CHAPTER III
UPLIFTMENT OF DEPRESSED CLASS PEOPLE

BRIEF HISTORY OF CASTEISM AND UNTOUCHABILITY IN MADRAS STATE

It was in the Census Report of 1931, the so-called untouchables were described as Depressed Classes. The term was generally followed thereafter to denote all down-trodden communities together in Madras State until Gandhi in 1932 came up with the term Harijans (People of God) to denote them. In 1935, Simon Commission coined the term Scheduled Castes to refer the Harijans. Government of India Act 1935 also used the term Scheduled Castes (SCs). A list of SCs was published by Government of India, in Government of India (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1936.

In the 19th Century the socio-religious reform movements were started by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Dayanand Saraswathi and Swami Vivekananda, they wanted to eliminate the discrimination and caste system of the Hindu religion. In 20th Century, Gandhi, B.R.Ambedkar and E.V.Ramasamy were few of the notable figures against caste system and untouchability. Gandhi had mentioned that Swaraj (Self-Governance) would be a meaningless term with untouchability in the society. However, according to the 1951

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Census, the total population of SCs in India was about 15%.\(^7\) Almost the same fraction was observed in Madras State, for a total population of 357 lakhs (35.7 million). Harijans population was nearly a sixth, about 58 lakhs (5.8 million) comprising of about 56 lakhs Scheduled Caste and 2 lakhs Scheduled Tribes.\(^8\)

In 1937, when first Congress Ministry assumed office in Madras State by Rajaji, legislations were introduced for the entry of Harijan into temples as the worship of God in temples had been denied to them. Article 17 of the Constitution of India had legally forbidden the practice of untouchability in any form.\(^9\)

Madras Removal of Civil Disabilities Act that was passed in 1938 and amended in 1947 was to remove social disabilities imposed on Harijans by custom and usage. Amendments were also made in 1947 to Madras Temple Entry Authorisation Act to make it more efficient.\(^10\) This social evil that had been deep rooted through centuries and stemmed from the backwardness of Harijans in terms of education and economic status had to be uplifted and Kamaraj Government took significant initiatives in achieving this goal.\(^11\)

**ATTEMPTS OF KAMARAJ GOVERNMENT TO ERADICATE UNTOUCHABILITY AND CASTEISM**

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\(^7\) Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007), Sectoral Policies and Programmes, Vol.II, Planning Commission (Government of India) publication, New Delhi, pp.405-419

\(^8\) Ibid.


\(^11\) Harijan Welfare in Madras State, Directorate, Government Publicity and Information, Madras, 1955, pp.1-3
Harijan as Hindu Religious Endowment Cabinet Minister

Kamaraj assumed office as Chief Minister on April 13, 1954, a Tamil New Year Day, for the first time and his cabinet comprised of seven ministers excluding him.\(^{12}\) One of the Cabinet ministers B.Parameswaran belonged to SC and he had been allotted to handle Hindu Religious Endowments along with transport, Harijan Uplift departments.\(^{13}\)

It was highly regarded as an innovative approach of Kamaraj, to appoint a Harijan minister to control over temple related issues, as Harijans once had been prohibited from entering temples as they were considered untouchables. The appointment was considered revolutionary in nature and the intention was praised in the Assembly.\(^{14}\) Kamaraj believed that when a minister of Hindu Religious Endowments enters in to a temple, he would be received with special respects and welcome and would never be ignored based on his caste.\(^{15}\) He appropriated the power and position for a good cause.

Harijans as Trustees of Hindu Temples

In 1954, his Government also took initiatives to send orders to all charity organisations and temple executive officers for implementing at least a trustee and a clerk from qualified SCs to increase the awareness on the untouchability.\(^{16}\) By 1958, there were a total of 3045 trustees appointed in the temples and 72 of them were Harijans. The poor ratio was attributed to scarce availability of

\(^{12}\) G.O.No 520, Public (Special), 13th April 1954  
\(^{13}\) Ibid.  
\(^{16}\) Viduthalai (Freedom, Tamil Daily), November 30, 1954, p.1.
qualified SCs for the position; however, the number was significant to seed the change.\textsuperscript{17}

**Harijans in the Customs and Traditions of Hindu Temples**

When Madurai Meenakshi Amman Temple trusteeship board was formed, Kamaraj appointed a Scheduled Caste Comrade Maruthiah as Chairman of the board. The tradition of the temple had, at the beginning of every Tamil New Year, a celebration of ten days and at the last day the Goddess used to be crowned as Queen. In the ancient days, a Golden Ruler will be passed from the hands of the Goddess to the King of Madurai to symbolise the blessings of Goddess to the King and the King used to walk in front of Goddess. However, later the Golden Ruler was carried by Chairman of the trustees’ board and thus Maruthiah, for the first time in history, carried the Ruler that created a wild social awareness.\textsuperscript{18} Kamaraj had carefully engineered the process.

