CHAPTER II

THE CONCEPT OF SAMATHUVAPURAM

In the first chapter, a study has been made about the various tentacles of the caste system and the urgent need taking remedial measures to rehabilitate the affected low caste people. In this chapter, a study would be made to trace the evolution of the concept of Samathuvapuram.

Earlier many social activists and reformers have made earnest attempts to eradicate inequalities and inadequacies, disparities and disabilities that existed in the society. But their efforts did not bring the desired fruits for reasons which are explicit. However, it cannot be denied that their mission has left its impact on the Tamil Society. The ideas of Self-Respect, inter-caste marriage, inter-dining, temple-entry, abolition of caste distinctions and marks, eradication of untouchability and child marriage, awakening of women and prohibition were upheld by ‘Periyar’ and his followers.

Chief Minister M.Karunanithi, trained in the Self-Respect Movement of ‘Periyar’, no doubt, has derived the humanistic approach and social emancipatory stand from ‘Periyar’.

As a humanist and rationalist, he has introduced earlier many welfare schemes such as the Anna Renaissance Scheme, the Slum Clearance Scheme, Beggars’ Relief and Rehabilitation Fund, the Kannoli Scheme, Abolition of (Manual) Riksha pulling, Manual Scavenging, the Self-Help Scheme, the Government’s Health Scheme, the Farmer’s Market, the Dalit Settlement Scheme etc, for achieving

harmonious living. Of all the schemes, the **Samathuvapuram Scheme** launched in 1998 has the potential to emancipate the poor, due to its nature and objective.

**Samathuvapuram** is a place where all communities can live together; share all civil and other infrastructure facilities, in equal comfort, self-respect and dignity with mutual respect and interaction. Throughout his life mission ‘Periyar’ EVR seriously argued for the equality of human beings. He condemned the institutions of caste and religion, which discriminated people as high and low.³ ‘Periyar’ the greatest revolutionary crusader wanted to establish a just society, where dignity of every human being is duly respected. He suggested that feelings of superiority or inferiority, relating to one’s birth should go⁴. He vehemently opposed untouchability and suggested that the untouchables should be housed among the people of other castes. He propagated that the existence of **agraharam** for Brahmins and **cheries** for the untouchables is certainly a kind of apartheid, worse than what was practiced against the blacks in South Africa⁵. He wished that the separate dwellings of the upper caste people called **agraharam** and that of the untouchable called **cheri** should be eliminated in the society.

Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi, the true and direct disciple of ‘Periyar’ EVR, is deeply committed to the progressive and reformist policies of ‘Periyar’. According to ‘Periyar’, the blood of human race is identical; there is no distinction between the high and the low. But, there are glaring inequalities in the social life of the people. With the strong belief in the concept of equality and emancipation of the power and welfare of all, Chief Minister M.Karunanidhi evolved the **Samathuvapuram Scheme** (‘Egalitarian Habitat’ or ‘Equality village’).

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4. **Ibid.**, February 20, 1940.
5. **KudiArasu**, February 02, 1940.
Announcement

In commemoration of the Golden Jubilee Celebration of India’s Independence in 1997, the then Chief Minister M.Karunanidhi announced his improvised / pet scheme of Samathuvapurams in the state budget for 1997-98. A new scheme indeed!

The term needs some clarification: It is a combination of two independent words: Samathuvam, meaning ‘equality’ and ‘puram’ meaning ‘habitat’ The term Sama is a derivative of the Sanskrit word Sama-which meant ‘equality’ in Hindustani and other Indian languages. The suffix puram is also a Sanskrit term. May be of north Indian influence, the term is mentioned in Tamil literature and inscriptions denoting a ‘town’ or ‘city’. Similarly, the word Samam or Saman, meaning equal or ‘balancing’ seems to be a Jain or Buddhist in its usage, perhaps a Prakrit word like Samanar (Jains) or Sangam (‘an assembly of learned man’ or ‘an academy’). In the same way the word ‘Sanskrit’ (more correctly as Samskrit) means a language that was ‘regulated’ or ‘purified’ or ‘balanced’ by later day intellectuals. Here the word Sams is to be carefully noted. It may be presumed that these two terms Samathuvam and puram appear to be Tamilized Prakrit words. At a later time, puram became a Brahmanic settlementas Vira Sri Narasimhendra puram.

The Samathuvapuram Scheme launched by the Chief Minister M.Karunanidhi is the outcome of various schemes introduced by early reformers. Today’s Samathuvapuram is expected to pave the way for the birth of a new society without

9. It is to be noted that early Tamil poets, including Tolkappiar and Tiruvalluvar have borrowed many ideas from Jainism and Buddhism and their words too.Basham,A.L., Op.cit, p.395.
distinction of caste status and purse power. Even though there are earlier models, the present one is a government sponsored scheme intended to avoid caste conflagrations and communal violances.

