the district. The Badagas spoke a dialect of Canarese. They were, moreover, much more civilized than most of the tribes included under the depressed classes’ category.

\textsuperscript{19} Sanjay Prakash Sharma, *Dalit Society and Upliftment*, pp. 46-47.
\textsuperscript{20} G.O. No.440, Public (22 May 1933). Letter A.1 No.449/33 from J.F.Hall, the Commissioner of Labour to the Secretary to the Government of Madras, 13 May 1933.
They followed all sorts of trades, though chiefly agriculturists, they had large and prosperous villages with tiled houses, and generally were much higher in standing than most of the hill tribes. The greater part of them was Lingayats.\textsuperscript{21} On the hills of Madurai, Ramanathapuram and Tirunelveli the Palaiyars, Pulaiyars, and the Kanis were the hill tribes. Palaiyars were much the wildest and shyest tribes in those parts. Kanis had been taught agriculture through the American Madura Mission and the Church Mission Society had done something towards educating and civilizing the Palaiyars. The efforts to induce these Palaiyars to settle and cultivate lands in Ramanathapuram were frustrated by the depredations of elephants. The Kotas an aboriginal tribe, were carrion eaters and therefore untouchable. The Todas were diminishing though they were extremely small in numbers.

The Kurumbas and Irulas were the shyest of the tribes on these hills and came less in contact with civilized life.\textsuperscript{22} As a whole their lack of contact with the people living in the plains they never faced the social disabilities as experienced by the untouchables. Thus their fight for the eradication of caste disabilities was scanty. In order to change their economic and educational backwardness the missionaries and the British government undertook effective measures. They did not participate in the depressed class movement for their elevation.

\textsuperscript{21} G.O.No.559, Revenue (08 March 1920).
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
**Criminal Tribes**

There were a number of criminal tribes in colonial Tamil region. Since 1920 the Criminal Tribes Act began to be implemented in the Madurai, Ramanathapuram and Tirunelveli districts.\(^{23}\) Regarding the criminal tribes it was rare to find a whole caste or tribe which had thieving as its chief profession.\(^{24}\) Some of the Kallars were hereditary thieves but large sections of them were as respectable as their neighbours. Even in the same district, as Madurai, the Kallars of Melur as a body had foresworn theft in a registered document and as a body had fairly kept this oath, whereas their fellow caste men south of the Vaigai River refused to restrain their propensity to thieve. The Valaiyars were respectable hunters, catchers of rats and of white-ants which they sell for food, but some sections of them in Coimbatore were addicted to crime. The Parayas were generally a most honest set of depressed people, but the Veppur Parayas and Vaniyan Paraiyans had taken largely to crime.\(^{25}\)

Muthu Ramalinga Thevar, popular leader of Thevar community\(^{26}\) began to mobilize the people to express their resistance against to the Criminal Tribes Act. He toured villages and led protest rallies for the rights of the individuals

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\(^{24}\) G.O.No.559, Revenue (08 March 1920)

\(^{25}\) Bose, K., *Forward Bloc*, pp.80-81.

\(^{26}\) The Thevar people collectively forms the Mukkulathor (meaning: people of the three clans) native to the Central and Southern districts of Tamil Nadu. The name "Mukkulathor" alludes to the three roughly designated groups Agamudayar, Maravar, Kallar and which make up this large endogamous social group.
registered under the Criminal Tribes Act. In 1929 the Maravars of 19 villages in Appanad were forced to register under the Criminal Tribes Act. Thevar led a massive campaign in the villages, urging the people to defy the Criminal Tribes Act. The authorities partially withdrew, and reduced the number of Criminal Tribes Act registrations in the concerned areas from around 2000 to 341. In 1934, Thevar organised a convention at Abhiram, which urged the authorities to repeal the Criminal Tribes Act. A committee consisting of Thevar, Dr. P. Varadarajulu Naidu, Perumal Thevar, Sasivarna Thevar and Navaneethakrishna Thevar was appointed by the convention to carry on the efforts to persuade the government to revoke the Act. The Act was, however, not revoked. On the contrary, its implementation was widened.

Thevar again led agitations and awareness-raising campaigns against the Act. At the time the Justice Party was governing the Madras Presidency, and their refusal to revoke the law created a strong animosity on Thevar's towards the Justice Party. After 1935 they were separated from the depressed classes list. Because of these above said reasons criminal tribes also never participated in the depressed classes movement and never tried to elevate them through this movement.