In 1954, Madras Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Amendment) Bill was introduced and a Joint Select Committee was formed with 23 members, 15 from Legislative Assembly and 8 from Legislative Council) under Parameswaran.\textsuperscript{19} The Committee was expected to deliver its duties in streamlining the functions of trustee boards and other temple related issues. In 1958, the Committee, then under Kakkan’s Chairmanship, adopted a resolution requesting special orders to appoint a Harijan trustee compulsorily in all temples.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{18} Personal Interview with Mr.Pazha. Nedumaran, Ex. President of Madurai Congress Committee, 22nd July 2012, at Vedaranyam
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{M.L.A. Debates}, Vol.XVI, Government of Madras, 19\textsuperscript{th} May 1954
\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Madras Information}, Vol. XII, No.5, May 1958, p.5.
Harijan as Home Minister

Police Department, then in all of its hierarchy had caste supporters and since the majority was non-SCs, when it came to break out of issues, had least consideration for the SCs if they were involved. 21 There had also been many incidents where the Police enjoyed the privileges by ‘Zameendars’(Landlords) and favored them by controlling Harijans, who were just coolies, through force.22 At the height of such controls there was even an incident of a Police Inspector punished a Harijan violently by tying him on the trees and boat him with sandals.23

When Kamaraj formed his second cabinet in 1957, he allotted the Home Ministry that is considered the next powerful position after the Chief Minister to Kakkan, another Harijan. It was neither before nor after Kamaraj the home ministry allotted to Harijan in the State.24

Usually the Chief Ministers kept the Police Department under their direct control as the power to control and maintain law and order had tremendous repercussions. But Kamararj brought Police Department under Kakkan so that to symbolise the handling over the power of control to Scheduled Caste and that was a critical stand taken by Kamaraj.25

Kamaraj also made appointments at the key positions of the Secretariat by qualified Harijan Community people. He had a personal interest in appointing Indian Administrative Service (I.A.S.)

22 Ibid.
officers and Indian Police Service (I.P.S.) officers from Suppressed Classes to the parts of the State where he had experiences of tensions and imbalance due to caste related issues.26

HARIJAN WELFARE

Harijan Welfare Department Enhancement

The Department had been created and functioning from April 01, 194927 but Kamaraj realised the Department could be enhanced by making it more efficient and thus more Harijans would be benefitted.

The welfare work was under a Director, an officer in I.A.S Cadre, and from August 09, 1961, Kamaraj Government appointed a Joint Director to assist the Director.28 The Collectors of the districts continued to be responsible for the ameliorative work done in the districts, with the Director of Harijan Welfare, Madras as coordinating officer.29

26 Personal Interview with Mr.G. Boovaraghan, Former Cabinet Minister in Kamaraj’s Third Cabinet, at Chennai, 17th August 2012
29 Ibid.
The ameliorative work consisted of:

1. Provision of house-sites
2. Maintenance of schools, grant scholarships, stipends, boarding grants and grants to private educational institutions for the benefit of the communities eligible for the help by Harijan Welfare Department
3. Provision of wells and tanks for the supply of drinking water, sanitary amenities, pathways, street lights and burning and burial grounds
4. Grants to private bodies engaged in social and economic uplift of the eligible communities
5. Grant of subsidy for the purchase of bulls and sinking of wells for agricultural purpose
6. Grant of subsidy for housing
7. Starting of Cottage Industries, etc.

**Harijan Day**

Harijan Day was celebrated every month, 28<sup>th</sup> for February and 30<sup>th</sup> for all the remaining months of a year, in all the Harijan Welfare schools and in other places in accordance with the programme laid down by the Government. The objective of the celebration was to bring about a change of outlook on the part of the caste Hindus towards Harijans so that the latter may be treated on footing of equality. Government’s desire was that every effort should be made to educate caste Hindus for the removal of untouchability and of the disabilities of Harijans.

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30 Ibid.  
32 Ibid.
The following activities were suggested for the Harijan Day celebrations:33

1. Procession in every village with the cooperation of the local Congress and Harijan Sevak Sangh workers as well as other interested in Harijan Welfare and public meetings arranged in a public place.

2. Evil practices of Untouchability, provisions of the Civil Disabilities Act, Temple Entry Authorisation Act, etc. may be explained in simple language and the consequences of transgressing those laws to be made clear.

3. The public wells may be thrown open to Harijans wherever possible without giving scope for any breach of peace on the occasions.

4. Local school teachers and the boys of all communities in the educational institutions may be induced and encouraged to partake in the observance of the day and do propaganda in a fitting manner.

5. It should be seen that Harijans are allowed to exercise their right of worship in all public temples and they are allowed due protection in the exercise of that right.

