

**DALIT MOVEMENT IN MADRAS PRESIDENCY 1891-
1931: ADI DRAVIDA MAHAJANA SABHA-A CASE STUDY**

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BALAKRISHNAN R.



**CENTRE FOR HISTORICAL STUDIES
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI-110067
INDIA
2005**

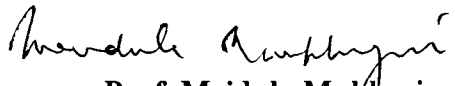



29th July 2005

CERTIFICATE

Certified that the Dissertation entitled “**Dalit Movement in Madras Presidency 1891-1931: Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha-A Case Study**” submitted by **Balakrishnan R.** in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy, in Modern Indian History**, is his original work and has not been submitted before in this or any other university.

We recommend that this Dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


Prof. Mridula Mukherjee
(Chairperson)


Prof. Aditya Mukherjee
(Supervisor)

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Introduction

INTRODUCTION

The caste system was believed to be the uniqueness of the Indian social life. The “untouchables,” called in today’s political and academic discourse as “Dalits”, were also a part and parcel of the caste system. Not only were they at the bottom of the Indian society but also in terms of economic condition, they were at the lowest echelon compared to the non-dalits. It cannot be said that all dalits are economically deprived, however, majority of them are suffering from poverty. Their problems differ from region-to-region, from rural area to urban and within various occupational conditions. Since from the establishment of colonial rule in India, the issue of the untouchables, was widely discussed among the British officials, Christian missionaries, social reformers (who were generally sprang from non-dalit community) and finally by the untouchables themselves.

The British also framed number of policies and programmes, and denoted them as ameliorative measures. The colonial records show that the issue of the untouchables was taken up by the British as a pivotal one. This phenomenon, in a way, was crucial to the British, to prove themselves as a Welfare state. Questions arise regarding whether the British policies had repercussions on the untouchables or not? If so, how far the benefits provided by the British, filtered down among the untouchables. A major allegation is that in spite of the efforts made by the British, Christian Missionaries, Brahman and Non-Brahman social reformers, and of course dalits, the majority of the dalits in today’s context still remained in the same wretched condition.

This study would elaborate the colonial measures framed to uplift the untouchables of the Madras presidency. Such measures were also the consequence of the efforts of the missionary, social reformers, and finally the untouchables. The focus, therefore, would be to look upon the rhetoric that the above groups employed in colonial India. It would be pertinent to look into a particular region as condition varies over region to region to know the vital feature of the caste system especially with reference to the untouchables under the colonial rule in India.

Caste prejudice was prevalent from the time immemorial in many parts of India, only a few regions could witness the emergence of dalit consciousness during early British rule. The Madras presidency, initiated its process before 1891 itself. In 1891, a group of untouchables of the Madras presidency found an association called ADI DRAVIDA MAHAJANA SABHA. The sabha from its inception had remarkable interaction with the British. During the late 19th century, the number of caste associations sprang up in India. It is argued, that those associations strengthened under the colonial administration. The process of enumeration or 'objectifying' the Indian caste categories is believed to be a stepping-stone to these associations. Keeping the above views in mind, this study would extensively elaborate the emergence and the extents of the movements among the untouchables of the Madras presidency under the colonial rule.

Review of literature:

Before going into the detail about the study, it would be pertinent to look into the secondary works on the caste and the caste associations of India. This might give us general notion on the emergence of caste associations both among the caste Hindus and eventually among the untouchables during the colonial era. Ghurye,¹ while arguing the condition of 'caste during the British Rule' explain, unlike the study of B.S.Cohn,² shows how the census as a process to study the Indian society was gradually shaped and reshaped from the foundation of the company rule in Bengal. Ghurye argues that the first tradition of scholars such as Nesfield, Elliot, Dalton, and Sherring just collected information on caste and published with comment, the later officials relied mostly on the decennial census reports "to know origin and theory of caste to give them special treatment".³

¹ G.S. Ghurye. *Caste and Race in India*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay. First edition 1932. reprint. 1969.

² Bernard S. Cohn, 'The Census, Social Structure and Objectification in South Asia' in B.S.Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and other Essays*, Oxford University Press. New Delhi. 2002. pp224-254.

³ Ghurye. op cit p.278

Sir Herbert Risley, however, changed the classification of 1891 census, with reference to social precedence as recognized by the native public opinion at the present day.⁴ Ghurye goes on to argue that Indians who were divided by caste group could perceive the difference from the census report. During this time, many associations (*sabhas*) sprang up to assert their dignity.

According to him, the census report were *not* utilized by the British as far as the following

- i) To retain its (caste-category) number and prosperity
- ii) To help any caste, as they registered numerical decline or economic dislocation
- iii) To provide special representation.

But intention of the British were *firstly*, “to determine in the light of their experience whether a particular person is one who can legitimately claim to belong to one of the three large groups of the population, devised for political purposes.”⁵ *Secondly*, they wanted to settle the case of caste disputes according to its practice, and *thirdly* intellectual curiosity. Thus, Ghurye argues that the census classification was not for the welfare of the subjugated.

On the contrary, to Ghurye, **B.S.Cohn**⁶ argues that the census ‘objectification’ touched almost every aspect of Indian life, by which both British and the Indians gained some benefits out of it. He asserts, through the census ‘objectification’ the British could ascertain the division of Indian society in a ‘systematic’ way. The process ultimately gave the British a broader view on identities of the Indian society. The Indian on the other hand were inclined to sustain their social precedence and draw benefits from government policies and programmes. The policies of the British which intended to give welfare measures, however, cannot be interpreted as the British state being a welfare state, rather, they may have framed most policies to gain something out of it.

⁴ Ibid., 278.

⁵ Ibid., p.279

⁶ B.S.Cohn, Op cit., 2002.

Both Ghurye and Cohn argue that the impact of census operations or objectification on Indian society was substantial. They intend to know whether the census enumeration was beneficial to the British or the Indian society. Apart from the above views, M.N. Srinivas⁷ asserts that the impact of census operation was apparent among the backward classes, higher castes, and Nationalist Indians. The backward castes used the process of census classification as a factor to mobilize their identity. As a consequence, in Tamil speaking region of Madras presidency castes such as *Vellala* and *Padayachis* 'wanted to be recorded as belonging to higher varna than that popularly conceded to them'. Such mobility "became more widespread with the census of 1901."⁸

The widespread awareness among the backward classes, that intended to sustain or place themselves in an appropriate status, culminated into the formation of caste associations. Caste associations or caste sabhas sprang up in different parts of the country. This formation was also indispensable to them when "different sections of a single caste claimed to be different *varnas* in different place."⁹ Srinivas argues that such sabhas proliferated in 1901. They also became an 'all India phenomenon' when the consequent census of 1921 was carried out, because the census by that time was deeply influenced by the 'passing of government of India Act of 1919.'

The above response of the backward castes eventually influenced the low castes as well. The sabha, found both by the backward classes and by lower classes, "articulated as well as organized the new urge to mobility."¹⁰ However, the sabhas found by the lower classes "involved the non performance of a traditional and degrading duty such as *corvee* or other free labor, or carrying palanquins, or beating the tom-tom on ceremonial occasions." Such efforts intended to elevate their status but in turn, it also infuriated the caste-Hindus. Therefore, on the one hand the high castes "used violence to enforce performance of duties and keep the parvenus in their pace."¹¹

⁷ M.N.Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*, Orient Longman, New Delhi. 1972.

⁸ *Ibid.*,p.95

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 98

¹¹ *Ibid.*,p.98

Srinivas goes on to argue that the caste classification in census was regarded by the Nationalist Indians “as yet another manifestation of a sinister design on the part of the imperial British to keep alive the numerous divisions already present in Indian society.”¹² The argument might be that the census classification could explicitly demarcate the difference in the Indian society. The caste associations formed both by caste-Hindus and by lower classes on the other hand, preoccupied with the caste identity and its uniqueness. This process was thus not compatible to the nationalists as it segregated the Indians into number of identities.

Rudolph and Rudolph¹³ argue that the caste institution, which united its members through marriage and tradition, changed its nature and emerged as an association. The spread of communication and market economy, as already proposed by M.N. Srinivas, was the driving factor which ensured cohesiveness among the caste and sub-castes which also in turn much proliferated. The associations were formed, due to the emerging liberal and democratic ideas and with the evolution of political democracy. The associations, intended to have a political representation, changed its nature and the policy of memberships. Now, the membership to the sabha was not based on the caste and its ritual or tradition, rather, the numerical strength and effective self-awareness. The association, which were believed to be a reincarnation of caste and distinct from political party, were criticized by the ‘modern middle class intellectuals, civil servants and policy makers.’

However, the Rudolphs argue, that the very nature of such associations cannot be neglected as distinct one, rather they “have a vital role to play in the exercise of political freedom through group self-government,”¹⁴ both maintaining independence and playing supplementary role with the state.

¹² Ibid., p.100

¹³ Lloyd Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, ‘The Political Role of India’s Caste Associations,’ *Pacific Affairs*, vol.XXXIII, No. 1, 1960.

¹⁴ Ibid.,p.10

The associations however have their own limitation. They cannot influence the people beyond state level. In this situation, the political parties play a pivotal role in organizing these caste association and ally with them. Congress, according to Rudolphs, played such role in Madras presidency, (today's Tamil Nadu). After independence, the Congress could extend and expect its support from *Vanniya Kula Kshatriyas*, though they were having divergent ideas among the party members themselves, the *Vanniyars* ultimately sought help from the Congress.

The *Vanniya Kula Kshatriya Sangham* which was once a caste association, 'reincarnated' into a political party and which was also supported by the Congress before and after independence. The point is that the associations that were found by the "untouchables," could not form its party after independence. It has to be studied that what factors permeate associations turning into a political party. The strength of the associations, Rudolphs argue, depends on "the number that a particular association can attempt to mobilize, on the degree of self-consciousness and, effectiveness of leadership, on the degree of internal cohesiveness and on the power of countervailing interest-group forces."¹⁵ The point is that actually the untouchables of the presidency did not have a single identity but belonged to three major groups. The question related to the degree of cohesiveness among these groups has to be achieved.

Association which got strengthened on the basis of above principles such as "self consciousness", "effective leadership" and "internal cohesiveness" could make headway as a political party. The newly formed parties such as the Tamil Nadu Toilers Party and Commonweal party insisted on the following three fields. As majority of them were suffering from lack of by educations and economic backwardness, *Vanniya Kula Kshatriya Sangam* insisted firmly that their members should be provided with range of facilities to uplift themselves from their educational backwardness. The second objective was to have a place in civil services, by which they could gain local prestige and also serve their community

¹⁵ Ibid., p.11

much better, “the third was winning Congress “tickets” for seats in lower governing boards as well as in the legislative and places in the cabinet.”¹⁶

According to Lucy Carroll,¹⁷ caste associations, which emerged as a representative of its members, were not merely an outcome of the rapid development of communication, or centralized bureaucracy; rather, these associations sprang up in many parts, due to the prolonged attempt of the foreigners in studying the castes. The foreigners who perceived the caste system as alien to them, inclined to study them through ‘ethnological inquiry’ with the following objectives.

- i) They used the caste category, as an indispensable tool to understand the Indian society, by conducting ethnographical inquiry.
- ii) They were inclined “to resolve the question of the racial/ethnic origins of the various Indian caste groups,
- iii) They tried to disentangle the myths and the legends that surrounded each caste,
- iv) They studied customs and manners, detailed ritual and ceremonial practices, and sought cultural affinities with other groups.”

In response to the colonial attempt in studying Indian society, Lucy Carroll argues that the Indian scholars extensively used arguments analogous to the western scholars. The caste associations were also an outcome of the personally motivated one. Some associations Lucy argues “were preoccupied with question of ritual practice and purity and how the bureaucrats of the Raj would evaluate their respective “social precedence” ratings; their goals, values, and objectives were “sanskritic.”¹⁸

Many associations sprang up, with the emergence of the colonial ethnological survey, as they were based on social precedence. Caste, such as *Kayasthas*, at one point in time out numbered the other castes in government employment, the trend of patronizing the caste, also changed according to its

¹⁶ Ibid., p.19

¹⁷ Lucy Carroll, Colonial Perception of Indian Society and the Emergence of Castes(s) Associations, *Journal of Asian Studies* vol.XXXVII, no. 2, 1978.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.243

necessity. The British were then inclined to check the dominance of one particular caste in the government service.

In response to the gradual dwindling of government support, castes, which had more highly educated youngsters, were inclined to try and prove their loyalty to the government. Lucy goes on to argue, that the associations were intended to use effectively the “administrative policies in the area of employment and political representation, rather than concern over *Varna* classification and social symbol per se.”¹⁹ Moreover, the associations formed mostly by the highly educated middle class and its leaders or members, were motivated to get government services. The government on the other hand, “was by far the largest employer of educated Indian talent; the government mitigated its hiring policies by reference to caste-categories and communal ratios, by reference to whether caste groups were “high” or low.”²⁰

Contrary to Lucy Carroll’s view, Eugene F. Irschick²¹ argues, the caste category such as *Parayar* the largest outcaste of Madras Presidency, who were once denoted as slaves, was an outcome of a dialogue between the British and Indian Scholars. The British while preoccupied with writing grand history, accommodated the *parayar* as a separate entity. Though his study confines within the 1880s and 1890s, in a way, it exposes the colonial construction of caste, in India. According to Irschick, the *paraya* who were emancipated merely in terms of nomenclature asserts their newly conceived identity, the *parayars*, with the constant support of the British in its grand narratives, claims that they were the “original inhabitants of the soil.” This status, as original inhabitants of the soil, could create knowledge and meaning to the *parayars*. As the British ethnological survey made its headway, the *parayars* have reaffirmed their original inhabitant status.

¹⁹ Ibid, p.249

²⁰ Ibid., p.250

²¹ Eugene F. Irschick, *Dialogue and History. Constructing south India 1795-1895*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1994.

The association called Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha, which the present study deals with, was a reincarnation of the *parayars* associations. Among the outcaste of Tamil Nadu, the *Parayars* were the majority as well as the pioneer in starting the association. The first association of this group was named after its own caste i.e. Paraya Mahajana Sabha. This sabha was found in 1891. The same term was, however, not compatible with a few people. As a consequence, the new association called Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha was found. The date of the formation of the sabha, somewhat obscure, is believed to be a repercussion of Montague visit to Madras. Some scholars presume that Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha was found in 1891. This study will look into the above point to give broader understanding of the association.

Irschick goes on to argue, that the colonial perception of Indian society was not merely a ramification of census classification, rather constant as well as continuous effort between the British and Indians. The British on the one hand encouraged the Indian educated classes to write on their glory of the past (it is restricted to lower class particularly *pariahs* of Madras presidency), and by writing grand narrative they have used the caste names such as *Pariahs* in the place of “slaves” which convinced others that the British were emancipating the society on the other hand.

Given the perspectives of caste and its associations, especially among the caste-Hindus of colonial India, it would be appropriate to mention an article written by **Bharat Patankar and Gail Omvedt**.²² According to them dalits are of two kinds, firstly the field servants, as they constitute majority among the dalits, could be identified with their uniform condition of socio-economics exploitation. Secondly, the artisan and service workers comprised small segment among the dalits who were not rebellious in their protest against the exploiting classes. It cannot be denied that the “rebellious revolt” done by the field servants played a pivotal role in “transforming the system”. However, the preoccupation with field servants as a only group that involving in agriculture, can not be accepted.

²² Bharat Patankar and Gail Omvedt, “The Dalit Liberation Movement in Colonial Period,” *Economic and Political Weekly*, Annual Number, February 1979.

In their conclusion, they asserted that the field servants could antagonize the exploiting class and obtain right to own land during the colonial period. If it was the case what happened to the artisan and service workers? Whether they got right to own land unlike their brothers or simply ignored by the colonial government?

On the contrary, to Omvedt's view, **Cederlof Gunnel**²³ asserts that artisan and service workers too contributed to the development of agriculture. Gunnel in her book argues that the artisan and service workers such as *Madhari* (Telugu speaking *chakkiliyars*) became indispensable to their Gounder landlords, and colonial economy. The study dealt with Coimbatore district of colonial Tamil Nadu, which was a well-known dry region of the presidency. There is a lacuna in the history of untouchables of Madras presidency. The leather workers of the presidency were not considered as a separate identity; rather they were enumerated in the census and government records in general term which subsumed them with other caste. While arguing the same line, Gunnel points out "throughout the last century, the leather workers of the highlands of Tamil Nadu were rarely at the centre of interest when official records were written."²⁴

Eleanor Zelliott,²⁵ while studying the Mahar movement of western India observed that the movement among the untouchables of the Madras presidency could not be "sustained and all encompassing as that of Mahars."²⁶ She also argues that the Mahar movement could produce its own political party in the independent India, whereas the movement from other region disappeared. While arguing the peculiarities of the Mahar movement she asserts that "the legitimization of the new non-traditional Mahar ambition both within the caste and among members of the elite in the larger society" was one of the factors for their success. In other words, the Mahars were helped by the enlightened reformers from the "elite" group. This was possible because the Mahars did not differentiate themselves from the non-dalits.

²³ Gunnel Cederlof, *Bonds Lost-Subordination, Conflict and Mobilisation in Rural South India. C. 1900-1970*, Manohar Publishers, Delhi, 1997.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p,2

²⁵ Eleanor Zelliott, "The Nineteenth Century background of the Mahar and Non-Brahman movement in Maharashtra, *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol.vii. no.3, 1970, pp.397-416.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

In the case of 'Adi Dravida,' the term Adi Dravida was itself based on the traditional glory of the dalits. The term thus implies several meanings. Firstly, it means that they are the sons of the soil i.e., they were the first to settle in the Dravidan land. Secondly, they are also the predecessors to the Aryans. Thus the pre-Aryan/Dravidian notion, in a way, negates the Adi Dravida (a dalit group) from the non-dalit communities. The Adi Dravidas referred them as an indispensable group to the region as an "original (adi) inhabitants." Zelliott argued the same as "a longing look back at past glory (that referring them as original settlers)," and "a protest at current treatment in the light of current standards and opportunities,"²⁷ were factors responsible for the success of the Mahar movement. Because she believed that preoccupation of the theory of "original inhabitation," would negate the non-dalit (non-original settlers) from joining hand in dalit upliftment. The Mahar on the contrary preoccupied with the current issues pertaining to the dalits and their development.

In the history of the untouchables of Madras presidency, only two major group i.e. Parayars and Pallars have been studied extensively. Scholars from both Indian and foreign country paid their attention generally to the numerically or economically dominant dalits; consequently, there are no works which try to study "untouchable among the untouchables" such as Chakkiliyas of the Madras presidency. Perhaps it can be believed that the policies of the government were also framed according to the data available on castes, which were studied extensively from the colonial period. The colonial officials did not study the Chakkiliyars, as they were preoccupied with the ameliorative measures for the Adi Dravidas. During the 1920s the term Adi Dravida, included the *pallar* and *chakkiliyars* the two other untouchable groups of the presidency. Therefore, the British were not in a position to be involved in "impartial treatment." The study also deals with the unequal treatment of the British meted out to the non-Adi Dravidas.

²⁷ Ibid.

Objectives:

1. To explore the demand that the “untouchables” of the Madras presidency (especially by Adi Dravidas) raised to uplift themselves from the deprived condition.
2. The response of the colonial government through government orders or acts would be analyzed to know the extent in which the dalits could develop.
3. Finally, the focus would be on the result of such orders or acts.

Confining within the colonial records cannot be authentic. Perhaps the colonial records may give us mere documents preserved by the British with their own knowledge and interpretation on the untouchables. However, the study will look upon the perception of Christian missionaries (if not all but one) and the perception of the non-Brahman caste Hindus through their leading newspaper and the views of the untouchables themselves.

This study deals with the *process of the untouchables of the Madras presidency gradually improved their condition with the support (as well as the opposition-in the case of non-Brahman party) of the British government, Christian missionary, non-Brahman caste-Hindus and of courses their own efforts*. This provided the untouchables a conducive position to form their own association and frame their policies and programmes without the support of others.

The study is divided into two important phase. The first phase starts with the period 1891 and ends in 1916. This phase is dealt with both Chapters I and II. The second phase starts from 1916 and ends with 1928. In fact this was the period of Labour department having an impact on the untouchables. The Adi Dravidas inclined to influence the Labour Department for getting more benefits. For the above purpose, they utilized their new association called in new term *Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha*. This was also the period of communal representation in Madras presidency. Therefore, the sabha on the one hand inclined to sustain the activities of Labour department for the welfare of the Adi Dravidars, and sought to have representation in the government institutions in the era of non-Brahman caste Hindus rule on the other. This phase is dealt with chapter III.

This study proposed to have the following chapters.

1. Debate on caste classification.
2. Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha –a case study.
3. Proceedings and Achievements of the sabha.

Debate on the caste classification:

This section elaborately deals with the question of pariahs (this name used to denote the Adi Dravidars and some extent the untouchables of the Madras presidency.) The phase starts with the British observation on the pariahs in 1891. The report submitted by the British collector Mr. Tremenheere, on the condition of the pariahs of Chingleput –“Note on the pariahs of Chingleput”- extensively dealt with the question. Then the Madras Missionary Conference’s Memorandum, on the Pariahs of Madras Presidency, occupies the second important observation on the pariahs. These observations created a widespread debate on the pariahs and their deplorable condition in 1891. Thirdly, questions (on 25 June and 7 July 1891) were raised on the pariahs of Chingleput by the Liberal MP, Mr. Samuel Smith in the British House of Commons of London. Those questions not only attracted the British officials of India but also created a wider understanding on the issue of the pariahs in London. Consequently, the public press both in India and in London (*London Times*) took up the question. Fourthly, the issue of pariahs also attracted the Non-Brahmin social reformers of India, who extensively dealt the issue through their press (*Madras Mail*).

The efforts made by the Brahmin social reformers towards the upliftment of the untouchables discussed in this chapter. The views of Mr. Natesan for instance, give a broader understanding on the Depressed Classes of India in general and Madras presidency in particular. He published a collection of articles on the issue of the untouchables of the Madras Presidency in “Depressed classes of India-an Enquiry into their Condition and Suggestions for their uplift.” His work was based on the observations from the series of conferences that were held under the Depressed Classes Conference in 1911.

There was also the observation of the Theosophical society of Madras. A pamphlet was published by Col. Henry Olcott in 1902, entitled "The poor Pariahs." His work also dealt with the issue on the pariahs of Madras. It could be a repercussion of the report submitted by the government in 1891.

The well-known pariah Mr. Iyothee Dass, also work reflecting the social condition of the pariahs of the presidency. The above mentioned works referred the untouchables of the Madras presidency either as Pariahs or Depressed Classes. The work of Iyothee Dass on the contrary referred the untouchables of the presidency as *poorva thamilan* (indigenous Tamilian). However, he referred to the Pariahs as the indigenous Buddhists or the true followers of Buddhism. His journal named *oru paisa tamilan* (one paisa tamilian) castigated the Brahmanism in terms of the suppression of the lower castes and in terms of the suppression Buddhism in Madras presidency. This trend continued until 1916.

The year 1916 was indeed the remarkable achievement in the history of the untouchables of the Madras Presidency. The formation of the protector of depresses classes called Labour Department had its impact on the untouchables of the presidency. At the initial stage the sole purpose of the department was to effectively carry out the ameliorative measures for the welfare of the depressed classes.

Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha- a case study:

This chapter extensively deals with the era of communal representation and the rise of Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha. The first phase 1891-1916 indeed created a conducive atmosphere to the untouchables to form their own association in 1917. The emergence of the Sabha with the support of the Brahmin, non-Brahman and the British government has extensively dealt in this chapter. The non-Brahman rhetoric, which used the issue of the untouchables of the presidency until 1919, has also extensively dealt in this chapter. The issue of the pariah turned Adi Dravida became pervasive in the non-Brahman caste Hindu press. By looking at the public opinion, we can understand the extent of political consciousness that was prevalent among the Adi Dravidars and the non-Brahman castes Hindus.

At those times the Adi Dravidars used the political rhetoric similar to their supporters. In other words both the non-Brahmans and Adi Dravidars castigated the Brahman dominated Congress and its programmes such as Home Rule. However, after 1920 the political rhetoric of the Adi Dravida had remarkably changed. It was due to the gradual decline of the support given by the non-Brahman Justice party after it assumed power.

After the Adi Dravidars had witnessed the non-Brahman put obstacles in their path they proliferated their activities. Now the Adi Dravidars castigated the non-Brahman leaders and their activities, with the same term used by both of them to criticize the Congress. On the one hand, the Adi Dravidars have used the British support to keep themselves away from the perpetual caste prejudice, which was practiced by the caste Hindus, especially while framing policy for the upliftment of the untouchables. On the other hand, they used the Protector of Depressed Classes i.e. Labour Department to safeguard their interests in growing communal representations. The emergence of the Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha and its date of formation, membership, periodical conferences and its various branches in the Madras presidency were also major issues that has been dealt in this chapter.

Proceedings and Achievements of Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha:

This chapter had extensively used the proceedings that were passed by the Adi Dravidars under the constant support of the British. The British policy of divide and rule such as favouring Non-Brahmans against the Brahmans, however, was pervasive in dealing with the Adi Dravidars under the non-Brahman rule. The demands put forward by the Adi Dravidars and the response of the government, in a way, shows that the British might have supported the Adi Dravidars. The demands of the sabha especially on the representation in Legislative, Imperial, Municipal, District, and Taluk Boards were extensively dealt in this chapter. Apart from the above, the process of *Adi Dravidisation* of the untouchables of the Madras presidency is the prime concern of the chapter.

However, the Labour department created for the welfare of the Depressed Classes of the presidency became the *protector of the Adi Dravidars*. This issue had created widespread debate among the British officials. They argued that the term Depressed Classes cannot be restricted with a single untouchable group (i.e. Adi Dravidars) of the presidency, on the contrary, there were number of other groups whose condition was so vulnerable than the Adi Dravidas.

The resolutions passed by the Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha also emphasized the British to bifurcate the department, and appoint special I.C.S.officer to look after the interest of the Adi Dravidars. The Labour department, on the contrary, was not only formed to safeguard the interest of the Depressed Classes but also to the welfare of the Backward Classes. The intention of the Sabha was to have a separate department for the Adi Dravidars themselves.

Finally, the resolutions frequently passed by the Sabha also created a misunderstanding among the other untouchable group of the presidency. The *Chakkiliyars* and *Pallars* who were the other major groups of the presidency also started their own associations in the 1920s. They also changed, unlike the Adi Dravida, their derogatory name into *Arundhatiyas* and *Devendra Kula Vellalar* respectively. However, they could not accomplish whatever the Adi Dravidars could under the British. We cannot find extensive works of those associations within the scope of the study. Further study would give us knowledge on the extent and the achievements of the newly formed associations.

SOURCES:

Finally, I would like to list the sources that are pivotal for the study.

- i) Government unpublished and published Records from the Tamil Nadu State Archives collection.
- ii) Legislative proceedings on the Depressed Classes and Adi Dravidars of the Madras presidency.
- iii) Proceedings of the Adi Dravida Mahjana Sabha especially 1920, 1921, 1923 and 1924.
- iv) Proceedings of various government departments such as Public, Revenue, Law (general) and Law (legislative).
- v) Native News Paper Reports of Madras Presidency.
- vi) Proceedings of Madras Legislative Council Debates.
- vii) Proceedings of Madras Legislative Assembly.
- viii) Leading News papers such as Madras Mail and the Hindu.

CHAPTER – I

Debate on Caste Classification

CHAPTER I

DEBATE ON CASTE CLASSIFICATION.

This chapter would deal with the process that how the colonial officials, Christian missionaries, social reformers, political reformers and finally the untouchables themselves perceived the untouchables of the Madras Presidency. This process would enable us to understand the gradual emergence of the untouchables from the condition of bonded labourers to the political group in the era of communal representation.

