CHAPTER - V

SELF-ASSERTIVENESS
CHAPTER - V
SELF-ASSERTIVENESS

Change in Terminology:

Since 1900, the Pahchamas of the Madras Presidency have been known by different names like Depressed Classes, Ādi-Dravidas, Scheduled Classes, and Harijans.

Ādi-Dravidas:

The term 'Ādi-Dravida' is commonly used to designate the Untouchables of Tamil Nadu, but it was not used in Government records prior to 1920. The change in the nomenclature of the Depressed Classes into Ādi-Dravidas was done as a result of the concerted efforts taken by M.C. Rajah, a leader of the Depressed Classes.

Leaders of the Ādi-Dravaida Mahajāna Sabhā, especially M.C. Rajah, spearheaded the move to change the nomenclature of the Depressed Classes to Ādi-Dravidas. In fact, as early as 1892, people had been agitating for this change. In 1917, a deputation consisting of Messrs. M.J.
Rajah, P.V. Subramaniam Pillai, K. Muniswami Pillai, V.
Räjarathinam Pillai, Venugopäla Pillai, V.G. Vásudeva
Pillai, and Srimathi Tiruppugal Ammäi presented a memo-
randum to Right Hon'ble E.S. Montagu and Lord Chelmsford,
asking for a change in the name of the Depressed Classes.
The relevant portion of the memorandum read as follows :

"The very name by which these people refer to us
breathes contempt. We should therefore request
Government to help us in our efforts to attain
social elevation by issuing orders that here­
after in all Government communications we should
be designated Ādi-Dravidas or the original
Dravidas thus bringing us into line with the non-
Brahmin Hindus, who are spoken of as Dravidas."2

In 1922, M.C. Rajah while moving a resolution for
the change in the nomenclature of the Depressed Classes,
made a forceful and powerful speech advancing valid argu­
ments in support of his plea. Rajah drew attention to
the real connotation of the terms 'Paraiya' and Pañchama'.
The former meant something mean and despicable while the
latter denoted one who was an outcaste. Rajah said,

"we are the original inhabitants of this land
and we never submitted to the yoke of caste.
We are the true descendants of the original
inhabitants and the preservers of the original
Ādi-Dravidian civilization."4
Rao Bahadur T. Namberumāl Chetti, M.C. Madurai Pillai and K. Srinivāsa Ayyangār supported the resolution of M.C. Rajah and S. Somasundaram Pillai pleaded for the removal of the stigma and extended support to the resolution. The resolution was carried and the Government issued an order in 1922 directing the use of the term 'Ādi-Dravida' in Tamil Districts and the term 'Ādi-Āndhra' in Telugu Districts in place of names like Pañchama and Paraiya. Though the Government Order clearly authorizing the adoption of the term 'Ādi-Dravida' and 'Ādi-Āndhra' instead of Pañchamas or Paraiyas was issued on 25-3-1922, the order was not fully enforced until 1924. To illustrate the laxness of Government officials in giving effect to the order of the Government, R. Veeraian, a member of the Madras Legislative Council, cited the instance of the issue of a deed (pattā) to an individual whose name was prefixed as 'Paraiyan'. This instance occurred after the issue of the relevant order by the Government. Another member of the Madras Legislative Council, N. Madurai Pillai drew the attention of the Government for the non-adoption of the terms 'Ādi-Dravida' and 'Ādi-Āndhra' by the military authorities and non-pursuance of the same by the Principal of the Law College. These
instances go to show that the departments of Government were not enthusiastic in implementing the relevant order. R. Veerian brought to the notice of the Council the use of the word 'Chakkilian' by the Mettuppalayam Union Board even after the Government had issued its order for the adoption of the term 'Ādi-Dravida'. On behalf of the Government, the Raja of Panagal stated that the Government will not use the caste names of the Depressed Classes and that it will not take any action if anyone used the caste names instead of the term 'Ādi-Dravida'.