**Untouchables**

The untouchables led a deplorable life because their condition was shoddier than the Aboriginal and Hill tribes and Criminal Tribes. Most of the

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tribes did not subject to the brutality of untouchability. In addition they never served as slaves under the Brahmans and caste-Hindus. Even though the tribes were economically, educationally and politically backward, their dwellings in hilly regions isolated them from the habitation of dominant caste people in the plains and freed them socially from the clutches of the caste-Hindus. Thus their seclusion from the rest of the civilized society relieved them from the atrocities of dominant caste people. Because of the atrocities only some depressed castes migrated from the plains to the hilly region in search of peaceful life. Thus the unbearable tortures of dominant caste towards the depressed directly affected the untouchables than the tribes. Even though these untouchable communities were heterogeneous groups their condition was almost same. The Parayas, Pallars, and Chakkiliars were some important sects in untouchable castes.

The Parayars of Tamil Nadu form a sizable portion of the Tamil society. They can be considered as the typical representatives of the untouchables of Tamil Nadu, and it was from their caste name that the word Paraya, meaning an out caste, has been coined and added to the rich repository of English language.28 Next to the Parayas, Pallars was the major untouchable community in Tamil Nadu. They were also an important organ of the village economy because they form the bulk of agricultural labour. They were usually employed in the cultivation of paddy lands. Their women were considered to be particularly skilled in planting and weeding paddy plants. It was believed that the word Pallan was derived from the word *pallam* means a pit or low lying region. The

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Pallars were usually engaged in the cultivation of paddy in such lands.\textsuperscript{29} They were often referred to as “out caste” and it means people who were not members of any caste.\textsuperscript{30} Chakkiliyar forms one of the lower castes. Chakkiliyars were the leather workers. It was their duty to remove dead cattle from villages. In turn the Chakkiliyar had to supply leather for agricultural purposes.\textsuperscript{31} There is no mention of them in early Tamil literature. They seem to have come from the Telugu and Kannada regions. Perhaps they came to Tamil Nadu in the wake of the Vijayanager invaders.\textsuperscript{32} Among the category of depressed classes the untouchables were socially, economically, and politically exploited by the dominant caste people. The hill tribes and criminal tribes were not experienced oppression and exploitation at the hands of dominant castes. The fact was that the criminal tribes practiced untouchability and oppressed the untouchables.

\textbf{ Legendary Origin of Depressed Classes }

Each community possesses a legendary story about their origin. Since it is impossible to depict the stories of all communities, very few stories are described. Legendary tradition connects the important untouchable community Parayas with the Brahmins. It is said that Cala Cambavan the ancestor of the Parayas was a Brahmana priest, worshipping god Siva with offerings of beef, and

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{29} Hanumanthan, K.R., \textit{Untouchability A Historical Study up to 1500 A.D. with special reference to Tamil Nadu}, p.116.
  \item \textsuperscript{31} Pillay K.K., \textit{Studies in the History of India with Special Reference to Tamil Nadu}, (Madras: published by the author, 1979), p.337.
  \item \textsuperscript{32} \textit{Ibid.}
\end{itemize}
one day he concealed a portion of the offerings in order to give it to his pregnant wife. When Siva came to know of it, he got angry, denounced him as Maraiyan (one who concealed) turned him away from the temple and appointed his younger brother as the priest. \(^{33}\) Maraiyan in course of time came to be known as Parayan. According to an unpublished treatise in the Government Manuscript Library at Madras, the great Siva temples at Tiruvarur, Tanjavur, and Tiruchirappalli were originally the tomb of three great Parayans namely Tiyaka Camban, Piravitai Camban, and Cambuka Camban who were the sons of Mallaiaperuman the great Paraya in the line of Ravana. \(^{34}\)

The counterparts of Chakkiliyars in the Karnataka state the Madigas narrate a story of their origin. According to their version they are the children of Matangi, who is the same as Mariamman with the head of a Madiga slave women and the body of the Brahmana lady, Renuka the wife of Jamadagni Maharishi. \(^{35}\) According to another legend they were the descendan ts of Jambava Rishi who was created by Atisakti six months before the creation of earth. Yugamuni was the eldest son. Jambava Rishi was presented with a cow by Siva for the benefit of his children. When once the Rishi had been to the court of Siva, Yugamuni entertained another Rishi called Sankhya at his house. Sankhya who immensely liked the sweetness of the milk of the cow presented by Siva wanted to taste its flesh also. He first entreated Yugamuni to slaughter the cow for him. On his