Since my study deals with colonial period, the nomenclatures, used at that time are the primary importance of the study. The caste system prevailed much before the advent of the British. However, the issue on the caste classification became pervasive during the colonial intervention on the Indian society. The census as a process took place from the late 19th century. The British were inclined to study the Indian society for their administrative purpose. It also ensured the revenue income to the British. The Indian society which was already segregated because of caste could facilitate the colonial officials in their objectives. Once the colonial officials invited some suggestions from the Indians on the census enumeration, the debate on the precedence of caste became pervasive.

As far as the untouchables of the Madras presidency were concerned, the British enumerated them under a single category called Depressed Classes. This practice was prevalent from 1900. Until that time, the untouchables of the presidency were called with a derogatory term such as Pariah and Panchama. Nevertheless, those names carried association of low social status. The burning desire to change the derogatory names became pervasive during the late 19th century.

General notion on the term “pariah”¹:

The pariahs were the dominant untouchable group of the presidency. The colonial officials and the Christian Missionaries extensively studied them. In course of time, the supporters of the untouchables multiplied. Apart from the census process, the untouchables were called by Indian society with different names. The pariahs were very well known to all as agricultural labourers. Majority of them were in wretched condition. They were dominant in the Northern part of the presidency. The colonial contact with this lower caste had created a new knowledge among the untouchables themselves. The British documents that intended to have knowledge on the agricultural labourers as well as menial servants, in a way, produced lot of documents on the lower castes of the presidency. It would be pertinent to know the early colonial writings on the lower castes especially on the pariahs. The British perception on the pariahs however, was not authentic, it created broader category to define all the lower castes of the presidency.

In fact the term pariahs as far as the colonial perception was concerned, was composed of several untouchable groups in the presidency. The presidency was composed of four linguistic groups, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam. The colonial officials used general term, for their various official purposes. The general term Pariah included the Parayar, Pallar, Chakkiliyars, Malas, Madigas, Cheruman, Holey and Semman etc.

Once the pariahs were educated by the missionaries they were in a position to understand the colonial records in a rather different way. The new debate, which became dominant under the colonial rule, was on the proper definition of the untouchables of the presidency. The suggestion made by them to the British indicated that they were the only group in the presidency, because the term *parayar* itself denotes those who were drumming the instrument called *parai*. On

¹ The word pariah is not a polite one to refer this caste in today's Tamil Nadu, however during 1890s at least up to 1917; the term was used extensively in public. My intention is to show how the caste name referred in my primary sources and in the public press.

the one hand, it indicated their traditional occupation and on the other hand, their low social status.

In the above paras, we have discussed the general notion on the castes of the presidency; it would be pertinent to know the colonial encounter on the untouchables of the presidency from 1880s. The British 'sedentarisation'² process during 1880s and 1890s had already dealt in detail in the review of literature; however, it would be pertinent to have a broader understanding on the point before we start the 1890s. Irschick, also argued that the *Parayars* in 1880-1890s were widely studied both by the British and Indian scholars. The British considered the Parayars as a separate entity in constructing their grand historical project. Whether they were inclined to 'empower' the parayar, or not, Irschick argues, is yet to be answered. He argues, that before 1890s the *parayars* known as slaves, they were, in a way, emancipated by the British in a historical sense. In other words, the British used to refer the term 'slaves' as '*Parayars*' in the documents alone.

The British referred the parayars again in a new term called "original inhabitants." This justified the British that they are emancipating "original inhabitants" who were not the slaves. British officials as they dealt with Chingleput (northern district of Madras, it was also once under the *Tondaimandalam* region) as a region with less rainfall 'sedentarised' the parayars as the original inhabitants of the *Tondaimandalam*. The British preoccupation with Tondaimandalam region, in a way, convinced the Parayars to believe Chingleput as a state. Moreover, the notion also created that Parayars of Chingleput were the highly exploited lower caste group from the time immemorial.

The parayars, thus, involved with the British (and vice versa) in a grand project of writing history. However, "the parayar voice, however low in status,

² According to Irschick, there were two groups of people among government officials. One group or School focused much about the issue of the pariahs for emancipating them. But their "emancipation" was not carried out in real sense. Whereas the second school which comprised of government officials, journalists, missionaries, and others, argued against the government approach of Pariahs and inclined to have a real emancipation. The second school also gave different interpretation to the term "Slavery," and took effort to "emancipate." The "sedentarisation" as a process was taken place "in which the parayars, even though they were the poorest, became constructed as the most loyal and the most sedentary of anybody in the entire population." Eugene F. Irschick, *Dialogue and History-Constructing South India 1795-1895*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1994, p.157.

played an important heteroglot function in creating meaning and participating in important historical tasks.”³ This phenomenon, that referring parayar in historical evidences, became pervasive among the intellectuals of the community. They began to narrate themselves with the *early* Tamil Literature and Poets such as Thiruvalluvar, Kapilar, and Nandanar, and poetess like Avvaiyar. Consequently, these sources used to authenticate themselves as the original inhabitants who were once occupied a respectable position and deserved special treatment.

Though the special treatment through Communal representation is a phenomena of 1920s, the historical recognition to the parayar given by the British in 1880s and 1890s, in a way, was a source of inspiration to refer the paraya as historically recognized, but much exploited community in the age of communal representation. Irshcik argues that the grand project of writing history by both the British and Indian scholars were, however, not intended to the structural change or emancipate the parayars, rather to know the sufferings of the Parayars both in the past and present in which they would be mentioned as originals inhabitants of south India.

Manual of Madras Administration:

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The detail and condition of the Pariahs can be drawn from the *Manual of Madras Administration*⁴ (first Published in 1885) which extensively studied the condition of the pariahs. These documents were also extensively used to understand the basic features of every caste.⁵ They were very keen in recording the basic information as well as the distinctive feature of every caste. Their entry on pariahs also dealt with the pariahs and their position in Hindu social system.

In course of time, the Pariahs became an important 'race.' Most of them began to believe themselves to be the original inhabitants or real proprietors of the soil (the Tamil speaking region. To quote the manual "the pariahs of Tamil countries believe that they were once the most important race. Those of

³ Ibid., p.183.

⁴ *Manual of Madras Administration*, Vol.No.67, Madras, 1885.

⁵ The importance of Manual and Gazetteer widely discussed in B.S.Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2003.

Tondaimandalam in South Arcot consider themselves the real proprietor of the soil. The *Comaty* shopkeepers of Madras before conducting marriage send an offering of Betel to the Chucklers or shoe makers.”⁶

The notion that pariahs were real proprietors of the soil is common phenomena, which they widely used. However, the manual gives illustrations that *Comaties* invited the *Chucklers* for their marriage. The word Pariah generally associated with those who were involved in beating drum (*Parai*) and announced the public about the important message to the villagers. The Chucklers who were generally involved in leather works are also regarded as Pariahs. The colonial scholars use similar views that the Pariahs mean those who were regarded by the caste Hindus as outcastes.

The manual also refers that the pariahs were not the only category that suffered under the social scale; rather there were ten castes, which constituted the lowest echelon of the social system. However, they did not mention specifically which were these ten castes. To quote the manual “the Pariahs are not even the lowest of the aboriginal races. In the Tamil country there are ten castes that are lower in the social scale than the Pariah, and from these are excluded the *pullar* who dispute precedence with the Pariah”.⁷

It is also apparent from the manual that the Pariahs have numerous sub divisions, and are different in appearance from the *chucklers*. And to quote the Manuals. “They (pariahs) constitute indeed a well-defined distinct ancient race, independent of all others, and which has its own sub-divisions, its own peculiar usages, its own tradition and its own jealousy of the encroachments of the castes which are above it and below it...Pariahs are wholly different in appearance from the leather-working race, the *chucklers* of *Madigas*.”

The manual also gives an account on the position of pariahs in Right and left hand caste dispute. They were generally against the *pullar*. To quote the manuals “There is a proverb that “the pariahs are not left-hand (*idangai*), they are

⁶ Madras Manual, op. cit. 1885.

⁷ Ibid.

tamulians. The mark for their signature is a staff, while that of the *chuckler* is a knife. They are the principle supporters of the Right –hand caste (*Valangai*) in the periodical dispute between the two hands (*idangai*) in which they always range themselves against the pullar”⁸

Manual of North Arcot District:

We discussed about the relationship between Pariahs and Pullar and to some extent the *Chucklers*. It can be pertinent to know about the chucklers from the government records. A *manual of the North Arcot District*⁹, was compiled by the then Associate collector, and Magistrate of North Arcot district Arthur F Cox and was Published in 1881. While giving information about the *Chakili* or *Madigas* of Telugu it refers to the relationship between the other untouchables of the region. It indicates the occupation of *Chakkili* as leatherwork. To quote the manual “the Occupation of this caste is leatherworking, in which they had the monopoly until the Mohammedans and *Lobbays* appeared upon the scene. Whether they or Pariahs are the lowest is a subject of dispute between the two classes, but by others they are considered as about equally low.”¹⁰ It also refers to the division between the untouchables on linguistic basis. To quote again the manual, “the caste is divided into Telugus and Tamilians, but originally the language common to all seems to have been Telugu, while that of the pariahs was Tamil”¹¹

Memorandum of Madras Missionary Conference:¹²

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Arthur F.Cox, *Manual of North Arcot District in Madras Presidency*, Madras, 1881.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² The Madras missionary conference held in Madras to expose the pathetic condition of the pariahs and other lower castes of the presidency. They have conducted conference for the same purpose frequently. This memorandum in question submitted by Mr. J.Colville Peattie the secretary of the Conference to the Governor of Fort saint George, Madras, on 26 May 1891. In fact the above memorandum reproduced by the government when the issue on the pariahs became pervasive in 1891. Mr. Tremenhære, the collector of Chingleput of Madras presidency submitted the report on the pariahs of Chingleput in 1891. To scrutinize the above report the government had to collect all the records pertaining to the condition of the pariahs of Madras presidency. Ultimately they have

The missionaries were the pioneer to help the lower castes of the Madras Presidency. Society was divided into the caste groups as higher and lower and the untouchables treated like the slaves. They could not get even the basic rights, which was accessible to the higher castes. The pariahs were not allowed into the Hindu temples because they would pollute the religious places. When the Christian missionaries came to Madras presidency, they saw the worst conditions that the untouchables were undergoing. They soon invited many lower caste groups to convert and have basic rights such as education and worship.

They used to bring government attention to the sufferings of the untouchables. They made serious efforts to protect the rights of the lower castes because a majority of them who suffered under the tyranny of caste prejudice could also become the Christian converts. After having prolonged caste prejudice the untouchables also responded to the activities of the Christian missionaries with enthusiasm.

The Madras Missionary conference¹³ held in Madras on 26 May 1891 did remarkable service for the upliftment of the pariahs. They were the pioneers in taking up the issue of the pariahs of Madras. They submitted their memorandum to the Governor of Madras to take the remedial measures to save the pariahs from the poor socio-economic and educational condition. As the missionaries were active in Madras presidency, they argued that they “are acquainted with the condition of the *Pariahs* and other low castes and are deeply interested in their welfare.”¹⁴

Major issues of the Missionary conference:

The memorialists of the Madras Missionary Conference argued that the pariahs were more important than the aborigine tribes of the Madras presidency.

also passed a Government Order (hereafter G.O) NO. 1010-1010A Revenue dated 30-09-1892. This G.O however, will be discussed later.

¹³ However, there were number of other Christian missionaries actively involved in the upliftment of the untouchables. I have taken the memorandum of Madras Missionary conference as an illustration. The government consideration on the above memorandum in 1891 is also worth mentioning for the starting of this study.

¹⁴ Ibid.

The memorialists of the Madras missionary conference argued that the condition of the pariahs still worst in the following condition;¹⁵

A) In spite of the government effort to abolish slavery, many *pariahs* are living in practical slavery.

B) Majority of the pariahs cannot find sufficient employment and on this account suffer greatly from want of food. During the failure of rainfall, a large section of the *Pariahs* does not obtain necessary and proper food.

C) They also suffer under the caste prejudice practiced by the higher caste people. The higher caste people do not pay the right wages to the pariahs and compel them to sign documents giving their consent to unjust demands, the real nature of which the pariahs do not know because they cannot read.

D) The education facilities which they were supposed to get on par with the other caste people are systematically opposed by the *mirasidars*.

E) Finally, the pariahs were not in a position to assert their right rather, they were suffering from the caste prejudice under the higher castes.

Suggestion to the Government:

Given the above situation of the pariahs, the memorialists argued for the proper consideration to their upliftment. They also argued, that the pariahs are in “need of more protection from injustice than they now enjoy. That the illegal practice of agrestic slavery by means of written documents should be summarily dealt with and that everywhere in villages they should possess house-sites in their own right.”¹⁶

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

The memorialists also conceived that if the above suggestion was carried out i.e. the allotment of the land to the pariahs ensured, it would enable them “to gain something like independence and a firm social footing, this section having becoming better and stronger than the rest will be able to help the weak and the poor and also be a financial gain to Government and create an increased demand for labour, so that a large proportion of pariahs who are now unemployed should be able to find work to do.”¹⁷

Another notable suggestion that the conference made was to determine the exact condition of the pariahs by appointing a commission. This process was believed by the memorialists as very important as it would “recommend to the consideration of Government certain measures for the amelioration of the condition of Pariahs.”

Colonial Report on the Pariahs:

Tremenheere the collector of Chingleput, Madras presidency, submitted an official report entitled “the pariahs of Chingleput” to the government in 1891. In view of the above report the government passed an Order in 1892.¹⁸ This report intended to know the basic as well as prerequisite information on the district. He had to write a report on the condition of the soil and the people because “Chingleput owing to its infertile soil and to certain accidents of tenure, was among the most backward parts of the Madras Presidency”¹⁹

Important issues:

The major issues that occupied importance were as follow:

- i) Pariahs position in Hindu social system and their segregation from the main village.
- ii) Their deplorable condition in 1888 and 1889. That they were leading a life in ‘hand-to-mouth’ and mostly ill-clothed”

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ G.O.No.1010-1010 A Revenue, dated, 30-9-1892.

¹⁹ Ibid.

iii) The continuous exploitation meted out by the mirasidars to Pariahs. The injustice done to the pariahs by the mirasidars were of several kinds such as claiming the right over pariah's settlement by producing necessary documents, treating the pariahs as slaves (*padiyal* in vernacular term).

Recommendation of the Report:

The report emphasized the government to provide free home for the pariahs. It also suggested sending a Madras officer to be in charge of definite settlement of the pariahs in upper Burma and Natal (South Africa). They were gradually migrating to these regions in large numbers and suffering in the alien land without any support. It recommended opening a separate school for pariahs whose literacy rate was unequal to their proportion in villages. The report extensively dealt with the educational development of the pariahs. The following were the points that they suggested to the government:

- a) "To increase the number of special pariah day and night schools so that every large *paracheri* (Paraya settlement) shall have one
- b) To abandon the result grant system and pay salaries in these special schools
- c) That provisional administration, which alone can stand the financial strain, and which can maintain a sympathetic policy in favor of the low-castes much more consistently than the local Boards, should assume the control of the special Pariah school."²⁰

Pariahs of other Districts of the Presidency; a Process of Generalization.

The report goes on to argue that the pariah as an agricultural laborer in general as bonded laborer in particular was suffering much before the arrival of the British. It gives number of incidents that related to the pathetic condition of the pariahs, as bonded laborers. Apart from giving the information on bonded laborers of the Chingleput region, it also deals with other districts of the presidency. The term Pariah, which used to denote the untouchables of Chingleput, began to be

²⁰ Ibid., p.32.

used as trademark to call the untouchables of other regions, such as South Canara, Travancore, Tinnevely, Godavary, Malabar and Tanjore.

The pariahs of **South Canara** brought into the government document and entered as bonded laborers of the region. Though the word *Mula mahars* entered in bracket, it is only in the case of South Canara that we could see the term Mula Mahar whereas other districts entered in a general term called *pariahs*. Mr. V.Ramiengar, C.S.I., observed that the pariahs of the south canara “still lingering in the interior of the Districts.....the contracts are between landlords and the pariahs attached to their estates and bind the latter and their families to serve on ht estates during their lives for certain specified low wages..... The pariahs are the descendants of the serfs who used to be bought and sold with the estates in former times, and are still ignorant and dependant to know or assert their rights.”²¹

The condition of the pariahs of **Travancore** was rather different from other region. The endeavor taken by Mr. Ramiengar, Dewan of Travancore circulated to the officials to facilitate the pariahs to access their rights. By the above effort of the government, the pariahs of Travancore could get “the freedom to walk along the roads of streets and to enter public offices for transacting their business, without being molested.”²²

The British observed the condition of the pariahs’ in **Tinnevely**. In this region the pariahs in fact suffered under lifetime slavery. It indicates that the nature of the slavery was divergent from region to region. However, the sufferers were the pariahs. The report clearly quote as, “In Tinnevely, two pariahs borrowed Rs.10 and 11 respectively, & bound themselves, in consideration of the principal and interest, to perform all kinds of work during their lifetime at a reduced rate of wages in the cultivation of their creditor’s land.”²³

The situation in **Godavari** district (modern Andhra Pradesh) was also similar. The pariahs in that district also tended to serve to their moneylenders or

²¹ G.O.No.1010-1010 A, op. cit.

²² Ibid, p.20

²³ Ibid.,p.21.

mirasidars. The nature of slavery was again different in this region. The slavery existed not only with the matured men but also with their sons. The report aptly quotes as “pariahs borrowed money from certain *rayats* and bound themselves and their sons to serve as agricultural laborers for indefinite periods.”²⁴

It also important to draw the attention in **Malabar** which had slavery both for lifetime and that would continue when their children became ‘able to work’. To quote the report, “The translation of one of these documents runs as follows:

“Whereas we have to-day received from you an advance of Rs. 100, we have agreed to work for you till the minors attain their majority, receiving a daily wage of two measures of paddy for maintaining ourselves and our children. We further agree that we, with our children when they are able to work, will serve for 36 years.”²⁵

The point which has to emphasize from the above documents is that those who served as bonded laborers in different districts of the Madras Presidency, more or less underwent a uniform condition of exploitation. In addition, they entered in government records generally as pariahs. The whole report thus explored the condition of pariahs of Madras presidency in general, Chingleput in particular.

This process also indicates that *how the term pariah which was a name of an untouchables caste of Chingleput region (north part of Madras presidency), gradually generalized to the other districts of the presidency. In other words, this also indicates that the British employing a single category to denote all the groups of the presidency.*

Pariah’s Issue in London:

According to Irschick, the parayas, their condition and right to acquire land were an outcome of the ‘grand project,’ in which the question raised by Mr. Samuel Smith, Liberal MP and friend of Dadabhai Naoroji, was very important. However, he goes on to argue that the question posed by Mr. Smith was not

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

intended to have emancipation of the pariahs. The question raised by Mr. Smith on the contrary, shows that the issue of the pariahs was seriously dealt with in the parliament. Because of the questions in House of Common, the Government of Madras, were forced to respond and take necessary action for the above issue. Perhaps, he was the first member to argue for the welfare of the pariahs in the House in the early 1890s.

Mr. Smith wanted to know about the condition of the pariahs of Chingleput because the region was just affected by the famine. He came to know the condition of the pariahs which was “appreciably lower than usual, a large proportion of them are always badly nourished, clad (if at all) in the vilest of rags.”²⁶ He asked whether the government of India is taking any steps in the matter. The House could not give proper answer for the question, because by that time they did not receive anything regarding the issue from the government of Madras.

The second question that raised by the same member on 7 July 1891 in the House is also worth mentioning. This time he had asked very specifically about the pariahs of the Chingleput district. The questions pertaining to the following was important:

- i) Attention of the government on the distress among the pariahs,
- ii) The required information regarding the amount of that distress,
- iii) Measure adopted if any by the government to ameliorated the condition of the pariahs during the famine,
- iv) The government stands on the pariahs issue or its proposal to appoint any commission to inquire into the distress.
- v) And finally, he wanted to know the right to low castes in acquiring land for cultivation.

In reply, the authority told that the attention of the Madras government had already been drawn to the issue. The officials also assured that they were eventually about to conduct a statistical survey in each districts of Madras presidency. Though the government did not take any measures for the improvement of the Chingleput, they argued, “Extensive measures have been

²⁶ House of Common Question dated 25 June 1891. as quoted in G.O.No.1010-1010 A, op cit.

undertaken and are being carried on for the relief of distress caused by the recent failure of rain.”²⁷ As far as the pariahs were concerned, the official’s view on the right to own the land was a remarkable achievement. The officials clearly indicated, “There is no bar, either of law or of practice, to low-caste people obtaining and cultivating available wastelands on the same term as high-caste people.”²⁸

Colonial Response to the 1891 Report:

Now it would be appropriate to discuss the very response of the Government on the Report of 1891. It is evident that the trend changed to a considerable extent in the longer run. The government observed the report carefully and came to the following conclusions:

A) The pariah question had gained widespread currency among the public notably in India and London. The issue of the pariahs was extensively dealt in an article published in *London Times* in 13 July 1891. A conference was also convened on behalf of the pariahs and a Memorandum submitted by the Madras Missionary Conference on 26 May 1891. Thirdly, issue became apparent in the House of Common, London.²⁹

B) The condition of the pariahs ...is greatly exaggerated

a) That the material condition of the pariahs was not that much pathetic

b) The *mirasi* system, which extensively dealt by Tremeneere, was not entirely exploitative in nature

C) The Government conceded, that giving the right to own waste land to the pariahs would not be an advantage to the government

D) The missionary conference view on the pariah population was a “misstatement,”

E) The question of the educational improvement of Pariahs would be considered by the Department of Public Instruction.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ G.O.No.1010.op. cit, p. 26.

F) Finally, the government stated that the condition of Pariahs was “much better” and the Government cannot favour a particular class by neglecting all “the tax payers.”³⁰ It is evident from the G.O that pariahs were not the only lower caste of the presidency rather there were 14 lower castes who were suffering much than the pariahs and they could not be included under a single term called Pariah.

Pariahs Question in Madras during 1890s:

The debate both in Indian and London Press (*London Times* for instance) the pariah question could have given a new outlook to the pariahs issue. The native newspapers also were very keen to discuss the suffering of pariahs. *Madras Mail* for instance, played a pivotal role, in extensively as well as frequently publishing on pariahs issues. In fact, some non-Brahmans philanthropists were the guiding spirit in helping the pariahs who by their frequent publication in the editorial of *Madras Mail* deeply analyzed the problems of pariahs. Their contribution thus channelized idea of the British officials in ameliorating the pariah’s condition.

Madras Mahajana Sabha:

According to Bimanbehari Majumdar, The Mahajana Sabha was found in 1881, and “continued to be a long time the standing congress Committee which elected delegates from the Madras Presidency for the Indian National Congress.”³¹

The non-Brahman social reformers as already mentioned criticized the misstatement of the Brahmans and the supporters of the Congress, Mr. C.P.Srehurry Naidu of Non-Brahman party, for instance, vehemently criticized the misstatement of Mr. Peter Paul Pillay who had spoke in *Madras Mahajana Sabha* conference which held on 16 April 1892, Mr. Paul Peter Pillay, according to Sreehurry Naidu, had given, a misstatement, on the pariah’s issue. Naidu opposed the view of Pillay. Mr. Paul Peter Pillay of Congress reported to made the following statement that “there was no grievance in the lot of the pariah, and that they were a happy and contented people. and that the agitation of the missionaries

³⁰ G.O.No.1010-1010 A, Revenue, October 1892.

³¹ Bimanbehari Majumdar, *Indian Political Associations and Reform of Legislation, 1818-1917*, Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1965, p.168.

was quite uncalled for.”³² Several missionaries who were attracted with problems of the pariahs felt that “the pariahs are greatly neglected and that their intellectual and social status ought to be raised.”³³

Mr. Sreehurry Naidu also perceived this issue in political angle. According to Naidu as Mr. Peter Paul Pillay made this speech in *Madras Mahajana Sabha* there was a greater possibility for such misstatement. He argued that “Mr. Pillay is one of the staunchest Congress wallahs it is no wonder, as all the delegates have not shared the opinions of Mr. Pillay.”³⁴ Mr. Naidu argued that “as public opinion very strongly recommends the amelioration of the lot of the pariahs, better days are sure to dawn upon them.”³⁵

According to a writer under a pseudonym – “one interested in Missionary Labour,” appreciated statement that was raised (against Mr. Pillay) by Naidu with eagerness. He observed that “it is indeed a hopeful sign of the time that Hindu gentleman like Mr. Naidu take such great interest in the poor and out caste.”³⁶ He also explained his experience in Tinnevelly where he happened to see an “orthodox Brahman’s attitude when a pariah came on his way.”³⁷

The above articles might have created a debate among the educated intelligentsia, on the condition of pariahs. Thus, during the early 1890s the pariahs issue gaining currency in the public. Many new friends were steadily coming out to give support to the parayars. A correspondent to *Madras Mail* in his article entitled “The Pariah’s new friends” appreciated the remarkable move that was taken by the missionary and *Madras Mail*. He argued that “It is surprising what widespread interest in the lot of the pariah has been evoked since the start made by the *Madras Missionary conference* and the *Madras Mail*.”³⁸

³² *Madras Mail*, 22 April, 1892.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Madras Mail*, 30 April, 1892.

New Friend to the Pariahs:

Apart from the above two new friends, the correspondent argued, a third sort of friend also take the issue of the pariahs. The *Madras Mahajana Sabha* being the third friend conducted a conference in Madras. His point of view would be that the third new friend also emerged in discussing and uplifting the pariahs, to quote his statement “the *Madras Mahajana Sabha*, in its recent conference, had now, perhaps rather late in the day, viewed the subject in decidedly sympathetic light. On the first day of the conference, Saturday, April 16 1892 the “pariah problem” occupied no small share of discussion and produced an uncommonly vigorous debate.”³⁹

Issues of the Madras Mahajana Sabha Conference:

The new third friend i.e. *Madras Mahajana Sabha* had indeed given a place to the pariahs. It invited delegates from a leading pariahs association called ‘Dravida Maha Jana Sabha.’ The conference invited Pandit C. Iyothi Das (editor of *Tamilan* and a well-known pariah scholar) and two other outcaste members. According to Kamalanathan,⁴⁰ “the resolutions brought by the dalit members were accepted by the (Madras Mahajana Sabha) Hindu members and was passed in the conference. The demands were ‘request the government to establish schools for the children of dalits in every village. Assignment of *poromboke* (waste) lands to dalits wherever land is available.’ These resolutions were moved by Raja Sir Savali Ramaswamy Mudaliar and seconded by Ellore Sankaran Iyer. Second supporter for the resolutions was Pandit C.Iyothi Dass of Dravida Mahajan Sabha.”⁴¹

It is very remarkable incident was that the pariahs were invited to Madras Mahajana Sabha conference. The correspondent to *Madras Mail*⁴² also argues, “An Ootacmund delegate (probably pandit Iyothee Dass) asked for education for the pariahs, and generally more kind and reciprocal treatment of them.”⁴³

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Kamalanathan T.P, *Mr. K. Veeramani, M.A.B.L.is Refuted and the Historical Facts about the Scheduled Cates struggle for Emancipation in south India*, Ambedkar Self Respect Movement, Tiruppathur, 1985, p.45.

⁴¹ Pandit C.Iyothe Das reproduced the incident, in *Tamilan*, 22 September, 1909.

⁴² *Madras Mail*, 30 April 1892.

⁴³ Ibid.

The issue, put forward by the delegate to give 'admission into the temples' for the pariahs, was opposed by a Brahmin from Tanjore. To quote the correspondent "This request (admission into temples) brought up a Brahman from Tanjore, who, the *Hindu*, inform us, spoke vehemently against the demand for religious worship on behalf of the pariahs, which question he would leave to time and circumstances to solve."⁴⁴ He further argued that "He repelled the change of cruelty to the pariahs laid at the door of the Brahmans and higher classes generally, and said so far as his district was concerned, the change (that allowing pariahs into temple) was untenable."⁴⁵ The attitude of a Tanjore Brahman shows that there was a greater possibility for the pariahs to get education, kind and reciprocal treatment, however, the issue on admission of pariahs into the temple was seen with skepticism in 1890s.