Earlier several housing schemes have been introduced for the Dalits by successive governments; but these are located far away from the main residential areas. Of course, Dalits are no longer ‘hutted like pigs’, and their housing conditions have improved but the problem of untouchability still persists. In such a situation, it is thought that the Samuthavapuram scheme if properly implemented, would bring about radical changes in the minds of the supporters of untouchability.

Earlier housing policies were implemented to promote only the economic well being of the untouchables, ignoring their social and cultural implications. The governments’ of course, have allotted lands or built “colonies or group houses” under various special schemes for the Dalits and all such as Pradhan Mantri Gramodhaya Yojana (rural shelter) Innovative Rural Housing Scheme for the Dalits and Indra Awass Yojana. However, all such schemes have changed only the nomenclature of the Dalit habitats from cheries to ‘colonies’. These colonies are still at the outskirts of the village without any free access to civic amenities available in the cities or towns.

Indra Awass Yojana

The Indra Awass Yojana (IAY) is a centrally sponsored housing scheme funded on cost shared basis in the ratio of 75:25. It is implemented since 1985-86 with an

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13. Ibid., p.3991.
15. Ibid., p 3992.
objective of providing dwelling units free of cost to the members of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and freed bonded labourers living below poverty line in rural areas. From the year 1993-94, the scope has been extended to cover non-Scheduled Castes, Tribes and rural poor subject to the condition that the benefits to non-Scheduled Castes and Tribes shall not be more than 40 percent of IAY allocation. Benefits of the scheme have also been extended to the families of ex-service men of the armed and para-military force who have lost their lives. Three percent of the houses are reserved for the below poverty line persons living in rural areas.\textsuperscript{17}

The salient features of the scheme are as follows:\textsuperscript{18}

1) Allotment of the houses in the name of the female members of the household or in the name of the husband and wife;

2) The minimum of 60 percent of the funds are to be utilized for construction of houses;

3) Sanitary latrine and smokeless \textit{chulah} are the integral parts of an IAY house;

4) Selection of beneficiaries under IAY is to be done by the \textit{Grama sabha}. While selecting the beneficiaries priority should be given to the following:

a) Freed bonded labourers,

b) Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribes householders who are victims of atrocities,

c) Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribes households, headed by widows or unmarried women,

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.,
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.,
d) Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribes households affected by fire, flood, earthquake, cyclone and similar natural calamities,

e) Other Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribes households,

f) Non-Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribes households,

g) Families headed by physically challenged persons,

h) Families or widows of personnel of defence services, Para – military forces killed in action,

i) Displaced persons on account of developmental projects, nomadic, semi-nomadic and denotified tribals, families with disabled members and initial refugees, subject to the households being below poverty line,

j) Choice of construction technology, materials and design are left to the choice of beneficiaries. There is no role for middlemen or contractors or departmental agency in the construction of houses.

Location of IAY Houses

The houses under IAY were normally built as individual plots in the main habitation of the Village.19 These houses were built on microhabitat approach or in a cluster within a habitation, so as to facilitate the development of infrastructure such as, internal roads, drainage, drinking water supply, etc., and other common facilities. Care has been taken to construct the houses close to the village and not far away so as to ensure safety and security, nearness to work place and social communication.

19. Ibid.,
The budget and implementation are handled by the Rural Development Department. The unit cost of IAY houses is ₹ 12000, the roof cost is borne by the Adi-Dravidar Department. The remaining cost is shared on the basis of 75:25 by Centre and State governments. The total plinth area of the house is 201 sq.ft.\(^\text{20}\)

The houses are built mainly for the Schedule Castes (SC’s) and Schedule Tribes (ST’s) in exclusively isolated places of the main villages or at the outskirts of small towns.\(^\text{21}\) Of course, this enhanced the housing condition of the Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes.\(^\text{22}\) Even then the problem of untouchability persists in these areas. The social exclusion on caste lines may cut off communication, interaction with other communities and sustain practices of social exclusion and untouchability.

Unlike the other housing schemes implemented, either by the Central government or by the state government, the Samathuvapuram Scheme aims at developing a casteless society nurturing social and communal harmony. The houses have been allotted to all caste people side by side so that no one row could be identified with caste names. As there should be no Harijan Colony in Samathuvapuram, there should be no Agraaharam, Pillaimar Street, Mudaliar Street and the like.

