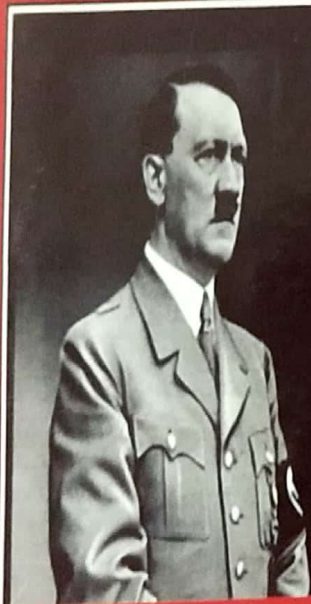


# POLITICAL MOVEMENTS IN HISTORY

G.Ravi  
A.Mohini  
P.Michel



All great movements are popular movements. They are the volcanic eruptions of human passions and emotions, stirred into activity by the ruthless Goddess of Distress or by the torch of the spoken word cast into the midst of the people.

**Virudhunagar Hindu Nadars' Senthikumara Nadar College**  
**(An Autonomous Institution Affiliated to**  
**Madurai Kamaraj University)**  
**(Re-accredited with 'A' grade by NAAC)**  
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## POLITICAL RIGHTS OF DALITS IN THE PRE-INDEPENDENCE ERA - A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

Dr.P.NAGOORKANI

The word 'Dalit' is derived from a Semitic root word *dal*, meaning to crush, crack, split, open, scatter, stretch out to be dissected, broken, torn, destroyed and trodden down. It thus refers to a poor, weak, helpless and oppressed people. Though the word 'Dalit' means oppressed, at present it refers only to the ex-untouchables of India who are known as Depressed Classes or Harijans (children of God) and Scheduled Castes (SCs). The term 'Depressed Classes' began to be used in official circle in the last quarter of the Nineteenth Century. Depressed Classes such as the Paraiyahs, Pallars, the Arunthadiyars, Madigas etc., are subsumed under the broader category, 'Adi-Dravidas'. Since 1922, they have been called officially called, 'Adi-Dravidas'.

By calling themselves Dalits, the Depressed Classes have done away with imposed names such as, Harijans, Exterior Castes, Excluded Castes, Outcastes, Scheduled Castes (SCs), Panchamas (Fifth Caste) and Chandlas (Doomed People). The common name, Dalit, coined and chosen by the Depressed Classes themselves seems to unite them while many of their former imposed ascribed names have divided them. The term Dalit acquired a new meaning in the 1970s through the radical programmes of the Dalit Panthers. The wide usage of this term replaced the word Harijan which had been coined by Mahatma Gandhi in the aftermath of the Poona Pact of 1932. To radical Dalit activities, Harijan represented a paternalistic categorization of a group doomed to remain in perpetual bondage.

In 1881 the population of the Depressed Classes in the erstwhile Madras Presidency was 4,439, 233, in 1891 their number was 5,162, 086, an increase of about 7,25,000 or seventeen per cent while the percentage of increase of the whole population for the Presidency was only 15.5. The population of Depressed Classes in Tamil Nadu, according to the 2001 census was 1,18,57, 504.

Untouchability, apparently includes deliberate denial of political rights to the Dalits. It, however, originated out of the suppression of the Broken Men who were Buddhists and out of the establishment of the supremacy of the Brahmins. They had no access to power and authority and were never treated as citizens or even as human beings but as mere untouchables having no rights whatsoever. Therefore, the Dalits gave more stress on securing political power.