The government's approach towards the pariahs question was also frequently published in *Madras Mail*. They wanted to ensure that the government looks into the pariahs issue and frame the policy accordingly. The correspondent of *Madras Mail*, published an article entitled "government and the pariahs," in which he published the question that was raised by Mr. Buchanan in House of commons, on the rising awareness or publicity of pariahs (through public press missionaries and Mr. Tremeneere's report on Pariahs of Chingleput) and the extent to which the Madras government committed to uplift the pariahs. He asked to Mr. Curzon (the British higher authority of the Government of Madras) who replied that though he could not get the reply to Mr. Tremeneere's report, "both the secretary of state and the government of Madras are anxious to do all that is practicable to improve the condition of the pariahs."⁴⁶

Pariah Mahajana Saba 1891:

The Pariahs found their own caste association in 1891. The association was named as Pariah Mahajana Sabha. The Sabha was keenly interested in appealing

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ *Madras Mail*, 6 June 1892.

for their demands to the British Government. Consequently, they could get considerable welfare to the members and their whole community. The association's name pariah meant for all the people belonging to Pariah community. The government, in a way, considered that the word *pariah* meant all the lower classes of the Presidency. However, the officials in longer run began to distinguish the pariahs from other lower castes of the presidency.

The pariahs could form their own association because of the following reasons

- i) Missionary conference could represent the pariahs by their proceedings
- ii) The government also keen to know much about the lower classes of the Madras presidency. Though it started its full-scale enquiry on the Pariahs of Chingleput on 1891, there were *Manuals* and *Gazetteers* that dealt much about the caste categories of the presidency. The result was that the lower castes such as pariahs could create a widespread discourse among the government officials. When the association called Pariah Mahajana Sabha was founded in 1891, the philanthropists as well as Government supported it.
- iii) The associations of various kinds such as Madras Mahajana Sabha could give the space to pariahs for articulating their suffering to the government.

The Pariah Mahajana Sabha was very active in uplifting the community. They also gave their demands to the Government to take necessary measures to improve their condition. In 1896, for instance, the Secretary of the pariah Mahajana Sabha applied to the Government to give them permission to give a (welcome) address to Sir Arther Havelock. However, the permission denied, they were asked by the government to apply for the further requisition to the private secretary to the Governor.⁴⁷

Parayan-journal:

Apart from the formation of Paraya Mahajana Sabha they also published a journal to articulate their grievances to the public. "The journal called *Paraiyan* published articles on the sufferings of pariahs for 7 years from its inception, i.e., 1893. The journal started with Rs. 15 as an investment. The journal contained 4

⁴⁷ G.O.No.359, Public, dated 17 March 1896.

pages.”⁴⁸ R.Srinivasan was the editor of the journal *Paraiyan*. He was honoured as Rao Sahib in 20 February 1920.

It is evident from the gist of G.O Public (General) department that the editor of the journal *pariah* applied to the Fort Saint George Madras to supply them the *Gazetteer* Published by the government. However, they were not supplied the *Gazetteer* as the officials felt that was unnecessary. To quote the gist of the G.O. “The Editor of the “*Pariah*” informed that the Govt is unable to accede to his request for the gratuitous supply of the Fort St. George *Gazetteer*.”⁴⁹

In 1896, the editor of the journal *Paraiyan* was summoned to hand over the money collected by him. It also refers that the editor started “*pariah National Press Lottery*” by collecting money from the pariahs. The purpose of the lottery however cannot be understood, as we do not have the primary sources. To quote the gist of a G.O,⁵⁰ “*Pariah National Press Lottery- The Editor of the “Parayan” directed to handover to the police the money collected by him in connection with the “pariah National Press Lottery” for being refunded to the ticket-holders.*”

Poorva Thamizhan; a New Trend

Until the end of 19th century, the term *pariah* was extensively used by both the pariahs’ and non-pariahs. This trend continued until the second decade of the 20th century. However, the term, which was employed by the untouchables, changed with new religious affinity. The usage of the new term was restricted with the journal *Tamilan*.⁵¹ The new term *Poorva thamizhan* used to denote that they were distinct from the Hindu religion. The author clearly distinguished that the

⁴⁸ D. Pichandi, Dewan *Bahadur R. Srinivasan-A study*, unpublished dissertation, University of Madras, Madras.

⁴⁹ G.o. No. 84 (Financial) Public, dated, 29 January 1895.

⁵⁰ G.O.No. 21848, (Judicial) Public, dated 21 November 1896.

⁵¹ It is the first journal published by the Pariah intellectual of Madras presidency. It was edited by Pandit Iyotho Das. He was a native doctor. He castigated the Hinduism, unlike his contemporary i.e. Non-Brahman leaders. In a way, he used the narrative that was pervasive in Non-Brahman press.

pariahs were once the ardent supporters Buddhism. They were subjugated and tortured by the Aryan invaders who were inclined to impose Hinduism in south India. He published the journal from 1906 to 1917.

Iyothee Doss's journal *Tamilan* elaborately covered the socio-cultural and political condition of the Parayas between the first decades of the 20 the century to second. The journal dealt with religion, caste system, social, and political activities especially of British and Congress. He also referred to the pariahs as *Dravida Buddhists*. By using the term, he expected that the pariahs would not feel inferior to caste Hindus rather, feel proud to call themselves as an original inhabitant or sons of the soil.

Iyothee Dass in his journal *Tamilan* referred that how the dravida Buddhists were (i) named or grouped under Right hand in (*valangai*) and left (*idangai*) caste conflict

(ii) They were also called as Panchamas (those belong to fifth *Varna*) which was again humiliating. He refers in his *Tamilan* that in 1891 the (pariahs) applied to the Congress Committee that the pariahs are the indigenous Dravida so they cannot be called in the same derogatory name. He goes on to argue that the same group of pariahs while sending a representative to the *Madras Mahajana Sabha* (which convened in 1892), was also used to refer the term "indigenous Dravidian" instead of the derogatory terms such as Pariahs, Sambavas and Valangaiyars (Rightist).⁵²

The *Tamilan* gives the efforts made by the pariahs much before the formation of Pariah Mahajana Sabha itself, which was established in 1891. The *Tamilan* dated 15 September 1909 reproduces the demands put forward by the Dravida sabha in the year 1891 to the Congress Committee. The application that contained 10 demands was sent to the Congress Committee to "explain their (pariahs) condition to the Government along with other demand and also recommend the following demands."⁵³

⁵² *Tamilan*, dated 3 March 1909, as quoted by G.Aloysius. (p.138).

⁵³ G.Aloysius, op. cit, 1999, p.184-185.

The demands were as follow:

- 1) Those who are using the term pariahs with derogatory remark should be punished
- 2) Separate schools for the community can be started with teachers from the same community and the fee for the students can be reduced to half.
- 3) Three students who passed their matriculation exam from this community can be given scholarship.
- 4) Each qualified students can be given placement in government offices of Tamilnadu.
- 5) They can be given job based on their educational qualification and discipline.
- 6) A representative can be nominated in Municipal council and village council to articulate the demands on behalf of the community. The representative can be well chosen not on the basis of their payment of huge tax, rather on their education as well as discipline.
- 7) The jail code 464, which refers to the pariahs having to do menial (degradable) work in jail, should be abolished
- 8) They should be allowed to draw water from the public wells of Tamilnadu.
- 9) They can be allowed into the offices where British and Hindu officials work and they should also be given prompt judgments
- 10) A village official, munsif can be appointed from the pariah community and whenever the British official visit the village should listen to their grievances.

Theosophical society:

Henry S. Olcott (founder of Theosophical society of Madras) in his pamphlet entitled "the poor pariah" (1902), also, mentions Iyothee Dass. He refers that Iyothee Dass along with his community members represented their grievances and propounded that the pariah's ancestral religion is Buddhism. To quote Olcott's pamphlet "three years ago a committee of those (pariah) people, headed by one of their recognized leaders, Mr. Iyothee Doss, a Native Doctor of Madras, came to see

me. They represented that their race were the aborigines of this part of India.....they begged me to help revive Buddhism among them.”⁵⁴

In fact the pamphlet in question was published after seeing the government’s approach to the 1891 Report, and it recommended them to take necessary action to ameliorate the condition of the Pariahs. Mr.Olcott already started several schools especially for the pariahs; he further suggested giving more encouragement to the establishment of new pariah schools in Madras presidency. He goes on to argue that the pariahs who were dwelling in towns were well off, compared to their brethren in rural areas. In rural areas, the caste-system was pernicious. The pariahs settled near towns at least could get employment (generally a lower level) in government offices whereas the rural inhabitants have to serve their master like a slave. To quote the pamphlet, “the pariahs in and near the large towns are comparatively well off, as their Labour is in demand by foreign merchants, and by Europeans especially, as domestic servants, for which work they are admirably qualified; but in the rural districts they come under the iron yoke of the caste system and pass their lives in misery and degradation.”⁵⁵

Depressed Classes Conference:

The term Depressed Classes was in vogue in official documents from 1900. The government expected to have common term to denote all the suffering classes of India. From 1900, the government extensively used the term to denote all the untouchables and the backward classes of India. This phenomenon also attracted the social reformers of all the presidencies of India. The Depressed Classes Conference conducted in Madras emphasized much on the ameliorative measures for the Depressed Classes. The activities of the Depressed classes’ conference was compiled in a book “Depressed Classes of India-An inquiry into their conditions and suggestions for Uplift.”⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Henry S. Olcott, “The Poor Pariah,” in C.Paramarthalingam, *Religion and Social Reform in Tamil Nadu*, Madurai, 1997, p.131.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p.119.

⁵⁶ Rajendra Singh Vatsa, *The Depressed Classes of India- An Enquiry into their Conditions and Suggestions for their Uplift*, Gitanjali Prakashan, New Delhi, 1912.

Mr.G.A.Natesan being an active Brahman social reformer articulated the demands on upliftment of Depressed Classes. Many articles were published in *Indian Review* of 1911. G.A.Natesan was the editor of the journal. He delivered a presidential address, at the second session of the Depressed Classes Conference, held at Madras, on the 8th July 1911. While giving his observation on depressed classes he notes that the condition of pariahs was full of suffering. They had to suffer in so many ways; the highest degree was that they were not regarded even as a human being. To quote the Address, “No fair-minded man can contemplate for a moment the present condition of the depressed classes, without being forced to admit that it is absolutely monstrous that a class of human beings with bodies similar to our own, with brains that can think and with heart that can feel, should be perpetually condemned to a low life of utter wretchedness, servitude and mental and moral degradation, and that permanent barriers should be placed in their way that it should be impossible for them ever to overcome them and improve their lot.” The point also observed by the Hon. Mr. Gokhale as, “deeply revolting to our sense of justice.”⁵⁷

Mr. Natesan goes on to argue that the depressed classes were the backbone of agriculture and they were working day and night for the enrichment of the highest caste people but they were seen as untouchables. They were also not treated as human beings. To quote his Address, “Nearly 60 millions of people as a class gentle, docile, industrious, pathetically submissive, even at the present day continue to be regarded with “the utmost contempt and scorn.” Without them agriculture would be impossible, the economy of Indian life would be most seriously upset and anything like an organized revolt by them on Western lines will undoubtedly mean ruin to Indian society, and yet those people so useful, so serviceable, so indispensable, who toil day and night for the enriched and the aggrandizement of the classes above them, are regarded as untouchables. “We may touch a dog, we may touch any other animal, but the touch of these human beings is pollution.”⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Ibid., p.180.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p.181.

Natesan used the term Depressed classes to group all the 'untouchables' of the presidency. Though he has used the term pariah, it was only to refer the condition of Southern India. Thus, it can be presumed that the term depressed classes used to group the "lower classes of India. It also denotes that social reformers tended to refer all the lower classes of India under one common term "Depressed Classes."

Now his attention shift to Madras presidency where he refers the untouchables by both the term depressed classes and pariah. The sufferings of pariahs, which he explains were, related to the same degree of the untouchables of the other region, however, the social system in south India in general Madras presidency in particular much more precarious condition. This can be understood in terms of their assertion or movement which vehemently criticized the caste-system for giving majority of the working class people a degrading position in social echelon.

Natesan while referring the depressed classes of the presidency explain their pathetic conditions such as refusal of caste Hindus from giving access to the pariahs to common wells and their low wages, which continued for the last 50 years. To quote his view on Pariahs. "Speaking so far as southern India is concerned, the depressed classes-the pariahs as thy are called-still suffer from disabilities of a most serious kind. They cannot use the common well nor even the common tank in some paces. They toil hard and sweat under the sun the whole day, and they rightly complain, in these days of increased wages and prices, they get more or less the same wages, which they obtained 50 years ago. They are treated as if they have no right as labourers to claim what they consider as fair wages."⁵⁹

He appreciates the Christian missionaries who gave the pariahs a sense of self-respect. He dares to question the caste-ridden people or any Hindu with self-respect "who can object to their (pariahs) conversion as Christian when under the pale of his own society they are treated as undesirable."⁶⁰ While concluding his

⁵⁹ *ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*,p.182.

lecture he claims that the pariah or depressed classes would make progress provided the sympathy or patronage, “of various high class, high placed and influenceal Hindus who were advocating their cause in all parts India, various reform, movements and active organization grows large in numbers. He also asserts that the depressed classes would make their way towards progress if this patronage continued.”⁶¹

The term depressed class, which was widely used to refer the lower classes of India, was questioned by Iyothee Das, he was also expressing his unhappiness over the usage of the term. In *Tamilan*, dated 10th November 1909, he questioned the very term depressed classes, and he suspected that whether the term refers to the lower castes who are forced to be untouchables or those who are lower (but from all the castes) in economic terms.

It was a common phenomenon that the untouchables of the Madras presidency inclined to distinguish them from the other depressed classes. While the social reformers were keen to uplift all the suffering people of the presidency, the untouchables wanted to have special protection on the basis of their caste oppression.

Paraya to Adi Dravida; a New Phenomenon:

So far we have discussed that how the term employed by the British, missionary, and social reformers to denote and articulate the problem of the untouchables of the Madras presidency. We also discussed how the term was gradually changed especially by the untouchables (for example from paraya to Poorva Buddha kudigal). The term pariah also changed by the government when they considered having a common term to denote all the underprivileged groups of India. (For example, pariahs to depressed classes). But the trend had dramatically

⁶¹ Ibid.,p.186.

changed among the pariahs (Adi Dravidar). During the year 1917 the untouchables of the presidency inclined to change the term pariah because of its derogatory remark. This phenomenon, in a way, was a repercussion of growing communal representation in the Madras presidency.

The issue on the derogatory term had gradually emerged in the presidency right from 1917. It would be pertinent to put the “the Adi Dravida Question”⁶² precisely like this, that *the term Adi Dravida emerged in the non-Brahman press especially in 1917. The non-Brahman leaders, who inclined to have more representation and oppose the Brahmanic dominance, extensively employed the term panchama or Adi Dravida. Several meetings or conferences were convened to propagate the newly conceived term Adi Dravida. Those conferences were convened both by the able support of the non-Brahmans and Adi Dravidars themselves. The Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha became the representative of the whole south Indian depressed classes. The non-Brahman leaders on the one hand inclined to group all the non-Brahman communities of the presidency into a single term. On the other hand the Adi Dravidas to all depressed classes of South India.*

The **first appearance** of the term Adi Dravida was believed to emerge in 1917. Geetha and S.V Rajadurai argue that the term Adi Dravida was proposed by the members of Madras Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha in December 1917. The sabha (its Kolar branch) in its conference in December 1917, “proposed the government to henceforth refer to panchamas as Authee Dravida. The issue was also taken by Natesa Mudaliar and he referred that “the government should immediately re-classify the so called panchamars as adi dravida as was desired by “prominent and representative members of that community.”⁶³

⁶² Debate on the rise and the extent of the term Adi dravida is elaborated in the second chapter. I have taken much importance to the term in the chapter to have extensive knowledge on the Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha. Thus, in this chapter I would like to give only a few remarkable idea on the term and would like focus on the process that the Adi Dravidars taken to change the term through their proceedings to the government. This chapter also inclines to deal the period from 1890 to 1928. Chronologically speaking this may not be correct but this first chapter would like to give a long process that had taken place from 1891 to 1928.

⁶³ V. Geetha and S.V.Rajadurai, “Towards a non-Brahmin Millennium from Iyothee Thass to Periyar,” Samya, Calcutta, 1998, p.176.

Resolutions to change the derogatory term:

This section contains only the resolutions that was passed by the Adi Dravida members and sent to the government. I take up only those resolutions related to change the term *paraya* and *panchama* would be the only interest of the section.

The resolution passed by the Adi Dravida Mahajana Conference in 2 October 1920 in Nandanar Matam, of Chingleput district of Madras presidency, emphasized the government to change the term *panchama* and *paraya* into *Adi Dravida*. The chairman of the Nandanar math swami Advaitananda asserted that they are the oldest inhabitant of the country and their name should not be used to refer their lowest position in the society. To quote “this conference request that its people being the oldest inhabitants of this country should not be designated by humiliating and degrading appellations like *pariah*, *panchama*, *pullaya*, *Thiya* and *Neecha*, etc. and that they should be designated by their ancient name of *Adi Dravida*.”⁶⁴

In the same resolution, the chairman argues that Mr. V. G. Vasudeva Pillay⁶⁵ was inclined to change the term *Adi Dravida* into “*Dravida*”. The term *Dravida* proposed by Mr. Vasudeva Pillay was for his selfish advantage. Mr. Advaitananda, the Chairman of the *Adi Dravida Sabha* (South Arcot branch) alleged that Mr. Vasudeva Pillay having an association in the similar term *Dravidan* in Rangoon, which is why he aspires to change the term from *Adi Dravida* to the *Dravida*. The Chairman goes on to argue that the term *Dravida* was an arrangement made by the “caste ridden people of Southern India. These “*Dravidas*” regard themselves higher than *Adi Dravida*.”⁶⁶ Thus, it shows that there was a divide between the caste-ridden southerner and *Adi Dravidars* (who were in majority in Northern Tamil Nadu).

⁶⁴ G.O. No. 2830, Revenue, dated 29 November, 1920.

⁶⁵ He was a member of Madras Corporation. He participated in the deputation given by the untouchables of Madras to Montague when he was in Madras. It seems that he had passed a resolution to the government to change the well-known name *Adi Dravida* into *Dravida*. The *Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha* conference castigated his move.

⁶⁶ G.O.No.2830, op. cit.

The chairman also alleged that Mr. Pillay “attempts to change without the consent of the community.”⁶⁷ He had to castigate the move of Mr. Pillay, because he believed that the term Adi Dravida was the one by which “various benefits and privileges have been secured for the community from government.”⁶⁸ The chairman further argued that Mr. Pillay’s move will “destroy the privileges acquired from a sympathetic government on virtue of being separate community.” The conference finally decided to remove Mr. Pillay from Madras Corporation and strongly recommended to the government not to appoint him in “any of the public councils of the land.”⁶⁹

“Deletion of the terms ‘Panchama’ and ‘Paraya’ from Government records”- a review:

As already mentioned the term Paraya and Panchamas was felt to be derogatory. Mr. M. C. Raja who was appointed to the Madras Legislative Council, being an Adi Dravida articulated demands pertaining to the welfare of the Adi Dravidars. On 20 January 1922, he moved a resolution demanding that the “terms ‘Panchama’ or ‘Parayas’ used to designate their ancient Dravidian community in Southern India should be deleted from Government records, and the term ‘Adi-Dravida’ in the Tamil and ‘Adi-Andhra’ in the Telugu districts be substituted instead.”⁷⁰

The reason, which he used to justify the above resolution, was of several kinds.

i) *First* of all the term “Panchama” and “Paraya” which was used by the higher caste people denoted that they were casteless. By using the term both Paraya and Panchama, they have also treated them as polluted castes. Mr. Raja while arguing the reason for this change of the term asserts, “The word conveys everything that is mean and despicable. It means the opposite of all that is holy, and respectable.”⁷¹

ii) *Secondly*, the term suggested by the caste Hindus i.e. *Panchamas* also degraded their status in the society. The Adi Dravidars believed that if the term

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ *Madras Legislative Council Proceedings*, Vol. IV, dated, 20 January 1922.

⁷¹ Ibid.

panchama used to denote the untouchables; it also implies that they are “a man of the fifth class (and) it is really to call him an outcaste.”⁷²

iii) The *third* reason for the deletion of the term was that the Adi Dravidars by that time had accumulated self-respect. The growing administrative status gained with government support might have given them confidence to change the term. Mr. Raja argued, “As our sense of self-respect increased, we came to realize the sinister implications of the name ‘Panchama.’”⁷³

iv) As they believed from time immemorial that they were the original inhabitant of the soil, they were inclined to change their name to differentiate themselves from the caste Hindus. Mr. Raja argued, “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 Adi-Dravidian civilization.”⁷⁴

v) Last but not the least, the reason put forward by them was to distinguish them from the other classes to ensure proper treatment and get privileges. In the era of communal representation, they expected to have special care. Mr. Raja argued, “We are a depressed community, and we are in need of greater facilities for improving our social status. So it is very necessary that we should remain a separate entity to get the required privileges from the government to achieve our object.”⁷⁵

Supporters of the resolution:

Many influential persons of the government supported the resolution. The gaining popularity of the issue of the adi dravidas in the communal politics led the supporters to accept the view of the Adi Dravidas. As already mentioned the issue of Adi Dravida was ubiquitous. This was possible because of the support rendered by the non-Brahman leaders. We cannot also determine that the Adi Dravidars were inactive. rather, they also used to submit several resolutions to the government especially by the support of non-adi Dravida council members.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Majority of the supporters to the above resolution were “representatives of the community in the Council and elsewhere in the various district boards, taluk boards, municipal and educational councils in this Presidency, also honorary magistrates and other leading member of the community.”

Mr. Somasundaram Pillai, for instance, was the one who supported the resolution. While supporting the demand he asserted that the Adi Dravidas did not occupy the lowest position in the early social structure. On the contrary, they were given patronage by the kings. Due to the dethronement of these royal families from its power, the Adi Dravidas were also reduced into poverty and neglected by the aliens. He also made a point that the term Adi Dravida refers the whole south Indian provinces. The Madras Presidency as it consisted of four important but linguistically divergent regions (Tamil, Telugu, Kanarese and Malayalam speaking region), it might not be possible to have similar term. However, Somasundaram argues, “All these four languages are Dravidian languages and when we say Adi-Dravida it applies to Telugu, Malayalam, or Adi-Kanarese, etc. when we say Adi-Dravida it applies to Telugu, Malayalam, Kanarese and Tamil even Marathas are considered Dravida.”

Response of the Government:

On behalf of the government Mr. K. Srinivasa Ayyangar argued that the government did not have any objection to call any community as they wish. However, problem arises when a group of the community refuses to have the term proposed by the other group. He argued, “Unfortunately, I have been receiving a number of petitions from members of this community who say that they desires to be called ‘Dravidas,’ not ‘Adi Dravida.’”⁷⁶ He goes on to argue that the general term whichever a community prefer can be considered but if some group oppose it should be considered with meticulous care.

The government believed that if they going against a part of the community who are not happy with the term proposed by a group, they (government) had to encounter several awkward questions. Mr.Srinivas argued, “I do not want any

⁷⁶ Ibid.

portion of the community to accuse the Government of calling them by a particular name by which they don't want to be called. I am willing to call this community 'Adi-Dravida' in the Tamil districts, and 'Adi-Andhra' in the Telugu districts. But if any particular person objects to be so called, I certainly will call him by the name by which he desires to be called."⁷⁷

In his conclusion, he asserted that the move of the Mr. Raja is too much; the caste names were recorded according to the persons wish. The government believed that if they remove the caste name from the record that was entered in the presence of the person and remove by the request made by another that will put the government under trouble. It will not be correct, Mr.Srinivas aptly argues, "The census records are there and the names are recorded as given by the particular persons. It is therefore too much to ask the government to go on editing them."⁷⁸

The point is, the Adi Dravidas were keen to use the term in Government records and they even proposed the government to edit the term Paraya and Panchama from the old government records. Though the government accepted the view that the term Paraya, and Panchama would be recorded as Adi Dravida, they were not ready to edit the old records. Perhaps, the government did not like to manipulate the Census records as it was entered the caste name with the own choice of the people.

Government Order on the Deletion of the Term:

The above-mentioned resolution could get a Government Order to the census enumeration authority and various government officials asking them not to use the derogatory term. Though Mr. Raja emphasized much on the deletion of the term Paraya and Panchama, the government produced the order to avoid the term such as Paraya, Palla, Chakkili and Madigas. These were of course belonging to untouchable community however, Mr. Raja had not indicated those caste names in his resolution.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

The government thus, asserted that the following two points should be considered by the concerned authorities.

- 1) “That in future the terms ‘Paraya’, ‘Palla’, Chakkili’ and Madiga’ should not be entered in public records against the names of Adi- Dravida and
- 2) That in all muster rolls, registers, service books and other public documents, the words if used should be omitted.”⁷⁹

However, the resolution was passed by a few “untouchables” to call or record them as “adi- dravida”. It was not then (1920) used by most of the “untouchables”. It was argued that the term used mostly by a few who were living in Madras city. The pariahs or panchamas who were away from Madras hardly know the term, Adi Dravida and of course they even did not know the fact that such proposal (that to change the term pariah to Adi dravida) was made by a few in Madras. The above mentioned G.O. though insisted the government to record them as Adi Dravida the government should not follow the proposal because by that time they did not wish to request all to record their name as Adi Dravida, rather the census officer given them their own choice to enumerate themselves.

Entering the term Adi Dravida; an Imposition

The Superintendent of Census operation sought the government’s approval to ensure the census operation without any compulsion. In other words, he stated that he was not in favour of enumerating the caste name, which the very people did not know. It would be pertinent to quote his own words on this issue “from the very beginning I have held that the only safe and wise course to follow in the census, especially in areas where strong feelings have been roused, is to stick closely to the record, to assume that the Enumeration staff did their work properly,

⁷⁹ G.O.No.817, Law (General), 25 March 1922. The same instruction has reproduced in G.O.No.3571, Law (General),?????? 1924.

and to exhibit the results as nearly as possible in the exact words recorded.”⁸⁰ He goes on to argue that “I would therefore prefer to show as *Adi Dravida* only the few persons who as a matter of fact use the name, and to show the rest of the community by the various castes names which appear in the census schedules.”⁸¹

While arguing the extent to which the term *Adi Dravida* was known to the *Parayas* or *Panchamas* (who were out of Madras) he asserts that the term could not gain a wide currency among them and he was also concerned about the fact that such radical change would put the government under “awkward questions.” To quote the Superintendent’s words again, “the alternative is to label the above community as *adi –dravida*, which I hesitate to do because the term is as a matter of fact returned by hardly anyone outside Madras city and by comparatively few in the city. Further once the rule of publishing the result as decided is broken, we shall find ourselves in a situation where it is difficult if not impossible to meet awkward questions.”⁸²

The reason for his refusal was that such a break of the rule would create misunderstanding among the “untouchables” themselves. Because in Madras Presidency in Particular, there were number of divisions and sub-divisions,⁸³ among the untouchables it would not be easy to satisfy the whole division by grouping them under one category *adi Dravida* which was in any way restricted to its Tamil speaking *Pariahs*. It would be pertinent to quote his own words “it is not impossible that there are still some people who may be interested to know how many *paraiyans* or *Malas* there are now, and they will naturally object to find them all grouped together under the one name *adi-dravida*”⁸⁴

The above proposal of the Superintendent of Census operation was ultimately approved by the government. The government also gave instruction to

⁸⁰ G.O.No.559, Law (General), 2 March 1922.

⁸¹ *ibid.*

⁸² *ibid.*

⁸³ Point is, most of the resolutions that intended to record a single term i.e. *Adi Dravida* continued from the 1917 and even today.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*

enumerators “to enter the name of the caste which each person gives of himself and this procedure has been followed in preparing the census schedules.”⁸⁵

Adi Dravida; also refers to Palla, Chakkilis and Madigas

The same issue to group the *Parayars, Pallas, Chakkilis* and *Madigas* under a common term *Adi Dravida* was again proposed in Legislative Council by **Mr. Veerian** a member of *Adi Dravida* community in 1924. The resolution however could not succeed in the legislative council, which was held on 10 October 1924. The point is what exactly Mr. Veerian proposed to the government by his resolution. He asserts that the term *Parayars, Pallars, Chakkiliyars and Madigas* should not be entered in government records, and they should enter as *Adi-Dravidas*. As far as the view of Iyothee Dass was concerned, the term *Paraya* should be avoided in public discourse rather referred as *poorva Buddha kudigal* (indigenous Buddhists). However, he could not take initiative to legitimize the term *Adi Dravida*. It has to be discussed to what extent Iyothee Dass’s view was accepted by the Caste-Hindus. As majority of Caste-Hindus believed Hinduism as a sole religion in which they will be placed in the middle of social hierarchy and certainty not along with the untouchables.