Though the Government, in pursuance of persistent demand, agreed to a change in the name of the Depressed Classes, none could prevent a man from calling himself what he liked. Many of the Depressed Classes were not even aware of the change in the name of their community. A few communities started calling themselves as 'Ādi-Dravidas', but many others did not. It can be admitted that the term 'Ādi-Dravida' was not in vogue prior to 1921. Hence, in the Census Report of 1911, we notice the different communities of the Depressed Classes being listed separately. It is surprising to note the same practice being continued in the Census Reports of 1921,
1931, and even 1951. To illustrate, the Ādi-Dravida population during the 1921, 1931 and 1951 census was 50,105; 1,619,277 and 1,953,669 respectively in the composite State of Madras. The population of the Paraiyas was enumerated as 2,263,803; 2,337,036; 1,117,197 and 1,347,948 for the years 1911, 1921, 1932 and 1951 respectively. Figures for the Pallas were 866,132; 862,685; 825,224 and 995,669 for the years 1911, 1921, 1931 and 1951 respectively. There are two explanations to this phenomenon. One is that the officials of the Government were not keen to list the Depressed Classes as Ādi-Dravidas. The other is that the Depressed Classes themselves were not either aware or interested in changing their name to Ādi-Dravidas. That the Depressed Classes were for a change in their nomenclature is evident from the census conducted in 1921 when 15,025 mentioned the name of their caste as 'Ādi-Dravida'. When in 1920 Dr. C.A. Nāṭēsan tabled a motion in the Madras Corporation to change 'Pāñchama' into 'Ādi-Dravida', a mass meeting of Ādi-Dravidas was held to support it. From 1920 onwards the term 'Ādi-Dravida' was used in the Madras Corporation records. The Council resolution read:
"That this council recommends to Government that the terms 'Panchama' or 'Paraiya' used to designate the ancient Dravidian Community in Southern India should be deleted from the Government records, etc., and the term 'Adi-Dravida' in Tamil and 'Adi-Andhra' in Telugu districts be substituted instead."10

Following the example of the Untouchables in the Tamil region, those in the States of Andhra and Mysore started calling themselves as 'Adi-Andhras' and 'Adi-Karnatakas' respectively. In 1922, Government directed that the term 'Adi-Dravida' in Tamil districts and 'Adi-Andhra' in Telugu districts should be used in official documents in place of terms like 'Panchama' or 'Paraiya', or similar ones.11

It should be noted that the change of name did not, either socially or materially, benefit the Depressed Classes. This was succinctly stated by M.W.M. Yeatts, the Superintendent of Census Operations. He said,

"There is something infinitely pathetic in the vain idea that a change of name can reverse the stigma of centuries; it is a mistake to encourage terms which obscure real social units. That so ugly and clumsy a term as 'Adi-Andhra' should come to obliterate such real and lively distinctions as Māla and Mādiga is hardly to the good. Communities of
such numerical importance and pronounced individuality should be encouraged to retain and develop a pride in their cognomens.\textsuperscript{12}

Depressed Classes:

The term 'Depressed Classes', which denoted the Pahchamas, sprang out of administrative exigencies. A perusal of the official records shows that this term was in currency between 1920 and 1935. In the Census Report of 1921 over six million people covering nine castes were listed as Depressed Classes. (Vide Table IV) The figures given in this report could only be regarded as an approximation because no effort had yet been made till then to define the term 'Depressed'. But in 1931, based on the stigma of untouchability, the Depressed Classes were identified and enumerated and 15.5 per cent of the population of Madras Presidency was found to belong to this category.\textsuperscript{13} The Census Report states:

"Viewed primarily regarding the existence of social disabilities, the figure is a minimum, considered strictly as personal polluting power, the figure is a maximum."\textsuperscript{14}
Scheduled Castes:

Changes which took place in the terminology of the Depressed Classes did not end with the change to 'Adi-Dravidias'. An Order-in-Council issued under the Government of India Act of 1935 listed all the hereditary Untouchable communities in the different provinces in a 'Special Schedule'. Thereafter, these castes came to be designated as "Scheduled Castes." In the list concerning Madras Presidency, eighty-six communities came under the category of "Scheduled Castes." (Vide Table II).

In 1941, the population of Madras Presidency, including the princely states of Pudukottai, Banganapalle, and Sandur was 49,840,564. Out of this, 8,152,226 belonged to the Scheduled Castes, the break-up of which males and females was 4,064,233 and 4,087,993 respectively. In the census of 1941, population enumeration was done according to religions such as Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, Parseis, Buddhists and Jews. The Scheduled Castes were not included under any of these heads and their enumeration was separate.
The Scheduled Castes and Tribes were christened as "Harijans" by Mahatma Gandhi. The literal meaning of the term "Harijan" is 'Children of God.' In the Hindu pantheon, Hari is the preserver of the world. Since the Untouchables were people who were totally neglected by the bulk of the society, it was only appropriate to name "Harijans." The first to use the word "Harijan" to denote the Untouchables was Narashir Mehta, a great Saint who belonged to the Nagar Brāhmaṇa community. He regarded the Untouchables as the sons of Hari, the preserver of the World. He claimed the Harijans as his kith and kin and thereby defined his own community.