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\(^{34}\) The History of Valankai Caste (Manuscript), p.38, quoted by Hanumanthan K.R., *Untouchability A Historical Study*, p.84.

refusal, he killed the cow himself and ate its flesh. He also induced Yugamuni to
taste the beef. When Jambavamuni returned, he became furious on hearing the
killing and eating of the cow and dragged both his son and Sankhya to the court
of Siva where they were condemned as Chandalas. The Madigas say that they
were condemned to the work of cobblers as expiation for the original sin of their
ancestor. Even though the legendary stories are considered neither true nor
rational, such myth controlled silently a major population for centuries without
their resistance is a remarkable one. These stories acted as a barrier among the
depressed classes and prevented them from integrating beneath one roof.
Occasionally the inhuman treatment united the depressed people to fight for their
common cause against the so-called dominant caste people. In these uprisings
untouchables effectively participated than the tribes. The following chapters
describe the evolution of depressed classes as separate category and their
elevation through the mass movement called depressed classes movement.

**The scope and limitations**

The period of study is limited from 1920 to 1937. During this period the
Justice Party was in power and the depressed classes’ movement reached its
zenith. The area is limited to colonial Tamil region. Though it was a part and
parcel of Madras Presidency it consisted of the people who spoke more than four
languages. Because of the dissimilarities prevailed among them, it is complicated
to bring them under common problem. In order to avoid these difficulties only

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36 Nanjundaiah, H.V. and Ananthakrishna Iyer, L.K., *The Mysore Tribes and
the colonial Tamil region was selected for research. Further for the first time depressed class list was published in Madras Presidency by the British government in 1930 which consisted of 89 castes, of them, 30 untouchables, 24 criminal tribes and 35 hill and aboriginal tribes. The revised list published in the very next year which consisted of 145 castes. It included two categories such as hill and aboriginal tribes and others, the term substituted instead of the terms untouchables and criminal tribes. Of them approximately less than 70 castes belonged to Tamil speaking areas. The groups included in the depressed classes’ category had different characters.

The hill and aboriginal tribes physically isolated from the plains and they were not included in the hierarchical caste system. The criminal tribes particularly the Kallars and Maravars were above the untouchables in the caste hierarchy. They were also one of the oppressors against the untouchables. The hill and aboriginal tribes and criminal tribes had not experienced the practice of untouchability. So it is impossible here to explain the condition and elevation of all the communities. Hence people who were treated as untouchables are taken up for study.

**Review of Literature**

Depressed classes or Dalit literature forms an important and distinct part of Indian literature. Dalit literature was energized by the advent of leaders like Mahatma Phule and Ambedkar in Maharashtra, who focused on the issues of depressed classes through their works and writings. This inspired academics and
non-academics to study the depressed classes. Both the Indian and non-Indian scholars are interested in studying the depressed classes in humanities and social sciences disciplines. However, there is no full-fledged study or even an anthology giving information about various depressed class movements in different parts of the country in colonial and post-colonial period.

Gail Omvedt and Bharat Patankar’s *The Dalit Liberation Movement in Colonial Period*[^37] and Ghanshyam Shah’s *Social Movements in India: A Review of the Literature*[^38] give an overview of the dalit liberation in India. The former deals with the colonial period whereas the latter looks at both the colonial and the post-colonial periods. James Massey’s, *Down Trodden The Struggle of India’s Dalits for Identity, Solidarity, and Liberation*, describes the issues of depressed classes in general and dalit Christians in particular.[^39] There are some studies on the depressed classes of Tamil Nadu.