The resolutions passed by the eminent dalits in the second decade of 20th century, in a way, showed that it was not merely to omit the derogatory word i.e. *Paraya, Palla* and *Chakkili*,⁸⁶ but it has to observe in the context of growing public (non-Brahmin or Panchama) demand for communal representation. Thus, it can be presumed that how the view of Iyothee Dass superseded by the *Adi dravidas* according to the political situation. They might have also thought that *to mobilize their caste men they should have a common term for which they need not hesitate to represent themselves in the same old contemptible term such as Paraya and Palla.*

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ One can presume that why the untouchables particularly who proposed the term *Adi Dravida* inclines to change only on the ground that they were derogatory. Perhaps the intention was to group them under *one and the only* term.

Be that, as it may, now let us look at the main content of the resolution made by Mr. Veerian. It wanted the government to enter the term Adi Dravida instead of Paraya Palla and Chakkiliya. He aptly denoted that “in future the words ‘Paraya,’ ‘Palla’ and ‘Chakkili’ and Madigas’ should not be entered in public records against the names of Adi Dravidas and that in all muster rolls, registers, service books and other public documents, the words, if used, should be omitted.”⁸⁷

As already mentioned the colonial officials with reference to the above-mentioned G.O.s (G.O.817, Law (General) dated 25 March 1922 & G.O.559 Law (general) dated 2 March 1922) scrutinized this issue and found that the present proposal was much the same as the previous one. i.e. G.O.817. In both proposals, the “untouchable” of the presidency demanded to the government that they should be recorded with the new term adi dravida. However, they observed that in the present G.O. (no.3571.) the fourth proposal (which I could not find in the same G.O. because that starts with fifth proposal) was different from that of the earlier one.

As the government officials aptly quote, “this department (Law) General) is concerned with the 4th resolution on the previous paras. The words underlined are the *additions to the original resolution, which has already been approved by C.2.that note, has slightly been amended* (italics mine) with reference to the new resolution. The file may lie over till the new resolution is allotted.”⁸⁸ Though the above observation shows that slight amendment was made with reference to the old resolution of G.817 the very difference cannot be explored as the 4 the resolution of 3571 is not available in the G.O.

Adi Hindus; a New Perspective.

The above government orders by the Adi Dravidas, showed that the Parayas, Pallas and Chakkiliyas of Tamil speaking region were included and termed as **Adi Dravida**, Malas and Madigas of Telugu speaking region as **Adi**

⁸⁷ G.O. No.3571, op. cit.

⁸⁸ G.O.No.3571, op. cit.

Andhra etc. The resolution passed by A.S.Sahajanandam on the contrary, wanted to group all the lower classes of people who were known by then as Adi-Dravidas, Adi-Andhra's and Adi-Karnataka, into a single term "Adi Hindus." However, the government as well as Nationalist leaders such as G.A.Natesan grouped all the above (adi) classes under a common term, Depressed Classes. The term, inclined to group all untouchables and lower classes of the presidency. But the experiment with changing the derogatory term continued by different groups of untouchables of the Madras presidency. Moreover, it, in a way, continues.

The intellectuals among the untouchables always like to distinguish them from the *economically* underprivileged people and saw themselves as *socially* disadvantaged. Mr. Sahajanandam wanted to group the untouchables of the presidency such as Adi-Dravida, Adi-Andhra and Adi-Karnataka under one term Adi Hindus. Mr.Sahajanandam argues, "that the classes of people known as "Adi Dravida, Adi Andhra's and Adi Karnataka's" may be uniformly designated as "Adi Hindus" instead of Depressed Classes" as the words "Depressed" is against their advancement."⁸⁹

After a scrutinsation of the resolution, the government informed that the earlier G.O.No.817 which deals with the adoption of the term Adi Dravida, Adi Andhra and Dravida instead of Panchamas or Pariah. It further asserted how the changes in those terms took place "the change was given effect to consequent on the strong feeling which the communities had exhibited towards the terms."⁹⁰

Once the derogatory term was changed with the popular consensus the present issue has to be discussed. The resolution, which seems to unite all the adi castes of the Madras presidency in general, and Tamil, Telugu and Kannada speaking regions in particular could not succeed at the meetings of the legislative council held on the 13th and 30th march 1927. *After getting similar resolutions for the past two decades the government could not consider the case seriously, and put*

⁸⁹ G.O.1236, Law (General), 2 April 1928.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

its decision concisely that “there is no objection on the part of the government to any community calling itself by any name it chooses.”⁹¹

Thus, it shows that the government could not concede the frequent resolutions that dealt with the caste classification or nomenclature. From the above G.Os, it is so apparent, that the resolutions focused mainly on the issue of recording in the government documents. It can also be drawn from the above facts that much was expected by the untouchables from the government records.

Debate on the “Nomenclature” in Modern Tamil Nadu:

The issue on caste classification however was not confined to the British period. The same issue is seen in contemporary Tamil Nadu as well. During the British period, the untouchables particularly a few among them were inclined to be recorded as Adi ‘Dravidas. It is also crucial to know the fact that a few untouchables of Southern Madras presidency wanted to call them as Dravidas. In a way, it can be presumed that the Pallars might have used the term “Dravida”.

In today’s Tamil Nadu, the *Pallas* of (southern) Tamilnadu inclines to change the popular term Adi Dravida into an all-inclusive term. In other words, the issue on caste classification or nomenclature became a long running feud between Adi Dravidas and Non–Adi Dravidas. As Mr. MSS. Pandian rightly points out, “In April 1998, Krishnasamy (a Non-Adi Dravida dalit leader) also demanded in the state assembly that the adi dravida and tribals welfare department be renamed as *social Justice Department* (italics mine). Adi Dravida is a term which normally refers to *parayans*. It is widely perceived that Krishnasmy’s demand was to ensure that the *Devendrars* (Pallars) are not subsumed under a category which refers to the Parayans.”⁹²

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² MSS.Pandian, Dalit Assertion in Tamil Nadu An Exploratory Note” *Journal of Indian School of Political Economy* 12 (3-4), 2000 (July-December), p.514

CHAPTER – II

Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha – A Case Study

CHAPTER II

ADI DRAVIDA MAHAJANA SABHA –A CASE STUDY

This chapter deals with factors responsible for the establishment of the Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha in the era of communal representation. In the second decade of the 20th century, the issue on the Adi Dravida was ubiquitous among the non-Brahman political rhetoric. The support rendered by Brahman and non-Brahman leaders also led the growth of Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha. The debate on the formation of the sabha, its nature, branches, and objective are the major focus of the chapter. This was also the time of the formation of the Labour department, the British after a long debate on the issue of uplifting the depressed classes and the backward classes of India formed the department in 1917. Apart from the support of the Brahman and Non-Brahman leaders, the British extensively dealt with the ameliorative measures for the depressed classes. In fact, the department named as “the protector of the depressed classes.” Thus, it would be pertinent to see the role played by the department in the emergence of the sabha.

Communal Representation: a debate.

The issue of the communal representation was pervasive in the end of the second decade of the 20th century. Many conferences were conducted for the articulation of the issue of the Panchamas or Adi Dravida. Such conferences became indispensable to the Adi Dravida, because of the growing interest of communal representation. Some scholars argue that the communal representation manifested mostly after the birth of Justice Party (1917). However, Kamalanathan¹ argues, that the issue of the communal representation is apparent from the work of Pandit Iyothee Dass. His journal *Tamilan* extensively dealt with this, Pandit. C. Iyothi Dass placed their demand as follows: “Communal representation was requested in Governor’s Executive council, Municipalities,

¹ Kamalanathan, *Mr. K. Veeramani, M.A.B.L. is Refuted and the Historical Facts about the Scheduled Caste Struggle for Emancipation in South India*, Ambedkar Self Respect Movement, Tiruppattur, 1985.

Army, Medical, Police, Railways, Education according to the population basis.” First, the dalits were inclined to have 25% of the seats in Legislative council. As Majority of Hindus opposed them, they have changed into 20% of the seats. He goes on to argue, “The demands of the dalits were not conceded by the British and unfavourable verdict was given by Lord Morley, he had not mentioned anything about Dalits.”²

The same weekly *Tamilian* also emphasized the need for giving representation in Legislative council and grant of lands for the panchamas or indigenous *Tamilan* (poorva *Thamizhan*). They never emphasized much of the Adi Dravida ideology. The main intention of the *Tamilian* group was, however, to have a representative from their same caste (parayar) but not necessarily Adi Dravidar or Hindu outcaste, rather they expected a representative from the Indian Buddhists or the protestant Indian Christians.

According to “the *Tamilian*,” of 29 August, the panchamas condition in villages was pathetic. He goes onto argue that this situation was an impact of the invasion of the Aryans. He insisted that there was no representation in the Legislative council “to voice forth their grievances.” He goes on to argue that a representative should be “chosen to safeguard the interests of these *Panchamas* from among the Indian Christians.”³

After the declaration of the Montague Chelmsford Reform, the conferences that convened in the Madras Presidency became more or less politically motivated in nature. D.A. Washbrook argues that caste became, in a way, a criterion to enter into the Legislative council. ‘The Fort.St.George had successfully neglected communal representation in 1882, 1899, 1908 and 1911.’ The pressures were from Government of India and the secretary of state.⁴ The above-mentioned point shows that communal representation was an outcome of the British role, which considered caste as criteria for a political representation.

² Pandit. C.Iyothi Dass, *Tamilan*, (weekly) dated 3-3-1909,p.3, As quoted in Kamalantahn, P.63.

³ *Tamilian*, 29 August 1917, (Madras, Native Newspaper Report, hereafter NNR, 1917).

⁴ D.A. Washbrook, *The Development of Caste Organization in South India 1880-1940*, Macmillan coy limited, Delhi, 1975, p.185.

As the caste representation was at its headway, the caste association began to organize so many conferences. The communal representation was on other hand believed to be an impact of the government approval itself. Washbrook argues, that “In 1919 and 1920, the Fort St. George ultimately had to respond, the switch of policy in London and New Delhi caused by Montague’s aversion to communal categories- Fort saint George drove the principle of representation for ill-defined ‘backward’ castes into its new local self-government legislation; and, after 1920, it used its liberal powers of nomination to fill many places in the Montague-Chelmsford Legislative council with caste representatives.”⁵

The Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha, as it witnessed the importance of communal representation, could make use of the conferences, conducted in the name of *Panchama* and Adi Dravida meetings, to expose their sufferings. It does not, mean that the sabha conducted the conferences by their own effort, rather they had to rely on the non- Brahmins, some time vice versa.

According to Irschick, Montague announcement in parliament also made the Justice party leaders realize that if they were to demonstrate their position as the sole representative of south Indian non-Brahmins they would have to organise and win the support of the out castes, who composed nearly one-fifth of the total population of the province.⁶

In a way, it can be argued that the mutual dependence between the non-Brahmin and outcaste developed the caste associations in the presidency. The conference organized by the Adi Dravidas with the support of non-Brahman leaders, criticized the Home Rulers. According to both the Pariahs and Non-Brahmans, Home Rule is nothing but the Rule of Brahmins.⁷

⁵ Ibid., p.186.

⁶ Irschick, 1969, p.70.

⁷ *Andhrapatrika*, 9 October 1917, (Madras NNR, 1917).

Adi Dravida Conferences and Public Press:

From 1917 onwards, conferences with the support of the non-Brahman leaders and the social reformers were convened in the Madras presidency. The issue of the Adi Dravidas became pervasive in the non-Brahman press. The conferences with the name *panchama* or *Adi Dravida* convened in the Madras Presidency extensively dealt with their grievances. The issues articulated by these conferences were also frequently published in the leading newspapers of the presidency. Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha conducted its conferences throughout the presidency. The Pariahs, who were until then called by either the same term or *panchama*, realized their suffering. This was not a new phenomenon of 1920s; rather, Irschick argues, “By the last decades of the nineteenth century, largely owing to the work of missionaries and the government, outcaste groups, particularly in the Tamil area, were becoming aware of their political and social rights and were beginning to realize the inequality of their economic as well as ritual status.”⁸

Most of the conferences reflected their under developed or oppressed condition. They have conducted so many conferences. It is evident from one of the government order that the Adi Dravida Mahajana convened so many conferences in Madras presidency. The G.O indicates that, “in view of other grievances caused by heartless land-lords, conferences were held on the 18th June, 1917, on the 29th June 1919 and 2nd June 1920. Mr. G.F.Paddison, protector of Depressed Class and Labour Commissioner presiding at the 1919 conference and a (Adi Dravida) representative in the Madras Legislative Council, the Hon’ble Mr.M.C.Rajah, presiding at the 1920 conference.”⁹

The meetings conducted by Adi Dravida or with the support of Non – Brahmas leaders extensively published in various leading newspapers of the presidency. These conferences or meetings were generally referred as “panchama meetings”. The term was however was not compatible with a few Adi Dravidas

⁸ Irschick, Eugene F., *Politics and Social Conflict in south India, the non-Brahmin Movement and Tamil Separation 1916-1929*, Oxford University Press, Los Angeles, 1965, p.9.

⁹ G.O.No. 2830, Revenue, dated 29-11-1920.

(during 1922.) As a consequence, they pleaded the government to delete the derogatory terms from the official records. Perhaps their intention was of two folds, as already discussed in chapter I, firstly, the derogatory name was offensive to use in the public records. Secondly they might have inclined to use a common term which can mobilize the outcast without using the derogatory remarks. It is apparent that the later point became widespread among the outcastes or pariahs after the Montague-Chelmsford announcement.

Most of the newspapers, which wrote on the pariahs question from 1890s under the influence of caste representation in politics, began to publish their (panchama) condition and the importance to give them representation in the government institutions. The *Dravidan* of 3 October 1917 dwelt upon “various hardships to which *Panchamas* are subjected by the social restriction imposed on them by Brahmans.”¹⁰ And went on to argue “those who are desirous of doing good to these *Panchamas* should represent to the benign Government their sufferings by means of resolutions passed at the meetings convened for the purpose”¹¹

The non-Brahman owned newspaper became a guiding spirit to the Adi Dravidas. Adi Dravidas could now realize their capacity to have representative of their own in every council of the government. It would be relevant to quote the correspondent of *Dravidian* of the same date. He argues, “if only a *panchama* had been member of the Legislative council, would he not have represented effectively the hardships experienced by his castemen and told the British rulers that the *Panchamas* also had an equal right to share the benefit of the British rule as the Brahmans. This indeed, is a strong reason for urging that every community should be duly represented in every council of the Government and in all government institutions.”¹²

Another panchama meeting was held under the leadership of Dr. T.M.Nair and Kandaswami Chetti on October 2, 1917 in Spur Tank Road, Madras. Irschick argues that “several party leaders spoke in the meeting and Dr. Nair suggested that

¹⁰ *Dravidan*, 3rd October 1917, (Madras NNR, 1917).

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ibid.

a committee be set up to coordinate all the political activities of the *Panchamas* in the city, with the Justice party giving advice and friendship, to his dismay, the president of the panchama political organization, the Pariah Mahajana Sabha, rebuffed his offer. It was true, Mr. Anchasa, the president admitted, that if home rule were granted the *panchamas* would be crushed; but he thought that this would occur regardless of who achieved power, the Brahmans or the non-Brahmans caste Hindus, he told the Justice party non-Brahmans that if they wanted to lead the *panchamas* “they should effect a reformation among themselves, and treat panchamas as their brethren.”¹³

Thus it is apparent that the support which was extended by the Justice Non-Brahmin leaders to Pariah Mahajana Sabha (series of conferences or meetings, which were held under the supports of both the non-Brahman leaders and eminent personalities of the sabha itself), shows that the Adi Dravidar were supported by the non-Brahmans. This trend, however, could not be sustained during the 1920s, because the period of communal representation and simultaneous appointment to the Adi Dravidas was making its headway. The Adi Dravidas no longer required support from the Non-Brahmins and they now rebuffed Justice Non-Brahman offers of cooperation.

Seven leading newspapers of the presidency published details of the Panchama conference of 7 October 1917, which has been discussed above. The *Dravidian*, the *Hindu*, the *Justice*, and *Swadesamitran* on 8 October 1917, *Andhrapatrika* and *Indian Patriot* of 9 October 1917, took up this issue. Thus, the political rhetoric on the panchama issue with the constant support of the leading newspapers gradually increased awareness among the *panchamas*. The term panchama was extensively used at that time.

The awareness that the panchamas acquired from the above support was multifaceted. *Firstly*, they could realize their value in growing communal politics and the opportunities to get influential position in legislative, District and Municipal councils i.e., government institutions. *Secondly*, their political rhetoric

¹³ Irschick, op cit., 1969, p.71.

was redefined according to their political development. In other words, the agenda of the outcaste as mentioned by Washbrook was, “couched in the language of caste aggression than, factional difficulties.”¹⁴

There were two conferences, which were organized by the Adi Dravidas. The first one was held on 24 October 1917, at Madras. *Dravidian* of 26 October 1917, published Tamil proceedings, which also refer that the “panchama” meeting was held under the auspices of the “Madras Adi Dravida Jana Sabha.” The point is that the Adi Dravida; during the second decade of the 20th century had referred as *panchamas*. The term “*Panchama*” was mostly used in Newspapers, those run by non-Brahmins.

However, the term *panchamas* in a way seemed to vanish, if not completely, from the public discourse as the *panchamas* consistently propagating the term Adi Dravida. *Dravidian*¹⁵ for example, published Tamil proceedings of an ‘Adi Dravida’ public meeting under the title “an Adi Dravida meeting”. The meeting was held under the presidency of Mr. Tangavelu Pillai on 2 December 1917, at Trichinopoly, the above said two meetings were reported in *Justice*, thus as pointed out elsewhere, the Adi Dravida, frequent meetings and their resolutions were extensively published in the leading newspapers.

The Adi –Dravida Mahajana Sabha, during the second decades of the 20th century was gaining currency as a sole representative of the Panchamas or Adi Dravidas. However, it was criticized on the ground that the association was a new one and the sabha was a creature of *chetty -Nayar* clique. *Desabhaktan*, for example, wrote that the “Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha, which now poses to be the organ of the depressed classes, is only a recent institution started by a few of the members of the Paraiya Mahajana-Sabha, which has been in existence for the last 80 years.”¹⁶

¹⁴ Washbrook.D.A, 1975, op cit, p.187.

¹⁵ *Dravidian*, 5 December 1917, (Madras NNR, 1917).

¹⁶ *Desabhaktan*, 13 December 1917, (Madras NNR 1917).

The correspondent also exposed the supporters of the sabha who were not panchama but from a Non –Brahman community. The correspondent mentions, “The new association (ADMS) is a creature of the Chetti-Nayar clique.”¹⁷ And he goes onto argue on “the various parties among the panchamas themselves.”¹⁸

Were the Panchamas or Parayas only Sufferer of the Time?

The preoccupation with panchamas issue by the leading newspapers thus created a debate and discontentment in the public. *Naradan* of Madras, for instance, wrote that panchamas are not the only castes of the presidency, which are believed to be suffering without government support. Rather there are other lower castes which really occupy the lowest echelon of the social order. To quote the correspondent, “the condition of the *Kuravars* and other classeswho are held lower in the social scale than the panchamas, was so pathetic.”¹⁹ And he goes onto argue, “Neither the government nor the social reformers in our country take any notice of them.”²⁰ In fact, they are still in the same fetter.

The Mirasidars (landlords) also criticized the Government support to panchamas. As the panchamas were gaining popularity and support in the public the British were also inclined to support them by giving some lands to the panchamas. They purchased the lands from the *mirasidars* and provided the panchamas free land for cultivation. By this act the British expected that the *panchamas* could get right to own land. The government move was opposed by the *mirasidards* on the ground that the mirasidars were also experiencing difficulties from the high taxation. *Vartakamitram* (probably the supporter of *mirasidars*), “criticized the government not to purchase land from *mirsidar* to provide panchmas.” They were arguing that “high taxation to the *mirasidars* is also a problem like what panchmas were experiencing.”²¹ While the *mirasidars* wanted to reduce the tax on land, the *panchamas* were very new to acquire free land. Thus, it shows that there was an inequality between the landlords and landless *panchamas*.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ *Naradan*, 4 February, 1918, (Madras, NNR, 1918).

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ *Vartakamitran*, 7 February, 1918, (Madras NNR, 1918).

Against the Home Rulers:

The Adi Dravidas conducted a meeting on May 1918 (exact date is not available) to put down the Home Rulers activities opposing the Government's activities. The Adi Dravidas also criticized the Home rulers who ignored to invite the representatives of the Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha to the Delhi conference. It is thus apparent that the Adi Dravidas opposed the Home Rulers on two grounds. One was that the Rulers activity should be "put down by the Government" as they are "against the endeavors of the government," and secondly the Adi Dravidas "also regretted the omission on the part of the rulers to invite the representatives of the Adi Dravidas to the Delhi conference."²²

According to the correspondent of *Justice* communal representation was the only solution by which they could expect advantage of all communities, the very fact that the South Indian Liberal Federation and Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha both association started because, the correspondent argues, "of the intolerance, clannishness and exclusiveness of one caste" (Brahmans).²³

The correspondent asked, "How has Mr. Montague come to the conclusion that under his scheme there would be no room for sectional control?"²⁴ The paper also shows that the two organizations, i.e. South Indian Liberal Foundation and Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha vigorously pressed to the Sectary of State for the grant of communal representation. To quote the correspondent, "The question of communal representation was most vigorously pressed for their attention during their stay in this city."²⁵

The paper also mentions that the above two organizations or their able representatives "should have been considered not in the spirit of casual, globe-trotters picking up and noting down things in a pickwickian fashion, but as responsible statesmen entrusted with the difficult task of framing a constitution for

²² *Andhraprakasika*, 14 May, 1918,(Madras NNR,1918).

²³ *Justice*, 3 August 1918, (Madras NNR, 1918).

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

India which would work without deadlocks, smoothly, successfully and to the advantage of all communities”²⁶ It is thus apparent that the non-Brahman political leaders supported the Adi Dravidas to attain the “successful advantage of all communities.”²⁷ The Adi Dravida leaders on the other hand supported the Non-Brahmans to provide communal representation. This support however soon vanished in 1920s.

The Adi Dravidas issue was getting widespread popularity. Many people were concerned about the sufferings of the Adi Dravidas. The Sabha that was founded by the Adi Dravidas with the support of the non-Brahman leaders could gain currency among the public. This could give them new sense of enthusiasm, by which the Adi Dravidas could articulate their grievances, to the government and gain some ameliorative measures.

It would be appropriate to know whether the Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha was supported by other than outcaste or not? The study shows that Missionaries, enlightened social reformers and political leaders were the sole supporters to the sabha. It would be appropriate to quote *Desabhaktan*,²⁸ that “the new association (Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha) is a creature of the Chetti-Nayar clique.”²⁹ The paper also exposed that the Panchamas following various parties. It is thus clear that a group of people who proposed the new name Adi Dravida (and named their own association by it), were supported by the non-Brahman leaders who belonged, for instance, Chettiar, and Nayar caste.

The Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha was invited to give their opinion to Madras Legislative Council in framing the ameliorative measures. The *Dravidian* observed that the copy of original letter sent to the sabha did not reach the sabha,

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ According to David Arnold, *Desabhaktan*, was “from the Gandhian point of view the most promising vernacular paper which was launched in December 1917 by the non-Brahman congress man Thiru Vi.Kalyanasundara Mudaliar. Arnold goes on to argue the changing trend of the paper. It happened when the editorial of the paper changed from Thiru Vi Klayana Sundara Mudaliar to “the one time terrorist, V.V.S.Aiyar, the paper then “adopted an aggressive nationalist line until September 1921”. See Arnold David, *The Congress in Tamilnadu, Nationalist Politics in South India 1919-1937*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1977, p.51.

²⁹ *Desabhaktan*, 13 December 1917, (Madras NNR, 1917).

so this wantonness or carelessness of the officials was to be avoided in the future. The correspondent analyzed the opinion that was given by the sabha members to the government. According to the correspondent, the opinion submitted by the Adi Dravidias intended to improve their education, sanitation, and water and street light facilities. Their opinions were not politically motivated but concerned with basic amenities.

As far as the issue of education was concerned, the correspondent argued that “Even now the Government are not attentive to the interests of the Depressed Classes and seek the welfare of only a few that agitates. The establishment of the Brahman widows’ home is an instance of this.”³⁰

In conclusion, the correspondent appealed to the government, “If the government is really interested in uplifting the non-Brahman community, who form the bulk of the population and who are in a very backward condition, the only way is to give them communal representation.”³¹ The correspondent further asserted on behalf of the non-Brahmans that, “without communal representation, any reform will prove quite useless and hamper the progress of the country.”³²

To sum up the public opinion on Adi Dravida, *the political or journalistic rhetoric in 1917 to 1919 in the case of Adi Dravida and Non-Brahman was to emphasize the importance of communal representation. In this process, Adi Dravida also got included, in a way, with the non-Brahman category.* The ultimate objectives were to give them communal representation. The argument, which they used to substantiate the communal representation, based on the “Brahmin dominance.” The issue of non-Brahmas raised by them invariably exposed the Brahman dominance. *Thus, during the early 20th century the issue of Untouchability became prominent among the non-Brahman.* This pushed the non-Brahmans to emphasize the importance of the communal representation.

³⁰ *Dravidan*, 27 December, 1918, (Madras NNR 1918).

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Dravidan*, 27 December 1918, (Madras NNR.1918).

This phenomenon from the 1890s (under the name Pariah issue) to 1917 (under the Adi Dravida Question) was fully faced with the opposition of “Brahman dominated” Congress. As far as the Adi Dravida was concerned, unlike the Non-Brahmin leaders they also involved in opposing the Brahman dominance in educational and employment and of course in all government institutions.

The question arises whether the majority of the outcastes were in a position to supplant the Brahmins from their dominance or not? In other words, it is crucial to know who were in a position to oppose the Brahmanic oligarchy in the presidency. Secondly, the question also arises which caste among the depressed classes could aspire for the replacement of Brahman dominance, whether the highly educated untouchables or the illiterate who had not seen the Christian missionary in their place.

In fact, due to the arrival of Christian missionaries to the presidency the outcastes, especially who converted into Christianity, could at least aspire for their educational development which was a mirage to them in the past. The educational advancement among the few untouchables also gave them freedom to aspire for the political as well also employment opportunity. The Adi Dravidas who were from the time immemorial well known for their service to the English official and hard work could readily make use of the opportunities. In a way, it is believed that the majority of Adi Dravidas, who were at the proximity of the British government or capital, could get (from 1891 onwards) a special privilege (which continued until the demise of the British power in India) from the ‘benign’ government.

Rise of Skepticism on Non-Brahmin Leaders:

The point which I would like to raise here is that the Adi Dravida who extended their support to the non-Brahmans getting their power in the Madras presidency were expecting a ‘just’ rule which they thought would give representation to them. Their expectation got confirmed as they regularly saw the public press especially that run by non-Brahman ‘recommend’ to the British to give representation to the Adi Dravidars. After the Justice Party assumed power, the very support given to the Adi Dravida by the party gradually demised. The

trend of political rhetoric, which they had employed before 1917, had also changed. During the early 1920s the Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha was gradually revealing the injustice meted out by the non-Brahman Justice rulers to them.

