CHAPTER IV
ERADICATION OF UNTOUCHABILITY
Rajaji with Kamaraj and T.T.Krishnamachari

Rajaji in the Legislative Assembly

Rajaji, Chief Minister, distribute Cauvery water to women at Salem
CHAPTER IV

ERADICATION OF UNTouchABILITY

All men are equal and all are gifted with the faculty of reason. But in spite of it men are classified into high and low. The renowned Tamil Poet Thiruvalluvar says in his Thirukkural that all are equal by birth; only by their vocations they differ. The following Thirukkural says:

All beings are the same in birth
But work decides other varied worth - K.972.

According to Avvaiyar a classical Tamil poetess there are only two types of caste, the high and the low. Those who give liberally to the poor upholding virtue are high. Those who do not give liberally are low.²

Though the refinement of human culture is reflected in our Constitution i.e., The Constitution of India as regarding untouchability, in reality it prevails still in certain parts of India more vigorously. Noble souls in the past and in the present fought and have been fighting against social evils especially untouchability.

Before going deep into the temple entry movement of Rajaji we should define what caste is. Varnasrama Dharma is the basis of Caste System in India. According to this system people have been classified into four classes. They are Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras. According to
Purusha Sukta of Rig Veda Brahmanas represent the mouth of Purusha, the Kshatriyas his arms, the vaisya his thighs and Sudra his feet. MANU also holds that the four Varna proceeded from the limbs of the creator. According to the Manu Smriti the four Varnas are Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra.¹

‘According to Kautilya, the duty of the Brahmana is study, teaching, performance of sacrifice, officiating in others sacrificial performance and the receiving of gifts.

That of Kshatriya is study, performance of Sacrifice, giving gifts, military occupation and protection of life.

That of Vaisya is study, performance of sacrifice, giving gifts, agriculture, cattle breeding and trade.

That of Sudra is the serving of the twice born (dvijati), agriculture, cattle breeding and trade, the profession of artisans and court-bards.²

In those days the Varna Dharma was in command and no one dared to question its autocratic status since every one was under the spell of the Theory of Karma.³ The theory of Karma is the contribution of Brahmins and there is no doubt about it.

Varnasrama – dharma, no doubt, had put a stumbling block to their thinking faculty and this had led to the passing of certain cruel, inhuman and barbaric laws against the Sudras. The Sudras were treated as inanimate things.
Those who adhere to the laws of Manu eulogise it immensely, but there is no code of law more notorious regarding social rights than that of the law of Manu. Dr.B.R.Ambedkar, an eminent thinker, scholar and a legal luminary painfully and provokingly had said that the evil incarnate Manu-Smriti had damaged the society in India. Quoting Manu he had said: “He prescribes such heavy sentences as cutting off the tongue or pouring of molten lead in the ears of the Sudra, who recites or hears the Veda.”6

Dr.B.R.Ambedkar is the Constitution maker of India and he hails from the Scheduled Caste (Sudra).

The Movement against the Caste system in India is almost as old as Caste itself. Buddhism and Jainism were reformist movements, which were partly aimed against Caste. The so-called Bak thi or Devotional Movement of the middle ages was mainly directed against the Caste system. Sikhism was similarly opposed to Caste. The various reformist movements that developed within Hindu Society in the second half of the nineteenth century, like the Brahma Samaj, Prarthana Samaj, Arya Samaj, Ramakrishna Mission, Theosophical Society etc., All believed in human brotherhood and the levelling up of Hindu society although Vivekananda seems to have believed (like Gandhi) that the four-fold functional division of society (non-heredity) is some kind of a natural institution.
“Gandhi broadly belongs to this tradition of the levellers, but would appear to be less radical than most of his forerunners in India”.7

According to S.S.Nigam “Smrti favoured Brahmanas to the highest extent. As the Brahmana sprang from (Brahma’s) mouth, as he was the first-born and as he possesses the veda he is by right the lord of this whole creation. Again, the smrtis regard him as the highest in earth eating his own food, wearing his own apparel, bestowing his own in alms.

