



GENESIS OF SMATHUVAPURAM – AS A BRAIN CHILD OF FORMER CHIEF MINISTER DR. M. KARUNANIDHI

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The aim of this Paper is to describe the Genesis of Smathuvapuram scheme of former Chief Minister of TamilNadu Dr. M. Karunanidhi. M. Karunanidhi, Former Chief Minister of TamilNadu ranks with the Social reforms such as RajaRam Mohan Roy and MahatmaGandhi in creating an egalitarian society. M. Karunanidhi achievement as a writer and as a statesman is complementary to each other. In his case history becomes contemporaneous and poetry becomes reality. In his creative interpretation of history as well as attempts for the creation of new TamilNadu. He is implied by the same passion for equality and unity of Tamils at first instance and of all mankind at another level¹.

Through his eloquent speeches and efficient administrative capacity Karunanidhi held on undiminishing place in the hearts of Tamil people and he leads TamilNadu through the path of developments as a result of the implementation of people welfare schemes. From all the progressive measures initiated by M. Karunanidhi the once devalued for the total synthesis of all the communities into a single unit is the launching of Smathuvapuram in 2006. It is a discovery rather than invention in the social history of mankind in general and Indians in particular. As an introducer or inventor of the new cultural living of people, Karunanidhi can be called as a social scientist. Because the Smathuvapuram is a total Panacea for chronic ailments of caste inequalities practiced in the society for centuries together. The People belonging to different castes, religious and social status had shown enthusiasm to become the residents of Smathuvapuram. It is a good signal for the merriment of social change. The main purpose of the Smathuvapuram is to create a casteless society. Smathuvapuram was started in fifty places throughout the state at a cost of 17.50 crores. Where people of different communities and different religions live in peace and harmony².

The complete success of Smathuvapuram depends on the co-operation and dedication of the residents of these localities. The Social equality in all aspects like religious organizations, mobile court, police outpost, etc., certainly help to achieve equality in the miniature society³.

The Project explores the possibilities of restructuring the rural development programmes from an environmental perspective. The rural development programmes are usually evaluated using a few objective parameters such as exhaustion of outlay and attainment of certain physical targets. For years together export and concurrent evolutions

have gone on a beaten track. However, the perspective of developmental performance has of large undergone a sea change, bringing in new dimensions, encompassing the environmental implications of the programmes.⁴

The growth of theoretical and empirical literature at the global level is quite vast. Still one finds it inadequate in the sense that the research output has not gone into policy making to any significance at the present level. The Government has realized the importance of appraising the rural development programmes from the angle of sustainable developments.⁵

A synergy between environment, health and development needs to be explicitly recognized. No developmental process, which leads to a quality of life, can be sustained in a situation of deterioration environmental and ecological conditions. Environmental degradation is usually the outcome of individual actions, which do not take into account the externalities imposed on other both in space and time. The market mechanism left to it does not provide any method of forcing the internalization of these costs. Indeed, it may actually reinforce such behaviors. As a consequence, it is the responsibility of the Government to ensure that both the current victims of environmental degradation and future generations are adequately protected, without distrusting the process of growth and development. Eventually, the responsibility for preservation of the environment rests on the people themselves for discharging these responsibilities, however, the rights to a healthy environment have to be unambiguously assigned through legislative action, and people's participation in preservation of the environment fostered through social mobilization and appropriate organizational structures.⁶

This report makes a review of the ongoing rural development programmes in Tamilnadu. In this State, apart from the centrally sponsored programmes, the State Government introduced a few unique programmes to create some critical infrastructure in the selective regions in a phased manner. The State Government adhered to the guidelines of the centrally sponsored programmes and put some additional input by way of making the programmes viable and successful. Keeping in view of the approaches of the centrally sponsored and state sponsored rural developmental programmes in the state of Tamilnadu, the major ongoing programmes have been reviewed. These analyses have been done on the basis of available aggregated and disaggregated data at the state level. Development per se has a seamy side in terms of environmental degradation. Development projects may be environmentally destructive. There are cases of destructive development, which aggravate poverty and contribute to environmental degradation at the same time. The focus is one of reviewing the approaches of the programmes and their financial and physical achievements. This analysis would help examine the impact of the programmes at the village and household levels from a policy perspective.⁷