6. The programs could be altered to suit local conditions without change in the spirit of the observance.

If any of the villages was identified prohibiting entry of a Harijan into a temple, that village was given preference during the Harijan day celebrations for a temple entry. Harijan Welfare Department officers were authorised to handle situations if there was

any refusal to opening temples for Harijans and the Government backed them with its power.\textsuperscript{34}

\textbf{Harijan Week}

Harijan Week was celebrated from 24\textsuperscript{th} to 30\textsuperscript{th} of January 1961 throughout the State including Madras City. Meetings were held in the Harijan Colonies. Documentary films were shown and health campaigns were conducted. Community dinners were also arranged wherever possible.\textsuperscript{35}

Kamaraj Government took it a point seriously but enthusiastically, to tackle untouchability and uplift Harijans equal to the rest. Apart from implementing Untouchability Act 1955, in which untouchability had been spelled as a crime, as per guidelines from the Article 17 of the Constitution, Kamaraj had realised that the changing of the attitude of caste Hindus towards equality was utmost important.\textsuperscript{36}

Village groups for propaganda through public talks, villupattu (folk song with a musical instrument that looked like a bow) and other means was encouraged. Every taluk was appointed with a Village Sevak to monitor the situation in public places whether any untouchability was practiced.\textsuperscript{37}

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Untouchability amongst Untouchables

It is worth to note that untouchability was not only a problem between caste Hindus and Scheduled Castes but it was a burning issue among the Scheduled Caste clans. Those who considered higher in rank within the Scheduled Castes did not eat at others houses though some level of friendship existed between them. There were also no entertaining of marriage relationships between them. When Harijans expected equality with caste Hindus, it was a contradicting surprise and yet true that also looked down at each other based on their castes.\(^{38}\)

Couple of incidents would expose the intensity and seriousness of the untouchability among the Harijans. Okkarai, a village near Thurayur in Trichirappalli District was provided with wells for drinking water purposes by the Government. But the wells were never put in to use as the sub-castes Parayar, Pallar and Chakkili within Scheduled Castes could not reach consent on how to use the wells without affecting their caste ranks.\(^{39}\)

Similarly in Aadhanur, Pallars submitted a writ petition for not providing the village with wells since the wells would be used by Parayars and Chakkilis also. They were ready to suffer their day to day drinking water problems but not to compromise on caste ranks.\(^{40}\)

\(^{38}\) M. Jeganathan, *Theendamai Ozhippu Chattam (Civil Disabilities Act)*, (Tindivanam, Jeevodhayam Printers, 1957), pp.13-14

\(^{39}\) *Ibid.*

Rewards for Excellent Service towards Untouchability Eradication

Kamaraj Government announced the rewards in 1956, worth Rs.100 and Rs.50 for eight persons from a district, in the every year, who had contributed excellent service towards removal of untouchability from the society. Rs.100 rewards for two and Rs.50 rewards for six persons.\footnote{Ibid.}

Those who open their wells to Harijans, allow Harijans into restaurants and engage in marriage relationship with them were recommended for Rs.100 rewards. Those who contributed in temple entry and other reforms in Harijan living areas were considered for Rs.50 rewards. In that year Rs.6000 was allotted for giving away such rewards.\footnote{Viduthalai, November 25, 1956, p.1}

District Collectors gave the proposals to Harijan Welfare Department director and the director together with the Harijan Welfare minister scrutinised the proposals on their own merit and finalised the awardees.\footnote{M.L.A. Debates, Vol. X, Government of Madras, 27th October 1958, p.24} In 1959, a sum of Rs.26,000 had been allotted for the rewards. Apart from the rewards, the legislative measures of Rs.500 fine and or imprisonment for not more than six weeks were also enforced towards eradication of untouchability.\footnote{A. Gopala Padayachi, Personal Assistant to the Director of Harijan Welfare, “Harijan Welfare in the State”, Madras Information, Vol.XIII, No.10, October 1959, p.34}
Every year the Government also tracked the particulars of offences booked under untouchability Act in the State;\(^{45}\)

**Table No. 16 - Details of Untouchability offences booked (1955-1963)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Cases Booked</th>
<th>Conviction</th>
<th>Acquittal</th>
<th>Compound</th>
<th>No. of Cases under trial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1955-56</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956-57</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957-58</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958-59</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959-60</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-61</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961-62</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962-63</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E.V. Ramasamy, the Chief of D.K., was satisfied with the way the Government progressed in untouchability eradication measures and he remained a supporter of Kamaraj throughout the tenure of Kamaraj Rule. When Kamaraj was asked why E.V.R. consistently supported the Government though there were many differences in principles between the Congress Party and D.K., Kamaraj replied that E.V.R. supported his Government as E.V.R’s dreams of eradicating untouchability and caste system were attempted to be realised. He agreed that there were differences in principles but not in eradicating untouchability.\(^{46}\)


\(^{46}\) *Navasakthi*, April 11, 1961, p.2.
**Mudukulathur Riots**

After the General Assembly Elections in April 1957, there were several clashes between Thevars and Harijans in Mudukulathur taluk, Ramanathapuram district. During the elections, Thevars had supported Muthuramalinga Thevar, Forward Bloc Party and Harijans had supported the Congress. This split in ideology had grown into small fights and group clashes that had resulted in even loss of lives from both sides and burning of Harijans houses.