The concept of Samathuvapuram is appreciated all over India. The journal Statesman published from Kolkatta appealed to the people to extend wholehearted support to the success of this scheme. It states that instead of exploiting the situation for a narrow political ends, mature leaders of political parties should extend whole-hearted support to Karunanidhi’s concept of Samathuvapuram, a government sponsored settlement scheme, where families of different castes and communities live in harmony

\(^{20}\) WWW.tn.gov.in/ spc/ tenth plan/ chapter 6.1
\(^{21}\) Ibid.,
\(^{22}\) Jothi Ramalingam, K and Sivaraj, M. Op. cit.,
like neighbours. It further says, the scheme is made of a small beginning and needs to be expanded, particularly in the violence prone southern districts of Tamil Nadu.\(^{23}\)

Ajay Menon, in his article “Samathuvapuram: Towards Equality” in \textit{Economic Times}, while appreciating the Concept of Samathuvapuram, says that “the search for a just free and prosperous society has occupied the minds of visionaries the world over. The move towards fulfilling these aims has been epitomized in India by the serene counsel of Mahatma Gandhi, who upheld the principles of Swadeshi, Swarajya of self-sufficiency.\(^{24}\) Tamil Nadu is fortunate that its Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi not only cherishes a vision but seeks to implement it through projects like the Anna Renaissance scheme, the Self - Help Programmes and the Samathuvapuram (Equality Village) initiative.\(^{25}\)

It was proposed to construct 50 Samathuvapurams in Tamil Nadu in the financial year 1997-98.\(^{26}\) In his budget speech (1999-2000) in the Legislative Assembly on 17 March, 1999. Chief Minister stated: “Though I am the founder of the Samathuvapuram Scheme, this scheme will hereafter be known as Periyar Ninaivu Samathuvapuram Scheme, after my mentor ‘Periyar’, who enabled me to record such value - based achievements”.\(^{27}\) To effect such a change of name a Government Order was passed on April 08, 1999.\(^{28}\)

The Samathuvapuram Scheme was initially implemented by the Adi - Dravida and Tribal Welfare Department and, was subsequently, handed over to Rural
Development and Panchayat Raj Department. A fund provision has been made only to Adi, Dravida and Backward Class and Welfare Department for implementing the scheme by the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department.

**Inauguration of the First Village**

The first Samathuvapuram was inaugurated on August 17, 1998 in Melakottai village of Madurai District perhaps in memory of St. Ramanujar’s radical act at Malkote in Karnataka. It was inaugurated by Honorable Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi. (Plate 2).

While inaugurating it the Chief Minister said, “My wish is that the entire district should become a Samathuvapuram and not alone that, the entire state and, above all the entire nation and the world should become a Samathuvapuram”. He also said that he was pondering for a long time over the concept of Tamil people living together as a single community. It was to accomplish this idea that the scheme of Samathuvapuram gradually took shape. He also appealed to the people that people belonging to several religious sections of society should live in harmony sinking all their differences.

Each Samathuvapuram consists of 100 houses. Each house is built in an area of 264.64 sq.ft within an area of 5 cents at free of cost. Additional cooperative loan

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33. The Hindu, August 18, 1998.
34. Ibid.
facilities are also extended to interested beneficiaries to the extent of `10000/- to create additional facilities in their houses.\(^{35}\)

**Selection of Site**

The land for the construction of **Samathuvapurams** was selected as per the guidelines issued by the government.\(^{36}\)

The guidelines are as follows:

- It should be a rural site. The reason may be to avoid areas of caste consciousness. Caste conflicts have been perpetuated in villages due to the separation of the residential areas of different caste groups, particularly the Adi Dravidas;

- Water logging and low lying areas are to be avoided;

- Land should be appropriate and suitable for construction of buildings: Priority should be given to create **Samathuvapurams** in government waste lands (Poramboke). In case of non-availability of government lands, private lands may be acquired;

- In case of temple lands, necessary action to be taken through the Board of Hindu Religions and Charitable Endowments.

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Selection of Beneficiaries

The beneficiaries were selected on a voluntary basis. Those who have come forward voluntarily to live in the Samathuvapurams without harping or any discrimination among the people were only selected.

Method of Selection

Extensive advertisements were made in and around the villages within a circumference of 10 to 15 km from the area selected for the establishment of Samathuvapuram through the Taluk Officials, Panchayat Union, the media and by beating the Tom Tom, inviting applications for allotment of houses. Normally, more than 1000 applications were received by the officials in each Samathavapuram. The scramble for becoming a resident of Samathuvapuram indicated the public support for the scheme.

As a first phase, applications, which fall under below poverty line, were selected by the revenue officials. Though no income limit is prescribed, priority was given mostly to the people living below poverty line. Then the officials made enquiries directly on the applications. After the verifications, the eligible applications were scrutinized.