The goal of Smathuvapuram scheme is to establish equality and fraternity among the Tamil community cutting across religious and communal barriers. It was the ambition of Chief Minister Karunanidhi that people belonging to various religious and communities should live in peace sinking all their differences. The purpose of constructing Smathuvapurams throughout the State is to inculcate a sense of fraternity and oneness among the people. The unity and integrity that prevail in Smathuvapuram should be a guide not only to Tamilnadu; but to the entire India. "The Smathuvapuram, I dream of, should not be confined to one or two in each district but; the entire State, why, the whole of India should become a Smathuvapuram".⁸

The government has taken various efforts to remove caste differences, to eradicate communal disparities and to establish equality, religious harmony and humanism. It is true that communal harmony has been disrupted, differences widened and hatred had come to stay resulting in violence and brutal murder. Discussions had been held with leaders of all communities and efforts are being taken to wipe out the disparities and evolve united society.

This was the basis for the evolution of Smathuvapuram where in people of all communities reside together. Chief Minister M.Karunanidhi has said Smathuvapuram, I visualize, should not confine to one or two places at the district level; but entire Tamilnadu, why entire India should turn into a Smathuvapuram.⁹

There is no distinction like the ruler and ruled, the higher and lower by birth. Communal distinctions are created by certain people having vested interests. It is obnoxious to note that people murder each other in the name of religion, caste, creed, etc. Even in the fag end of the twentieth century. The fact that great leaders like E.V.Ramasamy, B.R.Ambedkar, Mahatma Gandhi and C.N.Annadurai dedicated their entire life for the upliftment of the poor, outcastes and the downtrodden, whose life were ruined for centuries in the name of caste, colour and creed, is now part of history. Chief Minister M.Karunanidhi, following the footsteps of these great leaders, fought a valiant battle throughout his life for the amelioration of the downtrodden and Smathuvapuram, a social revolutionary concept, is the brainchild of M.Karunanidhi.¹⁰

"I have been pondering for a long time over the concepts of Tamil people living together as a single community. It was to accomplish the idea that the scheme of Smathuvapuram gradually took shape".¹¹

The Chief Minister of Tamilnadu M.Karunanidhi ventured in creating egalitarian settlement clusters referred to as Samathuvapuram. This innovative concept was aimed at creating a congenial atmosphere and establishing unity among various communal and religious groups.¹² The scheme was unique in the country and introduced in the State Budget during 1977-98. It has been decided to construct 150 Smathuvapurams consist of 100 households of various communities each. Adequate infrastructure facilities viz., drinking water, public distribution, primary schools, noon meal centers, parks, primary health center, television room, entry arch, community hall, commercial complex, Cattle sheds, Smathuvapuram memorial pillar, roads and streets have to be created on priority basis to live happily and comfortably without any communal and religious discrimination. The beneficiaries have to come forward voluntarily and live in the settlement clusters without harping any discrimination among them.¹³

Interested beneficiaries were identified on the basis of the guidelines. In apprising the scheme, it was found that after identification of beneficiaries, a piece of land of an area of five cents was allotted to each beneficiary at free of cost. For construction of houses, an amount of Rs.37,000 was also provided of each beneficiary as subsidy. These subsidies were distributed in two phases. In the first phase Rs.35,000 was given and in the next phase Rs.2000 was given for roofing. Every house had to be constructed in an area of 264.64 sq.ft. Additional co-operative loan facilities were also extended to the interested beneficiaries to create additional facilities in their houses.¹⁴

The State Government issued the guidelines to select the site for construction of Smathuvapuram. The guidelines were It should be a rural site, Water logging and low-lying areas are to be avoided. Land should be appropriate and suitable for construction of building. Priority should be given to create Smathuvapuram in government wastelands, In case of non-availability of Government lands, Private lands may be acquired. In case of temple lands, necessary action is to be taken through the Hindu Religious Charitable Endowment and Administration Department, After the selection of the site application from people living in the ten km radius surroundings villages need to be sought. If the number of applicants is not sufficient, applications may be called from the neighbouring areas.¹⁵