A peace talk was initiated by the District Collector of Ramanathapuram to resolve the issues between both parties on 10th September but there was pettifoggery between Muthuramalinga Thevar and Harijan leader Immanuel Segaran. The next day Immanuel Segaran was murdered. It had also been argued that the recent awareness and uplift of Harijans were troubling Thevars and combined with the election related issues, the result was the murder of Harijan leader.

On September 14, 1957, Police visited Keezhthooval village for enquiry and had to open fire on the mob, which became violent on the Police, for self defence, at least in the Police version of the story. Five Thevar community people were killed in the firing from a crowd of over three hundred people. The whole Thevar community turned against Kamaraj from this incident.

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48 *Viduthalai*, October 9, 1957, p.2.
49 Ibid., p.1.
E.V.R was in support of Kamaraj on the handling of Mudukulathur riots but D.M.K was against him. It was unavoidable situation and the Police had no other choice except for opening fire since peace and law and order in the society was utmost important. Kamaraj had also sent Chellapandiyan to Muthuramalinga Thevar to invite him to take part in Kamaraj’s ministry. However Thevar refused the offer and said that he would consider after the next assembly elections. That was an indication that Kamaraj put the Harijan-Thevar relationships above his personal ego.  

Apart from the clashes and bloodshed, Kamaraj understood that the people of East Ramanathapuram were struggling for basic needs and that had to be fulfilled in order to eliminate the clashes. He brought schemes for building houses, new roads, agricultural and small industries development for both communities.

**EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF SUPPRESSED CLASSES**

**Provisions to Harijan Welfare Schools and Reservations**

Kamaraj was very keen on education of the children in the State, especially the children from Depressed Classes, since they needed more resources and time to catch up with others, in terms of supporting them with monetary and other provisional benefits.

In the year 1954-55, a sum of Rs.2000 was allotted for buying combs, soaps, coconut oil for hair, etc, for the student studying in

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51 Personal Interview with Mr. Thamizharuvi Manian, Ex.General Secretary of Tamilnadu Congress Committee, 30th July 2012, at Tiruvarur
52 A. Gopanna, *Kamaraj Oru Sagaptham (Kamaraj – An Epoch)*, (Chennai: Nava India Publishers, 2003), p.131
Harijan Welfare Schools. The allocation was increased to Rs.5500 in the next year to include for purchase of stationeries, etc.\textsuperscript{53}

Harijan pupils were enjoying educational concessions and 10\% reservation of seats in all secondary and training schools and colleges. Kamaraj administration increased the allocation to 15\% in 1954\textsuperscript{54} and 16\% in 1956.\textsuperscript{55} In 1961, the total seats in all medical colleges in the State were 550 and 86 had been reserved for SCs and 135 for backward communities.\textsuperscript{56}

**Increase of Age Limit in the Engineering College Admissions**

In 1947, after the Independence of India, the age limit for Suppressed Class students’ enrollment had been relaxed from 20 to 22, for engineering colleges’ admission\textsuperscript{57} in the State. Kamaraj realised that the Suppressed Class pupils needed further relaxation in order to increase their enrollment significantly.\textsuperscript{58} Effective from the academic year 1955-56, the age limit was relaxed from 22 to 24 years.\textsuperscript{59}

**Scholarships to Harijan Students**

Though pupils from SCs and STs had been exempted from paying their tuition fees in educational institutions if their parents or guardians’ income did not exceed Rs.1500 per annum in case of colleges and Rs.1200 per annum in case of other educational

\textsuperscript{53}G.O.No.1620, Industries, Labour and Cooperation Department, 17\textsuperscript{th} June 1954;

G.O.No.3225, Education Department, 28\textsuperscript{th} February 1956

\textsuperscript{54}G.O.No.733, Education Department, 28\textsuperscript{th} May 1954

\textsuperscript{55}G.O.No.1195, Education Department, 21\textsuperscript{st} June 1956

\textsuperscript{56}Viduthalai, March 11, 1961, p.1.