Everything existing in the world was regarded as his property (Manu). He was recommended to be free from taxes. He filled the highest offices of state and society by his characteristics-those of teachers, priest, judge, Prime Minister assessor and member of the Dharma Parishad, the standing legal commission in the administration. He was punishable in law but not capital punishment”.

“If the Brahmanas violated certain restrictions as regards food, gifts, occupation or professions, he was supposed to lose his status (Manu). But at the time of adversity and distress he was allowed to follow the occupations of the lower varnas, no doubt with certain restrictions. Manu and Yagnavalkya lay down ten sources of livelihood open to all in adversity or distress viz., learning mechanical arts, work for wages, service, rearing cattle, trade, agriculture, begging and receiving interest” (Manu).
“The worst was the position of sudras as appears from smrtis. He was compelled to serve dvijatis. He was expected to possess no property (manu) He was subject to heavy and brutal punishments both corporal and economic for the guilt’s committed by him”. (Manu) 8

In the Presidential address of the forty first Congress S. Srinivasa lyengar spoke among many things about untouchability. “...Judged by any test, humanitarian, rational or spiritual patriotic or democratic we cannot with decency uphold in Hinduism the dogma of an immutable untouchability. It clouds our vision, limits our experience, hardens our heart, narrows our sphere of respectability and prevents our ideals of justice, love and sincerity from being perfect.”

In the same Presidential address he quotes the mystic saint Vemana: “Why should we constantly revile the pariah? Is not his flesh and blood the same as our own? And of what caste is He who pervades the pariah?”

“We must therefore, realise that untouchability is but the offspring of man-made custom and has no divine sanction behind it. On the other hand, from the point of view of Hinduism, it prevents it from spreading far and wide and sending its roots deeper and robs it of the transforming influence of missionary fervour.”

Pandit Motilal Nehru in his Presidential Address of the forty third Congress which took place in Calcutta in 1928 said the following about
untouchability: “As to untouchability, a great deal has been said but very little work has been done. It should in my opinion, be the duty of every Congressman to help actively in this work to the best of his ability. Untouchability must be abolished altogether so far as congressmen are concerned and no person who refuses to associate with untouchability as his equals should be permitted to belong to any congress organisation”\textsuperscript{10}

Nandanaar a devotee of Lord Siva and who hailed from the untouchable class was the first to enter the temple, not through revolution but through devotion. He has been eulogised in Peria Puranam\textsuperscript{11} of Sekkizhaar as Thirunaalaippovaar (one who would go to-morrow)

There had been many temple entry movements in India. In the interest of securing social and political justice for the cause of the Scheduled Castes Dr.B.R.Ambedkar launched his Temple Entry Movement at Nasik, even before Gandhiji launched his Dandi March to break salt laws.

R.Srinivasan popularly known as Irattamalai Srinivasan formed Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha in 1892 started a newspaper Paraiyan to spread his ideas and served as a dedicated crusader for the cause of the Depressed classes. In 1925 he had chalked out a programme for the upliftment of depressed classes and published it in his famous Tamil Magazine Aalaya Piravesam (Temple Entry) He was closely associated with Dr.B.R. Ambedkar, attended
the Round Table Conference in 1930 and 1932 as the sole representative of the south and played a major role in the conclusion of the Poona Pact.

M.C. Raja (1883-1947) hailing from the Scheduled Caste had done a lot for the upliftment of his people. He was a teacher by profession and had written books like Elementary Logic and Grammar for the students. In 1936 he started a Dravidian School which had many branches of night schools in Madras City. To translate his ideas into reality he formed a squad of scouts.

From 1917 he dedicated himself to various social causes of which Temple Entry Movement was the major one. His publication The Oppressed Hindus [1926] must be considered as an eye opener as regarding temple entry.

Prof. N.Sivaraj [1892-1964] was called with reverence as ‘The Leader’. He was a professor of Law in the Madras Law College. He had done yeoman service for the uplift of the Scheduled Caste. The effort he had taken for the temple entry had left an indelible mark in the history of social reforms. The Justice Party and the self-respect movement utilized his wisdom. In 1947 he started an English Weekly called “Jai Beem”.

