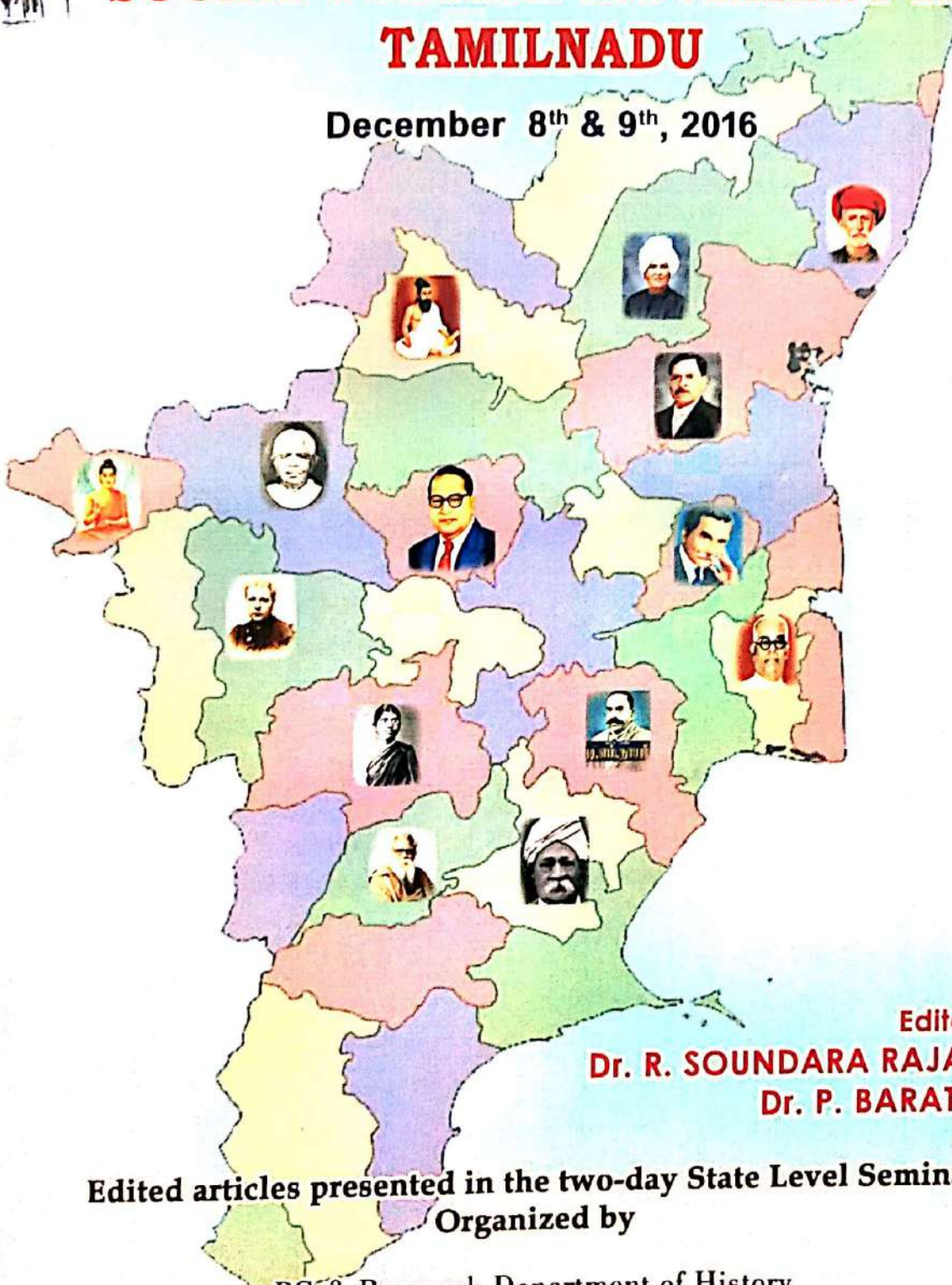




SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT IN TAMILNADU

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IYOTHEE THASS' STRUGGLE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE IN TAMIL NADU

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Iyothee Thass was a leader of par excellence in the Movement for Social Justice. A depressed class by birth and Buddhist by conviction, he was an outstanding figure in the role to emancipate the Depressed Classes and women in Tamil Nadu. He initiated socio-cultural awakening which preceded the rise of the Dravidian Movement in the second decade of the Twentieth Century Tamil Nadu. An ideologue and a cultural crusader, Iyothee Thass and a host of Depressed Class intellectuals of Tamil Nadu initiated a dozen of Tamil journals and magazines and ventilated novel ideas and their print and press activities opened a new ground in the subaltern struggle for identity, human dignity, equality, justice and above all social emancipation. Iyothee Thass and R.Srinivasan who started the journals, *Tamilan* and *Parayan* respectively heralded the 'Age of Struggle for Social Justice and Social Acceptance' in Tamil Nadu. Iyothee Thass also spearheaded a campaign of press media for the liberation of women from the age old superstitious customs of the Hindu Society. He ran the popular Tamil Weekly, *Tamilan*, for years. Besides, he published scores of pamphlets and tracts by him and his associates which were widely circulated among Tamils everywhere. The articles and write-ups he contributed for *Tamilan* provide an idea of the astounding range of his concerns: caste hegemony, untouchability and issues involved in census which are considered still great obstacles for the emancipation of Depressed classes and women.

Tamil press is typical of the rest of the Indian press in that it is a plant of recent growth. The earliest surviving printing in Tamil was a 16-page tract called, "*Christian Doctrine*". It was published by Portuguese Priests in Quilon on the Malabar Coast in 1578. The first Tamil periodical known as the *Tamil Magazine* was produced by the Christian Religious Tract Society in 1831. The other earliest Tamil weekly *Rajavritha Bodhini* was published in 1833, and *Dina Varthamani* was the earliest Tamil newspaper published from Madras in 1856.¹ The first Tamil Newspaper, *Swadesamitran*, was started by G.Subramania Iyer in 1882. Then many Tamil publications came into being

During the Governor-Generalship of Lord Lytton, the Vernacular Press Act was passed in 1878. It was also known as the 'Gagging Act'. By that, each printer and publisher had to deposit security and enter into a bond binding them not to print any matter against the British and submit proofs to the official censors. Lord Ripon, his successor repealed the Act

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