During the early second decade of the 20th century, the skepticism on non-Brahman movement as manifested by the new Adi Dravida intellectuals became ubiquitous. These new Adi Dravidas after seeing the unjust rule of the presidency started agitating against the non-Brahman rulers. This process became manifold, when the non-Brahman leaders, as Adi-Dravida leaders argue, sought to abolish the Labour department, which was called as the protector of Depressed Classes. The role played by the Labour department was crucial to the development of the depressed classes. However, it would be discussed later. The emergence of the Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha and its nature would enable us to understand the condition of the untouchables in Madras Presidency.

The origin of Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha:

The term *pariah* and *panchama* which reflected the 'degrading' nature of the "untouchables" was ultimately changed as Adi Dravidas. However, the efforts taken from 1917 to 1928 were to remove the caste stigma and get space in political representation. The resolutions, which were exclusively intended to change the term *pariah* and *panchama* into Adi Dravida, have already been dealt with in the first chapter. The year 1917 indicates that the activities of the Adi Dravidas were based primarily on the establishment of a wider network. *The conferences, which were frequently held during 1917 show that the Adi-Dravidas were in the process of making their identity in the era of communal representation.* It cannot, however, be asserted that these conferences in and around Madras, Trichnopoly, etc, were the sole initiative of the Adi-dravidas. Rather, Adi-Dravidas as they were educating themselves from the non-Brahmin, socio-political activity, in a way, began to resemble their activity.

The significance of the 1891 report was already dealt with in detail in chapter I. However it would be pertinent to repeat the major development of the report that was submitted by the collector of Chingleput, Tremenheere. The pariahs as they were called at that time attracted not only the attention of the British officials in India but also of London. As a suffering majority of the Madras Presidency, many foreigners were attracted to their condition.

The Madras missionary conference, for instance, submitted their memorandum to the British in which they recommended the government to initiate the proper ameliorative measures by which the pariahs could lead a dignified normal life. Apart from the memorandum of the missionary conference, the British effort to study the Chingleput region and its people particularly the pariahs, turned into another stimulus to gain public attention. The report of Tremenheere on “the pariahs of Chingleput, created a widespread understanding on the pariahs.

It was during the same time Mr. Samuel Smith a Liberal MP of the House of Common and also a friend of Dadabhai Naoroji³³ raised the question of the evolution of pariahs as well-known “untouchables” of Madras. One can also look at the importance given especially by the missionary, Government officials and press, Liberal MP such as Smith. The pariahs thus became popular and attracted the attention of the government in the year 1891. Unlike Irschick, Moses also has the same view. He argues, “the memorandum by the Madras Missionary conference to the governor and the report of Tremenheere (the District collector of Chingleput) and animated discussion on the condition of pariahs in the newspapers in Madras and London, not only created an awareness among the officials (on the pariahs) in the Government of India and in the government in Great Britain but also forced to act.”³⁴

The government observed, “The question of improving the condition of the Depressed Classes was engaging the attention of government ever since 1892 and several concessions were from time to time granted to members of these classes.”³⁵

³³ Irschick. Eugene, Dialogue and History, opcit.

³⁴ Brindavan C. Moses, “Panchama Land in Tamil Nadu” in Thangaraj (ed), *Land Reforms in India-Tamil Nadu an unfinished Task*, vol.9, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2003.

³⁵ G.O.No.1070, Law (general), 27-3-1924.

It is argued that the role played by dalits in World War I, also encouraged the British to give special care to dalits. It would be appropriate to quote Kamalanathan, "In the first world war the dalits Army Queen Victoria own sappers and mines of Madras and other regiments 'Mahar' and Sikhs fought bravely and brought victory in every sector to the Britishers. The hearts of the British rulers were moved towards these oppressed people, who were neglected by their own country men."³⁶

Debate on the foundation of the Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha:

The consciousness that the pariahs drew from 1891 Report of the Government, Memorandum submitted by the Madras Missionary conference and the view of Pariah in House of commons and eventually the public opinion on the pariahs through press, have created a new awakening among the Pariahs. These significant events were also a source of inspiration to the Pariahs to form their own association. The first association that was formed by the outcaste of the presidency was named after the caste. Paraya Mahajana Sabha was a pioneer association in the history of "untouchables" of the presidency. According to a G.O., the Paraya Mahajana Sabha found in 1891.³⁷ The other well-known association, which could sustain at least until 1935, was Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha. It is also believed that the Sabha was founded in 1891.

According to reference available from the Madras Year Book, 'Madras Adi-Dravida Jana Sabha was found in 1892. Its main purpose was "to raise the social, moral and intellectual status of the Adi Dravidas communities by every possible means. Membership was open to Adi-Dravidas only. The sabha has various branches throughout the presidency. Its life president was P. V. Subramanyam Pillai, Secretary was Rao Bahadur M.C.Rajah, M.L.C."³⁸

³⁶ Kamalanathan.T.P, *Mr. Veeramani, M.A.B.L., is Refuted the Historical Facts about the Scheduled Castes Struggle for Emancipation in South India*, Ambedkar self Respect Movement, Tiruppattur, 1985.

³⁷ G.O. No. 1021.L, Public Works and Labour, dated 11 April 1928.

³⁸ *The Madras Year Book*, 1923, Madras publicity bureau, Government Press, Madras, 1923.

It is apparent from the above information that the sabha was started from 1892. Apart from the Madras yearbook we have one more source, which asserts that the sabha was founded in 1892. J.Sivashunmugham Pillai, (who was elected as a first dalit Lok sabha speaker under the Congress rule in Tamil Nadu) for instance, indicated, "In 1892 the Dalit leaders in Madras formed another organization under the name Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha, but both (Dravida Mahajana Sabha and Adi-Dravida Mahajana Sabha) worked together in the matter of common interests of Dalits."³⁹

Government sources except Madras Year book of 1923, indicates that Paraya Mahajana Sabha was active. The sabha was keen to uplift the parayar, so they were demanding some remedial measures to be framed to uplift them. *Paraya Mahajan Sabha* unlike the Adi Dravida Sabha gave their deputation to the British high officials. In their deputation (in English) made it clear to the official, their socio-economic condition. In a way, this process effectively used to convince the newcomer to take care of the Parayar who were from the time immemorial deprived of the basic or fundamental amenities. The paraya Mahajana Sabha was in fact the pioneer association, which introduced the above process to explain their pathetic condition to the British high officials. They were very keen to articulate their demand at any place. The secretary of the Pariah Mahajana Sabha was "informed that sir Arthur Havelock will be unable to receive any address at the railway station and that any further application for permission to present an address should be made to the private secretary to His Excellency to Governor."⁴⁰

It is thus presumed that the Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha , could not get fame or could not actively involved in between 1891 and 1917 because there were no evidence which shows their activity from the government proceedings or records. This debate on the creation of Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha is crucial in many ways. In 1922 Mr.M.C.Rajah, the eminent intellectual among the community argued that the term Adi Dravida was found in 1891 itself, so it was not a new innovation. It was argued by M.C.Rajah that "this name, sir, Adi Dravida is not

³⁹ J.Sivashunmugham Pillai, *The Life Selected Writings and Speeches of Rao Bahadur M.C. Rajah*, M.L.A, Page 14.

⁴⁰ G.O.No.359, Public, 17 March 1896.

yesterday's. As I said, thirty years ago, the most cultured in our community sat together and wanted to find a proper name for the community. Then they decided that the community should be called Adi-Dravida.....from 1892 we have been asking government for this name and when His Excellency Lord Chelmsford and the Right Hon'ble Mr.E.S.Montague were in Madras the Adi Dravidas of the Presidency waited on deputation."⁴¹ This quote also indicates the great gap between 1891 and 1917(Montague's arrival).

However, the point is clear that Paraya Mahajana Sabha was the first association found by them in 1891. The Adi-Dravida Mahajana Sabha on the other hand, might have been a new creation of 1917. It can be argued that the Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha was a creation of 1917. It has not left any other records of its own between 1891 and 1917. The weekly journal called *Tamilan*, which published between 1906 and 1917, refers to the Parayas as Indigenous *Tamilan* (*Poorva thamizhan*). It has not mentioned much about the term Adi Dravida. *Desabhaktan* of Madras dated 13th December 1917 observes that, "Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha, which now poses to be the organ of the depressed classes, is only a recent institution started by a few of the members of the Paraya Mahajana Sabha, which has been in existence for the last 30 years, and which had the honour of presenting an address to sir Arthur Havelock."⁴² Most of the sources, which was used by the Adi Dravidas to propose the date of the foundation of the Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha as 1891, was generally published or written in between 1916 to 1923.

Debate on Membership:

Scholars such as P.E.Mohan while arguing about the membership observes, "There was no sex discrimination. Any person above 18 years of age could become a member with the formal permission from the Executive committee."⁴³ The membership was of various kinds. "The Sabha elected office bearers of the Executive committee by conducting a General Body Meeting called for the

⁴¹ Madras Legislative Council Proceedings, Vol.IV, 20 January 1922, p.2051.

⁴² *Desabhaktan*, 13 December 1917.

⁴³ P.E.Mohan, *Scheduled Castes: History of Elevation, Tamil Nadu, 1900-1955*, New Era Publications, Madras, 1993.

purpose.”⁴⁴ He goes on to argue that the Executive committee’s primary duty was to implement, “the resolutions passed in the Adi Dravida Conference and forward them to the Government for necessary action.”⁴⁵ This process of bringing to the government’s knowledge their resolutions passed in the recent meetings, was continued at least up to 1935. The members of the Saba such as Mr.R.Veerian and Mr.M.C.Rajah in their frequent questions to the government emphasized the need for the government to look after the Adi Dravida and their resolutions.

Question arises here whether the membership was restricted to the caste men or universal. The Madras Year Book quotes, “membership open to Adi Dravidas only.”⁴⁶ A telephone message (dated 4-10-1923) which was sent by the sabha to the government indicates that, “the membership was wide open to the philanthropists and able members of the Adi Dravida community. The sabha was active under the able presidency of P.V.Subramania Pillai he was a proprietor of an ice factory and, a member of both District Board of Chingleput and District Education Council of Madras. The sabha consisted of six Vice Presidents of whom Swami Sahajanandam was so well known. Mr.Desikanandam was the other important Vice President of the sabha. He was the Honorary Secretary of the Adi Dravida Refugees camp and the Honorary Presidency Magistrate of Madras. A famous intellectual and able leader Rao Bahadur M.C.Rajah was an Honorary Secretary of the Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha. He was also a Member of Legislative Council from 1920. The sabha thus showed that able membership was the key to its success. It was also crucial to the sabha to possess intellectuals who could effectively articulate or claim the sabha’s demands.

As far as the leadership was concerned, M.C.Rajah played a pivotal role in claiming the just demands from the government. He was a prominent member of the sabha and a member of Legislative council. He was also a nominated as a member of Imperial legislative council; he was nominated to the Madras Legislative council by His Excellency Lord Willington, the then governor of Madras.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.46.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.46

⁴⁶ Madras Year Book, 1923, op cit.

His position as a member of Legislative council reaffirmed the rights that had to be given to the suffering Adi dravidas. As Rudolph argued, the “leaders are conditioned by their ability to articulate and represent the purposes of the caste association, and for this purpose they must be literate in the ways of the new democratic politics.”⁴⁷ It was thus crucial for the members to be educated, sometime highly educated from the community. Their articulation, in a way, reached the British only because of their able representation.

Branches:

The sabha had several branches throughout the presidency notably in “Chingleput, North Arcot, and South Arcot, Kistna Godavari, Tinnevelley, Trichinopoly, Tanjore, Coimbatore, the Nilgiris, Malabar and Nellore.”⁴⁸ These branches were prominent places where the Adi Dravida conferences were conducted.

The branches were run by an eminent person of the Taluk or District Swami Advaidananda of Chidambaram who managed Nandanar Matt in Omakkulam of Chidambaram convened an Adi Dravida conference in 2 October 1920. While explaining resolutions of the conference he included the issues pertaining to the appointment of Adi Dravidas in Legislative and Municipal Councils and district Taluk Boards. However, much emphasis was given to the issues particularly of the district i.e. Chidambaram. *It shows that the branches had their independence in framing resolutions, especially with the approval of the branch's members.* The sabha's head office was in Nungambakkam, Madras. Majority of the eminent Adi Dravida leaders such as M.C.Rajah, R. Srinivasan, R.Veerian, and J.Sivashunmugham Pillai were the office bearers of the sabha.

As already mentioned the new Adi Dravida intellectuals manifested the skepticism towards the non-Brahman movement. These new Adi Dravidas after seeing the unjust rule of the presidency started agitating against the Non-Brahma

⁴⁷ Rudolph and Rudolph, opcit, 1960, p.8.

⁴⁸ G.O. No. 1070, Law (General), 27 March 1924.

rulers. This process became manifold, when the non-Brahman leaders fought to abolish the Labour department, which was called as the protector of depressed classes.

It would be pertinent here to know about the Labour department other wise known as a Protector of Depressed Classes. The proceedings of the Department would enable us to know the major work and the function of the Labour Department. In fact, the activities of the Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha were also a result of the patronage given by the Labour Department. Thus, the work of the department and the sabha goes hand in hand. Let us discuss the features of the Labour department.

Origin of Labour department:

It is believed that the Labour department was the sole protector of depressed classes and an outcome of the British officials or government. It was argued by the Adi Dravida Mahajana sabha office bearers that the Labour Department was started, “in consequence of government of India’s letter to the Madras Government, published in their Reference no. 1835 (Board of Revenue) dated 13th September 1916, that the government of Madras appointed in 1919 a special officer with a separate staff called the protector of the Depressed Classes (i.e. Labour Welfare Department).”⁴⁹

The Sabha members thus asserted that the Labour Department was the consequence of the debate between governments of India and government of Madras. In fact, the department was an initiation taken by Honorable Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji. In response to the Sabha members the British officials observed that “in consequence of a resolution moved by the Hon’ble Mr. Dadabhai in Imperial Legislative council on the 16-March 1916, the government undertook an exhaustive enquiry into the work that had already been done for the improvement of the Depressed and Backward classes and the scope of the work that still had to

⁴⁹ G.O. No 1070, Law (General), 27 March 1924.

be undertaken.”⁵⁰ The officials went on to argue that it was, “Before the completion of inquiry the government acting on the advice of the board of Revenue, placed Mr. G.F.Paddison I.C.S., on special duty to deal with measures necessary for improving the condition of the Depressed Classes.”⁵¹

Thus it is apparent that, the Labour department found in 1919 with the initiation of Honorable Mr. Dadabhai. The department though named as the protector of depressed classes, it could also work for the development of Backward classes. The government made an exhaustive enquiry to found the department. It would also be appropriate to know the factors responsible for the British who found separate department for the elevation of depressed classes.

The Purpose of the Labour Department:

The government observed that the welfare measures, which intended to uplift the depressed classes, were sporadic in nature. The government intended to organise the measures that were framed for the welfare of depressed classes. By bringing these programmes and policies under one roof, the British government could get an expert knowledge about the depressed classes. The government asserted that the Labour department or the commissioner of Labour was created because of “the necessity that was very strongly felt for imparting continuity to the spasmodic measure undertaken and for ensuring a long-sustained and well-directed effort in this direction.”⁵²

Objective of the Labour Department:

The department which was committed to organize the ameliorative measures to the depressed classes and backward classes, dealt with range of welfare policies. The major works that was carried out under the control and supervision of the Labour department can be listed under the following six heads;

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² G.O.No. 1070, Law (General), 27 March 1924.

- 1) The grant of waste lands for cultivation and house sites.
- 2) The acquisition of existing house sites to relieve the occupants from the present threat of ejection and provision of additional house-sites to relieve congestion.
- 3) The provision of drinking water well, pathways, burial and burning grounds etc.
- 4) The starting of cooperative societies.
- 5) The extension of education by opening separate schools wherever necessary or by arranging for admission to Caste Hindu schools.
- 6) The nomination of the members of depressed classes to local bodies and the Legislative council.⁵³

The government however wanted to ensure that these facilities should be equally distributed or shared among the depressed classes. It made it clear that depressed classes do not refer only to the Adi Dravida or Adi Andhra otherwise known as panchamas. The government clearly noted referred that there were so many other untouchable castes such as *Mala, Madigas. Chamars* etc.”⁵⁴ They also indicated that “it should be specifically stated what classes and castes of untouchables and other depresses classes are looked after in particular areas.”⁵⁵

Representation to the Depressed Classes:

Providing representation to the Depressed Classes in various government institutions was a notable work among the activities of the Labour Department. Indeed the departments had created a remarkable change in the development of the Depressed Classes. In a way, the department awakened the political consciousness among the Depressed Classes. As per provision of the department, “the government made special provision for the representation of depressed classes in the Madras Legislative council and in Local bodies. Under the Madras Electoral

⁵³ G.O. No. 116, Law (General), dated 15 January 1924.

⁵⁴ Undersecretary Safe files No. 41/23, dated 1 May 1923.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

rules, 5 seats in the Local Legislative council are reserved to members of these classes.”⁵⁶

Provision was also made by the Labour Department that the member of the Depressed Classes could be given representation in other influential position such as District and Taluk, and Union Boards. The government argued, “As regards local bodies, the Government have laid down that the few nominative seats that remain under the District Municipalities and Local Boards are mainly intended for the representation of minorities and of depressed classes. They have also impressed upon the presidents of District and Taluk Boards that they should have due regard to representation of depressed classes and of other unrepresented minorities in making nominations to Taluk and Union Boards.”⁵⁷

Labour Department under Trouble:

Under the activities of Labour department, the depressed classes were granted land for cultivation, and house-sites. In villages, considerable extent of land was retained by the collectors for the assignment of land for cultivation to depressed classes. The depressed classes could procure such allocated lands by indicating their caste name or if approved by the society or Association, which works for uplifting the depressed classes. A G.O. stated as, “The Application for land in such areas have to be in the name of and genuinely on behalf of members of the depressed classes or of approved society acting on their behalf.”⁵⁸

The Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha got involved in activities such as applying to Government for the grant of a land for the Adi Dravida members. References to this is available in all the government proceedings, which have pages of related applications for the land on behalf of Adi Dravida. The point to be mentioned here is that the Adi Dravida sabha had such network with the government, which proved beneficial to the community members. It is also

⁵⁶ G.O. No. 116, Law (general), dated 15 January 1924.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

apparent that the sabha and Labour department (government) had mutual understanding.

The activity of the Labour department (which was believed to be the Protector of Depressed Classes) did not escape from the severe skepticism or opposition from the Caste Hindus. The local subordinates who were supposed to implement the government welfare policies in the villages could not cooperate with the Labour department. As majority of the Local subordinates belonged to Non-Brahman community, they could not cooperate with government to grant the depressed classes land for cultivation or house-site. The opposition with the high degree of skepticism was obvious after the government pressurized the Caste Hindus. The Non-Brahman members as they came into power due to Montague Chelmsford Reform "set themselves to destroy this very Department (Labour Welfare Department)."⁵⁹

Emergence of the dispute between the Adi Dravidas and the Non-Brahmins:

The protector of depressed classes, otherwise known as commissioner of Labour had to face non-cooperation by the caste Hindus. The Labour department protected the Adi Dravidar when the caste Hindus atrocity was at the peak in the Pulianthope fire tragedy. In this tragedy several huts of the Adi Dravidas were burnt down by the Caste Hindus. The basic reason for the tragedy was the non-cooperation of Adi Dravidars with the caste Hindus in going on strike in the Mills, i.e. Buckingham and Carnatic Mills (which was run by the government). The police, as they attempted to curtail the strike, had to open fire in which several caste Hindus were killed.⁶⁰ The Adi Dravidars as they were loyal to the British gave up the idea of getting involved in the strike; the government attitude towards Adi Dravidars infuriated the caste Hindus to involve in violence. Consequently, the Pulianthope tragedy broke out.

⁵⁹ M.C.Rajah, *The oppressed Hindus*, Huxley Press, Madras, 1924, p.61.

⁶⁰ Eugene F. Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1969, p.189.

Perhaps, this incident was the stepping-stone to the mutual misunderstanding between the Adi Dravidars and caste Hindus. According to Mr.M.C.Rajah (a well-known Adi Dravida), “the party in power (Justice), which was headed by an eminent personality Sir. P. Tyagaraya Chetty wrote most unwise letter to the Government of Madras on the side of caste Hindus Labourers during the Madras Mill troubles, protesting against the protection given by the Madras Government to the Adi Dravidas.”⁶¹

The Justice party members as they were non-Brahmans could not oppose their fellow caste's atrocity against the Adi Dravidas. Apart from setting fire to the Adi Dravida huts, the caste Hindus with the support of the Non-Brahmin political party leaders ousted the Adi Dravida from the Madras city. The non-Brahman leaders also insisted the government to keep the Adi Dravidas out of the Madras city. The sympathy of the Government in rescuing the Adi Dravidars from the fire and establishment of the Refugee camp to the Adi Dravidars further developed the discontentment among the Non-Brahmins. Before 1920s the Adi Dravidas were patronized by the non-Brahman caste Hindus. The Adi Dravidars also joined hand with the Non –Brahman party leaders in protest against the Brahmins. Like the non-Brahman, they also invariably viewed Congress as their counterpart. But after the Pulianthope incident, the Adi Dravidars vehemently castigated the Non-Brahmans.

By seeing the Non Brahman leader's attitude, M.C.Rajah, (on behalf of the sabha) castigated the non-Brahman for having betrayed them. In his book *Oppressed Hindus*, he has written much about the oppositions that was meted out by Caste Hindus on the Adi Dravidars. The political rhetoric among the Adi Dravidas witnessed a dramatic change only because of the attitude of non-Brahman Caste Hindus in every village. It can also be argued that the Adi Dravidas found or realized their counterparts who are at the immediate vicinity and higher in terms of socio-economic and political condition. *It seems that the intention of non-Brahman political leaders was to check the Brahman dominance and get their position consolidated. To oppose the Brahman dominance they have used the Adi*

⁶¹ M.C.Rajah *Oppressed Hindus*. Op cit.p.61

Dravidars issue. The opposition between the Adi Dravidas and Caste Hindu might be the same. However, the Adi Dravidars apart from anticipating the political nomination were preoccupied with the basic amenities such as education, house sites, and employment opportunities from the government institutions.

Their skepticism of the Caste-Hindus became pervasive from 1921 onwards, because it was realized by the Adi Dravidas that the Justice Party after assumed power were not giving importance to the welfare of the Adi Dravidas. We cannot also assume that the Non-Brahmin leaders were totally against the Adi Dravidars. In fact, a few Non-Brahman Caste Hindu leaders were inclined to give proper representation to the Adi-Dravidars. Mr.Arogiaswamy Pillai of Non-Brahmans party, for instance, was concerned about the issue of the development of the untouchables. His accusation was that the Justice party was gradually moving away from social reform.⁶²

The mill strike that we have discussed reveals that the “The Non-Brahmins, as Mr.M.C.Rajah argues, “instead of distinguishing between non-co-operation strikers and loyal non-strikers, divided the labourers into caste Hindu strikers, and Adi Dravida blacklegs and asked the Caste-Hindu non-cooperation strikers to go to the caste-Hindus leaders of the Non-Brahman party and worry them to take their side against the loyal strikers.”⁶³ The above statement was made by him in the Budget Session for the year 1923 in the Madras Legislative council.⁶⁴

Rehabilitation measures of the government:

Thus, it is obvious that, the Adi Dravidas manifested their loyalty to the British and kept the caste Hindus away by getting the British support. However, the fire set on the adi dravidar settlement created a widespread discontentment among the Adi Dravidars. The British by using the Labour department (protector of Depressed classes) policies and programmes gave security to the homeless Adi Dravidas by establishing a refuge camp at Vyasarpadi Madras.

⁶² Irschick, op cit., p. 189.

⁶³ Mr. M.C.Rajah, *Oppressed Hindus*, op cit., p.63.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.62.

It is clear from a G.O., that during the troubles at the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills, the houses of the laborers were burnt down, the government issued orders to meet the expenses connected with the relief given to laborers who suffered on account of fire. The expenditure was met from the Labour commissioner's budget.⁶⁵

After the fire, the Adi Dravidars were rehabilitated by the British by founding the Refugee camp. T.E. Moir, commissioner Labour, wrote to the secretary to Government, Law General Department, in recommending Mr. Masilamani Swami Desikananada as Honorary Assistant Superintendent to be in charge of the Refugee Camp at Vyasarpadi, Madras. The protection that was given by the British might be humanitarian. By looking at the relationship between the Adi dravidars and British from the foundation of the British supremacy in India, one would infer that the Adi Dravidas (who were called as pariahs before 1917) were maintaining cohesiveness with the British. The cooperation of Adi Dravidars to the British in opposition to the non-cooperation strikers is just a manifestation of loyalty. In recommending for the Honorary Assistant to be the in-charge of the Refugee camp, T.E, Moir wrote that "If the Government approves, my intention is to put Mr. Desikananda in-charge. He is well known member of the Adi Dravida community and "having some private means he has been enabled to devote himself to furthering its interests."⁶⁶

The posts that Mr. Desikananda held were of several kinds. It is due to the emergency purpose that Mr. Desikanandam was recommended for the post of Honorary Secretary of the camp. T.E.Moir went on to argue that Mr.Desikanandan, "was the Assistant superintendent of the Adi Dravida Hostel, Vice President of the Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha, Manager of the king George's free Night school and one of the most active workers in the interests of his community."⁶⁷ In a way, it also implies that the "well known member of the Adi Dravida community," could get more than one post or position in government owned institution. It is therefore

⁶⁵ G.O.No.898, Law (general), dated 21 July 1921.

⁶⁶ G.O.No. 1095, Law (general), dated 13 August 1921.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

the second sort of manifestation that was carried out by the British to reward the loyalties.

Yet another manifestation of rehabilitation process of the British is clear from a G.O. It runs as, "After consulting Mr. Molony, chairman of the Town Planning Trust and Mr. Madeley, the corporation special Engineer, the government decided to construct cheap tenements for the adi dravidas who had lost their houses in the Pulianthope fire."⁶⁸ The government under the above project was to build 150 houses and "a sum of Rs. 2 lakhs was placed as a loan at the disposal of Mr.Molony."⁶⁹

The rehabilitation measures done by the British to the Adi Dravidars, created a widespread discontentment among the Non-Brahman caste Hindus. It is obvious that the British "protected" the depressed classes in general, Adi Dravidas in particular.

Reduction of the Fund to Labour Department:

The Justice party leaders manifested their non-cooperation with the British activities. The members of the Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha during their presidential Address at the second south Indian Adi Dravida congress held on 21st and 22 July 1922 at Koilpatti, Tinnevely District, discussed the unjust treatment that was meted out by the Non-Brahman caste Hindus. Thus, Mr. M.C.Rajah while explaining the activities of the members of "the so called Justice party," explains two unjust treatments that were done by the non-Brahman Justice party members. Firstly he argued "The council cut down our allotment of money in the very first year of its existence by one lakh of rupees and thus deprived the (Labour) Department of opportunities of relieving distress among the poor,"⁷⁰ Secondly the party in power during its second year reported to have "removed all the important and functioning officials of government."⁷¹

⁶⁸ G.O.No.1425, Law (general), dated 17 September 1921.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ M.C.Rajah, *Oppressed Hindus*, op cit, p. 64.

⁷¹ Ibid.

The discontentment that was prevalent among the Adi Dravidars was based mainly on the reduction of funds to the Labour Department. The Adi dravida intellectuals, Mr. M.C.Rajah, for instance, published range of arguments and statistics that revealed the fund for the Labour department was reduced very badly. The Adi Dravidas instead of expecting more fund for the Labour Department they wanted to save the Department. In other words, the Adi Dravidars who were patronized by the non-Brahman leaders before they came into power gradually put the Labour department under the crises. The power of Labour department in carrying out the welfare activities also reduced under the Justice rule. The reduction of the allotment of fund to the Labour department was another important hurdle put by the Justice party.

