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# **EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE: A CASE OF LOWER CASTES IN MADRAS**

AUTHORED BY - T SAMYUKTA SREE

## **ABSTRACT**

The inculcation of modern ideas by various external forces and access to education resulted in the emergence of an educated section of the Depressed Classes, who realised the significance of education and headed their own movement for dignity and self-respect. Leaders like Iyothee Thass and Rettaimalai Srinivasan used this awareness as a means to fuel social reform, which brought about a quantifiable rise in social mobility and school enrollment among the disadvantaged groups. This paper elaborates on the transformational role played by education in social upliftment of the lower castes, particularly the Dalits, in the Madras Presidency.

## **CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION**

Over the years, many academicians, learned people and scholars have defined the term caste. However, a definition I find most comprehensive and easily dissectible has been stated by Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891-1956) in his book “Castes in India: Their Mechanism, Genesis and Development (1917)”. It was given by Mr. John Nesfield, as per which, “caste is a class of the community which disowns any connection with any other class and can neither intermarry nor eat nor drink with any but persons of their community.”<sup>1</sup> This definition accentuates two main features of the Indian caste system; one, the fixed social divisions and two, the shortage of interaction between different castes. While the caste system is omnipresent<sup>2</sup> in the Indian subcontinent, it is strongly defended and upheld in the southern parts, especially in the largely Hindu states of Madras and Mysore.<sup>3</sup> Caste’s divisive nature and differences due to the same has led to disparities in educational opportunities as well. Further, access to learning, especially that of Sanskrit, was normally restricted to the upper castes (mostly the Brahmins). There’s always been some sort of divide, some discrimination, some form of subjugation in the society, and the question of whether it will disappear one day still remains unanswered. However, the society has undergone tremendous changes with regard to

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<sup>1</sup> Ambedkar, B. R. (2015). *Castes in India: their mechanism, genesis and development*.

<sup>2</sup> Gist, N. P. (1954). Caste Differentials in South India. *American Sociological Review*, 19(2), 126–137.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

such situations, and many eminent personalities have contributed to the same.

During the time of the British, despite colonial administrators suggesting otherwise, the Brahmins and other higher castes enjoyed privileges of remission and favourable assessment.<sup>4</sup> Multiple efforts to change this situation, both by Indians *and* Britishers, have been made; right from Thomas Munro (1761-1827) arguing that there was no reason for a Brahmin to pay less than a Sudra ryot to Rettaimalai Srinivasan pushing the government to begin a Labour Welfare Department for the 'untouchables. 'Social change' is an idea that attributes its existence to such people and organisations that were formed along the way. This research paper attempts to delve into how the legislations formulated by the colonial government, the role played by the Christian Missionaries, the contributions of personalities like Iyothee Thass, Rettaimalai Srinivasan, and the participation of the Justice Party helped in furthering the idea of social change in Madras.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE:**

1. Gist, N. P. (1954). Caste Differentials in South India. *American Sociological Review*, 19(2), 126–137<sup>5</sup>

This paper describes how the Indian caste system is one of the most complex social structures in the world. However, the focal point of discussion would be how caste makes an appearance in every facet of social life, right from occupation to migration. It discusses how the social disparities caste poses affect people with respect to education, intra-city mobility, occupational inheritance, and so on.

2. Mukherjee, N. (1961). THE RYOTWARI SETTLEMENT AND THE INSTITUTION OF CASTE IN THE MADRAS PRESIDENCY (1792-1827). *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 24, 303–306.<sup>6</sup>

This work of Nilmani Mukherjee discusses the Ryotwari Settlement, one of the revenue reforms introduced by the British in the context of caste in the Madras Presidency. It takes the reader through how the colonial administrators while formulating their policies of revenue administration had to take into account the caste system. It also encapsulates the differences

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<sup>4</sup> Mukherjee, N. (1961). THE RYOTWARI SETTLEMENT AND THE INSTITUTION OF CASTE IN THE MADRAS PRESIDENCY (1792-1827). *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 24, 303–306.

<sup>5</sup> Gist, N. P. (1954). Caste Differentials in South India. *American Sociological Review*, 19(2), 126–137

<sup>6</sup> Mukherjee, N. (1961). THE RYOTWARI SETTLEMENT AND THE INSTITUTION OF CASTE IN THE MADRAS PRESIDENCY (1792-1827). *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 24, 303–306.

between the British authorities, as some wanted to favour the Brahmins, while some decided to side with the lower castes.