In the second phase, all the selected applicants were invited to participate in the draw of lots for selection of 100 beneficiaries. As per the guidelines issued by the government, the selections was made by a committee headed by the district collector,

Member of Parliament, Member of Legislative Assembly, block development officer, District Adi - Dravida Welfare Officer, Thashildar and commissioner of the panchayat union. As per the instruction, transparency was maintained in the selection of the beneficiaries. While selecting the beneficiaries priority was given to freedom fighters family, handicapped, deserted women, and inter-caste marriage couple.

After the Selection of 100 Beneficiaries the houses were allotted in the following proportions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCs / STs</th>
<th>MBC</th>
<th>BC</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and in the following category:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCs / STs</th>
<th>MBCs</th>
<th>BCs</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2,4,7,10,12,14,17,20.</td>
<td>3,6,13, 16, 19.</td>
<td>1,5,9,11,15.</td>
<td>8,18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This was done in order to facilitate the families of all communities live adjacent to each other in an inter-mixed manner.

**Pattas** (possession deeds) were given in the name of the female member in some **Samathuvapurams**, alternatively, jointly in the name of the husband and wife.

**Details of Beneficiaries selected based on their communities** (Santhana Venugopalapuram, Tiruvallur District)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of the Community</th>
<th>No. of beneficiaries selected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td><strong>SC and ST</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>i. Adi - Dravida</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii. Schedule Tribes</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Backward Community</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Achari</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yadava</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Karuman</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agamudaiyar</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nadar</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Muslim (lebbai)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kavara Naidu</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mutharaiyar</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marate</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vaniya Chetti</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ediga</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sengunthar</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bonthil</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kammala</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sanar</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Most Backward Community</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vannar</td>
<td>0 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maruthuvar</td>
<td>0 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vanniari</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meenavar</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boyar</td>
<td>01</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sl. No.</td>
<td>Name of the Community</td>
<td>No. of beneficiaries selected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
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<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Other Communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kammava Naidu</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brahmin</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Balija</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rajus</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Periyar Memorial Samathuvapuram Guidelines, Adi-Dravida and Tribal Welfare Department, Government of Tamil Nadu, Chennai.

Resolution of the Beneficiaries

As per the conditions put forward by the government, the beneficiaries have taken a pledge of the following resolutions and have undertaken to implement the following conditions and for that purpose have signed a document:

1. I and my family members who decide to reside in Samarthuvapuram will live in peace, conserve harmony and unity without bias for any community or religion.

2. I, who intend to reside in Samathuvapuram, will perform my prayer in the community hall and I shall organize marriages and other functions or ceremonies in the community hall. I shall not resort to the formation of the independent prayer hall in a place meant for common prayer.

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3. If by any chance death occurs in my family, I shall bury or cremate the dead body in the common graveyard. I shall follow the guidelines of oneness in burial and cremation.

4. I shall not consent, attempt or permit installation of statues of any communal or religious leader.

5. I shall neither lease out nor create encumbrance on the allotted house in a stretch of 5 cents of land at Samathuvapuram for over a period of 15 years, nor shall I leave it unoccupied.

6. I shall reside in the house allotted to me. Neither I shall lease out the premises nor will I create encumbrance on the premises.

7. I shall maintain hygienic condition in Samathuvapuram without detriment to public health. I shall not venture to do any adverse act that causes hazard to public health.

8. I shall plant and grow at least two trees in the allotted space.

9. I shall not encroach into any vacant space left for either public utility, or will I allow anyone encroach into the vacant site meant for public use.

10. I and the members of my family will utilize the public water taps, overhead water tank, fair pricesShop, television room, Arivoly Library, roads, entrance arches and parks in proper manner and we shall not cause any damages to them nor will I give room for any complaint.

11. I shall utilize the common facility areas like public water tap, park and television room without any bias towards any community or religion.
12. In the event of my violating the above condition, I hereby give my consent to the State of Tamil Nadu to take over the 5 cents of land and the superstructure built therein. If I have made improvements in the area allotted to me at my own cost, I shall not call upon the state to reimburse the expenses incurred by me for making improvement in the space allotted to me.

13. I and the members of my family shall abide by the rules and regulations imposed by the State of Tamil Nadu or the district collector periodically.

Description of Houses

Each house consists of a verandah, hall or drawing room, bedroom, kitchen and modern lavatory cum bath. The house is provided with a spacious cupboard with 3 slabs and a loft to store things. A smokeless hearth is provided and a concrete slab is fixed for placing gas stove. (Plate 3)

Loan Assistance for Construction of House and Grant from State

Each beneficiary in Samathuvapuram has been sanctioned a subsidy of `35,000. In addition to this, loan assistance to the extent of `10,000 has been provided from the co-operative housing society. Each beneficiary stands to gain to the extent of an additional subsidy of `810 in lieu of payment of electricity service connection.

Infrastructure provided in Samathuvapurams

The infrastructure provided in Samathuvapurams can be grouped into three categories such as i). Basic Facilities ii). Community Development Programme and iii) Economic Upgradation Schemes.