The beneficiaries were to be selected on a voluntary basis. Even though there is no income limit, priority should be given to those who lived below poverty line. A Committee headed by the District Revenue Officer would select the beneficiaries. The Committee consisted of District Adiravida Welfare Officer, District Backward Classes Officer,

Thasildar and Panchayat Union Commissioner. The received applications were scrutinized at the level of Deputy Collector with the help of B.D.O. As per the guidelines the list of eligible applicants were approved by the Committee.¹⁶

Finally, the list has to be finalized and approved by the Gramsabha transparently. The allotment has to be made among the communities of the Government have ordered the construction of 100 houses, and out of them forty have been allocated to Adi Dravidar community, twenty five to backward class communities, another twenty five to most backward class communities and the remaining ten houses to families belonging to rest of the communities. If the beneficiaries did not come forward to occupy the houses and live in the *Smathuvapuram* within the stipulated period, the issued *patta* would be cancelled and related to the eligible applicants belonging to the concerned, communities.¹⁷

Beneficiaries have to be identified well in advance before construction of the houses. It is expected that the beneficiaries participate in the construction activities and ensure the quality of construction. Hence the *pattas* have to be issued at free of cost. Further, it has to be ensured that they are eligible beneficiaries. *Pattas* have to be issued, keeping in view that people of various communities came forward to construct their houses adjacent to one another. The scheme should avoid allotment of *pattas* to a particular community in specified areas, which would amount to segregation. In the case of excessive number of eligible applications from any particular community, they were to be provided plots with *pattas* for construction of houses from their own cost. However, they have to adhere to the rules and regulations of *Smathuvapuram*.¹⁸

In every *Smathuvapuram* roads, streets streetlight, water supplies, sanitation and drainage, school building, sub center, non-meal center, park, veterinary hospital, business complex, cremation ground, television room, bus stop etc. need to be provided. The District Collector has to decide the infrastructure facilities of each *Smathuvapuram* planning has to be carried out even before the acquisition of land.¹⁹

The *Smathuvapuram*, the homogenous cluster of village, is the discovery of the Tamilnadu Government, which spread all over the State. The following description is the profile of the various *Smathuvapuram* villages recently developed by the Government. Though one hundred and forty-five locations are identified so far only one hundred and forty five *Smathuvapuram* villages have been opened. These one hundred *Smathuvapuram* villages are model colonies for the future harmonious living of the Tamil people.

End Notes

- ¹ Kalaignar Diamond Jubilee Magazine, Chennai, 1999, p. 270.
- ² The Hindu, Madurai, 25th, May, 1998, p. 11.
- ³ Kumutham, 5th Nov. 1998, p. 98.
- ⁴ Rajamanikkam, J., *Virupachi Samathuvapuram*, Dindigul.
- ⁵ Subramani, V., *Virupachi Samathuvapuram*, Dindigul, Personal interview, 21, Feb. 2022.
- ⁶ Muhammad Haniba.M., *Kakkoor Smathuvapuram*, Ramnad, Personal interview, 17 Jan. 2023.
- ⁷ Santhi.K., *VirupachiSmathuvapuram*, Dindigul, 20, Feb. 2007.
- ⁸ Mettupatti *Smathuvapuram*, Namakkal district, Guide book, 10, Feb. 1999.
- ⁹ *Tamil Arasu*, Government of Tamilnadu, 6-31 Aug. 1998, p. 6.
- ¹⁰ *Mettuptti Samathuvapuram*, Guide book, 10, Feb. 1999.
- ¹¹ Poigai *Smathuvapuram*, Vellore district, Guide book, R.Siva Kumar, District Collector Vellore 1997, p. 8.
- ¹² Murugesan.C, *Ivathagudi Smathuvapuram*, Cuddalore district, personal interview, 20, March, 2007.

- ¹³ Tamil Arasu, Government of Tamilnadu, 16-31, Aug. 1998, p. 8.
¹⁴ G.O. No. 171, Adi-Dravidar & Tribes Welfare Department, Government of Tamilnadu, 22, Oct. 1997.
¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 8 – 9.
¹⁶ Tamil Arasu, op. cit., p. 7.
¹⁷ Ibid., p. 8.
¹⁸ Opcit., p. 9.
¹⁹ Ibid., p.11.