3. Vadivel, S. (2016). DALIT PRESS IN CONSTRUCTION OF DALIT CONSCIOUSNESS IN MADRAS PRESIDENCY 1893- 1914: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE. *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 77, 565–570.<sup>7</sup>

This paper speaks about building Dalit consciousness through a Dalit-run press. It discusses two personalities who were crucial in facilitating change through their newspapers and magazines: Rettaimalai Srinivasan and Iyothee Thass. Both of them played instrumental roles in trying to uplift their communities, through their monthly and weekly publications. The paper also enumerates the challenges they faced in the process.

4. R, J. Selvam, & Rao, S. (2024). Missionaries Ideology and Educational Egalitarianism: The Case of Dalit's in Colonial Tamil Nadu. *International Journal of History*, 7(1), 1-5<sup>8</sup>

In Missionaries Ideology and Educational Egalitarianism: The Case of Dalit's in Colonial Tamil Nadu, the impact of the philosophy of Christian missionaries and educational egalitarianism on the Dalit society has been studied. The missionaries were instrumental in constructing Dalit educational history and the paper examines the liberal educational system that they created.

5. Aruna, V. (2018). Role of Rettaimalai Srinivasan in the Temple Entry Movement. *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*, 5(4), 1-4<sup>9</sup>

This paper is an account of Rettaimalai Srinivasan's contribution towards the upliftment of lower castes and his role in the Temple Entry Movement. His early life, Ambedkarite stand, and more importantly, opinions on the Temple Entry Disabilities Bill have also been discussed. While the paper is titled 'Role of Rettaimalai Srinivasan in the Temple Entry Movement', it largely restricts itself to a general explanation of events, leaving little emphasis on Srinivasan's opinions.

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<sup>7</sup> Vadivel, S. (2016). DALIT PRESS IN CONSTRUCTION OF DALIT CONSCIOUSNESS IN MADRAS PRESIDENCY 1893- 1914: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE. *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 77, 565–570

<sup>8</sup> R, J. Selvam, & Rao, S. (2024). Missionaries Ideology and Educational Egalitarianism: The Case of Dalit's in Colonial Tamil Nadu. *International Journal of History*, 7(1), 1-5

<sup>9</sup> Aruna, V. (2018). Role of Rettaimalai Srinivasan in the Temple Entry Movement. *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*, 5(4), 1-4

6. Rao, P. V. (2018). Colonial State as ‘New Manu’? Explorations in Education Policies in Relation to Dalit and Low-Caste Education in the Nineteenth-Century India. *Contemporary Education Dialogue*, 16(1), 84-107. <sup>10</sup>

As a forerunner of ‘modernity’ and with a mission to ‘civilise’ India, the British government played a major role in shaping educational policies in the country. But did it act as a progressive force in shattering caste-based restrictions or simply fortify conventional Brahmin hierarchies? This paper answers the above question by examining Indian caste dynamics, Dalit and low-caste resistance, and comparing colonial policies with the *Manusmriti*.

7. Murali, V. (2016). IDEOLOGY OF AYOTHI DASS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF DALIT CONSCIOUSNESS. *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 77, 554–564.<sup>11</sup>

V. Murali in ‘Ideology of Ayothi Dass in the Construction of Dalit Consciousness’ examines the efforts of Iyothee Thass in constructing Dalit consciousness in the Tamil context. His emphasis on the importance of Buddhism, criticism of the Hindu scriptures and historical structure of the society, have discussed in detail. The impact of his ideology on the subaltern people has also been dealt with. The author concludes by saying how his contributions have been disregarded and that even uttering Thass’s name in the current societal sphere has become a rebellious act.

8. BASU, R. S. (2016). The Pariahs and Missionaries of South India [Review of The Pariah Problem: Caste, Religion and the Social in Modern India; Modernity of Slavery: Struggles against Caste Inequality in Colonial Kerala, by R. Viswanath & P. S. Mohan]. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 51(17), 29–32. <sup>12</sup>

Raj Sekhar Basu in ‘The Pariahs and Missionaries of South India’ reviews two works, ‘The Pariah Problem: Caste, Religion and the Social in Modern India’ by Rupa Viswanath and ‘Modernity of Slavery: Struggles against Caste Inequality in Colonial Kerala’ by Sanal Mohan. He brings out the arguments put forth by both authors on the links between the institutions of caste and slavery. Further, he praises them for making the readers aware that Dalit history isn’t

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<sup>10</sup> Rao, P. V. (2018). Colonial State as ‘New Manu’? Explorations in Education Policies in Relation to Dalit and Low-Caste Education in the Nineteenth-Century India. *Contemporary Education Dialogue*, 16(1), 84-107.