So far as the year 1921-22 was concerned, the fund allotted by the Labour department to the Adi Dravida was reduced by the Justice party in an unimaginable way. Mr. M.C. Rajah argues, "The department asked for a grant of 6.47 lakhs for Labour and allied department. This came before the Legislative council and grant asked for was reduced by one lakh."⁷² The grant proposed in 1922-23 was reduced by Finance committee, from 12.25 lakhs to 7.87 lakhs for Labour and allied department. The dramatic change had occurred when the above amount **7.87 lakhs** was proposed in legislative council "it was further reduced by **Rs.21380.**"⁷³

The crisis in carrying out the department (protector of depressed classes) was thus pervasive during the Justice rule., it had created a widespread misunderstanding among the Adi Dravidars. Apart from the reduction of power and fund to the Labour department, the justice party was reported to have appointed caste Hindus in Municipal council in place of Adi Dravidars. After the Justice party assumed power in Madras Presidency, as already mentioned, adi Dravidars demands were remarkably changed. The demands of depressed classes such as untouchability vanished. On the contrary, the Adi Dravidars were demanding from the British more representation in government institutions and more funds for their well being. Their proceedings and the response of the Government can be discussed in the following Third chapter. The chapter III

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., p.67-68.

would also make an attempt to analyse the relationship between the non-Brahmans and Adi Dravidars in terms of their demands to the government. Thus, the attitude of non-Brahmans towards Adi Dravidars was hindering their development. It was viewed with reference to the Labour department; and the reduction of funds to the depressed classes. The following chapter will analyse the other areas that were perceived as an obstacle to the Adi Dravidars.

CHAPTER – III

Proceedings and Achievements of the Sabha

CHAPTER III

PROCEEDINGS AND ACHIVEMENTS OF THE ADI DRAVIDA MAHAJANA SABHA

In this chapter, the resolutions passed by the sabha and its members in various occasion would be analyzed. The focus would be to know, how far their demands justified by them and up to what extent the British extended their support to Adi Dravidars. The British approach toward the Non-Brahman leaders and Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha is also worth mentioning to know the British attitude towards the caste groups after the communal representation conceded by the British India. In the era of rising communal representation, the Adi Dravidars, through their demands were emphasizing for appointing more representatives from their community in various government institutions. Representation was felt to be necessary in Legislative council, Municipal Councils, district, Taluq Boards, Union Panchayat and other self-governing institutions. This will be the focal point of the chapter.

How the Resolutions Reached the Government:

The Adi Dravida conferences, passed resolution which ultimately intended to bring to the knowledge of the government issues concerning them. It was an obligation to the Sabha members, who were already in Legislative council, to raise the debate on the issues in the council. The resolutions were first of all sent to the commissioner of Labour for scrutinize. The commissioner in turn would bring the debate to the council. The concerned authority of the departments such as Law, Public and Revenue and Education had to respond to the council members. Mr. Kesavulu Pillai, who was one of the vice presidents of the Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha and a member of Legislative council, Coonoor, for instance, asked, "Whether the governments have perused a communication under the heading "A Panchama mass meeting" published in the *Hindu* of 3rd February 1921.¹ The law Member responded to him by saying that "the resolutions passed at the meeting were received by Government who have forwarded them to the commissioner of

¹ *Madras Legislative Council Proceedings*, (hereafter MLCP), vol. I, 1921.

Labour for inquiry, on the result of enquiry, the Government will consider what action, if any, should be taken.”²

Major issues of the sabha:

The sabha demanded the British to grant various amenities pertaining to Education, Land acquisition, representation in the government institutions. A few members of the sabha were nominated as member of Legislative, District and Municipal council, land acquisition and employment. They also pressurized the government to grant wasteland for cultivation, free house-sites for the depressed classes. Though demands such as education facilities, land acquisition were the general one, representation in government institutions was their primary concern. The major arguments of the sabha members focused mainly on the appointment of their members in the Legislative, district, Municipal councils. The sabha started its vigorous campaign along with the non-Brahman leaders’ support in 1917 on the communal representation and representation with equal proportion to the population. Their demands to the government invariably referred to their numerical strength compare to Non-Brahmans, depressed classes and Muslim.

It would be appropriate to focus on a major issue, i.e. political representation. As already mentioned they started their political rhetoric with non-Brahman party leaders. Such rhetoric has already been dealt under the head “Adi Dravida Question” in previous chapter. Thus 1917, the year of communal representation, was the era of political consciousness among the Adi Dravidars? The trend however, considerably changed after 1920. The discontentment between the non-Brahman party leaders and Adi Dravidars has already discussed, as a reason for the growth of independence in the activities of the sabha. The following pages would focus on the issues pertaining to the political representation.

² Ibid.

In the Era of Communal Representation:

Before we go into the details of the resolutions that were intended to attain more political representation, it would be appropriate to know the reason why political representation was crucial to the Adi Dravidars. The Adi Dravidars as they were well known (from 1891) to the British government could aspire for the political representation when the Non-Brahman leaders pressurized the government to give weight to their numerical strength, after they united the *Panchamas* or Depressed classes into their Non-Brahman category. The demands for the communal representation that put forward by the Non-Brahmans included the Panchamas in their fold. The inclusion of Panchams also implied that the Non-Brahmans category was bigger than the Brahmins were. The point is that numerical strength along with socio-economic and political backwardness became a prominent 'factor' for the communal representation. The agenda of Adi Dravidars also emphasized that their strength and socio-economic and political vulnerability was a factor for the necessity of political representation.

Major demands of the Adi Dravidars:

- 1) Representation in the Legislative council
- 2) Appointment to committee
- 3) Representation in the Indian Assembly.
- 4) Large and More efficient representation in Local Bodies and Municipal councils
- 5) Appointment to Educational councils.
- 6) Titles and Honors and Honorary appointments to Adi Dravidars.
- 7) Public Service.
- 8) Territorial Force.³
- 9) Having full time Protector of Depressed classes.
- 10) Appointment of a full time senior civilian officer for Depressed Classes with an efficient staffs (preferable a qualified Adi Dravida)
- 11) To treat the works related to the amelioration of the Depressed Classes as a Reserved subject.

³ G.O.No.1415, Law (general), dated 19 May 1923.

12) Admission of Adi Dravidars into Public schools.

13) Use of Public Wells by the Adi Dravidars.

Numerical politics:

To justify their notion that to have more representation the Adi Dravidars has referred their numerical strength as a major factor. In 1923, for instance, the Adi Dravidars felt 5 seats were not sufficient to their population and argued that “we are 1/6th of the whole population 1/5th of the Hindu population we should get 15 seats in virtue of our numbers. We require more for safeguarding our interests.”⁴

They also compared other communities and their representation which was to them not properly shared. The Sabha members while arguing about the Muhammadans emphasized that the strength of Muhammdans was “only 1/5th of the population (but) were given 13 seats. The Indian Christians who were “less than 1/33rd of the population are given 5 seats.”⁵

Caste Prejudice:

Apart from their numerical strength, they referred to the necessity ‘for special protection on account of caste prejudice against them.’ The caste prejudice was a factor that was considered by the government. To safeguard their interest; they demanded the government give at least 20 seats.⁶ Their age long oppression by the caste Hindus was cited by the Adi Dravida as a factor for more representation and protection, under the British.

To justify the similar line they argued that “descended from the original Dravidans who inhabited southern India before the invasion of Aryans from the North and being consequently the sons of the soil in a very special sense, we

⁴ G.O.No.1415, Law (general), dated 19 May 1923.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

constitute the bulk of the labouring population especially in rural areas where the caste Hindus depend upon us for cultivating their lands.”⁷

In chapter I, I have referred that how Eugene Irschick shows that the Parayars referred themselves as sons of the soil to justify themselves as the deserving category for special care under the British.

To Pressurize the Government to Plan and Execute Welfare Policies:

The Adi Dravidas believed that unless and until there was a representative from their community in Legislative, District, and Municipal council, they could not pressurize the government to protect themselves from caste Hindus oppression. While framing or implementing any government policy there was at least the possibility of caste prejudice to the Adi Dravidas being questioned if they had more representatives in those councils?

As far as the growing discontentment between the Non-Brahman party and the Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha was concerned, the Adi Dravida tried to have “a strong contingent in the council” so that “there would have been no anti-Adi-Dravida crusade in the Pulianthope trouble, no suggestion to deport Adi Dravida from Madras. No abolition of Assistant Labour commissioner, no rejection of the Irrigation bill by the non-Brahmins” rather they would have “commanded better consideration from the Ministers and from the council which consists mainly of caste Hindus posing as Non-Brahmans.”⁸ It was thus crucial for the Adi Dravidars to have more representatives in government institutions so that they could influence the government policies.

The Political rhetoric that they used:

We have already discussed under the heading “Adi Dravida question in Public Press” that how the urge for the communal representation was emphasized by the non-Brahman leaders by including the panchamas question in their political

⁷ G.O.No.1070, Law (general), dated 27 March 1924.

⁸ G.O.No.1415, Law (General), dated 19 May 1923.

rhetoric. In fact the very term panchama was extensively used to unite the outcaste in their fold but it was realized by a few Adi Dravida intellectuals, Mr. M.C.Rajah, for instance, was argued that this term has “sinister implications.”⁹ During 1917, the non-Brahman leaders used both Panchamas and Adi Dravidas to denote the outcastes of the Madras presidency. The Adi Dravidars were not only using the term Adi Dravida but also referred to Depressed Classes whenever necessary. Most of their resolutions passed both in Adi Dravdia Conference and Legislative Council, referred to the term Depressed Classes to get any government benefits. The Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha members while going on a deputation to Mr. Harding, asserted, “on behalf of the Adi Dravidas and Other Depressed Classes of Southern India, we, the members of the Madras Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha, welcome your Excellency.”¹⁰

To mobilise the Government fund for the sake of outcastes it was crucial to the Dravidars to refer to the Government encompassing all the groups of outcaste of the Madras presidency. How far the terms such as Adi Dravida denote the outcastes of the presidency will be discussed in the same chapter.

Demands of Adi Dravidars for Political Representation: a Branches' Approach

It is essential to know that the Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha was demanding political representation with the support of non-Brahman leaders. The following pages would concentrate on the efforts taken by the Adi Dravidars themselves.

The Adi Dravidas convened a conference on 2nd October 1920¹¹, in Omakkulam Nandanar Matt of Chidambaram Taluq. The resolutions passed in this conference shows that the Adi Dravidars were not at all supported by any non-Brahman caste Hindu leaders. As usual, they proclaimed their loyalty with

⁹ MLCP, Vol.IV, 1922, p.2048.

¹⁰ G.O. 1070, op cit., para.1.

¹¹ G.O. No. 2830, Revenue, dated 29, November 1920.

Britishers, because they were the only source for the Adi Dravidars and their development.

The resolutions passed by the Branches of Adi Dravida were preoccupied with the development of their own Taluq or District. They also encouraged the British to nominate their members in respectable as well as influential position in government institutions. As already pointed elsewhere the Adi Dravidars wanted to have the major influential positions in Legislative council, Municipal Councils, Districts, Taluq Boards, Union panchayat and other self-governing institutions. The conference members were happy at the nomination of Swami Sahajananda to the Municipal council of Chidambaram and expressed their gratitude to the British.¹²

In the same conference, the members prayed the government to “appoint at any early date more than two representatives of Adi Dravidras as members of Taluq Boards and as Honorary magistrates and as similar functionaries.”¹³ The conferences that convened in 18th June 1917, 29th June 1919 and 2nd June 1920, emphasized the appointment of special officers to look after the depressed classes. This conference (of 2nd October 1920) brought the resolution that were passed in the above mentioned conference to the government and regretted that “no special officers has been appointed for advancing the interests of the depressed classes in South Arcot district in general and Chidambaram Taluq in particular.”¹⁴

The members of the sabha were very clear about the process of execution of government plans. The sabha members argued that though “the British government, the government of India, the Governors of Madras, collectors of Districts and other high officers do sincerely sympathize with the Adi Dravidars, their grievances cannot be fully redressed until subordinate officials are actuated by similar sympathy.”¹⁵

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ G.O. No. 2830, Revenue, dated 29, November.1920.

¹⁵ Ibid.

The conferences convened by the Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha and its branches clearly authorized their leading members to communicate with the British higher authorities, facilitating the relationship between the sabha and the government. The conference of 1920, for instance, “authorized the Hon’ble Mr. Rajah to communicate in person the resolutions passed at this conference to His Excellency Lord Willingdon.”¹⁶

The Honorable Secretary of the sabha Mr. M. C. Rajah raised several issues in the Legislative council on behalf of the depressed classes in general, Adi Dravida in particular. As already mentioned the sabha by its resolution, pressurized the government to implement the welfare measures that framed to uplift the depressed classes. It would be pertinent to know the major issues that put forward by the sabha in their resolutions. The major issues of Adi Dravida Mahajana sabha was changing according to the political change in Madras presidency. The Honorary secretary of sabha Rao Bahadur M.C.Rajah raised the issue on the derogatory term used by the colonial records. As the term *pariah* and *panchamas* denotes their lower status in the social system. The debate which taken place among the members of Legislative councils already dealt in chapter I.

The very argument of Mr. M.C. Rajah implies that they were mostly concerned with the government privileges or benefits. To quote Mr. M.C.Rajah “we are a depressed community and we are in need of greater facilities for improving our social status, so it is very necessary that we should remain, a separate entity to get the required privileges from the government proceedings to achieve our object.”¹⁷

The whole arguments were to *record* the respectable name Adi Dravida instead of a derogatory one. One might rise point here how far the stigma would vanish by merely *recording* the compatible word. It has much to do with the very higher castes who are using it. It is argued that the term “Adi” itself implies that they are distinct from the other castes. Sriman Biswananth Das Mahassayo while arguing on the similar line says that “any expression differentiating them from the

¹⁶ G.O.No. 2830, Revenue, 29 November 1920, Resolution No.5.

¹⁷ MLCP, Vol. IV, 20 January 1922, p.2048.

rest of the Hindu will not at all improve the situation”¹⁸ The point which I would like to emphasize here is that the deletion of terms from the government records would ensure that at least in future the term Adi Dravdia would be recorded. Through the new term, they could get a new identity. As Mr.M.C.Rajah aptly said “we should be designated Adi Dravida or the original Dravida, thus bringing us into line with the non-Brahman Hindus, who are spoken of as Dravidian.”¹⁹

Loyalty as the Best Policy:

Whatever the government appoints a member of Adi Dravidar community, they never failed to appreciate the government. Swami Shajanananda an Adi Dravida, for instance was appointed by the Madras government as representative of Chidambaram taluk. The members of South Arcot Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha branch appreciated the activities of the British. The sabha members aptly wrote, “The conference feels deeply grateful to the government for appointing Swami Sahajananda to the Municipal council of Chidambaram and for the help which government is giving to the Nandanar School at Chidambaram.”²⁰

Derogatory term to justify the Necessity for the Political Terms:

The discontentment that existed between the Non-Brahman leaders and Adi Dravidars also reflects in their resolution. The attempt taken by V.G.Vasudeva Pillai to call these members as “Dravida” instead of Adi Dravida infuriated the members of the sabha. They were strongly recommending the government to remove and cancel his representation from Chidambaram. Mr. V.G.Vasudevan was one among the member of Adi Dravida deputation which took place when Mr. E.S.Montague was in Madras.²¹ The proposal given by Mr.Vasudevan(change the term Adi Dravidas into “Dravidas”) was criticized by saying that he made “attempts to change without the consent of the community its name of Adi

¹⁸ Ibid., p.2051.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., Adi Dravida Conference Resolution No.2, (b).

²¹ MLCP, VOL.IV, p.2051.

Dravida...as a distinctive appellation through which various benefits and privileges have been secured for the community from Government, into Dravida.”²²

V.G. Vasudeva Pillai, as he went against the theory or interest of the Adi Dravidars, was not considered as a representative of Adi Dravidars. On the contrary, the conference recommended to the government to “remove (him) from the Madras corporation and no attention should be paid to his representations.”²³

Gratefulness towards Government Officials:

Whenever a government official patronized the Adi Dravidars in implementing the welfare activities, the Adi Dravidars requested the Government to retain the post of the servant. The Adi Dravidars thus suggested through their resolution to the government, to give much importance to the development or upliftment of Adi Dravida. The Adi Dravidas expressed their gratefulness to the “sympathy of the British government, the government of India, the Government of Madras, Collectors of District and other high officers.”²⁴

Though the above said officials have sympathy towards the Adi Dravidars, they can ensure the sympathy has rewarded only by “activating Local Subordinate Officials. Once the Adi Dravidar had seen the cooperation of the Thasildar of Chidambaram Mr. T.M. Desikachariar, they praised him by saying him as the one who “sincerely labouring for the Adi Dravidas.” So he was also recommended by the Adi Dravidars to “be retained in Chidambaram.”²⁵

Safeguarding the protector of Depressed Classes:

The Adi Dravidars perceived the protector of depressed classes ‘saddled’ with other works such as criminal tribes and Labour and wanted to have special Officer who could devote his full time for the well being of depressed classes. This proposal, to have special officer was a result of the Non-Brahmin leaders’ attitude.

²² G. O. No. 2830, Revenue, 29 November 1920, resolution no.3 (b).

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid. Resolution No.4 (b)

The Adi Dravidars believed that the non-Brahmin leaders after assuming power in Madras presidency gradually gave up the idea of protecting the interest of adi dravidars. Apart from the attitude of Non-Brahman leaders, the British officials themselves were inclined to divert the work of the protector of depressed classes into criminal tribes, and Labour. The British tried to implement the objectives of the Labour Department. The pressure given by Honorable Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji to protect the Depressed Classes and Backward Classes might be the reason for the change of British attitude, the proposal of Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji emphasized to create a separate department for improving the condition of both Backward Classes and Depressed Classes. Perhaps his resolution intended to uplift all the suffering masses. To him sufferings of the depressed classes and backward classes in terms of education, land acquisition, house sites drinking water facilities, starting of cooperative societies etc., were the same.

The Adi Dravidars on the contrary, wanted to have all the facilities for the sole betterment of the depressed classes. Their point of view was that they were denied those facilities for a long time, due to caste prejudice. They argued that from the time immemorial they were denied the above facilities by the caste-Hindus, so they were deserved to get them. The British seeing the resolutions of Adi Dravidars criticizing the activities of Labour department being saddled with into 'other works,' responded that the resolution passed by Dadabhai Naoroji was for the "improvement of the Depressed and Backward classes."²⁶ The British went on to argue that before the completion of the enquiry on both depressed and backward classes, the government created a department, with the advice of Mr. G.F. Paddison I.C.S., to deal with the betterment of depressed classes. The British asserted, "The enquiry above referred to was subsequently completed and Government considered that it was necessary to included within the scope of the special officers duties all the depressed classes and backward classes, in other words Labour in general."²⁷

²⁶ G.O. No. 1070, Law (General), dated 27 March 1924.

²⁷ Ibid.

Why Depressed Classes are Important under Labour Department than Backward Classes:

The discontentment, among the Adi Dravidars on the diversification of Labour department from upliftment of depressed classes to backward classes, became pervasive. As the Adi Dravidas realized the partial approach of the Justice party leaders, they passed series of resolutions to have special officer for elevating the depressed classes in general, Adi Dravida in particular. This approach of the Adi Dravidars thus emphasized the government to bifurcate the Labour department. The process of getting considerable control over the Labour department can be discussed in the following paragraphs.

Appointment of Standing Committee:

As already mentioned the objective of Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha and its members, was to have effective control or influence over the department. Therefore the sabha members whoever already placed in Legislative council, were frequently raising questions in the council. Mr. G.Vandanam, an Adi Dravida, member of Legislative council passed resolution “to appoint a standing committee to look into the grievances of the depressed classes and to suggest means of redress.”²⁸ The Standing committee used to analyze the resolution passed every year. The committee also conducted meetings twice in a month. Mr.Vandanam wanted to appoint a standing committee especially to look into the grievances of the depressed classes. Before dealing with the issue on the appointment of the standing committee, it would be appropriate to know more about the structure and function of the Labour Department. The hierarchy of the Labour department was as follows:

²⁸ G.O.No. 1365, Law (General), dated 11 May 1923.

Labour Department

Commissioner of Labour (Head of the department)

Labour Advisory Board.

Assistant Commissioners of Labour

District Collectors

Special Thasildars.

Subordinate officials

Thus, it would be clear that Labour Advisory committee and Assistant commissioner of Labour, and District collectors assisted the commissioner of Labour. The Special Thasildars used to supervise the subordinate officials. The assistant commissioner, district collectors, Special Thasildars and subordinate officials were under the control of the commissioner Labour. The present resolution that passed by the member of Adi Dravida Mahajana sabha was to appoint a standing committee to look into the interests of the depressed classes.

Types of Committees:

During the sessions of the House or Legislative council, the standing committees met at least once in two months. There were two committees in the presidency. The standing committees, according to the government, "composed of members of the Legislative councils of whom a few are elected by the council.

and the rest are nominated by his Excellency the Governor. The standing Finance committee and the Public Accounts committee are only two committee of this kind in this (Madras) presidency.”²⁹

Another committee that was in force in the presidency was called as Ordinary Advisory committee. Its members were “appointed entirely by His Excellency secretaries to government and heads of department who are not members of the Legislative council are also appointed ex-officio members. All the committees come under this category.”³⁰

Response of the Government:

Mr. Vandanam passed resolution to appoint the standing committee especially for the upliftment of the depressed classes. It would be appropriate to know the reasons why the government cancelled the resolution. However, the government argued that the issue on the depressed classes was seriously considered by them. Therefore, it was unnecessary to appoint a separate committee for the depressed classes. It is apparent from the following response of the government that the government was carrying out several remedial measures for the upliftment of the depressed classes but the Adi Dravidars were not satisfied.

The British officials responded to the above resolution about the problems of the depressed classes, and said that they “have been exhaustively examined by the government from time to time in the past and present.”³¹ Apart from the regular protection to the depressed classes, the Labour department publishes its report annually, which “placed on Editor’s table and opportunity is given to the member of the council to express their views on the subject.”³² It was also true that as the member of the sabha appointed in Legislative council, “they could raise several interpellations in the Legislative council.”³³

²⁹ G.O. No. 1365, Law (general), Dated 11 May 1923.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

The activities of the sabha was mostly concerned about the above issue, they have passed several resolutions by looking the response of the government in the Legislative council. The debate over the issues on depressed classes was readily brought to the notice of the commissioner of Labour. This process also ensured that the Adi Dravidars along with depressed classes gained currency and remedial measures. The government aptly noted, "There have also been several resolutions of Adi Dravida conferences in the matter. These interpellations and resolutions are invariably referred to the commissioner of Labour thereby giving him an opportunity to take any action which he might deem necessary."³⁴

Apart from the debate in the legislative Council and the activities of the Adi Dravida sabha, the government suggested to the collectors and the commissioner of Labour to look into the grievances of the people. The government thus, felt the resolution to appoint a standing committee as unnecessary. Arguing on the same line Mr. K. Srinivasa Ayyangar, (an executive of the government) observed, "I am not able to see what a committee can possibly do beyond what we ourselves are doing."³⁵

By the above response of the Government, the sabha members came to know the administrative structure of the Labour department. By the proposal made by Mr. Vandanam the Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha came to know the structure and the functioning of various committees in the presidency. When the sabha convened, the next conference on 4 April 1923 referred the government to appoint Adi Dravidas in the above committees. The sabha in its resolution emphasized the government to include the Adi Dravidars in the committees mentioned above. The sabha argued, "representatives should be included in every important committee appointed by the government, such as Finance committee, Public Accounts, standing Advisory Boards, there is no question of public interest in which the welfare and progress of the depressed classes is not involved."³⁶

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ G. O. No. 1415, Law (general), dated 19 May 1923.

Acting upon the resolution the British officials indicated that the Law general department “appointed only one committee called Labour Advisory Board for the benefit of depressed classes.”³⁷ Mr.M.C.Rajah was appointed as the member of this committee. Perhaps, by the above said appointment, the sabha members might have got influence over the Labour department. Though the British could not appoint the sabha members in *other* committees they assured to the sabha that, “If such a committee is constituted, provision will no doubt be made for the adequate representation of Adi Dravidas in it.”³⁸

REORGANISATION OF LABOUR DEPARTMENT:

Apart from the demand for the representation of Adi Dravidars in the committees, they demanded the British to appoint special officers for safeguarding the interest of the Adi Dravidars. The resolution passed by them particularly after 1920, intended to free the Labour department from the caste Hindu clutches. In other words, the Ministry formed by the Justice party especially by the support of Montague Chelmsford Reform was perceived as a threat or an obstacle for the well-being of Adi Dravidas.

Special Officer for the Depressed Classes:

The sabha passed a resolution to the government to appoint “an I.C.S. officer who would devote his whole time to the work of the amelioration of the Depressed Classes.”³⁹ They wanted to have a separate I.C.S. officer for the elevation of Depressed Classes, because the commissioner of Labour was ‘saddled’ with other works. If there were a separate officer, the problems of the Adi Dravidas which were growing day by day, would be reduced. The sabha also asserted that “a senior officer with a large and efficient staff working in all districts” should be considered as very important at this juncture. The proposed senior officer, Sabha

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ G.O.No.1415, Law (general), dated 19 May 1923, resolution No. 9.

argued, should have “assistants and office staffs who should be capable men belonging to Adi Dravida community.”⁴⁰

The sabha also pointed out that the demands or resolutions carried in the council were not favored rather, the majority of the caste Hindus in the council “counteract and nullify” them. They argued that the caste Hindus could easily be distinguished from the Depressed Classes, Brahmins, Indian Christians and Mohammedans, by their distinct character. The sabha gave a threat to the British by saying that they just feared about and, “viewing with anxiety the decreasing power of the British element and the increasing power of a caste bound oligarchy which while demanding justice for it is devoid of an innate sense of justice.”⁴¹

Non-Brahman oligarchy:

The political rhetoric used by the Adi Dravidas indeed changed by the attitude of the Caste Hindus. Interestingly the very political rhetoric used by the non-Brahmans against the Brahmins such as “Brahmin oligarchy” and “dominance,” was now used by the Adi Dravidars. The Adi Dravidars referred to the Brahmins, Christians and Mohammedans as minority and the Caste Hindus as Majority who were occupying the power at that time.

When the non-Brahmans opposed the Brahmins oligarchy the British (as they felt the Brahman dominance as a threat), encouraged the non-Brahmans by supporting the communal award and safeguarding the majority non-Brahmans. Arguing the above point Eugene, Irschick wrote, “The British reaction to the non-Brahman movement in Madras in the middle of the First World War was one in a series of attempts to quash the pretensions of South Indian Brahmins.”⁴²

The approach of the British thus shaped according to the degree of threat they perceived. The Adi Dravidars in their resolution used the same rhetoric to threaten the British by referring “Non-Brahman oligarchy.” The question arises

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., End Para of resolution no.9.

⁴² Eugene.F. Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*, p. 354.

here whether the British favored the Adi Dravidars against the Non-Brahman oligarchy or not? The depressed classes favored by the British from 1891 itself. Therefore, we cannot distinguish the remarkable change that took place after the emergence of Non-Brahman oligarchy. There was however a possibility that, as the Adi Dravidars castigated the Justice party on the ground that they (Non-Brahmans) form the majority in the Legislative council the British might have checked the caste Hindus dominance by the giving more representation to the Adi Dravidars.

Adi Dravidars at the Vicious Circle:

The articulation of Adi Dravidars proliferated within no time. Their conferences (especially after 1920) condemned the activities of the non-Brahmans caste Hindus who formed a majority in every influential government and private position. The Adi Dravidars in their frequent resolutions argued against the justice party by calling it as “sectarian movement.” The Adi Dravidars argued that they were under the clutches of the caste-Hindus. They asserted that the party in power (i.e. Justice Party), is a threat to the elevation of depressed classes in general and Adi Dravidas in particular. They rightly said, “the introduction of Reforms as modified in this presidency by the sectarian movement called the Non-Brahman movements, has placed the Depressed Classes at the mercy of Caste Hindus who are more or less openly opposed to the elevation of our community.”⁴³

The Justice Party composed of Non-Brahmins was believed to be staunch supporters of Landlords. The Adi Dravidars perceived that the support rendered by the party leaders to the landlords was yet another threat to the elevation of Adi Dravidars or Depressed Classes. They also asserted that the protector of Depressed Classes or Labour department was facing a severe threat in the form of Landlords; they argued that the Landlords “sought to abolish the office of the Labour commissioner because he was the protector of the Depressed Classes.”⁴⁴

⁴³ G.O.No. 1070, Law (general), dated 27 March 1924, Para no.11.