Mahatma Gandhi used the term "Harijan" to mean 'men of God.' But earlier, while writing in 'Navjivan', Gandhiji used the term 'asprasya', meaning Untouchable, to denote the Depressed Classes. When these classes resented this, he began using the term 'Harijan' from 1930. Later, he changed the name of 'Navjivan' to 'Harijan'. It was Gandhiji who popularised this term. Recognition to the term 'Harijan' was given by an order issued by Government in 1947. The order stated:
"the Government have directed that the term 'Harijans' should be used to denote persons belonging to the Scheduled Castes in all public records except in proceedings under statutory enactments until the statute is amended."18

Christening of the Depressed Classes as 'Harijans' met with strong disapproval from leaders of these classes. M.C. Rajah raised strong objection to Gandhi's calling the Depressed Classes as Harijans. Rajah's contention was that the term 'Harijan' meaning 'Children of God' denoted all Hindus and hence inappropriate for the Depressed Classes. He regarded names like 'Ādi-Dravida', 'Ādi-Āndhra', and 'Ādi-Karnataka' appropriate. Rajah asserted that the castes concerned could very well adopt a name for themselves and that no one else had the right to give them a name.19 Though Gandhiji popularised the term 'Harijan', it has not found a place in the Constitution of India. Instead, the term Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have been incorporated in the Constitution.

Awakening among the Depressed Classes:

"Most parts of the world have had their type of what Ward calls, the lowly. The Romans
had their slaves, the Spartans their helots, the British their villeins, the Americans their Negroes, and the Germans their Jews. So the Hindus have their Untouchables. But none of these can be said to have been called upon to face a fate which is worse than the fate which pursues the Untouchables. Slavery, serfdom, villeinage have all vanished. But untouchability still exists and bids fair to last as long as Hinduism will last. The Untouchable is worse off than a Jew. The sufferings of the Jew are of his own creation. Not so are the sufferings of the Untouchables. They are the result of a cold calculating Hinduism... The Jew is despised but is not denied opportunities to grow. The Untouchable is not merely despised but is denied all opportunities to rise. Yet nobody seems to take any notice of the Untouchables..."  

Thus wrote Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in 1943. By Untouchables, Dr. Ambedkar meant the Depressed Classes. If this was their plight in the 1940's, one could very well imagine the magnitude of the problem in the nineteenth century. The Depressed Classes were treated as the lowliest creatures, worse than even animals. A dog or cat could walk freely into the house of a caste Hindu but member of the Depressed Class could not. Ignorance, poverty, illness -- these were the lot of the Depressed Classes. With the coming of the British, a ray of hope became visible. It was the white man, the foreigner, who opened the eyes of the Depressed Classes. Until then they had been taking things for granted.
Adi-Dravida Mahājana Sabha:

The first step in tackling the problems of the Depressed Classes was taken by the Adi-Dravidā Mahajana Sabha.

In 1857, some learned scholars, businessmen and social workers belonging to the Depressed Classes, formed an association. In December 1892, this association was registered under Act XXI of 1860 as "The Madras Adi-Dravida Mahājana Sabha." The Madras Adi-Dravida Sabha integrated all the associations of the Depressed Classes and registered on November 8, 1928 as "The All-India Adi-Dravida Mahājana Sabha." The Adi-Dravida Mahājana Sabha was constituted on the basis of a constitution which was drawn up on democratic lines. The Sabha had hundreds of branches located in the rural areas. Membership in the Sabha was open to individuals belonging to the Depressed Classes who were above eighteen years of age. The membership fee was one anna per head. The permanent organ of the Sabha was the Executive Committee which was elected at the meeting of the General body of the Sabha which was held once in three years. The day-to-day work of the Sabha was carried on by the Secretaries, Treasurer and the General
The objectives of the Ādi-Dravida Mahājana Sabhā were:

1. to maintain and subsidise journals;
2. to publish books and pamphlets on political, social, scientific, economic and literary subjects;
3. to organise and hold public meetings;
4. to start and maintain libraries, free reading rooms, night schools and ritual meetings.