K.R. Hanumanthan’s *Untouchability – A Historical Study up to 1500 A.D.* is confined to the problem of untouchability.[^40] David Mosse, an anthropologist, based on a village study, ‘Idioms of Subordination and Styles of Protest Among Christian and Hindu Harijan Castes in Tamil Nadu’ has noticed the abandoning


of some stigmatised services which was done earlier by the Pallars to the dominant castes. He has explored the assertion of Pallars in the socio and cultural sphere. According to David Mosse, they have not only withdrawn from subordinate service roles but also challenged the exclusivity of high caste privilege, and succeeded in gaining similar honors for their caste in religious and secular institutions.\(^{41}\) Robert Deliege, based on a village study at Alangkulam in Ramanathapuram district ‘At the Threshold of Untouchability: Pallars and Valaiyars in a Tamil village’, has shown the relation and difference between Pallars and Valaiyars, a lower but non-untouchable caste.\(^{42}\) Emma Sandberg in her work, ‘Being a dalit Woman in Seethaikurichy: Religious Affiliations and Social Situations’, highlights how the religious affiliation affected the social situation of the Pallar women (and also other dalit women) recording the impact of religious conversion of Pallars from Hinduism to Christianity and thereafter to Islam in an interior village of Tirunelveli.\(^{43}\) Karin Kapadia in ‘Every Blade of Green: Landless Women Labourers, Production and Reproduction’ has pointed out how Pallar women and children in Aruloor contributed cent percent to


household earnings.\textsuperscript{44} This was in glaring contrast to the Pallar men, who were idling and remaining income less. Hugo Gorringe, a sociologist, in his book \textit{Untouchable Citizens: dalit Movements and Democratization in Tamil Nadu} has dealt with the Dalit Panther Movement, an organization of Paraiyars in Madurai region.\textsuperscript{45} Gunnel Cederlof’s, \textit{Bonds Lost: Subordination, Conflict and Mobilization in Rural South India c. 1900-1970}, explains the relationship between the Goundar and the Madhari community in the rural Coimbatore district and also emphasis on the process of industrialization and how it affected this rural relationship. She gives much importance to the economic aspects only.\textsuperscript{46} Mohan’s \textit{Scheduled Castes: History of Elevation, Tamil Nadu, 1900 – 1955}, broadly sketches the role of the Christian missionaries, depressed classes organisations and its leaders and government supports in elevating the depressed classes.\textsuperscript{47} Ragupathi’s unpublished Ph.D. thesis “The History of Devendrakula Vellalar Movement in Tamil Nadu, 1920 -2000” deals with the Pallar caste as one of the depressed classes.\textsuperscript{48} Ratnamala’s unpublished Ph.D. thesis “Dalit Issues and Tamil Press: The Coverage of Dalit Participation in Politics in the


Southern Districts of Tamil Nadu” studies the print media’s attention towards the Dalits in the present times.\textsuperscript{49} Oral Robert’s Ph.D. thesis “The Role of Protestant Missionaries for the Upliftment of Dalits in Northern Part of Tamil Nadu” traces the history of missionaries’ efforts in the development of depressed classes.\textsuperscript{50} Most of the researches are confined to particular depressed caste and its issues but there is no comprehensive account of depressed classes’ category evolution and their movement. The present study fulfils the gap.

\textbf{Objectives and Hypothesis}

The objective of the thesis is to study the evolution of depressed classes’ category. It also studies the efforts of untouchables’ to attain the status of a militant subaltern political group from the status of serfdom. The following assumptions are sought to be tested.

- Untouchability was one of the main criterions in evolving the depressed classes’ category during the British rule.

- Untouchable practice excluded them in accessing the common resources and public sphere and space.

- Emigration and education of depressed classes led them to form organization.


• Depressed classes conducted their protest movement against the oppression of dominant castes through conversion.

• Due to the ideological reasons they maintained cordial relationship with the non-Brahmin movement and contradictory to the Congress and Gandhi.

• They faced the stiff opposition and violence when they asserted their rights.

• The British government supported the depressed classes.

Methodology and Sources

The methodology adopted in this study is descriptive. Both primary and secondary sources have been used. The important primary sources are the newspapers, reports, government orders, and Legislative Assembly and Council debates. These records furnish much information required for the study. Apart from the primary sources, certain secondary sources such as literatures related to depressed classes are also found useful to the present study. The primary sources have been carefully and thoroughly examined, analyzed and subjected them into internal and external criticism. Meticulous care has been taken to make the study highly objective and historical. This work is, obviously based on primary source of information. Certain facts were duly corroborated by other sources. It has been objectively analysed, properly interpreted and systematically arranged in a consolidated form.
The primary sources have been collected from Tamil Nadu State Archives, Chennai and Periyar Tidal, Chennai. The secondary sources have been collected from Cannemara Library, Madras Institute of Development Studies, Dalit Resource Centre, Madurai and the libraries of various colleges and universities.