J.Siva Shanmugam Pillai [1901-1975] was a member of the Madras Corporation from 1932-1939 and the Mayor of Madras in 1937-1938. He was the Speaker of Madras Legislative Assembly from 1946-1955, and he was the U.P.S.C [Union Public Service Commission] member from 1955 to 1961 and from 1962-1968 he was a Rajya Sabha member.
In 1944 he wrote a letter to Gandhiji. In it he had pointed out certain grievances of the depressed classes especially the temple entry. His letter reads: “Since the Congress Ministry has resigned in my province, the work of amelioration of the depressed classes (such as temple entry) has been neglected. RAJAJI has done an excellent work during the regime of the Congress, for the depressed classes”.

N.Veeraiyan (1882-1938) was an ardent fighter against social evils. His fight against the atrocities committed by the caste Hindus in post offices, temples, and public roads is still in the memory of the people of Madras.

Swami Sahajanandam: [1891-1959]

Swamiji was a great scholar in Tamil and Sanskrit. Equipped with a sound knowledge of the religious scripture he challenged the entire body of priests of Chidambaram temple for the Temple Entry Movement. For his own people [Depressed Class] he constructed a separate temple called the Sivaloganathanar Temple in Chidambaram. Mahatma Gandhiji had laid the foundation stone for it in 1913.

E.V.Ramasami [1879-1973][Thanthai Periyar] occupies a unique place in Tamil Nadu. Social Reform in general is acquainted with his name in Tamil Nadu. In 1924 he led the famous Vaikom Satyagraha at the request of other Satagrahists like George Joseph and Neelakanda Nambudri. This Satyagraha was connected with temple entry. Periyar was arrested but he achieved his goal.
After that Periyar was called as “Vaikom Veerar” (The hero of Vaikom). So far we have seen the origin of caste and its evil effects. We have also seen the noble souls who strived hard to eradicate Casteism and who took effort for the temple entry.

We shall see the role of Rajaji as regarding the eradication of untouchability and his temple entry movement. Rajaji never did anything for publicity. Whether it is Harijan’s (Depressed class) upliftment or intercaste marriage or any other reform for that matter he was a man of action.

“The Rajaji Story” provides lot of information about his social reformation. “During his spell as chairman Rajaji selected for life long opposition, two demons-drink and untouchability.”

Three incidents revealed Rajaji’s stand on the question of Caste. One involved a preacher belonging to a depressed Caste, Swami Sahajananda, who visited Salem in 1917. Encouraged by Rajaji a group of friends arranged a feast for Sahajananda in the home of Yagyanarayana Iyer, the Brahmin principal of Salem College. The Chairman was present. In the gradation of improprieties feeding a man of Sahajananda’s background in one’s home occupied a high place. Abettors shared in the guilt.

The horrified majority of the town’s Brahmins ostracized the principal, Rajaji and other Brahmin participants. At weddings and funerals they were
excluded. More serious was their being told that Salem’s priests would not officiate at the annual ceremonies for the dead in the homes.\textsuperscript{15}

The second incident was directly related to Rajaji’s Chairmanship. In different wards in the town, the municipality’s employees turned on the water every morning and turned it off every evening. In July 1918, one of them, a \textit{Panchama} deemed untouchable, was assigned to the public tap in the \textit{agraharam}, the Brahmin locality. It had been the doing not of Rajaji but of the engineer responsible for the town’s water supply A.V.Raman.

All the same the ‘Untouchable’ was defiling the Brahmin’s water. There was an outcry. A hundred ‘respectable and responsible rate payers’ asked the Council to move the employee to another ward, and Rajaji was attacked in the letters column of \textit{The Hindu}. But the ‘untouchable’ saw hope. ‘There was a sensational meeting of the Municipal Council on the issue. While a number of Panchamas crowded round the meeting hall a Brahmin deputation pressed its view inside.

The Council was evenly divided. Rajaji cast the Chairman’s vote to keep the employee in the agraharam. Brahmin widows now cast ‘looks of hatred’ at Rajaji. A friend asked him ‘Do you wish to kill my grandmother?’ She has not eaten for two days. Rajaji was unyielding. After a while the resistance subsided. \textit{The Mail of Madras}, British owned Newspaper had written that the opposition to the tap man in Salem displayed India’s unfitness for Home Rule.
Rajaji argued that the Municipal proceedings proved the opposite. Councillors who belonged to the higher castes had shown that they could sink and ignore caste prejudice.