\textsuperscript{57}G.O.No.991, Education Department, 13\textsuperscript{th} May 1947


\textsuperscript{59}G.O.No.1204, Education Department, 7\textsuperscript{th} July 1955
institutions, they still had to pay special fees against miscellaneous expenses. From academic year 1958-59, the Government ordered that the special fees towards library, laboratory, and medical inspections for forms IV to VI exempted in secondary schools.\textsuperscript{60}

The scheme provided, apart from scholarships, residential and non-residential boarding grants and construction of hostels and maintenance of Harijan Welfare Schools (HWS). From 1956 to 1958, Rs.15.54 lakhs (1.554 million) were spent for schooling charges and Rs.5.25 lakhs (0.525 million) on the maintenance of HWS. 13,580 boarding grants had been issued and 96 hostels were being maintained.\textsuperscript{61}

Government of India had been granting scholarships for post-matriculation studies\textsuperscript{62} from 1952-53 and Kamaraj Government delegated this scholarship through Director of Harijan Welfare. A sum of Rs.23.56 lakhs (2.536 million) was also provided for scholarships in 1960. Pupils could, not exceeding Rs.200 per student, get advance for paying their fees if the scholarship from Central Government was delayed.\textsuperscript{63}

In 1960-61, Rs.177 lakhs (17.7 million) was sanctioned by Kamaraj Government for the award of scholarships. Scholarships were also granted for professional courses such as law, medicine, engineering, etc. Post-Graduate Arts Colleges were provided with three scholarships and law school students were granted ten

\textsuperscript{60} G.O.No.735, Education Department, 16th April 1958
\textsuperscript{61} Second Plan, Madras State, 1959, p.147.
\textsuperscript{62} G.O.No.3763, Industries, Labour and Cooperation Department, 8th November 1955
From 1957, Government also allowed full fees concession for children of barbers and washer man, the same concessions as Harijan children.

Besides, there was differentiation between Harijans and Harijans who had converted to Christianity in terms of concession in the fees. Converted Harijans could enjoy only 50% of what their non-converted counterparts enjoyed. From the academic year 1957-58, all the concessions to Harijan students were also extended to convert Harijans.

**Free Hostels for Harijan Students**

Kamaraj Government provided free hostels for SCs students. 75% for SCs and STs, 15% for Backward Classes (BCs) and the remaining 10% of the seats were allotted for others in the hostels. SCs, STs and BCs were given full fee concession while others had to pay a third of total fees. In 1961, the government removed these fees, but the reservations remained the same and paved way to all the students, despite their caste belonging, to stay closer together without discriminations.

As of 1960, there were many free hostels for SCs from primary schools. Apart from the 43 hostels listed below, there were 172 more hostels in the State that had been receiving aides from the Central Government.

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66 *G.O.No.731, Education Department*, 25th April 1957
Table No. 17 - List of Free Hostels for SC and BC students in 1960

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the District</th>
<th>Total Free Hostels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chengalpattu</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Arcot</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thanjavur</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madurai</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramanathapuram</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tirunelveli</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Arcot</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salem</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coimbatore</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiruchirappalli</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Nilgris</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madras City</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>43</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rewards for Rank Holder Harijan Students

From 1958 onwards, Kamaraj Government approved the award of two Gold medals and two Silver medals, in each district of the State, for the top two students from SCs, compared to their fellow SCs students to be fair and to ensure every year two students get the rewards, for passing out Secondary School Leaving Certificate (S.S.L.C.) examinations. A sum of Rs.3120 was granted in the same year for these rewards.\(^69\) The purpose, obviously, was to encourage the SCs students in their studies without disadvantaging them by comparing with non-Suppressed Class students.

\(^69\) G.O.No.4242, Industries, Labour and Cooperation Department, 1\(^{st}\) April 1958
Mid-day Meals

The scheme has been handled and complete by discussed in the previous chapter; however, the emphasis here is different.

When Kamaraj learned that Harijan Welfare Schools and Madras Municipality Schools were witnessing a significant increase in both attendance and enrollment since the provision of mid-day meals, he vowed to extend the mid-day meals scheme to all elementary schools followed by secondary schools. The scheme had become a huge success, with extraordinary participation from public, in terms of achieving increased enrollment, attendance and reducing drop-outs.\textsuperscript{70} Besides the scheme also had another important effect that pupils from various caste backgrounds, without discrimination, ate together at schools. Once the young minds accepted that they were equal, the casteism and untouchability expected to get extinct.\textsuperscript{71}

HYGIENE FOR HARIJANS

Water Hygiene

Harijans living conditions had been very pathetic in terms of cleanliness and hygiene.\textsuperscript{72} For water hygiene, many wells were silted and renewed and new wells were dug. Panchayat funds had to be used for drinking water purposes, if there was a critical and emergency requirement, Harijan Welfare fund was utilised to provide drinking water facilities. Apart from this, roads, small bridges, bathrooms, toilets and cremation sites were also provided. In the year 1963-64,

\textsuperscript{70} K. Sakthivel, \textit{Op. cit.}, p.82.
\textsuperscript{71} \textit{M.L.A. Debates, Vol.VI, No.5 to 8, Government of Madras,1959}, p.316.
\textsuperscript{72} \textit{Harijan Development Welfare Half Yearly Report, Tirunelveli District, Government of Madras, 1963}, p.8
4.5 lakhs (0.45 million) was spent for providing new wells alone. Small linking roads were also provided for Harijan living areas.\(^{73}\)

Government did encourage the contribution of respective living area public for all the schemes but the schemes did not depend on the public contributions, especially the ones for providing water hygiene. Government also allotted 20% of the village works grants to Harijan Welfare activities.\(^{74}\)

**Rewards for Hygienic Harijan Areas**

Kamaraj intended to encourage the hygiene practices among the Harijan living areas and introduced a reward scheme for the best hygienically maintained Harijan area.