Chapterisation

The thesis comprises six chapters excluding introduction and conclusion. The **introductory chapter** gives the preview of the research topic, hypothesis, area of study, design of the study, review of literature and so on.

Though some scholars explored the depressed classes, they failed to portray people of various castes who were considered as depressed classes, the criteria that united them under common category and the reason for bringing them under this category. The first chapter **Evolution of Depressed Classes Category** deals with the desire of depressed classes to isolate themselves from the Hindu fold, efforts of the British government to create a separate depressed classes’ category and its background history. This chapter digs out the hidden facts regarding the formation of depressed classes’ category. Since the term depressed classes used in British records for a short while there is no reference regarding its evolution, the tremendous work of the British government to categorize various sects of depressed classes under common category and isolated them from Hindu and non-Brahmin category, which laid the foundation for the formation of present SC, ST list.
The second chapter **Untouchability: Deprived the Depressed Classes** explains the characteristics of the Hindu society of the colonial Tamil region which made the social life of a vast majority of the people miserable. The whole Hindu society was broadly divided into three main sections, the Brahmins, the non-Brahmins and the untouchables. The Brahmins enjoyed unlimited powers, the non-Brahmins possessed certain rights and privileges but the enjoyment of which was denied to the depressed classes whose condition was extremely deplorable. They were subjected to the social disabilities of untouchability and unapproachability. Indeed they were not allowed to draw water from the common wells and tanks, to travel motor vehicles, to enter into educational institutions and public offices. Their women were not allowed to use upper cloth. Such deplorable conditions have been explained clearly in the second chapter.

The third chapter **Elevation of the Depressed Classes** traces the genesis of elevation of depressed classes. Spreading of education by the Christian Missionaries, introduction of modern institutions and alternative employment by the British and the emigration of depressed classes were the genesis of the elevation of depressed classes. It explores the mode of addressing the depressed classes’ issues. Holding conferences and public meetings, publishing periodicals, submitting petition were some important modes of addressing. The organizations and its leadership demanded education, alternative employment and political representation at all institutions. They advocated to give up some habits which affected their body, ruined their economy and morality. The depressed classes were asked to over throw some socio cultural tasks which demeaned their lives.
The fourth chapter **Ideology and Identity for Elevation** deals with the ideologies of the depressed classes, adoption of common identity and its collapse. They tried to homogenize the heterogeneous identity. Adi-Dravida, meaning the first inhabitants of Dravida nadu, was claimed by them and bestowed by the British India government to all the depressed classes. But owing to the entire heterogeneous caste groups preferred to identify them by their own caste identity, the homogenize identity got failed. Since the depressed classes identified themselves with the Dravidian race, the same idea was adopted by non-Brahmins also as they aligned with the Non-Brahmin Movement. Due to the ideological differences regarding their political rights the depressed classes’ movement confronted with Congress. There is also a discussion over the rift that emerged within the depressed classes’ movement due to the ideological similarities and dissimilarities are also discussed.

The fifth chapter **Assertion and Counter Aggression** deals with the assertion of depressed classes and ruthless restrictions and violence imposed on the depressed classes by dominated castes especially non-Brahmin dominant caste-Hindus. The legislations passed by the British government with the support of native Justice Party’s government enabled the depressed classes to assert their rights. But when the depressed classes asserted their legal rights they faced stiff resistance and violence at the hands of dominant castes throughout colonial Tamil region. Illustrations of violent attacks of innumerable depressed classes who lost their lives and properties are included in this chapter.
The sixth chapter **State Response to Elevation and Assertion** analyses the role of British government towards the development of depressed classes and its responses when atrocities perpetuated on them. No doubt, the British government provided some material supports for the development of depressed classes. Though they passed a series of acts for the upliftment of depressed classes, in majority of the cases of ruthless violent attacks against the depressed, they justified the actions of dominated castes. In some issues in order to maintain peace they neglected the demands of depressed classes to interfere in their issues. Thus this chapter explores the dual face of the British government.

The concluding part summarizes all the chapters. It also analyses the achievement and failure of the depressed classes’ elevation. The movement of depressed classes liberated their people to some extent from the oppression of dominant castes. Due to the caste consciousness, ideological differences within the movement, counter aggression of dominant castes and the British government’s double face against the depressed classes’ people could not completely relieve from the yoke of dominant castes.