⁴⁴ Ibid., para.12.

The Non-Brahmin Caste Hindus, according to Adi Dravidras, reduced the efficiency of the Labour commissioner into insignificance, the wiles, that were employed by the Non-Brahman caste Hindus against the Adi Dravidas seems to be the vicious circle to them. They go on to argue that the caste Hindus who were unable to abolish the office of the commissioner of Labour, attacked the very efficiency of the Labour commissioner by, "supplying him with a less efficient staff who are not to act except with the permission of the district collectors who fear to undertake measure for the benefit of the depressed classes lest they should thereby incur the displeasure of local land-lords and Caste Hindus, whose voice has become all potent in the administration of this presidency."⁴⁵

The Adi Dravidas wanted to break the vicious circle. Consequently, they asserted that the Non-Brahman Caste-Hindus control over the Labour department officials would hinder their development. so "the work of ameliorating the conditions of the Depressed Classes should be entirely a Reserved Subject, no part of the work being controlled by any of the Transferred Departments and it should be entrusted to a full-time senior civilian officer with an efficient staff working under his direct orders."⁴⁶

However, the government denied in its response to the Adi Dravidars by asserting that, "the education of the children of Depressed Classes cannot be classed as an industrial matter or as a measure adopted for the welfare of Labour."⁴⁷ The British went on to argued that the proposal was "against constitutional principles and can not therefore be granted."⁴⁸

Bifurcation of Labour Department: a process of Adi Dravidasation of the Labour Department.

The Adi Dravidars intended to have a separate officer for the welfare of depressed classes alone. The sabha members who were in influential position insisted to the government to take the necessary measures. They pressurized the

⁴⁵ Ibid., para.12.

⁴⁶ G.O.No.1070, op cit., para.14.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

government to consider the case seriously. The *first* demand put forward in this regard was to appoint “an I.C.S. officer who should devote his whole time to the work of the amelioration of the depressed Classes.”⁴⁹ Secondly, they insisted the Government that “There is a need for a senior officer with a large and efficient staff working in all Districts. His assistants and his office staff should be capable men belonging to our (Adi Dravida) community or drawn from other classes, (who are) free from caste prejudice.”⁵⁰

In response to the above question, the Government explained that the process of bifurcation of the Labour Department was already in its underway. The government while referring the process of bifurcation pointed out the four notable officials’ view. Mr. Moir (the commissioner of Labour in 1921), Mr. Paddison (the commissioner of Labour in 1923.) Mr. Srinivasa Ayyanagar (the member in charge of the department) and Mr. Knapp were the government officials who expected that the department would soon be bifurcated and senior officials had to be appointed especially for the betterment of Adi Dravidars.

Mr. Moir’s suggestion:

The government mentioned that the process of bifurcation is already on. It was clear from the letter sent by Mr. Moir dated 16 August 1921, that Mr. Moir was also of the view of reorganizing the Labour department. His suggestion was, “There should be two officials to view their own departments, i.e. Labour and Depressed Classes if a reasonable degree of efficiency was to be maintained in respect of the work entrusted to the department there were two possible courses open to the government; either to continue the existing system or to have two senior officers, one to deal with questions connected with Labour and the other to deal with criminal settlements, depressed classes and allied subjects, and to advise government in regard to them.”⁵¹ Though the suggestion clearly indicated that the department should be bifurcated for the interest of the Adi Dravidas, a resolution passed by the supporters of caste Hindus emphasized to the government that the

⁴⁹ G.O.No. 1415, Law (general), dated 19 May 1923. Resolution no.9

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ G.O.No.1415, op cit.

department should be abolished. Therefore, the government argued that the Moir suggestion could not be fulfilled.

Mr. Paddison's view:

The second notable official was Mr. Paddison (commissioner of Labour). He expressed the similar but more specific view. As far as the view of Mr. Moir was concerned, the department for the development of "depressed classes" and Criminal Tribe was yet to be created. Whereas Mr. Paddison clearly indicated that, the "Adi Dravidars" should be protected by appointing a fulltime officer. Mr. Paddison aptly noted, "The Adi Dravidars required a full time officer for themselves, that the Labour questions would give full employment to a special officer and that it would be preferable that the office should be separated and placed in the hands of two senior officers whose influence would secure the cooperation of all parties concerned."⁵²

Indeed, the suggestion given by Mr. Paddison for the well-being of the Adi Dravidars indicates that the Adi Dravidar had remarkable impression on the British high officials. The Adi Dravidars could get such recognition partly because of their sabha's activities. *The Sabha members who were well placed in the government institutions were the guiding spirit for the Sabha.*

Mr. Srinivasa Ayyangar's view:

Mr. Srinivasa Ayyangar also expected the bifurcation of the Labour department, but unable to implement the process. Because Mr. Srinivasa Ayyangar (the member in charge of the department) and Mr. Knapp both realised that the department should be bifurcated, but they felt that there was an administrative difficulty. Mr. Srinivasa Ayyangar was quite concerned about the financial condition of the government. When there was a meeting in legislative council in 25 March 1922, Mr. Ayyangar pointed out "we (the Government of Madras Presidency) were of the opinion that there should really be two separate

⁵² Ibid.

departments. One dealing with industrial Labour and the other dealing with the depressed classes. If the House is prepared to sanction funds to have these departments under separate heads, I shall be extremely pleased. But in our present financial state we can not afford it and we are getting on with one single Labour Commissioner to do both those functions.”⁵³

Finally, Mr. Knapp, Honorable member of the House also accepted the view of the bifurcation by saying that, “the jurisdiction of the commissioner of Labour should be separated from that of the protector of the depressed classes, but it was money which stood in the way.”⁵⁴

Whatever may be the obstacle in the process of bifurcation, the Adi Dravidas were ultimately given assurance that they would get a separate department with a special officer with the staffs and assistants especially from their own community. The British indicated that “the desirability of adopting the suggestion made by the Adi Dravida deputation viz, to have an I.C.S officer to devote his whole time to the work connected with the Depressed Classes, has already been admitted by the government. It can, however, be given effect to only when the finances of the government allow it.”⁵⁵

The whole bifurcation process eventually gave protection to the Adi Dravidars. The Labour department, in fact was created for the benefit of both Depressed Classes and Backward classes. However, the Labour department when it started with a few schemes, which directly connected with the upliftment of the depressed classes, gave recognition to the Labour department as a “protector of Depressed Classes.”⁵⁶

The Adi Dravidars who also represented the Depressed Classes of South India (Madras Presidency) had made an endeavor to save the protector of the Depressed Classes. The Adi Dravidars to ensure this passed several resolution (which we have already discussed in previous paras) to have strong grip or

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

influence over the department. To conclude the issue of the Labour department it might be pertinent to say that *the protector of Depressed Classes became the protector Adi Dravidars.*

DEMANDS ON POLITICAL REPRESENTATION:

The sabha passed resolutions to the government to get representation in Legislative council, Local Bodies and Municipal councils. The Adi Dravidar's resolution reflected the growing political scenario of the presidency. They used the same political rhetoric that was used by the non-Brahman leaders in the second decade of the 20th century.

Representation in the Legislative Council: a justification.

The Adi Dravidar s realized that a few members of their community could not have voice in raising question and framing the policies that intended to ameliorate the depressed classes. Until 1920, there were 5 seats to represent the Depressed Classes in the Legislative council. The Adi Dravidars passed resolution to give more representations with reference to their numerical strength. They argued that "the 5 seats at present assigned not enough. We are entitled to more. We are 1/6th of the whole population 1/5th of the Hindu Population (4/5th caste-Hindus and 1/5th of Depressed Classes) we should get 15 seats in virtue to our numbers. We require more for safeguarding our interests."⁵⁷

They have justified their demands by referring the caste prejudice meted out on them by the Non-Brahman caste Hindus. According to Adi Dravidas, the Caste Hindus atrocity inflicted on them was of various kinds. They have substantiated the above view by quoting from important incidents. Firstly, they believed the anti-Adi Dravida crusade in the Pulinathope fire as a manifestation of caste Hindu atrocity on them. As already mentioned the Non-Brahman leaders were very much dissatisfied with the Adi Dravidas because the Adi Dravidas did

⁵⁷ G.O. No. 1415, Law (general), dated 19 May 1923, Resolution No.1

not join with the Non Brahmin leaders against the British. The government however, protected the Adi Dravidars by establishing Refugee camp for them.

Secondly, the Adi Dravidars castigated the suggestion made by the non-Brahman leaders. The suggestion was to deport the Adi Dravidars from Madras. Irschick for instance has already dealt the attitude of Non-Brahman Caste- Hindus towards the Adi Dravidars. He asserted that during the Pulianthope fire incident⁵⁸ the Adi Dravidas were not protected by the Caste Hindus. Rather they written proposal to the government to keep away the Adi Dravidars out of the Madras city. He substantiates the above view, by referring the proposal passed by Mr. Tyagaraja Chetti (a reputed Non-Brahman Leader). Mr. Tyagaraja written to the Government that, "The Ali-Dravidars should not be kept together in one camp or near each other in the affected area, the Ali-Dravida Camps should be removed outside the limits of Madras and they should not be kept together."⁵⁹

Thirdly, the Adi Dravidas alleged that the Non-Brahman leaders took measures to abolish the post of Assistant commissioner of Labour. They have taken such measures to save the government from conflicting with the caste-Hindu landlords of the presidency. The nature of job that the Assistant commissioner carried out was to ensure the Adi Dravidras and Depressed Classes in acquiring free house-site and free cultivable land. For that reason, the government had to take effort of purchasing or "snatching" the excessive lands from the landlords. The landlords who were having cohesiveness with the Non-Brahmin leaders prejudiced them to abolish the post from the presidency itself. It is apparent from the government report that their attempt however did not succeed. The government aptly notes "in 1921 and 1922 several resolution were tabled for the abolition of the Labour Department but none of them were actually moved in the Legislative council as some lapsed and other were withdrawn."⁶⁰

⁵⁸ In this incident, several huts of the Adi Dravidas set fire by the caste Hindus.

⁵⁹ The *Hindu* (weekly edition), September.8, 1921, as quoted by Eugene F. Irschick, *Politics and Social Conflict in South India*, p. 190.

⁶⁰ G.O.No. 1070, Law (general), dated 27 March 1924.

Finally, the caste Hindus also rejected an Irrigation Bill that was intended to provide facilities to the depressed classes. The Adi Dravidars thus indicated the caste prejudice in several ways and finally demanded to the British to have more of their own members. For instance they demanded 20 seats in the Legislative council. In fact, there were only 5 seats. They said, “considering the need for special protection on account of caste prejudice against us and the fact that we form the bulk of the laboring population (industrial and agricultural)we require at least 20 seats.”⁶¹

The whole argument put forward by the Adi Dravidars was to have more representatives in the Legislative council. The British did not show much interest to the representation of more Adi Dravidars in the Legislative council. Because the Adi Dravidas hardly had franchise at that time. The government argued that, “the question of franchise is one that can hardly be taken up for consideration at present.”⁶² The very statement of the Adi Dravidars, which showed that there were 5 seats in the Legislative council, was not true. On the contrary, the government asserted that, “the number of nominations allotted to Madras for representing various communities has in the past been only two.”⁶³

Representation of Adi Dravidars through Election:

The Adi Dravidars have seen the caste Hindus attitude towards the Adi Dravidars and their improvement and decided to request the government that nomination of Adi Dravidar should not fall in the hands of caste-Hindus. The Adi Dravidas argued, “The nominations are intended to secure effective representation of weak and minority communities and of intelligent opinion in advance of the majority.”⁶⁴ However, the very purpose of nomination did not satisfy the minorities because it was dominated by the caste Hindus. Adi Dravidas expected that if the nomination made compulsory there should be an assurance that the majority ministers, who were mostly hailing from caste-Hindu category, should not be consulted in nominating the Depressed Classes. As they rightly argued, “The

⁶¹ G.O.No. 1415, Law (general), dated 19 May 1923, Resolution No.1, Para 3.

⁶² G.O.No. 1070, op cit., p.23.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ G.O. No. 1415, op cit.

Ministers should not be consulted nor should they have any voice in the matter of these nominations.”⁶⁵ They go on to argue, “Ministers are able to command a majority without the aid of nominations. The castes Hindus have been able to get a majority without the aid even of reservation.”⁶⁶

The Adi Dravidars in yet another resolution to the Government emphasized the importance of election. It also shows how far the process of nomination hampers their progress. They argued that “In the Madras Legislative council our members form such a small minority that in spite of their protests and pleadings caste Hindus neglect and override our interests. We want a larger number of seats to be assigned to us in the Local council and we would suggest that instead of being nominated our representatives should be returned to the council by election.”⁶⁷

According to the Adi Dravidas the reservation for the Caste Hindus was not necessary, because majority of them had the right to franchise. They asserted that the “non-Brahmin Hindus, do not require the protection which such reservation is calculated to give. At present we exercise the franchise in a general electorate without any chance of a member of our community being returned to the council.”⁶⁸ Consequently, the British could not give more seats to the Adi Dravidas as they were grappling with the issue of franchise and other rules and restrictions.

Special electorate:

From the above lines, one can perceive the degree of caste prejudice meted out by the Caste Hindus on the Adi Dravidars. However, the point is to focus on the growing consciousness of the political development among the Adi Dravidars. Apart from requesting the government for the election in the case of Legislative council, the Adi Dravidars demanded a special electorate for the Adi Dravidias. They argued, “The government may consider the formation of a special electorate of the Depressed Classes. This will give our representatives the authority and

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷G.O.No.1070, op cit.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

independence associated with an elected representative.”⁶⁹ By getting the separate electorate, they believed it would help their political training. They argued “The formation of a separate Electoral roll for our community for the Taluk Boards, district Boards and Municipalities, will afford a political training to our people.”⁷⁰

Pseudo Adi Dravida Members:

The Adi Dravidars also pointed out to the government that the members nominated in the local bodies and municipal councils very often favored rather than question the caste Hindus resolutions. It would be appropriate to quote the views of the Adi Dravidars in the above matter. They argued, “Often men who will not boldly express the wishes of the community are nominated, they are chosen just for their not being able to differ from caste-Hindus. The nominations are in many cases merely nominal and do not secure real and practical representation.”⁷¹

Large and more Representation in Local Bodies and Municipal Councils:

So far, the demands put forward by the Adi Dravidars on the Legislative council occupied the prominent position in the study, now it would be appropriate to know the demands put forward by the Adi Dravidars in Local and Municipal councils. They believed that if the government nominates more representatives of Adi Dravida community in these local bodies, the chance would be higher to them to influence the implementation of government policies. Adi Dravidars demanded more representation in every important council, by which they expected to have more numbers of their communities to be nominated in important local bodies. As quoted by the Adi Dravidars “If we had effective representation we could secure larger number of our men being appointed as *Kurnams*, village *Munsiffs*, Police, salt, Forest and other officers, besides a larger share of appointments in several departments of public service.”⁷²

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² G.O.No.1415, op cit, Resolution. No.7.

It is obvious that the more the representatives in such bodies the lesser the caste prejudice. In their resolution, they made the above point clear that “besides the prejudice against our community, the smallness of the number of our men in these councils makes their voice unheeded; a single Adi Dravida in the midst of a larger number of influential Caste-Hindus is not able to enforce his opinion.”⁷³

The government as they observed the resolution of the Adi Dravidas accepted the view that they will give more representation to the Adi Dravidars. The government went on to argue that they were already making headway towards the above issue. The special operation of the Labour department in several new districts employed the staffs in large number. However, the recruitment to those local bodies was “subject in the case of District Labour officers to the approval of the commissioner of Labour.”⁷⁴ The government was inclined to appoint “provided qualified men from that community (Adi Dravida) are forthcoming.”⁷⁵ They also ensured that the position of Special Thasildar (District Labour officer) required very special qualifications and they should know the district in every manner it works.

The outcome of the above demand was in a way indicated, success for the Adi Dravidars in future nomination as special Thasildar, special officers and staffs in District Labour office. Ultimately, the government approval for the above issue indicated, “preference would always be given to a member of the Depressed Classes when a suitable man was available.”⁷⁶

Acting upon the above issue, i.e. appointing more Adi Dravidars to the Local bodies such as Karnams, village Munsiffs, the Government also made it clear that to appoint the Adi Dravidras they do not require any special orders to implement it. The Under Secretary to the Revenue department replied to the Adi Dravida demands saying that there were some rules to get appointment in office of Karnams and village Munsiffs. The restriction was that some posts required hereditary background and property by which the government could rely on the

⁷³ G.O.No. 1415, op cit, Resolution. No.4.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

concerned official. He pointed out that “offices of Karnam and village munsif in most places are governed by act III of 1894 or act III of 1895 and succession to those officers is governed by definite provisions of Law. In case of non-hereditary posts of headman, the recognized principle for appointment is that men of property should be selected –vide B.S.O.155 (11). They should also be qualified by passing the village officers tests.”⁷⁷

The above fact shows us that those influential positions in village level institutions were based on hereditary, property and other qualifications. The requisition made by the Adi Dravidars however convinced the officials to give such influential position by giving preference on the basis of their socio-economic condition. The government also ensured to some extent, to give representation to Adi Dravidars by observing some rules as well. The under Secretary to the Revenue department concluded that “subject to these limitations adi–dravidars may be appointed as Karnams as village munsifs, and the classes of qualified candidates among adi Dravidas will doubtless be considered by appointing officers, no special orders (seem) necessary.”⁷⁸

Titles, Honors and Honorary Appointments:

Finally, the Adi Dravidars wanted to get respectable titles and Honours by which their social commitment was acknowledged. In fact, the titles acquired by them indicated something good about their commitment. The society, which called them once with derogatory remark, would see a few among the lower castes getting honor by the government. The sabha members petitioned the government that “In the distribution of titles, honours and honorary appointments our men should never be overlooked. Besides being an encouragement to public workers in our community, recognition by Government helps to break the special prejudice against our community.”⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Ibid., Reply from Under Secretary, Revenue department.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid., resolution no. 6.

The titles and honours were also believed to be the recognition of the government for men of excellence. Whenever the Adi Dravida leaders served their community and were given such titles and Honours it started as a process of creating self-respect to the Adi Dravidars. The sabha members argued the above point that “men of independence who have served and suffered for the community should be especially taken notice of. This will help the progress and self-respect of the community.”⁸⁰ As a response the private secretary to the Government, sent the above demand to the Governor to deal with the matter of honours.⁸¹

In fact, the British honoured Mr. M.C.Rajah, with the Rao Bahadur title, and R.Srinivasan was honoured with the title of Rao Sahib in 20th February 1920, in the presence of commissioner R.C.Sitaramayyar. He was also honoured as Diwan Bahadur, in January 1936.

Assessment of the Sabha Resolution:

We have discussed elaborately the most frequent resolutions that were passed by the Adi Dravida Mahajana sabha in previous paragraphs. Apart from the resolution passed by the sabha to the government, the sabha members who were placed in legislative council, Mr. M.C.Rajah for instance, also articulated their grievances to the council repeatedly. Mr. M.C.Rajah had raised several issues related to the ameliorative measures for the depressed classes in general and Adi Dravidars in particular. His resolutions for the above purpose passed mostly with reference to the Adi Dravidars. In fact, as we already discussed in chapter I, i.e., Debate on caste classification, Mr.M.C.Rajah was the leading proponent of the term Adi Dravida in the place of Panchama and Paraya, in the legislative council. The first chapter also discussed about the process of changing the derogatory caste name into a respectable term Adi Dravida, especially in the context of growing political development of Madras presidency. We also understood that the term was not accepted by all the outcastes groups of the presidency. By the above fact one can easily raise a question that whether the resolutions passed by sabha members

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Refer Under secretary safe file, No.1584, A-1, dated 2 May 1923.

on behalf of AdiDravidars was conceded by all the lower caste group of the presidency or not?

We have also discussed elaborately how the protector of Depressed classes i.e.Labour department, became a protector of Adi Dravidars. *It was indeed observed by many officials that though the Adi Dravidars referred the term depressed Classes to demand any ameliorative measures they could not share it properly rather benefit concentrated solely, in the Adi Dravida community.* The issue also discussed very extensively by both the British officials of Madras presidency and a few among the official in the British parliament. We also discussed in chapter II that how the Non-Brahmin used the term *pariah* and *panchama* at least until the end of the 1916 and Adi Dravdia after 1917. The Adi Dravidars on the other hand used the term Adi Dravida for their political development and they also used the term Depressed Classes to articulate their demands with the British on behalf of both Depressed classes and Adi Dravidars.

The issue has to be dealt with seriously to know the extent of the sharing of the government benefits by the lower groups of the presidency. The issue was pervasively discussed in the presidency during 1924. A question was raised by, a well-known member of the Adi Dravida community, Mr.M.C.Rajah, to know the intention of the government in the publishing of the gist of all government orders into vernacular language, created a widespread discussion about the dominance of Adi Dravida in the Labour department. Let us analyses the process, that how the British define the dominance of Adi Dravidas in the Labour department.

We have already discussed how the Adi Dravidars distinguished themselves from Backward Classes such as Kallars and Depressed Classes. This attitude of the Adi Dravidars opened new avenues to the Adi Dravidars to get employment and economic benefit such as Land for cultivation, free house sites, etc., and finally political representation. The Labour department as a protector of Depressed Classes created a number of projects to uplift the Depressed Classes from lack of Education, Economic employment and political backwardness.

During 1920s, the sabha members realized the hostile attitude of the non-Brahmins towards them especially after the Justice party assumed power. Now the first and foremost things were to protect the Labour department. Hence the Adi Dravida Sabha members by redefining their loyalty with the British opposed the 'sectarian' attitude of the non-Brahman leaders. The Adi Dravidars also informed the Government that they were at the danger of Non-Brahman oligarchy. Perhaps the government could have safeguarded the Adi Dravida to check non-Brahmins dominance. Because the percentage of non-Brahmins was highest i.e. around 93%. Though the non-Brahmans were very new to the British political strategy, the depressed classes or Adi Dravidars or pariahs were well known to the British 1891 onwards.

The government officials were well versed with the issue of pariahs (and later Adi Dravidars) by their programmes and policies. The overall benefits, which were intended to uplift the depressed classes, were, according to few British officials, extensively used by the Adi Dravidars community by themselves. It would be appropriate to look at the issue of publishing gist of all the government orders, especially those passed for the benefit of depressed Classes, into vernacular languages. One point should be made clear that the government orders may not be authentic as it would show the perception of the government on the Indian society not vice versa. However, the G.Os at least showed that they have passed number of such Government orders for uplifting the Depressed Classes in general and Adi Dravidas in particular.

Mr. M.C.Rajah came to know the government proposal that they were going to publish the gist of government orders into vernacular languages such as Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kanarese. So he asked question in legislative council referring three important departments in particular namely Home, Revenue, and Education. Indeed the above departments had passed several G.Os time to time. He asked those officials that "whether it is the intention of Government to publish in the vernaculars a gist of all the G.Os issued by the Government since January 1920, related to the depressed classes, offering

concessions for education, darkhast lands, house sites, loans for cultivation appointments etc.”⁸²

Consequently the concerned department were asked to respond to the above question law department responded that “there is no such proposal now under consideration but following answer may be given with the approval of education and Revenue Department. A few members neglected the question by saying that “this seems for the political purposes.” A few members accepted the question by saying that “it would certainly be a good thing to accept.” The Second group of members were of the opinion that the government policies or orders should be filtered down properly to the very beneficiaries for whom the orders were passed, because we did not publish anything into vernacular language “we are always having questions asked and complaints made that the officials and others do not carry the intentions of government.”⁸³

Some official accepted the proposal to publish the gist of G.Os into vernacular language and warned that if there was any opposition to the proposal “His Excellency should be asked to allow the matter to be discussed in cabinet.”⁸⁴ He also observed that the gist of the G.Os should be published with “a note containing reference to not only Adi Dravidars but other backward communities including untouchables.” The above issue created an interest among the officials to deal with question of Adi Dravidars and their “lion share.” The Education department had extensively dealt with the G.Os published from 1920s and responded to the proper authority. The Public department had cited G.O.No.658, Public, dated 15 August 1922, and also said that G.O “refers to the proper representation of all communities including depressed classes.”⁸⁵

⁸² G.O.No.116, Law (general), dated 15 January 1924.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

Unequal development among the Depressed Classes:

The issue of the impartial treatment of depressed classes was raised by the Revenue department. It was asked whether “land for cultivation purposes and acquisition of land for house site purposes was carried on by the Labour department in respect of Malas, Madigas, Chucklers(chakkiliyars) chamar, Haddi Bavani, other untouchables.”⁸⁶

This question was indeed remarkable one in the history of the depressed classes of the presidency, because the term Adi Dravida was not accepted by other than parayars. Remaining major untouchables such as Pallars and Chakkiliyars though they were subsumed under the Adi Dravida category, majority of them, especially the Pallars and *Chakkiliyars* could not be benefited by the activities of Labour department, because the British favoured a community (Adi Dravidars or Pariahs) which was nearer to them. Some official of the Revenue department were very serious about the development of depressed classes excluding the Adi Dravidars. The official clearly mentioned that “It shall be specifically stated what classes and caste of untouchables are looked after in particular areas.”⁸⁷

The lion’s share:

As the activities of the Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha increased in terms of passing resolutions, in Legislative council, conducting meetings in the public and the government response especially through Labour department had indeed created a suspicion that the Labour department was focusing only on the Adi Dravidars. This was realized by both the British officials and the depressed classes other than Adi Dravidars. The resolutions passed by the sabha members invariably referred the term Adi Dravida or Depressed to request the government to frame ameliorative measures for them. Since there was no clarity in the term Adi Dravida and no reference especially to the other castes such as Paraya, Pallar and Chakkiliyars, in the case of **Adi Dravidas**, Kallars, Upparai, Voddar, Yanadies, in the case of **Depressed Classes**.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p.24.

Officials felt unhappy with the impression of the public about the Labour department and its favoritism to Adi Dravidas and who got the lion's share, and wrote that "I am afraid the noisy Adi Dravidar are having lion's share that is the impression at public mind-Therefore it is essential to state clearly the number of people in each caste of depressed classes that are benefited in the areas."⁸⁸

He goes on to argue that there should be a specific statement "to dispel suspicions in public mind with regard to activities of Labour Department being specially mentioned to adi dravidars."⁸⁹ The suspicion already mentioned became acceptable because the Revenue department officials came across the government orders mostly with reference to the Adi Dravidars. They argued that, "Therefore it is desirable to know of other classes of untouchables that are assisted in any manner."⁹⁰

Depressed classes-an analogous term:

The officials argued that the term such as Depressed Classes could not be a reference for a single caste rather; it had many castes and sub Castes whose condition was as pathetic as the Adi Dravidars. In fact, many untouchables were not considered by the Adi Dravidars as a castes deserved to enjoy government benefits. This presumption proves that it was, in a way, true because the reference that the Adi Dravidars made to convince the British was negating almost all the depressed classes from the Adi Dravida community.

As the above fact realized by the Government officials, they clearly stated that the term Depressed Classes was not applicable to only one community, rather, with innumerable lower castes whose socio-economic and educational condition was so vulnerable. It was rightly pointed out by the officials that "It is the misfortune in this presidency we have here a variety of socially and economically downtrodden communities. The phrase-depressed classes cannot therefore be

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p.25, para 3.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

limited into application of any one community. There are large communities, such as Upparai, Voddar Yanadais etc., who are socially downtrodden, have no houses to live in, no property to own and no chances of advancement in life.”⁹¹

They also asserted that these communities might be given representation in legislative council, because they are socially economically and politically downtrodden in the Madras presidency. It was appropriate for the British to ask the Labour department that whether they have done something to uplift these classes or not. According to the officials, the depressed Classes other than Adi Dravidars were suffering badly, they also “have to work all day and be content with a scanty meal to appease their hunger, their torn cloth to cover their body. They have no representation in the legislative council or in the local bodies to claim for them their rights. Questions are however sometimes asked what has the Labour department done for those people. How much money has been spent on their Education, what extent of land has been assigned to them for house sites for cultivation and what representation has been given to them on the various representational bodies?”⁹² These questions were indeed thought provoking but the department had not responded to these questions, because they were preoccupied with the amelioration of the Adi Dravidas.