<sup>11</sup> Murali, V. (2016). IDEOLOGY OF AYOTHI DASS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF DALIT CONSCIOUSNESS. *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 77, 554–564.

<sup>12</sup> BASU, R. S. (2016). The Pariahs and Missionaries of South India [Review of The Pariah Problem: Caste, Religion and the Social in Modern India; Modernity of Slavery: Struggles against Caste Inequality in Colonial Kerala, by R. Viswanath & P. S. Mohan]. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 51(17), 29–32.

simply the perceptions of the elite classes, rather the stories of the semi-literate and non-literate Dalits are compelling and deserve to be read.

9. V. Geetha, & S. V. Rajadurai. (1993). Dalits and Non-Brahmin Consciousness in Colonial Tamil Nadu. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 28(39), 2091–2098. <sup>13</sup>

Dalit consciousness and a political voice for the Dalits is a phenomenon that received very less academic attention. This paper written by V. Geetha and S. V Rajadurai examines the thoughts and opinions of popular Dalit intellectuals who were actively involved in political and social reform activities. They discuss personalities like Ayothidas, M. Masilamani, and the ones who came after them as well, such as Maduriar and Appaduraiar in detail. An in-depth analysis of their arguments and opinions has been made.

10. Samraj, C. J. (2006). Understanding the Struggle for Panchama Land. Madras Institute of Development Studies. <sup>14</sup>

Panchama Land (also known as cultivable wastelands) were assigned by the British government in an attempt to connect with the Depressed Classes. These lands were illegally transferred to the non-depressed classes. This paper written by C. Jerome Samraj analyses the struggle for these lands. It also discusses the report submitted by J. H. A Tremeneheere, the then District Collector of Chengalpattu on the conditions of the Depressed Classes in the district and proposes policies to better their living conditions.

#### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:**

1. To analyse the educational access of the lower castes pre- and post-independence in the Madras Presidency.
2. To understand the contributions of the colonials and natives towards social change and upliftment in Madras.

#### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS:**

1. How did education empower the lower castes to battle the oppression they were subjected to?

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<sup>13</sup> V. Geetha, & S. V. Rajadurai. (1993). Dalits and Non-Brahmin Consciousness in Colonial Tamil Nadu. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 28(39), 2091–2098.

<sup>14</sup> Samraj, C. J. (2006). Understanding the Struggle for Panchama Land. Madras Institute of Development Studies

2. What role did the Christian Missionaries; colonial polices and play in advocating social change?

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

This paper titled as “Education and Social Change: A Case of Lower Castes in Madras” employed the empirical historical research methodology. It has referred various published articles and academic books by scholars to understand the caste disparities and the contributions of different personalities to combat the same.

## **CHAPTER-II: EDUCATIONAL ACCESS AND BRITISH & MISSIONARY EDUCATIONAL POLICIES FOR THE UPLIFTMENT OF THE MARGINALISED**

Caste in India was ubiquitous, spreading its vicious tentacles into every part of the country. The four-fold system was followed, with people being divided into the four infamous categories- Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. Along with them, there existed another category of people, the untouchables (today’s Dalits and Scheduled Castes). Referred to using different names- Pariahs, Panchamars, the Depressed Classes, the Downtrodden<sup>15</sup>, etc., they laid at the bottom of the caste ladder, and have perpetually been deprived of basic rights and opportunities. Therefore, it goes without saying that segregation extended into the educational sphere. The first census conducted in 1881, and reports on the same bring out how the literacy rates were considerably low, with education being accessible mostly to the upper castes and urban citizens.<sup>16</sup> The upper castes, especially the Brahmins, had privileged access. They were well-versed in Sanskrit and religious texts, which proved to be useful for the administrative and priestly roles that they were entitled to.<sup>17</sup> Along with educational disparities, the lower castes were also robbed of occupational opportunities. They were made to do the most menial of jobs (manual scavenging and bonded labour for instance), working in places that the caste Hindus refused to even step in.