To motivate sustained hygienic conditions, in 1961-62, he introduced Rs.300 worth of rewards for the most hygienic Harijan living villages. Some details of Ramanathapuram district on the same year were as below,\(^{75}\)

\(^{74}\) *Ibid.*
\(^{75}\) *Welfare Schemes for Harijans in Ramanathapuram District*, Department of Information and Publicity, Government of Madras, 1963, p.56
Table No. 18 - Award winners for Hygienic Harijan Areas of Ramanathapuram District in 1962

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Taluk</th>
<th>Selected Village</th>
<th>Rewards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sattur</td>
<td>Sandhanur</td>
<td>Rs.300 worth of Radio Set</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Srivilliputhur</td>
<td>Kunnoor</td>
<td>-do-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aruppukottai</td>
<td>Karungudi</td>
<td>-do-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thirupathur</td>
<td>Aavinipatti</td>
<td>-do-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thiruvadanai</td>
<td>Perumal Madai</td>
<td>-do-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sivagangai</td>
<td>Sankaranthi</td>
<td>-do-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramanathapuram</td>
<td>Thamaraikulam</td>
<td>-do-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paramakudi</td>
<td>Talakkal</td>
<td>-do-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mudukulathur</td>
<td>Nagarathar Kurichi</td>
<td>-do-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HOUSING SCHEMES FOR SCs AND STs

Provision of Government Lands

Those Depressed Class families could not afford to own a house was given free Government lands for house sites. Government also acquired land under Land Acquisition Act to sustain the provision of free lands to Depressed Classes. These were private lands acquired with appropriate compensation.  

Before 1936, there was grant of loans to Depressed Classes that were being recovered in small installments for the purchase of house sites. Each family was allotted with 3 cents of land in wet

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76 A. Somasundaram, Assistant Secretary, Department of Industries, Labour and Cooperation, “Impressive Achievement in Housing the Harijans”, Madras Information, Vol. XI, No.10, October 1957, pp.20-21.

areas and 5 cents in dry areas.\textsuperscript{78} Kamaraj Government extended the scheme to Class I Panchayats and urban locations from July 1956, which had previously been confined to only Class II Panchayats and rural areas.\textsuperscript{79} Special Tahsildars and other executive staffs were appointed to acquire sites for the housing.\textsuperscript{80}

A subsidy of Rs.500 per house was given and a sum of Rs.200 was sanctioned as interest free loan. This loan had to be repaid in 40 installments of Rs.5. The installments were further reduced by 50\% from 1958-59, to Rs.2.50 per month for 80 months.\textsuperscript{81} Each Harijan Colony was provided with a well in Rural Water Scheme.\textsuperscript{82}

A model Colony in Kariappatti village in Madurai district was designed to accommodate 80 Harijan families and 10 Gounder community families at a cost of Rs.42,000. This Colony was provided with water supply, school and other necessary facilities and the design was well received by the families.\textsuperscript{83}

Kamaraj’s administration also tried twin-houses in a block and five-houses in a block, side by side in a row, to save material use and thus expenses for both material and labor. The main savings came

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{78} G.O.No.1025, Firka Development Department, 12th November 1949
\textsuperscript{79} G.O.No.3509, Industries, Labour and Cooperation Department, 31\textsuperscript{st} July 1956; G.O.No.3297, Industries, Labour and Cooperation Department, 9\textsuperscript{th} October 1957
\textsuperscript{80} G.O.No.2925, Industries, Labour and Cooperation Department, 4\textsuperscript{th} September 1957; G.O.No.2230, Industries, Labour and Cooperation Department, 9\textsuperscript{th} June 1958
\textsuperscript{81} G.O.No.3289, Industries, Labour and Cooperation Department, 8\textsuperscript{th} October 1957; G.O.No.1256, Industries, Labour and Cooperation Department, 31\textsuperscript{st} March 1958; G.O.No.3263, Industries, Labour and Cooperation Department, 25\textsuperscript{th} August 1958
\textsuperscript{83} G.O.No.2265, Industries, Labour and Cooperation Department, 2\textsuperscript{nd} July 1955
\end{flushright}
from the reduction of number of walls. Apart from cost, these houses saved significant time in building them. The cost significantly came down, one twin-house block was Rs.920 and five-house block was Rs.2750. The engineering excellences show the interest the Government had towards these projects and pushing then to their limits. The split of expenses for each type were as below;