This association was started with a view "to organise their own people and to educate them in proper manner." The leading figures behind the formation and functioning of this association were P.V. Subramaniam Pillai, M.C. Chinnathambi Pillai, M.C. Rajah, R. Srinivasan, M.C. Madurai Pillai, R. Veerian and J. Sivashanmugam Pillai. Associations similar to the Ādi-Dravida Mahājana Sabhā were in existence in other parts of India also, particularly in Bengal and Malabar. In the Madras Presidency, besides the Ādi-Dravida Mahājana Sabhā, there were also such associations as the Madras provincial Depressed Class Federation, Ādi-Dravida Malayālam Sabhā, Ādi-Āndhra Mahāsabhā, Arunthathiyar
Mahāsabhā, and Kerala Depressed Classes Association. In addition, certain labour unions contained mostly people of the Depressed Classes.

The Ādi-Dravida Mahājana Sabha rendered yeoman service to the Depressed Classes. This association was the pioneer in creating an awakening among the Depressed Classes. A special wing of this association was the Depressed Class Service Army whose members were mostly youngsters. It was similar to the Salvation Army of the Christians. This Service Army was charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the rights and liberties of the Depressed Classes. It was also the task of this army to arrange agitations and demonstrations. News and views of the Mahājana Sabha were published in different journals. Some of these were Sūriyōdayam (1869), Pañchaman (1871), Mahāvikatatothan (1875), Sugirdavāsani (1877), Drāvidamitran (1885), Paraiyan (1893), Illara Ozhukkam (1898), Boolōga Vyāsan (1900), Drāvida Kogilam (1907), Ādi-Dravida Mitran (1939), Anrōmitran (1910), Tamizhan (1907), Puttuyir (1940), Jai Beem (1940), etc. The journals were very handy to the Ādi-Dravida Mahājana Sabha to spread its message and thereby bring together-
the Depressed Classes. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the Ādi-Dravida Mahājana Sabha served as a beacon light to guide the Depressed Classes. It did well in championing the cause of the down-trodden communities and in drawing the attention of the Government to the plight of these people. Its crusades were beneficial to the Depressed Classes.

The Ādi-Dravida Mahājana Sabha highlighted the deplorable plight of the Depressed Classes and clamoured for ameliorative steps to better their lot. The Sabha, while expressing its opinion on "The Report on Indian Constitutional Reforms" of 1818, observed thus:

"We may indicate, however, in a general way, our attitude towards the Reform Scheme. We are averse in the present condition of public opinion, and in the present stage of social and moral progress, and with the ideas which now rule the social relations of communities, to the establishment of a dual Government in this country. We are, therefore, opposed to any department of the administration being transferred to popular control. We would particularly protest against education being vested in 'Ministers'. These Ministers would look after the interests of their particular communities and either neglect us in such a way that we may look upon them for ever as our masters."
From this statement it is easy to gauge the bitterness the Depressed Classes had.

Extracts from the presidential address of G.A. Natesan, Editor of the 'Indian Review', delivered at the second session of the Depressed Classes Conference held at Madras on July 8, 1911, are worth quoting because they show the forcefulness with which the plight of the Depressed Classes was brought to the attention of the Government. Natesan made a powerful plea for bettering the lot of:

"...fifty million people sunk in ignorance, poverty and contempt, branded as Untouchables or Unapproachables, treated as serfs and reduced to a state of moral degradation through the contempt and ill-treatment that they have received for the past one thousand years... British rule and English education have roused in us new aims, new aspirations and all those who are actively engaged in the great task of uplifting India are deeply alive to the fact that there can be no true uplift for the Indian nation unless and until the so-called Depressed Classes rise with them."

Natesan urged the Depressed Classes to agitate constantly on strictly constitutional lines.
The Adi-Dravida Mahājana Sabhā, under the leadership of M.C. Rajah, agitated for adequate representation for the Depressed Classes in the Legislative Council and local bodies. The Sabhā opposed the principle of nomination. The Sabhā, in its memorandum stated:

"The political views of the Indian section of the Cabinet and particularly of the members who holds the portfolio of nominations have been and still are diametrically opposed to the views of our political association and the real interests of our community."

Hence, the Sabhā urged the Governor to take over the portfolio of nominations. The Sabhā gave the following figures to justify its claim for more seats in the legislature.