Starting from early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the colonial administration provided the Depressed Classes

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<sup>15</sup> R, J. S., & Rao, D. (2021). SPECIAL SCHOOLS FOR DALITS IN COLONIAL TAMIL NADU. *IJCRT - International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT)*, 9(1), 954–962.

<sup>16</sup> Report on the Census of British India taken on the 17<sup>th</sup> of February 1881: Vols. I-III

<sup>17</sup> Kamal, U. (2023). Does ‘Caste Matters’ in School Education: A Preliminary Study in Uttar Pradesh. *Contemporary Voice of Dalit*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/2455328X231171509>

with certain concessions, to better their social and economic conditions.<sup>18</sup> They considered the caste system as a problematic institution and as India's route towards further backwardness. Despite viewing it as an unjust socio-economic order, they didn't come forward to change it as they feared any change that they might bring in might backfire on them. They were in need of funds to cement their rule further; the existing revenue system was advantageous to them, and therefore they kept quiet.<sup>19</sup> However, there were certain administrators who were influenced by liberal ideas and called for a policy of state intervention to deliver justice to the masses.<sup>20</sup> Officials like Bentinck, Baber, Cotton, Tremenheere, were great promoters of the same and were aware of the prevailing injustice, but held back due to revenue constraints. J.H.A Tremenheere, District Collector of Chengleput (Chengalpattu) in 1892 submitted a report titled "Notes on the Pariahs of Chingleput" on the existing conditions of the Depressed Classes in the district and proposed policies to better their living conditions.<sup>21</sup> A GO (Government Order) was passed in the same year, approving the policies suggested by Tremenheere- assigning plots of waste lands (Panchama lands) to the Depressed Classes, constructing Panchama schools, and assigning permanent houses for them.<sup>22</sup> This was one of the notable changes brought in Madras for the upliftment of the Depressed Classes. Another noteworthy GO was passed in 1893. Known as the Magna Carta of Panchama Education, it was issued for the education of the Pariahs, and was the first special order for Dalit education in the Madras Presidency.<sup>23</sup> Dr. Duncan, the Acting Director of Public Instruction passed the order, and it contained approval to (1) grant Pariahs in training schools an additional stipend of Rs. 2 per month (2) grant Pariahs seeking admission into private training schools (3) establish special schools for Pariahs (4) provide the Pariahs sufficient supply of books, furniture and slates.<sup>24</sup>

Special schools were required for the Dalits, since even when public schools were established, the Dalit students faced exclusion and harassment. Separate schools became a requirement to ensure their access to education without having to face discrimination. One of the primary initiatives taken in this regard was the setting up of the Hunter Commission, officially known as the Hunter Education Commission of 1882. Established by Lord Ripon to assess and reform

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<sup>18</sup> : Velusamy, M. (2011). Social and Political History of Dalit Emancipation: Pre and Post Independence Period. *Voice of Dalit*, 4(1), 91-129. (<https://doi.org/10.1177/0974354520110109>) (Original work published 2011)

<sup>19</sup> British Measures for the Liberation of the Depressed Class Labourers, N. Ambika, *UGC Approved Journal*, 8(3), (2018)

<sup>20</sup> Supra note 7

<sup>21</sup> Samraj, C. J. (2006). Understanding the Struggle for Panchama Land. Madras Institute of Development Studies.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Supra note 1

<sup>24</sup> Supra note 1

Indian education, it recognised this issue and recommended for separate schools to set up for the Dalits, as they weren't allowed to sit next to Caste Hindus.

In 1916, C. F Paddison became the first Commissioner of Labour and was given the job of supervising the interests of the Depressed Classes in different aspects, including education. One of the key concerns was the lack of elementary education for the Depressed Classes, and therefore, the Labour Schools came into being. These schools were necessary, as caste-based prejudices remained high despite repeated emphasis on zero discrimination. These schools provided free books, food, hostels, and slates to the students.<sup>25</sup>