**Twin-House Blocks**

Table No. 19 - Details of expenses for a Single Twin-House Block

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Expenses</th>
<th>Cost (Rupees)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bricks 12,000 Nos.</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cement 24 Bags</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windows 2 Nos</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palmyrah Rafters</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reepers 1,000 ft.</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiles 1,200</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron Nails, etc</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mason</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Charges</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Cost</strong></td>
<td><strong>920</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Five-House Blocks

Table No. 20 - Details of expenses for a Single Five-House Block

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the District</th>
<th>Total Free Hostels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rough Stones 3,000 Nos.</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bricks 30,000 Nos.</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cement 60 Bags</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doors 10 Nos.</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windows 5 Nos</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palmyrah Rafters</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reepers 2,500 ft.</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiles 3,000</td>
<td>575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron Nails, etc</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mason</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Charges</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Cost</strong></td>
<td><strong>2750</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The total amount spent during the Kamaraj Decade for acquisition and assignments of Harijan house sites was 110.82 lakhs (11.08 million). Year wise details of the expenditure are tabulated below;\(^85\)

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Table No. 21 - Expenditure for acquisition of Harijan House Sites (1954-1964)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Expenditure (in Lakhs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1954-55</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955-56</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956-57</td>
<td>5.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957-58</td>
<td>4.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958-59</td>
<td>6.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959-60</td>
<td>9.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-61</td>
<td>16.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961-62</td>
<td>21.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962-63</td>
<td>21.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963-64</td>
<td>19.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>110.82</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ELECTRIFICATION OF HARIJAN COLONIES:**

Kamaraj Government took special care for electrifying Harijan Colonies. Whenever there was a planning of electrification in Panchayats and Municipalities, it was decided that, Harijans residential areas must be included. The State Government was also providing subsidies from the Harijan Welfare budget, a sum of not less than Rs.1.5 lakhs each year from 1957-58 onwards. This was to cover the expenses of Electricity Board so that the Board could purely enjoy the incentives of the expansion of electrification without suffering the expenses.

A sum of Rs.6.85 lakhs had been set apart under grant-in-aid schemes for sanitary amenities, acquisition of housing sites and

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electrification of Harijan colonies in the year 1960.\textsuperscript{87} The table below has the details of total expenditure in Kamaraj Decade for electrification of Harijan Colonies;\textsuperscript{88}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Harijan Colonies Electrified</th>
<th>Expenditure (in Lakhs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1957-58</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958-59</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959-60</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-61</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961-62</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962-63</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>2.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963-64</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,228</strong></td>
<td><strong>12.20</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The numbers indicate that a huge sums of more than Rs.10 million and Rs.1 million have been spent for Harijan housing and Harijan Colonies electrification respectively during Kamaraj Decade. It must be noted that these are the values of 1950s and 1960s where an American Dollar was exchanged for an average of 4.8 Indian Rupees.

**ABOLISHING THE NAME OF ‘CHERI’:**

On September 3, 1955, Ponneri Panchayat came up with a resolution and put forth to the State Government to remove the name

\textsuperscript{87}“Harijan State in Madras State”, \textit{Madras Information}, Vol. XIV, No.8, (August 1960), p.32

\textsuperscript{88}\textit{G.O.No.267, Finance Department}, 31\textsuperscript{st} March 1968 as quoted in R. Ramasubramaniam, \textit{Op.cit.}, p.48
‘Cheri’ to denote Harijan Colonies from Government Records. Kamaraj administration issued orders directing that the term ‘Cheri’ should be dropped from usage in official records and in all correspondences, instead the terms ‘Colony’ or ‘Quarters’ could be used.

Kamaraj mentioned that his Government was dedicated to abolish not just the term Cheri but the Cheris themselves. He also added that the Government, despite its efforts, was being encountered with hesitations of Harijans to adapt them for the change.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR THE DOWNTRODDEN**

For Agricultural Labours

Depressed Class people were, mostly, not educated or skilled enough to earn their living through non-agricultural activities. Government allocated lands for them to cultivate crops at free of cost. There had been, until the year 1960-61, 5,288 acres assigned under such scheme. The administration also provided Rs.285 for bulls, agricultural equipment and seeds, effective from 1957-58. Rs.250 for purchase of plough bulls, Rs.25 for agricultural equipment purchase and Rs.10 for the seeds were the allocation.