Basic Facilities

Overhead Water Tank

An overhead water tank with the capacity of 30,000lts (Plate 4) has been constructed in each Samathuvapuram through TamilNadu Water Supply and Drainage Board keeping in view the needs of people.\textsuperscript{46} Tiled Public Fountain taps, for supply of water have been installed in streets, with proper outlet drainage facilities.

Electricity and Street lights

At government cost, electric connections have been given to all houses with meters. Tube lights and sodium vapour lamps have been installed to provide sufficient illumination.

Roads

A central road of 30 ft. and cross section roads have been laid in Samathuvapurams.\textsuperscript{47} The central roads and all the cross section roads have been evenly leveled and black topped with bituman. In order to avoid damage to the road owing to rain and floods, pre-cast cement slabs are fixed at the border of the roads.

Primary Health Sub – Centre

Primary health sub-centers are constructed in many Samathuvapurams on need base.\textsuperscript{48} As they are sub-centers, they will function twice or thrice in a week. They serve the medical needs of public living in the Samathuvapuram and surrounding villages.

Fair Price Shop

Taking into consideration the convenience of the residents of Samathuvapurams, though full time Fair Price Shops are located in the main village or

\textsuperscript{46} Government Order 171.\textsuperscript{Op.cit.}, 
\textsuperscript{47} Government Order 171.\textsuperscript{Op.cit.}, 
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
the nearby village, a building for a part time Fair Price Shop is also provided in Samathuvapurams\textsuperscript{49} (Plate 5).

**School**

Primary or Elementary Schools are constructed on need base,\textsuperscript{50} so as to impart education to the children of the beneficiaries and nearby areas. Drinking water and toilet facilities are also provided in the school premises (Plate 6).

**Drainage**

Drainages have been provided in each street, so that water stagnation and stench is avoided.

**Rain Water Drainage**

Drainages made of random rubble stones have been provided. This enables the flow of rain water immediately without stagnation, especially in the Samathuvapurams which are located at the foot hills, e.g. Odaipatti Samthuvapuram, Theni district.\textsuperscript{51} As the ground water potential is very low, to harvest the rainwater, storm water drainages and percolation ponds are created and water is stored in these ponds. These ponds are named as Samathuvakulam\textsuperscript{52}

**Shelter for the Commuters**

Bus shelters are provided on both sides of the high way or main road with stop over. This results in the plying of all buses on the highway/road.

**Post Box**

A post box for clearance of mails has been installed in every Samathuvapuram


\textsuperscript{50} Government Order No.171, Op.cit.,

\textsuperscript{51} Booklet issued by the District authorities, Theni District at the time of the inauguration of Odaipati Samathuvapuram.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.,
Dust Bins

Dustbins have been provided in the premises of Samathuvapurams with a view to maintain cleanliness. At Poigai Samathuvarams, Vellore district, a slacking yard of dimension 10’ X 8’ X 4’ feet has been provided within the campus to accumulate the garbage collected from the dustbins (Plate 7).

Fencing or Compound Wall

To protect the inhabitants of the Samathuvapurams, from the cattle and intruding strangers, barbed wire mesh fence or compound wall has been provided around Samathuvapurams.

Common Graveyard

Land for common graveyard has been allotted in many Samathuvapurams to suit the convenience of all religions concerned. The beneficiaries before occupying their allotted houses have to resolve to use this common graveyard.

Community Development Programmes

Community Hall

A community hall with all the facilities like water, lighting, toilet, kitchen, etc., has been constructed which are used for conducting marriages, festivals, community cultural events.\textsuperscript{53}.

Television Room

To facilitate the people of Samathuvapuram to spend their leisure time and acquire knowledge of day-to-day activities of the government about the various schemes of the government, a television with a room has been provided in each Samathuvapuram. Mostly these rooms have been constructed near the park or open air

theatre where the beneficiaries could sit and relax and watch the Television programmes.

As free colour TVs have been given to all the inhabitants of Samathuvapurams, the TV room is not functioning at present.

**Nutritious Noon Meal Centre**

For providing education with nutritious diet for children, a Nutritious Noon Meal Centre with a class room, a kitchen and a stock room has been built. In order to kindle their thoughts and to motivate them, attractive pictures are drawn on the walls.

**Children’s Playground**

A good play ground is set up in each Samathuvapuram for the children to play and enjoy slides, swing, material for body building and other play materials have been provided.

**Samathuvapuram Park**

A beautiful, colourful and well-maintained park has been setup for the beneficiaries. Beautiful croton plants, colourful flower plants and other plants have been planted around so as to maintain greenery (Plate 8).