These activities resulted significantly in the growth of education-

Years	No. of Schools	Boys	Girls
1920-1921	109		
1921-1922	164	1,179	123
1922-1923	254	-	-
1923-1924	469	12,886	1,608
1924-1925	656	19,774	2,440
1925-1926	723	22,417	3,189
1926-1927	926	29,239	4,679
1927-1928	1,178	36,885	5,914
1928-1929	1,583	47,262	9,274
1929-1930	1,784	52,858	10,746
1940-1941	1,198	38,848	13, 229
1950-1951	1,349	64,351	33,656

Source: P. E Mohan, *Scheduled Castes: History of Elevation, Tamil Nadu, 1900-1955*, New Era Publications, Madras, 1993. P.62

Apart from the colonial government and its policies, the Christian Missionaries also played a significant role in educating lower castes. One of the most influential actors in colonial India, their primary goal was to convert the Indians to Christianity. They hoped to challenge Indian religions and proving they were false using Western-style education, which they believed contained Christian values.<sup>26</sup> Between 1706 and 1823, there were three main educational

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> BELLENOIT, H. J. A. (2007). Missionary Education, Religion and Knowledge in India, c.1880–1915. *Modern Asian Studies*, 41(2), 369–394. doi:10.1017/S0026749X05002143

systems in India- government, indigenous, and missionary organisations.<sup>27</sup> The lower castes were forbidden from entering the first two, since they were dominated by the Europeans and Brahmins. Arguably, it was the Christian missionaries who first gave rise to Dalit independence by providing them with western education.

However, for a long time the missionaries (and the colonial government) were focused on converting the caste Hindus to Christianity and neglected the conditions of the marginalised communities. When they realised it was difficult to attract the upper castes, they were circumstantially forced to turn to the Pariah labourers.<sup>28</sup> They did use the lower castes as a tool to fulfil their interests, but were sincere in their activities. Rev. Adam Andrew whose work involving the Pariahs earned him the nickname 'Pariah Andrew',<sup>29</sup> made a thorough enquiry on the conditions of the depressed class labourers in the Chengalpattu district and even submitted a memorandum to the government in 1889, asking it to bring out reformatory measures. He also credits Mari Paul, a Pariah leader as the reason for the success of his church during 1889-1894.<sup>30</sup> Another important missionary was Rev. William Goudie who worked in the Thiruvallur district, highlighted the plight of the Depressed Classes in his works and emphasised the importance of allocation of land for cultivation and education for them.<sup>31</sup>

As a part of their activities, the missionaries established numerous schools, despite the colonial government's disapproval. Along with the lower castes, women were also given educational access, despite the opposition they faced from conventionalists and traditionalists. B. Ziengenbalg, the first Pietist missionary to India, established schools at Cuddalore, Madras, and Tranquebar, with his successors establishing schools in Thanjavur and Tiruchirappalli. Their objective was to teach the children reading, math skills, and writing, thereby providing them with an education that was free from caste and religious orientation.<sup>32</sup> The Dalits, who had never been permitted to receive public education along with the higher castes, now had educational rights reserved just for them and could study, which helped them procure jobs.<sup>33</sup> The missionaries were extremely creative when it came to decreasing the Dalit's educational

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<sup>27</sup> Selvam, R. J., & Rao, Y. S (2024), Missionaries' Ideology and Educational Egalitarianism: The Case of Dalits in Colonial Tamil Nadu, *International Journal of History*, 7(1)

<sup>28</sup> Houghton, Graham, *The Improvement of Dependency, the History of the Protestant Church in Madras 1870 - 1920*, Madras, 1983, p. 99.

<sup>29</sup> *Supra* note 16

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Notes on the Pariahs of Chingleput, Tremeneere, 30.09.1892

<sup>32</sup> *Supra* note 16

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

disparities. They improved their status and created awareness of their rights through missionary organisations like the “Educational Mission” headed by Reverend Alexander Duff of Scotland.<sup>34</sup>

### **CHAPTER-III: EDUCATED LEADERS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR SOCIAL UPLIFTMENT**

The emergence of revolutionary changes in the intellectual framework of the Tamil region was the result of the modern Western education system that was in place. It also brought into the picture new social-political ideas that helped the lower castes understand their own dignity, self-respect and uniqueness.<sup>35</sup> The humanitarian ideas of the English and western education instilled consciousness in the Depressed Classes, and encouraged them to fight against the subjugation by the caste Hindus.<sup>36</sup> The ones who were educated by the Christian missionaries and the educational policies of the colonial government realised the importance of education and insisted on their fellow community members sending their children to school.<sup>37</sup>