Government used the budget of Food Production Scheme to complement the scheme. Harijans were encouraged to form cooperative societies and apply through the societies to the

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89 *G.O.No.422, Industries, Labour and Cooperation Department*, 6th February 1957
91 *Viduthalai*, December 4, 1960, p.2.
92 *G.O.No.2379, Home Department*, 14th July 1962
Government for obtaining subsidised purchase of cows too.\textsuperscript{94} However, if the applications were disproportionately huge, then balloting system was followed for the allotment.\textsuperscript{95} Those who had their own lands of less than two acres and Harijans who had been cultivating on leased lands were also benefitted through such schemes.\textsuperscript{96}

**For Washermen and Barbers**

Since the economic situation was generally bad and comparable to that of Harijans, washermen and barbers were considered for providing loans in order to improve their lives. They were helped by providing interest free loans. Every year 100 barbers and 120 washermen were given loans of Rs.53 and Rs.50 respectively for the purchase of the equipment in their respective profession.\textsuperscript{97}

**For Cottage Industries**

Under the grant-in-aid schemes, for the year 1959-60, a sum of Rs.60,000 had been approved for giving training to six Harijan students in eleven industrial workshops in the State. The sum was increased to one lakh, the next year. Besides, a sum of Rs.3.70 lakhs (0.37 million) was also sanctioned for a year in the districts of North Arcot, Salem, Kanyakumari, Tirunelveli, Thanjavur, The Nilgris, and Madurai for starting of Industrial Cooperative Societies and continuance of old societies.\textsuperscript{98}

\textsuperscript{94} *M.L.A. Debates*, Vol. XXXV, Government of Madras, 19\textsuperscript{th} August 1960, pp.98-99
\textsuperscript{95} *M.L.A. Debates*, Vol. XXXVIII, Government of Madras, 30\textsuperscript{th} January 1961, p.88
\textsuperscript{96} *Viduthalai*, July 8, 1963, p.1
\textsuperscript{97} Kakkan, *Op.cit.*, pp.54-55
As an alternative to agricultural income, Depressed Class people were given Rs.440 subsidy if they came forward to start small industries. Central Government had sponsored Rs.150,000 in the year 1956-57 for this scheme. In Thanjavur district, 24 farmers were given subsidies of Rs.10,500 and the remaining were given loans in the same year.

**Technical Training**

Many SCs beneficiaries had underwent training in technical courses but hesitated to start use of them at their own investments since the lack of funds for buying equipment. Not exceeding Rs.500 per member was given as subsidy to purchase tools and equipment, from 1956-57. Following were the trades that were given the benefit;

1. Blacksmithy
2. Carpentry
3. Fitting
4. Light Metal
5. Book Binding
6. Electrical Wiring
7. Plumbing
8. Gas Welding
9. Sewing and Embroidery
10. Tailoring (leather)
11. Other miscellaneous trades

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99 *Viduthalai*, December 15, 1956, p.2
100 *HaijanaNalathurai Atrum Panigal (Activities of Harijan Welfare Department)*, Tamilnadu Government, 1967, TNA, Madras, p.11
Other Benefits to SCs and Fishermen

1. No entry fees for writing Public Service Commission entrance examinations for Harijan students who had either intermediate or degree.\(^\text{102}\)

2. Government assistance for lawyer fees if any poor Harijan had to indulge in criminal investigations.\(^\text{103}\)

3. Community Centres were built for the mingling of Depressed and non-Depressed Classes children. Milk and mid-day meals were provided in the centers along with toys for playing.\(^\text{104}\)

4. Fishermen were given fishing nets and boats in subsidised prices under separate schemes.\(^\text{105}\)

Besides, Kamaraj Government did not allow alcohol in the State for Public consumption. That, in a way, had a significant control on the Suppressed Classes from spending their day’s earnings at the evenings and also from irresponsible citizens.\(^\text{106}\) Kamaraj’s initiatives towards the upliftment of downtrodden had notably started lives to transform through education and other economic development.\(^\text{107}\)

A point to note here is that, Kamaraj’s interest towards bringing change in the lives of downtrodden had begun well before he

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\(^{103}\) *Viduthalai*, October 12, 1960, p.1.

\(^{104}\) *G.O.No.2686, Industries, Labour and Cooperation Department*, 13\(^{\text{th}}\) August 1957.

\(^{105}\) *Viduthalai*, March 29, 1963, p.3.


\(^{107}\) Personal Interview with Kalyan Ramji, Retired Regional Commissioner for SCs and STs, Southern Region, at Chennai, 14\(^{\text{th}}\) July 2012.
assumed office in 1954. The very first amendment to the Constitution of India was done in 1951 that had a significant role of Kamaraj who was then President of T.N.C.C. A Brahmin student Shenbagam Durairajan had appealed to the High Court and then Supreme Court to remove the special reservation for the Depressed Classes and got the verdict on her favor, as the reservations was claimed to be against the fundamental rights.108

Upon the Court’s verdict, Kamaraj realised the impact for downtrodden and flew to Delhi to meet Prime Minister Nehru to emphasise the urgency and need for amendment in the Constitution so that the reservations could stay. Nehru was hesitant and felt it was too early to make amendments since the Constitution had been effected recently from January 1950.109

However, Kamaraj remained persistent and succeeded in convincing Nehru for the amendment. The amendment provided statutory recognition for the reservations. The amendment to the Constitution Act 1951 stated as follows;

“[4] Nothing in this article or in clause [2] of article 29 shall prevent the State from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes”110