Adi Dravidisation of the Untouchables of the Madras presidency:

It was believed that the Adi Dravidars as majority of them concentrated in and around Madras city could get maximum benefits compared to the one who were in southern districts. The proximity to the capital of the presidency became a prominent issue to them. They argued that “Are they (depressed classes or other than Adi Dravidas) cared for at all? If not why? Do it because they are not near the throne of grace. Those questions have to be answered.”⁹³

⁹¹ Ibid., p.26.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

We have already discussed in the first chapter that the term “Adi Dravida “ was used as matter of fact only by a few and the “untouchables’ who were living outside Madras could not use the term when the census enumeration took place. This shows that the term Adi Dravdia used extensively among the well educated among the pariahs of Madras city. The Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha, as already discussed, conducted several public meetings mostly outside Madras city. This also implies that they were inclined to mobilize the people under the banner called Adi Dravida. The conferences thus convened by the Sabha in the south part of Madras Presidency also created a widespread currency among the untouchables of the southern region. The process of Adi Dravidisation of untouchables of the Madras presidency reflected in the consequent census operation. The number of the Adi Dravidars steadily increased from 1921 to 1931.

According to a census report of 1921, the term Adi Dravida was practically invisible in the 1911 censuses. It was in 1921 that there were 50,015, Adi Dravidars who mostly sprang from Madras and its suburb Chingleput. Whereas the rest of the presidency returned them in traditional caste names. They also argued that the term Adi Dravida was proposed by a few Untouchables of the Madras. It was believed to be “An agitation for a change of name; but they are not all of opinion as to the most desirable name some favour Adi Dravida for the Tamils and Adi Andhra for the Telugus, other favor Dravida. In fact, none of these names were yet established outside Madras and its suburbs in Chingleput. About 50,000 persons in these two districts returned themselves as Adi Dravidas; the rest of the community continued to describe themselves either as *Panchamas* or by the traditional caste name.”⁹⁴

The number of Adi Dravidas in 1931 increased remarkably compared to the Adi Andhra and Adi Karnataka. This would also be an example to show that how far the Adi Dravidisation of untouchables of the presidency mobilized the identity to propose the government for various ameliorative measures. The census report of 1931 rightly pointed out as “The question of views has been much in the attention of the leaders of these communities in the past ten years and to this is

⁹⁴Boag G.T., *Census of India, 1921-Report*, vol. XIII, Part I, Government Press, 1922, p.158.

attributed the popularity of the term Adi Dravida and to a less extent of Adi Andhra and Adi Karnataka, and their returns in such numbers in the caste tables.”⁹⁵

PROTECTOR OF DEPRESSED CLASSES TO ADI DRAVIDAS:

It is obvious that how during the year 1921-1931 the term Adi Dravida was extensively used in the public records such as census and various policies of the government. The term, Adi Dravida was used to convince the British and gain many things from the government and not shares in equal proportion. Arguing the above line the official argued that “Impression is gaining abroad that the activities of the Labour Department are divided to the benefit of pariahs alone practically to the exclusion of other depressed classes whose lot in life is even worse than that of the pariah.”⁹⁶

Policy of Favoritism:

The official also castigated the activities of the Labour department that they should not favor a single caste who were raising demands rather they should also treat other depressed classes who were not aware about such constitutional methods but were lower in every sense compared to pariahs. They also argued that if the policies of the Labour department could not filter down to all the needy downtrodden classes the purpose of the department may not be achieved. It was said “If the objective of the publication of the note under reference is to remove this impression the note ought to state clearly to what extent steps are taken to ameliorate the depressed condition of the various classes of the downtrodden people. The Labour department has to make only care that their efforts are not confined to the betterment of the few favoured communities alone. Unless and until the department can make out such a case publication of the note is I am afraid not likely to serve any good purpose.”⁹⁷

⁹⁵ M.W.M Yeatts, *Census of India 1931-Report*, vol XIV, Part I, Government press, Madras, 1932, p.342.

⁹⁶ G.O. No. 116, op cit., p.26.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p.26.

One official asked a renowned Adi Dravidar member who was running hostel under the name Adi Dravida Hostel on the identity or castes of the student. It was an act of the government to know how far the term Adi Dravida refers to different communities and whether they usually include all the castes under the term or not. However, such question cannot be answered by the superintendent of the Hostel. The secretary to the law general department wrote to the commissioner of Labour Madras to “furnish the information on the Adi Dravida Hostel which was under the superintendents of Mr. M.C.Rajah during 1920 and 1921.”⁹⁸ He was very keen to know the fact that “what castes did the student belong and in what schools were they reading.”⁹⁹

The question raised by the secretary of law department could not be answered by the commissioner of Labour. F.M.Tylor by using the accumulated knowledge about the hostel administration could not answer the above question. Rather, it was simply denoted with a generic term “Adi Dravidars.” The commissioner said, “I have no information on the points raised.”¹⁰⁰ However, the commissioner justified that “had the hostel been a Government institution under management of this department,”¹⁰¹ We could have collected information especially to denote the real identity of Adi Dravida or depressed classes. His further answer shows that the Hostel was started by Mr.M.C.Rajah who had personal discussion with Mr.T.E.Moir and Mr. Paddison. Mr. Tyler (the then commissioner of Labour) noted “The hostel was a private one under the management of Mr. M.C.Rajah and grants-in –aid were made by the commissioner of Labour. It is apparent that many of the arrangements as regards the hostel were made as the result of *personal discussion* (italics mine) between my predecessors, Mr. T.E.Moir and Mr. G.F. Paddison and Mr. M.C.Rajah.”¹⁰²

It is obvious from the above question that the hostel was run by the grant-in –aid scheme of the government. Since the Hostel ran with the aid of government, it should satisfy itself by enquiry whether the government aid reaches

⁹⁸ G.O.No.2555, Law (general), dated 24 October 1923.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

its real beneficiaries without partiality or not. It is evident that Mr.T.E.Moir and G.F.Paddison being the commissioner of Labour in different time could not verify the above fact that whether the government polices filtered down to the needy people without partiality or not.

According to a G.O., it is obvious that the Hostel in question was granted a considerable sum (for that time) by the protector of depressed classes, Labour department. The G.O. refers that "A sum of Rs.3.000/- was sanctioned by the Labour Department in the year 1921 towards the maintenance of the Adi Dravida Hostel run by Rao Bahadur M.C.Rajah Avl., M.L.C. In the budget for 1923-24 an allotment of Rs.10,000/- has been sanctioned for the maintenance of the hostel. This amount is the estimated recurring and non-recurring expenditure for 40 students."¹⁰³ It is understandable to ask the department that why they could not enquire about the students and their identity (there were 40 students in that hostel at that time).

No Harmony:

Given the above fact, question arises here that in what way the sabha negated the other castes from its resolutions. It was not a surprise as the Sabha was dominated by the educated intelligentsia. We already discussed that any association requires educated intellectuals who would assimilate the government schemes and procedures for articulating their demands in such a way that can easily convince the government to take prompt action. However, the Adi Dravida Mahajana sabha was viewed at the end of 1917 as treating their illiterate brethren very badly.

The sabha as it flourished with support of non-Brahmans could not escape from this criticism. While arguing the feature of Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha, *Desabhaktan* of Madras argued that this sabha was not a old and reputed one rather the Paraya Mahajana Sabha, was their pioneer. The Sabha was a combination of "chetti-Nayar clique." They also did not leave the unequal treatment between the

¹⁰³ G.O.No. 116, Law (general) dated 15.January 1924. p.22

sabha members who were mostly well educated and the illiterate Adi Dravidars. As aptly put by the correspondent, “the way in which the educated few among them treat their illiterate brethren, concludes that there is no hope for this community, unless the Government introduce compulsory education in their case.”¹⁰⁴

While demanding special Protection from the government against the Justice party, the Sabha accused the Party of creating ill feelings among the Adi Dravidar themselves. They argued the above point aptly “In order to carry out its anti-depressed –class’s policy the party in power (Justice) had been trying to create division in our camp and break the strength of our undivided voice.”¹⁰⁵

As we have come across the two different sources one, which castigated the sabha as the creation of chetty-Nayar clique, another as the anti- Depressed classes policy of the Non-Brahmin, one can easily presume that the sabha could not escape from criticism.

Changing the Derogatory Name –a New Trend:

The changing of derogatory name such as paraya and panchama to Adi Dravida also influenced the other untouchables group of the presidency. The *Chakkiliyars* by using the same notion of Adi Dravidars started calling themselves as *Arundhatiyars*. However, they did not use the same process as the Adi Dravidars had. Perhaps their low social and economic status readily hindered them from undertaking the process. Although it is not true that all the *chakkiliyars* were mending shoes they were involved in various occupations, which were mostly menial. Majority of them worked in more polluting occupations such as leatherwork. They were also not patronized by the missionaries, which in the case of their brethren was so strong, for a long time. It seems that social reformers who were very anxious about the development of pariahs did not concentrate much about the welfare of Chakkiliyars. The Chakkiliyars were also not considered as a separate identity rather, they were invariably referred as pariahs. It was natural

¹⁰⁴ *Desabhaktan*, 13 December 1917, (NNR Madras 1917).

¹⁰⁵ G.O.No.1070,op cit, Para 13.

phenomena among the outsiders only. In fact, the Tamil social system knew very well that who were pariahs and who were *Chakkiliyars* as such.

It would be pertinent to mention about the chakkiliyars in brief. Majority of them were Telugu speakers. In addition, it seems that they “migrated” from Telugu speaking Andhra region to Tamil region. The reference to chakkiliyars was given by the leading scholars of Tamil Nadu such as Mr. P.E.Mohan and T.G.Jacob. Both of them were of the view that the chakkiliyars were occupying the lowest position of Tamil society. Perhaps, their language Telugu might have readily distinguished them from Tamil speaking untouchables such as Paraya and Pallar. According to P.E.Mohan, “The majority of the Chakkiliyars speak Telugu. They are also called as Arundhatiyars in most of the cities and towns of Tamil Nadu especially in Madras. They work as scavengers. They are the most suppressed lot among the scheduled castes; they seem to be immigrants from Andhra. Separate studies have to be made to trace their migration, the causes for their deplorable condition, the social change among them etc.”¹⁰⁶

Thus, it is obvious that the condition of chakkiliyars was so bad due to their occupation and economic condition. The chakkiliyars were believed to be the *untouchables among the untouchables*, because of their social, educational and economic backwardness. This is also the reason why they could not think about the political advancement. Majority of the Chakkiliyars mainly concentrated in the western part of Tamil Nadu. T.G.Jacob argues, that “A small miniscule minority speaking only Tamil lives in some of the southern districts.”¹⁰⁷

Jacob also goes on to argue that the Chakkiliyars migrated from the Andhra region in earlier time. Their condition was so pathetic than other ‘untouchables’ of the Tamil region and the Tamil speaking untouchables in a way treated these Telugu speaking Chakkiliyars as inferior. He argues that “they (Chakkiliyars) were brought in by the *Naicker* invaders of Tamil Nadu at the time of the *Vijayanagar* Empire, in the wake of which other oppressor castes like *Naidu*

¹⁰⁶ Mohan. P.E., *Scheduled Castes: History of Elevation; Tamil Nadu 1900-1955*, New Era Publications, Madras, 1993, p.4.

¹⁰⁷ Jacob. T.G., *Reflections on the Caste Question- The Dalit situation in South India*. NESAI, Bangalore, 2002.

also came in. The presence of these oppressor castes is also very strong in places like Chennai as business interest groups. *The situation of the Arundhatiyars is probably the most tragic among all the Dalit groupings in the state* (Italics mine). They are also looked down upon by other Dalit castes, who are Tamil speaking.¹⁰⁸

Having made a small narrative on the condition of the chakkiliyars or Arundhatiyars it would be appropriate to focus on an association found by them in 1920. Madras as it became a vital place for the economic and political activity provided the well educated among untouchables an opportunity to develop their community. Most of the educated intelligentsia emphasized the need for the educational advancement. It was true that the dalits who were socially marginalized had to develop their education by which they could aspire for, employment and latter the political advancement of their own community.

Arundhatiya Mahajana Sabha (1920):

Mr. L.C.Guruswamy was a well educated among the Chakkiliyars or Arundhatiyar. He was appointed, as a member of Madras Legislative council in 1920. He was the member of the council from 1920 to 1930. Apart from this, he served, as a Honorary Magistrate for 20 years and became a member of a cooperative Bank, member of the Madras University senate in 1929 and was honored the respectable title, Bahadur, in 1927. He was appointed as member of Legislative council after the prolonged struggle that was carried out both by the Non-Brahmin leaders and of course Adi Dravidars. Apart from the above supporters, the British favoritism for communal representation played a pivotal role for the appointment of dalits in the legislative council.

Mr.Guruswamy, took the initiative to found an association in the name of *Arundhatiyars*, though he could not have been individually involved in the foundation of such an association. There are no sources to substantiate the formation of association, its members and Branches if any. No government records pertaining to the sabha is available. Perhaps they could not enter the government

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

records simply because they could not accomplish whatever the Adi Dravidars had done before the formation of their sabha. The Chakkiliyars could not be recruited in government services as they were a small minority in the presidency and their educational condition was comparatively lower.

The point to be mentioned here is that the Chakkilyars as they did not change their derogatory name by the same constitutional methods practiced by their brethren (Adi Dravidas), could not have any impression in government records. However, the Madras Yearbook which compiled information on the “societies and Institution, especially based on Literary, Scientific, Social and General Issues,” indicated that the Arundhatiya Maha Sabha was found in 1920.

The main objective of the Sabha was “to promote and protect the rights and interests of the Arundhatia community.”¹⁰⁹ Mr. L.C.Guruswamy who was the member of the Legislative council was the president of the Sabha.”¹¹⁰

Arundhatiya Question:

Mr. L.C.Guruswamy indeed played a pivotal role in drawing the attention of the government towards the Arundhatiyars as well as Adi Dravidars. Along with M.C.Rajah, he had supported several resolutions passed for the welfare of Adi Dravidar community. However, he did not raise more issues on the development of Arundhatias. The issue, which he had raised on his community, was very new which directed the Government’s interest on his community. His first issue on the Arundhatiyars was on the assignment of land to the community. In fact, the question was not responded properly because talking about Arundhatiya in the heyday of depressed classes and Adi Dravida was looked upon as a ‘sectarian’ approach.

¹⁰⁹ The Madras year Book 1923, Madras publicity Bureau, Government Press, Madras, 1923, p. 287.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

Land Assignment to the Arundhatiyars:

The term *Adi Dravida* also included Pallars and Chakkiliyars. The *Arundhatiyar* who changed their derogatory name Chakkiliya by themselves, were not responded to by the British sufficiently. Being a member of Legislative council Guruswamy had raised question that “whether any poramboke lands set apart for assignment to the depressed classes have been assigned to the members of the Arundhatiya (madiga) community in the various districts of the Presidency since 1921; and if so to lay on the table a statement showing the number of Arundhatiyas who were benefited by these assignment and the extent of land assigned in each district.”¹¹¹

The government responded to the question by putting a statement that “No separate information is available for the extent of land granted to any particular section of the depressed classes.”¹¹²

Nomination of Arundhatiyars in Local Boards:

Being the only Arundhatiya member Guruswamy had not got considerable importance in the council. However, he had raised issues on the nomination of Arundhatiya in Local boards and Municipalities. By looking at the situation, the British officials realized that the Arundhatiyars also supposed to get a influential position. Mr. Guruswamy asked the members of Local self-Government to give information “showing the number of Arundhatiyas (madigas) nominated to the municipal councils, District and Taluk boards of the presidency with their respective districts during he years 1921-1922 and 1922-23.”¹¹³

The member could not help Mr. Guruswamy showing the number of Arundhatiyars in such local bodies responded, “The governments have no information. The information desired had been called for, and will in due course be

¹¹¹ MLCP, Vol. XI, dated 2 February 1923, p.1560.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ MLCP, Vol.XI, 1923.

communicated to the honourable member.”¹¹⁴ Thus, it shows that the Arundhatiya question was entirely new to the British who were engrossed either with Adi Dravidars or Depressed Classes.

It can be argued that lack of articulation of the demands on the part of Arundhatiyars. Became a obvious reason for the lack of government “attention” towards the Arundhatiyars.

Devendra Kula Vellalar Question:

The majority of untouchables of the south district of the Madras presidency were called as Pallars. Like their fellow communities of the presidency they also were treated by the society as lower caste. Their position if early 1920s was not good. Scholars such as Jacob argued “The Majority dalits of South Tamil Nadu was known as Pallars/Devendra Vellalars, while the dominant dalit castes, in the north districts are the pariahs/Adi Dravidars who are educationally and socially in a better position than in the southern districts.”¹¹⁵

In fact, the pallars are not beefeaters, so they used to call themselves superior to the pariahs. Their traditional occupation also shoes that they were not involved in very menial jobs. The missionary activity in the southern Madras Presidency among the Pallars, in a way, empowered the Pallars. The educational development and over a period their economic advancement gave them political consciousness in the early 1920. As they were concentrated in the southern district of the madras presidency, they could be readily observed by the government. The census report indicates that during the first decade of 20th century they migrated to some other parts of the presidency. Mr. Boag.G.T. argued, “the Pallars are fewer in the districts of Trichinoploy, coimbatore and Tanjore from which districts they must have emigrated in greater numbers.”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Jacob.T.G, *Reflection on the caste question*, op cit.

¹¹⁶ Boag.G.T, *Census of India 1921-Report*, vol.XIII, part I, Government press, 1922, p. 158.

It can be argued that the Pallars or Devendra Kula Vellalars were distinct from the parayars of North districts of the Madras presidency. Apart from the question raised by Mr. R. Veerian on the lack of representatives from the southern districts, there was no attempt on the part of untouchables from southern districts. The Pallars argue that they were not given representation in the legislative councils. In fact, the Adi Dravidars claiming to be the sole representative of South Indian depressed classes could not give representation equal to proportion to the population. Scholars such as Mohan argue that "In the Legislative council some nominated seats were reserved for the scheduled castes. These were mostly filled up by the Adi Dravida and Adi Andhra communities. The Pallars were left out."¹¹⁷

It is true that the representation of Adi Dravida was more than the Adi Andhra. Mr. L.C.Guruswamy an Arundhatiya became a member of legislative council. Apart from this, there were none from the non-Adi Dravida and Non-Adi Andhra. Consequently, "the Pallars, Mohan argues, living in Ramnad district organized a conference of Devendra Kula Mahajana Sabha on 23, April 1924 at Settiyarpatti, Tamilnadu district and urged the government for their representation in the Legislative council."¹¹⁸

The Pallars also did not endeavor to change their old name into a new one by proposing to the government through any resolution. The Adi Dravidars being a member of Legislative council from 1920 could take such initiative in 1922 to change the derogatory term into respectable one especially in government records. In spite of the Pallars majority in the southern districts, they were not able to get membership in legislative council and aspire for the change of derogatory term from the government records. In fact, the above-mentioned conference of Pallars provided two important changes. Firstly, the Pallars changed their name into Devendra kula Vellalar. Secondly, the conference gave leadership to the Devendra kula Vellalars.

¹¹⁷ Mohan.P.E, Scheduled Castes, 1993, op cit, p.49.

¹¹⁸ G.O. No. 304, Law (Legislative), 21 August 1923, as quoted by Mohan.P.E, p.49.

Mohan argues that “Mr. Subramanian Moopnar, who was a member of taluk Board, Tiruchirappalli and Palani Andi Havildar lead the conference.”¹¹⁹ The lack of representation of Pallars in legislative and local bodies, in a way, hindered their progress; the sabha found both by Pallars and Chakkiliyars could not mobilize more members unlike the Adi Dravidars. Separate study can be done for understanding the activities of these movements, which were at the embryonic stage in the mid 1920s.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

Conclusion

CONCLUSION

The study focused on the condition of dalits under the clutches of colonial rule. The untouchables, as they were in the lowest echelon of social, economic and political ladder, saw education as a major goal. Though this study did not extensively deal with the efforts on the educational development, it focused much on the movements that they started especially in the context of the era of communal representation. The dalits of the Madras presidency had to cross several hurdles in their elevation. Their political development did not occur overnight. To justify the unequal social structure of the presidency, the Non-Brahmin leaders extensively used the issue of untouchables. This process became fruitful to Non Brahmins to oppose the Brahmin dominance in socio-economic and political level.

Once the Non-Brahmin Justice party came into power, the support rendered by the them to the Adi Dravidars gradually decreased. After joining hand with the non-Brahmin social reformer, the Adi Dravidas realized that the non-Brahmin party focused much on their political advancement. Consequently, the Adi Dravidas of Madras presidency gained independence in their political demands. They also castigated the caste Hindus who were near to their socio-economic and political status.

The Dalits as they were at the lowest echelon of the social system they could not immediately aspire for political development, rather they were preoccupied with the educational and employment development. The present study, however, not focused on any one of the above issue, rather it concentrate on the growing emergence of political consciousness among themselves. The movement among the dalits was not a sudden outbreak of 1891. It had shaped gradually with the constant support of missionaries and the British. As majority of dalits were poor in educational and economic sense, they were so loyal to the British who occupied almost all influential sectors of the government machinery.

The present study focused the issue of dalits under the colonial rule; the emergence of dalit movement viewed on par with the growing political development in the Madras presidency. At the initial stage the issue of dalits had extensively employed by both missionary and the British. The present study focused mainly on the process of growing dalit consciousness in the Madras presidency. The missionaries were the pioneer in elevating the dalits of the madras presidency.

Though the ultimate aim of the missionaries was a highly debated issue, their activities for the educational empowerment of the dalits was highly commendable. The Hindu social reformers were indeed encouraged by the pioneering work of the missionary activities. The British on the other hand, took up the issue of dalits partly for their own political gain and partly due to the pressure they had faced from the British parliament.

The present study focused on the movement among the dalits during the colonial era. Due to their socio economic condition, they could not start their movement independently. Their social statues, in a way, determined their economic, educational and finally the political status. In other words as they were deprived in education and economic well being they could not aspire for the immediate political development. The Christian missionaries were the pioneer in elevating the dalits. Their educational institutions believed by the dalits as both the place for worshipping and educating themselves. The Hindu social system placed the dalits far away from the social and educational advancement; the missionaries started the process of educating the dalits for conversion. The dalits were the majority in the process of conversion so the missionaries extensively took up the issue of dalits. It cannot however be concluded that the primary goal of the missionaries was merely conversion.

On the one hand, the British wanted to show itself as a welfare state and whoever loyal to them were the highest beneficiaries of the colonial era. They hardly had to take pains to divide the Indian society. On the contrary, they were engrossed with perpetuating the same caste ridden social system by which they weakened the society and perpetuated imperialism. The real intention and activities

of the British in India was highly questioned in the British parliament London. Consequently, the British had to show their welfare activities in India.

The caste-Hindu social reformers were the next protagonist to the dalits. Though majority of the caste Hindus were oppressor in rural areas, they were quite helpful to the dalits who were in the urban area, they also showed to the British that they have changed their heart by including the dalits issues in their political rhetoric. The era of communal representation was also the era of extensive use of dalit question. They were preoccupied with the issue of dalits to justify the social inequality of the time.

When the communal representation was at the embryonic stage, the caste Hindus who realized the Brahmin dominance changed their political rhetoric. They now called themselves as non-Brahmins. The dalits who were minority but whose condition was so pathetic under the social system became a major interest to the non-Brahmin. They invariably used the dalit question to castigate Brahmin dominance not only in educational and employment status but also in social status. Their political narrative of non-Brahmins thus focused mainly the practice of Untouchability by the orthodox Brahmins. Their rhetoric did not focus on the treatment given by them to the dalits in rural areas. It was indeed an advantage to raise slogans in urban areas.

The inclusion of dalits in the non-Brahmin political rhetoric implied that they were the suppressed group under the Brahmanic dominance. They showed that they were the upholder of dalits.

Given the above situation question arises what was the real condition or response of the dalits under the support of missionaries, the British and the non-Brahmin Caste Hindus? Whether dalits utilized the above support to attain basic development or they were opposed the self interest of the above groups. As the majority of the dalits were helpless, they have used all the above support to get considerable development.

Once the dalits realized that they were betrayed by the non-Brahmin caste Hindus they had developed independence to put forward their argument and achieve their demands. They expected the full fledged development in various government institutions. They had demanded influential position from the government especially in Legislative Council, local municipal and district Boards. Public service and employment in government services as attendants and official grade were their primary concern of that time. On the other hand, the British gave their support to the Adi Dravidars. It manifested by giving more representation to the Adi Dravidas, especially in various government machineries.

The political rhetoric that used by the dalits especially with the support of the Non-Brahman caste Hindus from 1891 to 1920 had dramatically changed after 1920. The non-Brahman caste Hindus became a primary counterpart to the dalits. The political rhetoric now encompassed all the depressed classes of the madras presidency. To accomplish their self-development among Adi Dravidars they have extensively used the term-depressed classes to justify the British government that their representation encompassed depressed classes of the presidency. The protector of depressed classes i.e. Labour department mostly accomplished the rise of Adi Dravidar. We have discussed the process of how the protector of depressed classes shrank into protector of Adi Dravidars. This issue questioned the very existence of Labour department. The non-Brahman Caste Hindus on the one hand wanted to abolish the service of the protector of depressed classes and the Adi Dravidars on the other hand castigated the effort of the non-Brahmins and wanted to ensure that the protector of depressed classes was saved from the policy of betrayal used by the non-Brahmins.

The Adi Dravidars projected to the British government that they were the sole representatives of the depressed classes of Madras presidency. The preoccupation of Labour department with the Adi Dravidars rather than other deprived section of the depressed classes, created a widespread debate among a few British officials in India. The debate became pervasive abroad.

The other untouchables groups, pallars in 1923, proved that they were marginalized in spite of the government effort in elevating the depressed classes. The Adi Dravidars, in a way, showed the government that the term Adi Dravida was nothing but the combination of Paraya, Pallar and Chakkiliyars. Nevertheless, the pallars and chakkiliyars though could not change their name in government records as they were not mentioned anywhere with their identity or derogatory name. They changed their name into Devendra Kula vellalars and Arundhatiyars respectively.

Indeed the Adi Dravidars or parayars played a pioneer role in mobilizing the depressed classes. They were the real testimony for the emergence of dalit consciousness in the Madras Presidency. If dalit groups seek their gradual but mutual development, they could have given importance to the marginalized section of the depressed classes. It is obvious that the combination of all the important groups of the dalits in a movement would always ensure the mutual development.

A particular group representing the whole section of the deprived classes will always get castigated in one way or other. The dalit movement should prove in its real sense, that they were all encompassing in a united front. Unless and until the cohesiveness was ensured no one could expect the upliftment of dalits. The concept dalit, for instance, denotes all the ex untouchables of our society. One should be very careful in employing the term to identify particular group as dalits.

In spite of the domination of a particular identity, the dalit movement in the colonial period created new elites among the dalits. In their political narrative, they always referred to the real suffering masses of the rural areas. In fact, the reference sometimes confined to the urban centers, though they might have called the rural dalits masses for their conference. However, one should take pains to see how far the rights acquired by the dalit intellectuals in urban region filtered down to the rural regions. This study does not try to show that *all* the Paraya or Adi Dravidars progressed in the Madras presidency. In fact majority of the illiterate masses among the above caste still remained in the same wretched condition. The association on the contrary could provide affluence to only a few who were articulating the demands of their brethren.

The elitist among the dalits did not reach the highest ladder overnight; their political rhetoric invariably referred the rural masses. Using the voices of the real dalits to get their selfish advancement could not uplift the real dalits. If the dalit movement in spite of the lack of government attention, could have started from the very villages where the suffering masses were deprived by the dominant castes, then the major political rhetoric of the dalit leaders would have been different. In fact, the real untouchables should be given government benefits. The elite dalits who settled in cities and towns some time in villages readily took advantage of the policies and programmes of the government. By using the acquired wealth, they were in a position or in the forefront in grabbing the benefits that were intended to uplift the real suffering dalits.

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