Hurdles again faced Rajaji over two ‘untouchable’ students who he felt were fit for a course in Salem Secondary Training School. The Indian Headmaster and the European Inspector were unwilling to take them. Rajaji was asked to send the boys to an institute in Madras.\textsuperscript{16}

Insisting on admission in the Salem School, Rajaji dared the authorities to refuse and had his way. The boys completed the course and found responsible jobs. From these incidents, it is manifestly clear that his conviction cannot be cowed down by anyone’s dictation.

One more soul who dedicated for the welfare and upliftment of the Harijans along with Rajaji was Madurai Vaidyanatha Iyer. He did many things to the Harijans. He insisted the Government to provide the following facilities for the Harijans such as, water, housing, education, Harijan literacy.\textsuperscript{17} Swami Sahajananda who hailed from the depressed class had high regard for Vaidyanatha Iyer and said adoringly the following things about him: “All should follow Sri Vaidyanatha Iyer who toils for the upliftment of the Harijans”.\textsuperscript{18}

Eradication of untouchability was another pledge that Rajaji sought to fulfill. As temples were closed to the so called untouchables, he wanted to throw
open them to the untouchables. In 1937 the congress ministry under the leadership of Rajaji came to power in Madras. At first he wanted to bring this reform measure to the notice of the public. Accordingly this subject was introduced in both the Houses in the form of resolutions and Bills. Since all the political parties in India were ardent supporters of eradication of untouchability, this subject did not receive much criticism from the members of the opposition in both Houses. But they only criticized the proposed measure of the Government to solve the problem.

Rajaji at this juncture decided to make use of the Temple Entry Proclamation issued by the Maharaja of Trivancore on 12 November 1936, to create a favourable climate for his own proposal to be carried out in the Legislative Assembly soon. This remarkable measure performed by the Maharaja of Trivancore was highly hailed by Rajaji and he declared that Hinduism had been purified. He also moved a resolution in the House in appreciation of the Trivancore ruler’s gracious and peaceful achievements of social reforms of far reaching value.

Following this M.C.Rajah introduced a Bill, to remove social disabilities among certain classes of Hindu. The Bill was intended to secure the legal rights for the Harijans to use public places like the public roads, public well etc; but it did not include the temple entry right. As Rajaji himself was working for the eradication of untouchability he directed his party members to support the Bill
introduced by M.C.Rajah. The Bill was supported and passed in the House with universal support in 1938 after a yearlong deliberation.

Thus in 1938, the Madras Legislative Assembly passed the first comprehensive Penal Act to remove social disabilities. Under this Act it was an offence to discriminate Scheduled Castes not only in regard to publicly supported facilities, such as roads, wells and transportation but also in regard to any other secular institution, to which the general public were admitted including hostels, restaurants, shops, etc; this Act also banned judicial enforcements of any customary rights and disability based on membership in such a group. Violation was made a cognizable offence with a small fine for the first offence and larger fine and up to six-month imprisonment for subsequent offences.

M.C.Rajah tried to introduce another Bill, called the Temple Entry Bill, but Rajaji tried to stop M.C.Rajah from passing the Bill, for he himself wanted to move in the Assembly his own Government Bill in the same subject. They differed in the implementation of the measure. Rajaji wanted to experiment this policy in one district and if it proved successful, he wanted to extend it to other parts of the Presidency. It was contradictory to M.C.Rajah’s Temple Entry Bill, which proposed to cover the entire Presidency at once. When this Bill was finally put to vote, it had only twenty four supporters, while the entire body of Congress men voted against it.
In the Madras Presidency Vaidyanatha Iyer of Madurai started the crusade for the Harijans Temple Entry. He in his capacity as the President of Tamil Nadu Harijan Sevak Sangh from 1936 to 1955 worked for the upliftment of the Scheduled Castes. On seeing various ameliorative measures taken by the Government of Madras for the progress of the Scheduled Castes he got aid from the Government for running schools and hostels all over Tamil Nadu. Such work earned him the glorious epithet “Father of Tamil Nadu Harijans”.