"We number 7,503,475 out of a total population of 42,794,115 inhabitants of this Presidency. We are mainly engaged in agriculture and suffer from various disabilities, political, social, economic and educational, arising from and aggravated by the stigma of untouchability and unapproachability reveted on us by the united force of caste opinion. We are now represented in the local legislature by five nominated members. The Mohammadans who number only 2,865,286 in this Presidency are allotted 13 elective seats. The Indian Christians who number only 1,380,672 have five elective seats and three nominated seats. The Anglo-Indians who number only 23,492 have one elective seat and one nominated seat. We who number more than one-sixth of the population..."
engaged on the land, the basic industry of the Province and have our undoubted age-long grievances to redress, are certainly entitled, in equity, justice and good conscience, to a much greater representation than we have at present. We would therefore respectfully urge, that a minimum of twenty seats for our community on the legislature is an urgent necessity."\textsuperscript{26}

In 1924, the Sabha demanded communal representation in the local legislature, the Indian Assembly, the Council of States and the Governor's Cabinet. It urged the Governor to establish a separate Department to look after the Depressed Classes.\textsuperscript{27}

In May, 1926 the tenth conference of the Ādi-Dravida Mahājana Sabha was held in Madras under the Presidency of R. Veerian and urged the Governor of Madras to "appoint a commission to investigate into the conditions and suggest measures for the amelioration of the Depressed Classes." The conference also urged the Government to "form a separate electorate for the Depressed Classes so that all the representatives for the various local bodies, Municipal Councils, and the Legislative Council may be drawn through that channel." The conference also wanted franchise to be given "to all persons of the Depressed Class community who have
passed at least the S.S.I.C. and who pay the smallest possible tax to a corporation." The conference asked for the removal of the power of recommendation and endorsement from the village officials.  

At its eleventh conference, the Sabha urged the introduction of compulsory elementary education. It also asked for the introduction of vocational training in all the elementary schools. The conference was of the view that the scholarships given to the pupils belonging to the Depressed Classes were inadequate and wanted an increase. It placed on record:

"its emphatic protest against the grievous and gratuitous insult maliciously offered to the community by Dr. Besant in her speech at the All India Social Conference."  

It demanded representation for the Depressed Classes in the Cabinet. It requested the Government to look into the working conditions in the tanneries.

The fourth All India Depressed Classes Conference and the twelfth conference of the Ádī-Dravida Mahājana Sabha were held in Madras in 1929. It requested the
Government to appoint a member of the Depressed Classes to represent Indian Labour at the International Labour Conference. The conference felt that there should be statutory provision for including members of the Depressed Classes in the cabinets of the Governors and the Viceroy. The appointment of a member of the Depressed Classes to the Whitely Commission was requested by the conference. It resolved to form an All-India Depressed Classes Educational Association for taking concerted measures to provide facilities for higher education to the children of the Depressed Classes.

At a meeting of the Executive Committee of the All-India Ādi-Dravida Mahājana Sabha held in August 1929, it was resolved to request the Indian Central Committee and the Royal Commission to grant separate electorates to the Depressed Classes in Madras Presidency so as to remove their disabilities. The meeting also requested the committee and commission to grant proportional representation in all legislatures to the Depressed Classes. Another request that came from this meeting was for special privileges, such as exemption in age and educational qualifications, to the members of the Depressed Classes for
employment under the Government.

\textbf{Adi-Andhra Association :}

Among the other communal associations mention must be made of the Adi-Andhra Association which was active in the Telugu districts of the Presidency. This association was running day and night schools for the benefit of the Depressed Classes. It was also the practice of this association to bring to the attention of the Government, the genuine grievances of the Depressed Classes. It used convene conferences of the Depressed Classes. The representatives from the Telugu districts in the Legislative Council were the mouthpiece of the Adi-Andhra Association. These men sought the implementation of the resolutions passed in the conferences of the Adi-Andhra Association.

\textbf{Arunthathiyar Association :}

Arunthathiyar Association was the communal organ of the Chakkiliyans of Tamil Nadu. Its headquarters were in Perambur Barracks, Madras. This association also managed and operated day and night schools primarily for the
benefit of Chakkilians. It functioned for the welfare of the Chakkilians.