**Samathuvapuram Memorial Pillar**

In commemoration of this epoch - making scheme, the major social reform ushered in this electronic era by the Chief Minister of TamilNadu, a Pillar of Unity is built representing the casteless generation holding aloft the torch of wisdom spreading the message of the new society with fragility and equality (i.e) Samathuvam.

A memorial pillar of a height 15 feet has been erected in the middle of the park and it bears the sculptural work of two hands joined together, which symbolizes Unity and Diversity. Granite stones are laid all around the pillar and at this top of the pillar a
lotus with multi-petals has been designed and provided. This memorial pillar has been designed to exhibit that a multi-petalled lotus has transformed into a flower and likewise we should also unite ourselves with a single heart and soul to form a community of equality. A pathway of marble stones has been laid around the memorial pillar. This has been brought about under the scheme ‘Namakkku Naame’.

**Household Tree Planting**

Different indigenous trees like *Vembu, Pungan, Naval* etc. are planted on the sides of the roads, parks, streets school campus, community hall, near water tan, etc. Trees like Mango, Guava, Papaya, Sappotta, Pomegranate, etc., are planted in the backyard of every house. As a measure safeguard Tree guards have been provided around the saplings thus planted.

**Placards**

A good number of placards containing messages inspiring communal harmony, humanity, elimination of untouchability, etc., have been installed at vantage points or on the front wall of the houses and compound walls. The thought provoking messages in the placards or walls are as follows:

- Let us preserve religious harmony.
- Let us eliminate untouchability.
- If we have to attain equality, we should give up communalism and casteism.
- Let us grow humanity.
- Let us forget alcoholism and take care of our families.
- Untouchability is a sin.
- **Samathuvapuram** to remove casteism and so on.

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Special Camps by Government Agencies

Arrangements have been made to organize a special camp by Agricultural Department to impart training to the agriculturists. Veterinary Department to give medical assistance to protect the cattle and by Medical Department for effective check up and treatment. This sort of camps if organized once in three months will help the beneficiaries in Samathuvapurams and people around them.

Economic Upgradation Schemes

Fruit-bearing Trees

Each beneficiary in Samathuvapurams has been given fruit bearing trees like Guava, Mango, Papaya, Sappotta, Pomegranate, Coconut, etc. Apart from this, the coconut groves have been developed in a few Samathuvapurams, near the overhead water tank. It has been decided to utilize the income from the coconut grove for the maintenance of the Samathuvapuram project.

Milk Producers Co-operation Society

Milk - Producers Co-operative Society has been constituted for the economic upliftment of the beneficiaries of Samathuvapuram. Subsidy based loan assistance to acquire milch cattle has been made available to the members of this society. The members on roll of this cooperative society are given the registration number such as VLR-4.

Common Milch Cattle Shed

To foster the milch cattle and for the economic upliftment of the Samathuvapuram beneficiaries, modern cattle shed have been constructed in the Samathuvapurams (Plate 9). This sort of segregation of the milch cattle from the

55. Poigai Samathuvapuram, Vellore district.
56. Personal Interview with Mr. V. Ramalingam, resident of Poigai Samathuvapuram, Vellore District. May,16,2008.
residential lay out is indented to preserve the public health. That apart, there is a grazing poramboke land nearby meant for the cattle.\textsuperscript{57}

**Industrial Training Centre**

Steps have been initiated to impart training to the womenfolk in the fields of industrial training, repair of Television, tailoring, basket-making, door mats, computer sambrani, incision stick, etc. This will make the women earn their livelihood and thus increase their income and thereby achieve the targeted economic upliftment.\textsuperscript{58}

**Small Savings**

All the beneficiaries in Samathuvapurams have taken part in small savings scheme. Each beneficiary has opened a recurring monthly deposit account.

**Voluntary Service Organizations**

NGOs have been involved in providing information about the consumer rights, eradication of child labour, bonded labour and valuable suggestion about government welfare schemes, legislation, etc. Schemes for the betterment of women are also disseminated.

**Monitoring of the Work**

The beneficiaries themselves undertook the construction of the house buildings in the Samathuvapuram scheme\textsuperscript{59}. The required raw materials like sand, brick, windows,.

\textsuperscript{57} Personal Interview with Sundaram.R, resident Melakkottai Samathuvapuram, Madurai District, April, 08, 2007
\textsuperscript{58} Murasoli, August 31, 1998.
\textsuperscript{59} Interview with Selvaraj Solanguruni Samathuvapuram, Madurai District. March 17, 2007.
doors, etc. have to be taken care of by the beneficiaries to construct the houses without any delay.

The construction of overhead tank has to be handed over to Tamil Nadu Drinking Water Corporation to provide drinking water in *Samathuvapuram*. Weekly monitoring has been done to ensure cleanliness of the tank.

