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**EMPOWERMENT, SOCIAL JUSTICE, INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT :  
ISSUES & PERSPECTIVES OF TRIBAL TAMILNADU**

**Editor**

**Dr.S.Pushpalatha**

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY**

**DIRECTORATE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION**

**MADURAI KAMARAJ UNIVERSITY**

*(University with Potential for Excellence)*

**Madurai - 625 021.**

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## COMMUNAL RESERVATION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN TAMIL NADU, 1967-1997

Dr.P.Nagoorkani

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the reservation policy of the Government of Tamil Nadu to attain social justice for the different communities for 1967 to 1997. Even though the reservation policy was adopted by the colonial government in the Madras Presidency in the Nineteenth Century, the reservation issue gained momentum when the Justice Ministry formed in 1921. For a while, the monopoly of the Brahmins prevailed in the education and public services in Madras Presidency. Hence the Justice Ministry issued three communal government orders in 1921, 1922 and 1928.<sup>1</sup> These orders ensured reservation quotas to the non-Brahmins and paved the way for the redistribution of economic welfare.<sup>2</sup> As the Justice Party was dominated by the caste Hindu Non-Brahmins, the reservation ordered benefited them much. The Congress Government which was in power from 1937 to 1997 did not take much steps in the reservation issues. When the DMK and AIADMK Governments were formed, the Backward and most backward classes benefitted much. The interests of the Scheduled Classes were not much improved in the reservation issue.

### GO. during D.M.K. Rule, 1967-1976

During the D.M.K. rule the 'backward concept' in the administration was subjected to different interpretation. The 'backward concept' had a longer history. The term 'backward' was first employed during the Governorship of Lord Hobart (May 1872 to April 1875). During Lord Mayo's Viceroyalty (January 1872), Government collected educational and employment statistical data among Hindus and Muslims and found Muhammadans backward in education.<sup>3</sup> In order to encourage them in education, special privileges were given to them and preference was given to them in Government employment.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the idea of 'backwardness' and of employment in public services was considered to be a remedy to remove such backwardness that entered into the Madras administrative set up in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. The concept of backwardness first employed in the field of recruitment to Government jobs was then logically extended to the area of public education which produced the candidates for the public services.<sup>5</sup>

Then the term "backward" was freely used in education department and "illiterate" and "indigent" castes were considered as "backward classes". They were given privileges and also financial help was extended to educational institutions. Here, their castes were taken into consideration rather than their religion for the purpose of enumerating them as "backward classes". Therefore, many

1. Assistant Professor of History, School of Historical Studies Madurai Kamraj University, Madurai  
-625 021