Devendrakula Velalar Sangam:

Next to the Paraiyas, the leading community among the Depressed Classes was that of the Pallas. Their association was known as Devendrakula Velalar Sangam. The Sangam was a communal Association whose finances were sound. Its finances were used to settle the clashes which often broke out between the Pallas and Kallas. This community had its own panchayats where both minor and major questions were settled. The fine that was imposed by the panchayats were payable to the Sangam. This was one of the ways in which the Sangam augmented its finances. This association too used to convene conferences to focus attention on its grievances.

During the Conferences of the Madras Adi-Draida Mahajana Sabha and the All-India Depressed Class Association, the above-mentioned Associations were represented. On such occasions all the sub-castes of the Depressed Classes raised their voice in unison.
Valluvar Mahājana Saṅgam:

Another voluntary communal association which came much later on the scene was "The Madras Presidency Valluvar Mahājana Saṅgam" which was registered in 1935. Twenty years later the name of the Saṅgam was changed as "The South India Valluvar Mahājana Saṅgam." Similar to other communal associations the Valluvar Mahājana Saṅgam also conducted conferences from time to time to draw the attention of Government to the grievances of the Valluvas. At the conference of the Saṅgam held in 1935 it was resolved to request the Government to provide compulsory education, to establish schools of astrology and Indian Medicine, to accord representation to the Valluvas in local and provincial bodies in proportion to their population, and to absorb more Valluva youth in Government service. In the second conference of the Valluvas held in 1938 it was resolved to request the Government to assign cultivable land to the landless Valluvas, and to appoint deserving members of the community as Honorary Magistrates in the important centres of the Presidency. In 1938 the third Conference of the Valluvas resolved to request the Government to declare equal rights and privileges to all communities in the Hindu fold, to provide free education to
Valluva children, and to provide representation to the Valluvas in Local Boards and the Legislative Assembly.

Depressed Class Association of Kerala:

The social and religious reformer, Narayana Guru, born an Ezhava, founded the Travancore Ezhava Sabha. Following this, the Nair Service Society was founded by Mannath Padmanabhan,

"...not only to further the interests of the caste it represented, but also to reform from within by breaking down the divisions between sub-castes, thus welding it into a single community."

The Untouchables created the Pulaya Maha Sabha. The Nambudiris created the Yoga Kshema Sabha. Efforts at ending caste discrimination in Kerala started with the Vaikam Satyagraha.

Service of Religious groups:

Many among the Depressed Classes were driven to embrace faiths other than Hinduism so as to put an end to
their inhuman plight caused by caste distinctions. Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity provided avenues of escape to these unfortunate people.

Buddhists:

The social and economic position of the Ādi-Dravidias were considerably affected when a considerable number of them embraced Buddhism. Since then they were treated like slaves. There is evidence to prove that a good number of Ādi-Dravidas embraced Buddhism. Arunachalakavirayar, a leading poet, calls Ceylon, where there are numerous Buddhists, as 'the land of Paraiyas.'

New light has been thrown on the relationship between Buddhism and the Depressed Classes. Hence, this aspect merits detailed consideration. It is said that the majority of the Depressed Classes were neither Saivites nor Vaishnavites. Edgar Thurston in his 'Castes and Tribes of Southern India' says:

"As a matter of fact, the wearing of the nāma of Vishnu or the smearing of the ashes of Siva, is of no meaning to a Paraiyan. They are neither Saivites nor Vaishnavites."32
The split of the Depressed Classes into the 'right hand caste' and 'the left hand caste' goes to prove that they were Buddhists. Buddhism was a success in South India because it preached a classless society and its monks practised what they preached. Pandit Hisselle Dharmaratna Mahathera says:

"These monks ignored caste differences and this was a great relief to the masses of the Depressed Classes who suffered acutely on account of caste discrimination. The oppressed classes found their emancipation in Buddhism. Opposition to the rigid and inhuman caste system was one of the major reasons for the popularity of Buddhism."33

Buddhist revival in the South was started by Pandit C. Ayodhidas. Mention must be made of two associates of Pandit Das. One was P. Lakshmi Narasu, who was a great scholar. Narasu did much to spread Buddhism among the Untouchables. The other notable associate of Das was Appādurai. He founded the South India Buddhist Association at Kolar Gold Fields in 1927. Appādurai was also responsible for spreading the message of Dr. Ambedkar among the Depressed Classes and for helping them to start the Scheduled Caste Federation. He succeeded Pandit Das as the editor of 'Tamizhan'. He spread Buddhism in
different parts of Mysore State. The reason why Buddhism proved to be attractive to the Depressed Classes was that this faith preached a society devoid of any class or caste distinctions. Unfortunately, it did not make any headway in the Madras Presidency.