Streetlights have been installed in each *Samathuvapuram* according to the need. Estimate has to be sought from the Tamil Nadu Electricity Board to erect transformers and to provide electricity. The State government provides the deposit money for every beneficiary household. The applications by the individual beneficiaries are processed and submitted to the Electricity Board along with the deposit money by the authorities.

Requirements of roads, street, drainage and small bridges need to be constructed as in the blue print (proposed by the authorities). If the ordinary *Kutcha* channels are sufficient for drainage, concrete channels were to be avoided. School building, Noon Meal Centre, TV room, Health Sub-centre, Veterinary dispensaries, etc., need to be established as per requirements. These works have to be handed over to the concerned departments and ensure their completion of work in time.

The District Collector has to monitor the construction of houses, drinking water, electricity and roads by the respective organizations through weekly meeting on Mondays.

**Maintenance and Expansion of Samathuvapuram**

*Samathuvapuram* is a mega housing scheme with all infrastructural facilities. Proper maintenance of the public assets and facilities will ensure benefits for a long time.
Individual responsibility may be assigned to maintain the surroundings of his / her house in order to create a good living environment.\textsuperscript{60}

Efforts shall be made to maintain these public services by constituting committees of beneficiaries. Maintenance of drinking water, streetlights, noon meal centers, community hall drainage, etc. is the responsibility of the village Panchayat and the Block Development Office. The monitoring of health sub-centre and veterinary dispensary has to be under taken by primary medical officer and veterinary doctor.\textsuperscript{61}

\textbf{Time Table for the Maintenance of Infrastructure Facilities in Samathuvapurams}

\textsuperscript{61}. Demi Oficial Lt.No. 1/41732/97, November 18, 1997.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Infrastructure</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Time Duration</th>
<th>Field Officer</th>
<th>Maintenance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Over head Water tank and public fountain</td>
<td>Rural Development</td>
<td>Once in a week</td>
<td>Block Development Officer</td>
<td>Panchayat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Street Light</td>
<td>Rural Development</td>
<td>Once in a week</td>
<td>Block Development Officer</td>
<td>Panchayat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Television and room</td>
<td>Rural development</td>
<td>Once in a week</td>
<td>Block development officer</td>
<td>Panchayat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Once in fifteen days</td>
<td>DEO/AEO</td>
<td>Panchayat Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Nutritious Meal Centre</td>
<td>Rural Development</td>
<td>Once in 15 days</td>
<td>P A to Collector /Block development Officer</td>
<td>Panchayat Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Additional Health Centre</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Once in 15 days</td>
<td>Joint Director / Medical Officer, Primary Health Centre</td>
<td>Panchayat Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Veterinary Sub-Centre</td>
<td>Veterinary</td>
<td>Once in 15 days</td>
<td>Joint Director, Veterinary / Veterinary Doctor</td>
<td>Veterinary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Public Distribution Shop</td>
<td>Civil Supply</td>
<td>Once in a month</td>
<td>District Civil Supply Officer / Block Civil supply officer</td>
<td>Co-operative society/ Consumer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Library/ Reading Room</td>
<td>Library</td>
<td>Once in a month</td>
<td>District Librarian</td>
<td>Panchayat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Community Hall</td>
<td>Rural Development</td>
<td>Once in three months</td>
<td>Block Development Officer</td>
<td>Panchayat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Street</td>
<td>Rural Development</td>
<td>Once in six months</td>
<td>Block Development officer</td>
<td>Panchayat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Maintenance of Park and Tree Planting</td>
<td>Rural Development</td>
<td>Once in a month</td>
<td>Block development officer</td>
<td>Panchayat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Self-Help Group</td>
<td>Women Welfare/ District Rural Development Agency</td>
<td>Once in 15 days</td>
<td>Project Officer</td>
<td>Block Development officer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In view of making themselves exemplary to others in future, welfare committees have been formed in these Samathuvapurams. The researcher has taken the Rasingapuram Samathuvapuram, Theni District, as a specimen for this part of the study. Irrespective of caste and creed representation has been given to all householders in these committees (Appendix E).

Details of Welfare Committees

1. Committee for Maintaining Communal Harmony and Social Justice:
   The main aim of this group is to make the society free from ill-feelings on caste and religion in the Samathuvapurams. It will assemble on every full moon day and solve minor and civic problems.

2. Public Health Committee:
   It maintains the village environment; avoid spread of any contagious diseases.

3. Consumer Vigilance Committee:
   To supervise Samathuvapuram Public Distribution Centre, Noon Meal Centre and Markets, guiding the performance as per government rules and regulations.

4. Water Supplies and Maintenance Committee:
   The duty of this committee is to monitor distribution of potable drinking water to the people and to take steps to avoid wastage of water through leakages, damages to pipeline and prevent washing of cloths in the public fountain.

