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**Interrogating Enquiry Commission Reports on
Caste Violence**

Guest Editors

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Abstracts:

Interrogating Enquiry Commission Reports on Caste Violence: An Overview

C. Lakshmanan and K. Srinivasulu

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Caste Violence and the State

**A Critical Review of the Justice Baskaran Commission Report on Caste
Clashes in Madurai District in 1989**

C. Jerome Samraj

ABSTRACT

Villages around Bodi Nayakkanur in south-west Tamil Nadu witnessed a series of inter-caste violent episodes between 10 and 20 September 1989. This spread across 60 villages taking the lives of at least 30 people and destroying properties worth several thousands of rupees. Police had to resort to firing on 12 different occasions to bring the situation under control. Subsequently, the Tamil Nadu government appointed a judicial commission headed by Justice B. Baskaran to conduct an inquiry into the occurrences and submit a report on factors that caused the violence, whether there was a need for any disciplinary action against police officials, and possible measures to prevent such violence in future. Enquiries of this kind gain socio-political and administrative significance as the state attempts to foster equity in a hierarchical society like India. Given the socio-cultural and economic inequalities inherent in caste society, this paper attempts to analyse whether the commission remained objective in conducting the enquiry and to what extent it overcame entrenched prejudices and adhered to upholding equality before law.

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Caste Violence and its Stubborn Persistence

**Report of the High Level Committee for the Prevention of Caste Clashes in Southern
Districts of Tamil Nadu**

M.N. Panini

ABSTRACT

This paper assesses the Justice S. Mohan High Level Committee's report on caste violence in southern Tamil Nadu. It commends the report for highlighting that political parties and leaders have a vested interest in ensuring that caste hatred and conflicts are kept simmering and that development has reinforced caste oppression in new forms. It also concurs with the report that virulent caste associations be banned and village-level peace committees and secular non-caste associations break the stranglehold of caste identity. However, the paper argues that the report

falls short of confronting the structural defects and core issues of poor governance that it has exposed. It also criticises the report for remaining silent on how the nexus between antisocial mafias, political leaders representing caste and community interests, and government officials can be defeated.

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Caste Clashes (1995) and Judge Gomathinayagam Inquiry Commission: A Study

K.A. Manikumar

ABSTRACT

Discrimination against Pallars (Devendrars) prevailed in erstwhile Tirunelveli district, which included present day Thoothukudi district, even as late as the last decade of the twentieth century. Devendrars became more assertive and aggressive in the Tirunelveli region during the prolonged caste clashes between them and the Thevars (Mukkualthor) in the mid-1990s. Devendrars were determined not to take discrimination lying down. They resisted fiercely and the police, in its inept way of handling the situation, committed excesses that culminated in the unleashing of violence in Kodyankulam village in Thoothukudi district. This violence outraged the general public and the state government, which came under pressure due to public outcry, appointed a one-man commission headed by a retired district judge, Thiru Gomathinayagam, to probe the clashes. The incidents of caste clashes, the conduct of proceedings and findings of the commission are examined in this paper.

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Illiberal State and the Myth of a Civil Society

Justice Sampath Commission Report on Paramakudi Police Firing

R. Thirunavukkarasu

ABSTRACT

The Justice Sampath Commission that looked into the Paramakudi police firing (11th September 2011) on unarmed Dalits, in its two-volume report, not only absolved the police of any wrong doing but also underscored the supremacy of a formidable political dispensation in which a perfect union of interests between the ideology of dominant caste(s) and the state apparatus became vivid and unambiguous. This paper analyses the commission's ways of assessing the tragic incident and highlights the nuanced socio-political significance of the report. In doing so, it tries to demonstrate the hypocrisy of the state and questions both its liberal credentials and the space it affords to a vibrant civil society.

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A Reform-centric Approach to Ending Caste Discrimination

An Analysis of the Report of Justice Punnaiah Commission

K. Srinivasulu

ABSTRACT

The Justice K. Punnaiah Commission appointed by the Andhra Pradesh government in April 2003 to inquire into the prevalence of untouchability and associated discrimination, indignity and marginalisation suffered by SCs and STs assumed significance in the context of the political economy of caste dominance and the resistance to it by the vibrant Dalit movement since the mid-1980s. The analysis of the Dalit question, especially the issue of untouchability, its varied forms and varying degrees of intensity, demonstrates the painstaking process by which the commission collected and analysed information. But its recommendations, relevance and practical feasibility and the follow-up measures it suggested in terms of institutional and action-related initiatives to address the issues bring out the reform-centric approach of the commission towards the elimination of caste discrimination.