In the city of Madras, the Buddhist Association had branches in Pudupet, Mariyamanagar, Narasingapuram and Perambur. In the Presidency there were branches in Vellore, Gudiyatham, Palligonda, Chakkaramallur, Vannivedu, Walajabad, Conjeevaram, Enathur and Angambakkam. Apart from these there were also branches at Kolar Gold Fields, Oorugam, Marikuppam, Andersonpet, Hubli and Secunderabad.

The Buddhists preached the message of the Buddha and they may be regarded as the forerunners of revivalism in the Presidency. Eminent leaders of the Depressed Classes like N. Sivaraj and R. Srinivasan were greatly touched by the Buddhist philosophy and teachings.

At the turn of the present century, most of the Buddhists were found in Madras and in the districts of
North Arcot and Chingleput. The number of Buddhists which was 697 in 1911 rose to 1222 in 1921. They were mostly converts from the Depressed Classes and fishermen. The Buddhist association in Madras professed to "promote the knowledge of Buddhism amongst the Indians with a view to secure adherents." But it does not seem to have succeeded in this endeavour.

Hindu Revivalist:

The great saint Sri. Rāmānuja, who converted the Untouchables to Vaishnavism, named them as 'Thirukulathar', people of good class. Even to-day a large number of Untouchables who follow the Sri Ramanuja cult are found at Hoskot, Kolar and other places. They follow the 'Guru paramparai' and have Sri perumpudur in Chingleput District as their headquarters.

Christian Missionaries:

Christianity preached the brotherhood of man and this attracted the Depressed Classes. Another factor was education which was freely provided by the Missionaries.
Educated and converted Depressed Class people were treated with respect by the caste Hindus. By becoming Christians the Depressed Classes could hope to derive substantial material benefits also. These were the factors which encouraged large scale conversions to Christianity. It should be noted that some of the best educational institutions in the Presidency were run by the Christian Missionaries. One denomination among the Christian Missionaries was particularly active among the Depressed Classes. That was the Salvation Army. The Salvation Army did much to uplift the downtrodden people.

All these associations in due course fell a pray to the Caste-Hindu political leaders. By their tactics and foul play the united Depressed Classes Ādi-Dravida Mahājana Sabha was scattered into pieces. Thus the united community, unity of the Depressed Classes was jeopardised by the actors of political drama. They fell together and yet to raise again together.

Conclusion:

The Depressed Classes began to assert themselves
for their rights and privileges only from the beginning of the present century. The creation of an association to forge unity among the Depressed Classes and to highlight their grievances was the first step in the self-assertiveness of the Depressed Classes. The demand for a change in the nomenclature of the Depressed Classes was effectively put forth by the leaders of the Depressed Classes. This was a step taken to remove the stigma of untouchability by effecting a change in their caste names. Following the Depressed Classes of the Madras Presidency, similar classes in the Āndhra, Karnataka and Malabar regions formed associations for themselves and in the case of the Depressed Classes of Āndhra and Karnataka, even effected a change in their nomenclature. Apart from these associations, particular caste associations among certain Depressed Classes also sprang up. In infusing the spirit of awareness and assertiveness among the Depressed Classes the pioneering role of religious groups and social reformers cannot be underestimated. Mention in this connection may be made of the Buddhists, Hindu revivalists and Christian Missionaries. Even though Buddhism could not produce a lasting impact, yet it rendered some useful service to the
Depressed Classes. The Hindu revivalists were successful in leaving behind a noble tradition which could be emulated. The work of the Christian missionaries was mainly in the field of education by which they were able to open the eyes of the downtrodden Depressed Classes. The cumulative effect of the efforts taken by all these forces was instrumental in launching the Depressed Classes on their march to secure equality with the rest of the society.

...
References

10. G.O. No. 817 (General) March 25, 1922.
11. Ibid.
15. Joint Committee on Constitutional Reform, 1933-34, p. 70.
C. Anand, Government of India, 1936., p. XXIII;


19. *G.O. No. 849, Development, April, 1939, discussion in the Madras Legislative Assembly*.


22. *M.C. Rajah, The Oppressed Hindus*, p.84.


24. *South Indian Mail, July 17, 1911*.

25. *A.D.M.S.P.*


27. *Ibid*.


29. *Ibid*.