5. Community Welfare Hall Maintenance Committee:
   To regulate use of community centre for all functions except any caste, religious and political programmes, to operate the TV from evening 6 pm to 10 pm daily and to maintain the electrical fittings, etc.

6. **Samathuvapuram Sanitation and Epidemic Prevention Committee:**
   To maintain sanitation in Samathuvapuram and to assist public health group

7. **Community Assets Protection Committee:**
   To protect and prevent the encroachments in School, Health Centre, Community Welfare Centre and Play Ground and to safeguard all community assets from sabotage.

8. **Library Maintenance and Continuing Non-formal Educational Committee:**
   Maintenance of the library and books, journals and improving the literacy level of villages are the main duties of this group. It will look after the Samathuvapuram School also

9. **Avenue Trees and Electricity Maintenance Committee:**
   The main duty is to save the trees, roads, electric lights, etc. from damages, to replace electric bulb and keep the concerned officers informed and get things rectified then and there by organizing the beneficiaries.

10. **Night Patrol and Protection Committee:**
   This committee will organize patrol in turns during nights to protect the residents of Samathuvapuram from theft and nuisances from strangers, enlisting the support of all the beneficiaries of the Samathuvapuram.

**Economic Development and Formation of Self - Help Groups:**
   As all the inhabitants of Samathuvapurams are living below the poverty line, they may be provided subsidized loans under Self-Employment programme Swarnajeyanthi Gram Swarogar Yojana(SGSY). This will go a long way in promoting economic development and social harmony. Formation of Self- Help Groups under SGSY and their economic activities will provide additional income and better standard of living to the inhabitants.63

63. Government Order No. 78, Rural Development Department, Government of TamilNadu, Chennai,
The Samathuvapuram projects aim at creating awareness about equality and unity among people of various castes and religions. Voluntary and non-Governmental Organizations, NSS, NCC, etc. shall act as the catalytic agents of change and development among the beneficiaries of Samathuvapurams. They should be involved in the projects of literacy, health and mass education to create change in the social attitudes to bring social justice and communal harmony at their door steps.64

Source of Finance

It has been decided to pool financial resources of Central and State sponsored programmes of Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS), Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY), M.P/M.L.A Development Scheme. Tenth Finance Commission Allotment, State Finance Commission Allotment, and Panchayat Union General Fund. The scheme resources need to be pooled for construction and infrastructure development.65

It was targeted to construct 150 Samathuvapurams, but due to change over in the political set up and change of government, the Samathuvapuram activities were stopped to 145. Though 145 Samathuvapurams were completed, inauguration was celebrated only for 132 Samathuvapurams. When the DMK government was again in power in 2006, the Samathuvapuram works have been taken up with added vigour.66

In the Governor’s address in the Legislative Assembly on January 21, 2008 among others, it has been announced that “an even better way of spreading Thanthai

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64. Ibid.,
Periyar’s message of social equality would be to establish another Samathuvapurams in his name. A Government Order was also passed to this effect.67

Samathuvapurams are not merely building the houses and allotting the same to the poor, instead; they serve so many purposes and solve the needs of the people. Building houses and providing infrastructure facilities though seems to be a primary aspect, yet there is an underlying motive behind it. The very fact that the people coming from different communities and different walks of life avail the Samathuvapurams indicates that the government have launched the programme to create awareness among the people to give up their communal feelings. In a way, it may be said that the unity is the motto to uplift the poor and the downtrodden. By establishing the Samathuvapurams, its concept is fulfilled because one can find the unity in diversity. Not only this, it fulfills the aim of establishing the Model Village by providing housing for all communities, effectively maintaining the water bodies and providing safe drinking water, establishing infrastructural facilities, protecting the environment by planting trees, kitchen gardening and smokeless chulah, the provision of sanitary facilities, effective disposal of solid waste, ensuring the health facilities and campaigning, using effective and eco-friendly building material, eradicating untouchability and establishing communal harmony.

Many earlier government schemes introduced by the DMK under the Chiefministership of M. Karunanidhi have failed in the implementation level. The Slum Clearance, Kannoli, Beggars’ Relief and Rehabilitation, the Veeranam Projects, basically

good schemes, thoroughly failed because of political interference and corrupt practices.

However, the Samathuvapuram scheme like the Uzhavar Sandhai scheme is one of the successful ventures of the DMK regime. Since there is clear government checks and balances and monitoring and official involvement, the scheme is said to have achieved many of its aims. The beneficiaries too have become enlightened except a small percentage, and enjoy the benefits. The high human philosophy:

  All are equal by birth  has a meaning in the starting of these Samathuvapurams. A land torn under caste considerations and communal tensions, such human endeavours are of prime importance.