Being an ardent follower of Gandhiji and Rajaji, he wished to break the practice of untouchability. So he decided to lead a batch of Harijans devotees into the Meenakshi temple in Madurai. Accordingly on 8 July 1939, he along with a group of Harijans entered the Sri. Meenakshi Amman temple went to the Golden Lilly tank inside the temple and after finishing their ablution visited the various shrines situated inside it. By this action, for the first time in Madurai one of the worst forms of untouchability was defied.

Mahatma Gandhi on hearing the message of opening of Meenakshi temple for the Harijans on 8 July 1939 wished that opening of the Meenakshi temple would be followed by the opening of other great temples of South India.

As such an entry by the excluded classes into the Hindu temple constituted the offence of defilement of places of worship, the orthodox people showed their protest. A criminal complaint was filed against them on 11 July
1939. To ensure the removal of obstacles in the way of the Harijans entering the temple, Rajaji’s Government published an Indemnity Bill. As the Legislature was not in session, on the advise of Rajaji, the Governor of Madras issued an ordinance under section 88 of the Government of India Act. This was known as ‘Temple Entry Ordinance’. In the August session of the Legislature, the Premier, Rajaji introduced the, ‘Madras Temple Entry Authorization and Indemnity Bill’, on 8 August 1939. It received the assent of the Governor General on 4 September 1939. Thus he got the legislation passed so quickly and cleverly that the new law obtained retrospective effect on the action of Sri. Vaidyanatha Iyer and his group.

S.Srinivasa Sastri a popular Congress leader denounced the procedure which the Government had adopted first throwing open the Madurai Meenakshi temple to the Harijans and then passing legislation retrospective effect.

This Act provided state support for the temple entry of the Untouchables and other lower castes in the Madras Presidency. Otherwise it would have constituted an offence of defilement of places of worship under the Indian Penal code. The government gave strict instructions to the officers to implement the temple entry act properly.

Through this Act a number of temples in Madurai, Tanjore, Tirunelvelly etc., were opened and they were the following.
2. Sri. Kudalalagar Temple, Madurai
3. Sri. Sundaraja Perumal Temple, Madurai
4. Sri. Kalamega Perumal Temple, Madurai
5. Sri. Brahadeeswarar Temple, Tanjore
6. Sri. Tirucuttalanathar Swami Temple, Tirunelvelly
7. Sri. Kasiviswanatha Temple, Tirunelvelly.

Following this a Harijan Welfare Committee was constituted, which had the Chief Minister as Chairman. The other members were the ministers for Harijan Welfare, Director of Harijan Welfare, Social workers, Educational experts, and a few members of the Legislative and Parliament were also in the committee. This committee was convened periodically and gave valuable suggestions to the Government regarding the Scheduled Castes Welfare. To meet the growing problems of the Harijans, this Committee was reconstituted with 18 non-official members and 5 additional members.

By way of eradication of untouchability ‘Harijan Utsav’ was celebrated from 24 September to 2 October every year. These days are historically important. On the 21 September Poona Pact was signed and on 26 September it was ratified. On 30 September Harijan Seva Sangh was formed at Bombay and 2nd October is Mahatma Gandhiji’s birthday. All these nine days were celebrated as Utsav by Tamil Nadu Harijan Seva Sangh from 1938. The Harijan Day was celebrated to impress upon all the people the imperative need
to remove untouchability and other disabilities and also to popularize the measure taken to uplift the Scheduled Castes. The 30th of every month was earmarked for the celebration. It was celebrated in every town and village to promote amicable relationship between Scheduled Castes and caste Hindus.28

Inspite of all these things caste atrocity prevailed in many places in Madras state especially in the District of Coimbatore and Ramanadapuram in 1954. 29 To encourage the volunteers who worked for the removal of untouchability the Government awarded ‘Gold Medals’ in recognition of their social services.

Rajaji took the problems of the Scheduled Castes not merely a problem of a particular caste or community but a problem of the nation. He carried out all these Welfare measures with a hope that if these reached the Scheduled Caste properly in time, there would be no doubt that these would ameliorate the caste animosities.