One such leader, who had the benefit of receiving elementary education was Iyothee Thass (1845-1914), founder of one of the earliest known organisations associated with the depressed classes, the Adhvaidhananda Sabha. Born in one of the multiple *cheris*<sup>38</sup> in Madras, he was only 26 when he set up the Sabha in 1870 at Ootacamund (Ooty). Hailed as the forerunner of the non-Brahmin movement in Madras, he believed that the lower castes were the original inhabitants of the country and were also Buddhists. His ideas and opinions were published in a weekly magazine named *Oru Paisa Tamizhan* (later changed to *Tamizhan*) that he launched in 1907.<sup>39</sup> Another significant organisation that he was a part of along with many others was the Madras Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha, founded in 1881. The first conference of the Sabha was held on December 1<sup>st</sup>, in Ooty. Some of the demands put forth during the same were: (1) As education was significant to progress, separate schools should be opened in each village for the children belonging to the depressed classes, who should also be offered a 50 percent

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<sup>34</sup> Rao, Y. C (c2007), *Writing Dait History and Other Essays* (p.23), New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers

<sup>35</sup> Panikkar, K.M (c1920), *Essay on Education: A Reconstruction in India* (p.6), Madras: Ganesh Publication

<sup>36</sup> Supra note 7

<sup>37</sup> Murali, V. (2016). IDEOLOGY OF AYOTHI DASS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF DALIT CONSCIOUSNESS. Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 77, 554–564. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26552683>

<sup>38</sup> Gorringer, H. (2016). Out of the Cheris: Dalits Contesting and Creating Public Space in Tamil Nadu. *Space and Culture*, 19(2), 164-176. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1206331215623216> (Original work published 2016)

<sup>39</sup> Supra note 38

concession in fees (2) Three students from the depressed classes who pass the matriculation exam every year should be chosen by the government for a stipend grant that'd enable them to continue their studies till they graduate. (3) Employment in government services should be assured to all those from the depressed classes who've passed their matriculation examination.<sup>40</sup>

The Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha aimed to integrate all members of the depressed classes and maintained a service army and scout wing. Other important leaders of the Sabha were P.V Subramaniam, Rettaimalai Srinivasan, P.M Madurai Pillai, M. C Rajah, R. Veeriyar and J. Shanmugam Pillai. When P.V Subramaniam was the president of the Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha, he started schools, conducted conferences and meetings, appealed to the governor and viceroy to better the conditions of the Depressed Classes, and bore all the expenditure himself. M.C Rajah was an important leader, who was the first elected president of the All-India Depressed Classes Association and was also the secretary of the Adi Dravida Mahajana Sabha.<sup>41</sup> He authored quite a few books, including *The Oppressed Hindus*, which provides a moving account of the conditions of the lower castes in pre-independent India.<sup>42</sup>

Another key leader was Rettaimalai Srinivasan (1860-1945), who devoted most of his life towards the upliftment of the Paraiyars<sup>43</sup> and Dalit emancipation<sup>44</sup>. Known for cultivating cleanliness and civic behaviour in his people, he openly declared war on the caste system, religious myths, and untouchability.<sup>45</sup> During his time, education had awakened the untouchables, who began to demand entry into temples. Srinivasan, along with B. R Ambedkar, in the first two Round Table Conferences and during the Poona Pact, worked hard to bring the Temple Entry movement to the forefront. The Justice Party that had been in power during the introduction of the Temple Entry Bill, has significantly contributed to the educational upliftment of the lower castes as well. It introduced free and compulsory education for children between the ages 5 and 12, implemented fee concessions, provided free education for girls

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<sup>40</sup> V. Geetha, & S. V. Rajadurai. (1993). Dalits and Non-Brahmin Consciousness in Colonial Tamil Nadu. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 28(39), 2091–2098. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4400205>

<sup>41</sup> Bandyopadhyay, S. (2000). Transfer of power and the crisis of Dalit politics in India, 1945–47. *Modern Asian Studies*, 34(4), 893-942.

<sup>42</sup> Rajah, M. C. (2005). *The oppressed Hindus*. Critical Quest.