Rajaji’s Concept of Education and the Uplift of Depressed Classes

Rajaji insists the importance of learning like other thinkers of the world. He specifically says that education would elevate the depressed class people.

Thiruvalluvar a unique thinker of Tamil Nadu says that only those who are learned posses the eyes and the unlearned only sores instead of eyes, in their face. He also says that numbers and letters are the eyes of the people.
Avvaiyar an eminent poetess of ancient Tamil land says that the learned people are adored wherever they go.

Plato a great Greek thinker prescribes education for ruling. His pupil Aristotle also euologises education. The French philosopher Rousseau also places education high.

Learning refines one’s thinking and outlook. It is expected to instill equality in the minds of all. It also plays a role in enhancing humanity. In India untouchability has been a cruel disease though the laws are very severe to curb it. It exists mostly in the rural areas where ignorance and illiteracy parade. Learning is a weapon for the crusaders of social evils. Rajaji also has taken this weapon to bring dignity and honour for the people who are depressed and oppressed socially.

Even education was denied to the socially oppressed classes, the Harijans, in the culture void places where the dark minds reigned. On one side there arose a social reform movement that was led by Periyar E.V.Ramasamy [Periyar E.V.R] to eradicate untouchability and other social evils and on the other side there appeared the application of Gandhian principles to eradicate untouchability. Rajaji was a follower of Mahatma Gandhi and he fought against Casteism wherever it was possible.

Though the Government was powerful it could not make all the students study in the same schools. This was because the parents of the so-called high
class were reluctant to send their children to the schools where the Harijan students were admitted. This made the government to establish separate schools for the Harijans.

**Rajaji’s Crusade against Casteism**

Rajaji’s main aim was to educate the depressed class children. Under his leadership the Congress Party before and after independence rendered selfless service to the helpless Scheduled Castes. The Government of Madras was the first Provincial Government in India to undertake the work of amelioration of the Scheduled Castes. The Government under Rajaji made institutionalised efforts to promote education among the Scheduled Castes through the Labour Welfare Department.

Rajaji’s Government gave free concessions in the educational institutions to the students who belonged to the most backward class like Kallar, Maravar Yenadi and above all the socially oppressed class people. During 1939-40 the economically and socially depressed class students who were appearing for various examinations had been exempted from the payment of fees.

Every Harijan hamlet with a population of 500 and above could get a primary school during Rajaji’s tenure as Chief Minister. Building schools exclusively for the Harijans was not justified after independence, since it was
against democratic norms. That kind of separate schools would aggravate the social divisions, the reformists thought.

The Government of Rajaji was vehemently attacked that it was not at all interested in merging these people with caste Hindus.\textsuperscript{35} Periyar E.V.R. through his newspaper \textit{Viduthalai [Independence]} strongly expressed his view, that the Scheduled Caste students should be admitted in the common schools.

To this allegation the government of Rajaji replied that the creation of separate schools for the depressed class people was an additional facility for them. The government also shattered the argument saying that orders were issued to admit pupils belonging to all communities in the welfare schools in order to eradicate the feeling of untouchability.\textsuperscript{36}

Rajaji in his second spell of office in 1952 took strong and effective measures to revive the progress of education. He skillfully handled The \textit{Madras Removal of Civil Disabilities Amendment Act of 1947} to remove the social disabilities of the Scheduled Castes (Harijans). According to this Act if any school was to be opened it was ordered that that they should be near the locality of the Scheduled Caste children or should be opened in a place accessible to them.\textsuperscript{37}

Bifurcation of Labour welfare Department into Labour Welfare Department and Harijan Welfare Department\textsuperscript{38} during the Premiership of
O.P. Ramaswamy Reddiar, enabled Rajaji to pay special care to the Scheduled Castes.

The strong opposition for the admission of Harijan children in the common school from caste Hindus and hesitation among the Scheduled Castes parents to send their children to public schools forced the Government to start separate schools to educate the children of those down trodden people. This shows that the intention of the Government was to promote the welfare of the down trodden at any cost and its intention was not to divide on the basis of caste.

Though the Government spent a huge amount of money for imparting education for Scheduled Castes the students attended the high schools and colleges were only in small number. In most cases the high schools and colleges were situated only in Taluk and District Head Quarters. It caused inability to the Scheduled Caste students who had completed the elementary education in the local labour schools. They were not economically sound enough to go to the high schools or colleges, which were mostly situated in far off places. This led to a sudden stagnation in their educational career.

Hostel Facilities

The Rajaji Government during the year 1937-38 sanctioned money for the depressed class students, to stay in the hostel. During 1952-53 his Government spent a sum of rupees 7,66,260/- towards residential and non-
residential scholarships to Harijan and Backward class students studying in Arts and Professional Colleges.\textsuperscript{41}

It was the policy of the Congress Party that the education should become common property of the common man.\textsuperscript{42} Hence the Congress Ministry in 1952 under Rajaji tried to eradicate illiteracy among the masses that too particularly among the Harijans.

The Government pursued the policy of the Noon meal scheme of the previous government (Justice Party Government) to appease the hunger of the poor children. Nearly 87,300 children and 1330 labour schools were benefited by this scheme. Due to this the strength of the students increased. The children were hale and healthy and they evinced keen interest in their studies.\textsuperscript{43}

The Madras Corporation continued its own scheme of supplying free mid-day meals to the children attending the Corporation elementary schools. The medical officers in consultation with the head master selected children who needed additional care. In Madras city poor and ill-nourished children were given shark liver oil and calcium tablets. Certain municipalities arranged for free vitamin tablets to the needy children and expectant mothers.\textsuperscript{44}

**Rajaji's New Pattern of Education and its Repercussion**

During his last tenure as Chief Minster (1952-54) Rajaji had introduced a new system of education on 31, May 1953,\textsuperscript{45} which brought brickbats rather than bouquets. He on many occasions clarified that the new system of
education was not to aggravate the caste system but to ameliorate it. The new education system insisted that the students should pursue certain vocation along with their studies. This system would seem an appreciable one but it had in itself a seething seed.

Though Rajaji had said any one could pursue any vocation irrespective of caste the nomenclature he had given for the educational system “Kulakkalvi” (Caste vocation) was misunderstood (according to him) and turned against him. The term ‘Kulam’ in Tamil denotes ‘Clan’ or ‘family’ and his new system of education was based on a vocation based on clan or family. The students had to pursue this besides what they had been taught in the schools.

It is said that the new patterns of education had a link with productivity. The students can learn as well as earn. According to this system the school was conducted only for half a day and the rest should be utilized for the pursuance of the vocation. Students hailing from the families of landowners, peasants, artisans, potters, carpenters, ironsmiths, were expected to pursue the job connected with their families.46

Defending his new system of education Rajaji said: "I venture to suggest to the crusaders of compulsory primary education whether we cannot be content with three days in a week for schooling. Our schools could then take two sets of children in a week. Give the children a chance during the other four
days to work with their parents in the villages. The homes are homes as well as trade schools and the parents are masters as well to whom the children (can be) apprenticed." Many people viewed Rajaji’s scheme as a Brahmin’s device to condemn children of lower castes to their father’s occupation wanting to discriminate their skills of the countryside and to preserve the caste system.

Rajaji’s thinking was far ahead of his times. His concept of primary education paved the way for respecting all profession, which he thought, would end caste distinctions. He said that the reform would bring the caste together, not to separate them. It was expected that every upper class boy would go to the cobbler’s workshop and mix with them.

But whatever may be the interpretation or explanation given to his new educational system the Dravida Kazhagam (started by Periyar E.V.Ramaswamy) and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam of C.N.Annadurai vehemently opposed this on the ground that it would breed casteism.

The Drvidan parties started an agitation against this new scheme of education and it resulted in the resignation of Rajaji as Chief Minister.
END NOTES


4. Ibid.

5. *Karma* means Fate.


12. Letter from J. Shiva Shanmugam Pillai to Mahatma Gandhi- dated 27th July 1944 (Collected Papers of Dr. G.Thangavelu.)

14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
18. Ibid., p.297.
25. Ibid, p.70.
27. Harijan, 17 September 1938, p.266.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.


40. Ibid.


44. Ibid., p.59.