<sup>43</sup> Deliège, R. (1993). The Myths of Origin of the Indian Untouchables. *Man*, 28(3), p. 535 <https://doi.org/10.2307/2804238>

<sup>44</sup> Aruna, V. (2018). Role of Rettaimalai Srinivasan in the Temple Entry Movement. *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*, 5(4), 1-4

<sup>45</sup> Supra note 44

above the eighth standard, and laid foundations for higher education universities that aimed at providing education to non-Brahmin communities.<sup>46</sup> They also issued a GO during the 1920s that stated that government aid/grant will not be given to the schools that refuse to admit Adi Dravida children. Their policies enabled social mobility and resulted in a rise in school enrolment among the disadvantaged groups.

Various schools were established by these leaders and reformers in Madras. Henry Steel Olcott, one of the co-founders of the Theosophical Society, met Iyothee Thass in 1892. Post the same, he established the ‘Panchama Schools’, free schools for Dalit boys and girls.<sup>47</sup> The society helped in setting up five schools in Madras, with the first school being set up in 1894. The school syllabus was designed specifically to suit the needs of the Dalits. According to Olcott, the pupils were trained to maintain accounts, make bills, and work out problems that involved English and Indian money and measures.<sup>48</sup> The table below shows the growth in education post the establishment of these schools-

Year	Number of Students Present	Number of Students Who Passed	Percentage
1895-1896	14	12	86
1896-1897	33	25	75
1897-1898	34	21	62
1898-1899	54	33	61

Source: *The Poor Pariah*, p. 129

Through this one understands how the depressed class leaders realised and understood the need for education as an important tool to free their people from their oppressed conditions.<sup>49</sup> They emphasised the same using print medium, an important tool of modernity<sup>50</sup>, which encouraged more of their people to learn to read and write.

#### **CHAPTER-IV: CONCLUSION**

This paper titled “Education and Social Change: A Case of Lower Castes in Madras” highlights the progressive role education plays in empowering the lower castes, especially the Dalits.

<sup>46</sup> Thamarai Manalan, M. (2018). Role of Justice Party in Tamil Nadu politics, *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*, 5(5)

<sup>47</sup> Supra note 1

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Mathialagan, M., & Ramanathan, G. (2018). Social movements and upliftment of depressed classes in the 20th century in the Madras Presidency, *Shanlax International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities* 5(2), 1-6.

<sup>50</sup> Supra note 25, p. 562

Historically, the caste system imposed a wide range of restrictions on the lower castes, which included them being denied access to educational and occupational opportunities. However, legislations and policies of the British government, the contributions of the Christian missionaries and efforts of native leaders and reformers helped in dismantling these barriers, thereby making way for social change.<sup>51</sup>

The colonial government, through initiatives like the Hunter Commission, Labour Schools and GOs relating to the establishment of special schools for the Pariahs helped in bettering the conditions of the lower castes considerably. J. H. A. Tremenheere, District Collector of Chengleput (Chengalpattu) deserves a mention here, because of his efforts to bring to notice the conditions of the lower castes to the government. The special schools set up by the colonial government helped in elevating the conditions of the lower castes to a considerable extent, as the strength in the schools increased gradually. The Christian missionaries, who arrived before the British government came up reformative initiatives, played an equally crucial role. Despite using the lower castes as a tool to fulfil their proselytising interests, they ensured the people got sizeable opportunities to study. Missionaries like Reverends Adam Andrew and William Goudie worked in different districts of Madras to help the lower castes. Like the government, they established schools as well, and also ensured the women got access to education along with the lower castes.

The ideas of the British government and the Christian missionaries inculcated consciousness in the minds of the lower castes, propelling them to fight against the unjust treatment they were subjected to. The educated section of Depressed Classes understood how instrumental education was and could be in their lives, and spread awareness on the same among their community members. Education of the lower castes resulted in the emergence of leaders like Iyothee Thass, Rettaimalai Srinivasan, M. C Rajah, etc., all of whom participated in the movement in their own ways. Numerous organisations were formed in this regard, like the Depressed Class Mission, Madras Valluvar Mahajana Sangam, Indira Kulathiba Vellalar Aikya Sangam, Parayar Mahajana Sabha (founded by Rettaimalai Srinivasan), and so on.<sup>52</sup>

In conclusion, this paper demonstrates how education helps in empowering an entire community of people, who'd been downtrodden and subjugated for centuries.

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<sup>51</sup> Supra note 9

<sup>52</sup> Supra note 39

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