

HISTORY OF SAMATHUVAPURAM VILLAGES IN VIRUDHUNAGAR DISTRICT

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Introduction

In 1990 – 1999, Tamil Nadu totally struggled with Caste conflict. Upper caste people were not accepted downtrodden people's social and economic developments. In Tamilagam most of places lot of issues and caste conflict between Upper caste and downtrodden people. Virudhunagar district was a major part of these struggles. Because Virudhunagar district Upper caste people equally with Seduced Caste people. Mainly in 1997 Sundalinganar Bus problem was big struggled with these two people in Virudhunagar district. Kalainjar Karunanithi (Ex CM of Tamil Nadu) thought to stop these communal conflicts in Tamil Nadu. EVR's self-respect movement were also eradication of untouchability. So Kalainjar thought *Samathuvapuram* Villages also gave Social change of Scheduled Caste people.

Concept of *Samathuvapuram* Village

The term of *Samathuvapuram* is derived from Sanskrit word. *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'¹. 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*. 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 Brahmanic settlements Vira Sri Narasimhendra *Puram*².

After the big caste conflict of southern Tamilnadu in 1997, the government conducted three All Party Meetings in May, 1997, June 1997 and October 1998 to discuss the ways and means to maintain communal harmony and to avoid caste tensions in the state. An appeal was made in these meetings to the leaders of various parties to keep peace and communal harmony. The government on its part took action as per the resolutions arrived at in the meetings.

Based on one of the decisions taken at one of the meeting held on May 14, 1997 all the district collectors were instructed to constitute Peace Committees at the District level and to conduct regular monthly meetings to sort out issues between different sections of the people.

After examining the deliberations at the All Party Meeting held in June 1997, the government ordered to remove the names of caste, communal and political leaders from the names of the districts and transport corporations in the state with effect from July 01, 1997 as a measure to reduce caste friction³. As per the decision taken at the meeting held on October, 1998, the government ordered to constitute a Peace Committee in every village with the Panchayat president as chairman to curb untouchability. The government also formed a separate department in the name of Social Reform as a permanent measure for promoting equality and social renaissance⁴.

On July 16, 1997 the government appointed a high level Committee with Justice S.Mohan (Rtd.Supreme Court Judge), as chairman to find out the causes of the caste clashes and also to suggest measures to prevent such violence in future. The Committee submitted its report to government on January, 31 1998⁵.

The important recommendations made by the Justice Mohan Committee are the removal of the statues of community leaders, desecration of which has touched off many a case of mob-violence, at least to safer places.

It also suggested bringing amendments to the electoral laws for rotation of constituencies reserved for Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes. Further, it sought a rapid industrialization of the southern districts and more schemes on the lines of *Samathuvapuram*, where people belonging to all castes and communities could live together in harmony.

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 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 violence⁶.

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 'huddled like pigs', and their housing conditions have improved but the problem of untouchability still persists. In such a situation, it is thought that the *Samathuvapuram* 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 wellbeing 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 Awas 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 towns⁷.

Method of Selection in *Samathuvapuram*

The people were 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, inviting applications for allotment of houses. Normally, more than 1000 applications were received by the officials in each *Samathuvapuram*. The scramble for becoming a resident of *Samathuvapuram* indicated the public support for the scheme. The applications were, which fall under below poverty line, were selected by the revenue officials⁸.

***Samathuvapuram* villages in Virudhunagar District**

The first *Samathuvapuram* was inaugurated on August 17, 1998 in Melakottai village of Madurai District⁹. Totally 6 villages were in the Virudhunagar district, namely *Samathuvapuram*, Pattakulam Sallipatti, Senkottai, Mulliseval, Anaiyur and Kalkurichi¹⁰.

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 facilities are also extended to interested beneficiaries to the extent of 10000/- to create additional facilities in their houses.

After the Selection of 100 Beneficiaries the houses were allotted in the following proportions¹¹

SCs /STs	MBC	BC	Others
40	25	25	10

Total money spent for *Samathuvapuram* villages in Virudhunagar district. The expenditure towards the construction of houses in *Samathuvapuram* is met entirely through the special grant of State Government. The expenditure towards basic amenities and infrastructures like safe drinking water, roads, drainage, street lights, community hall, library, nutritious meal center and so on is met with funds from the respective departments and local bodies¹².

Name of the <i>Samathuvapuram</i>	Amount in lakhs
<i>Samathuvapuram</i>	39.81
Pattakulam Kallipatti	39.81
Senkottai	53.57
Mulliseval	53.57
Anaiyur	47
Kalkurichi	47

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 *Samathuvapuram*, alternatively, jointly in the name of the husband and wife¹³.

Social change through *Samathuvapuram* village in Virudhunagar District

In Virudhunagar district, there were no big agriculture lands, no big factory and unemployment. Sivakasi and Sattur surrounding areas only have fire office work and match factory. So whatever communal conflicts, there were big effects in in Virudhunagar district. Society were haven't change between upper caste people and lower caste people. In Virudhunagar district villages, lower caste people' houses were situated colony street, Ambedkar colony and others. No relationship between upper caste people and lower caste people. When they were going to the upper caste people' streets, lot of conditions were followed by upper caste people¹⁴.

These problems were mainly stopped by *Samathuvapuram* villages. Lower caste people were going to any places without conditions in *Samathuvapuram* villages. 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 Agraharam, Pillaimar Street, Mudaliar Street and the like¹⁵.

Conclusion

Samathuvapuram village programme were a good concept of Kalainjar Karunanithi. Yesterday *Samathuvapuram* was in theory. Today it has entered the pages of history. Tomorrow they will be studied as a historical event. Yesterday's politics is today's history. So *Samathuvapuram* create history and a study today is more relevant to highlight and suggest ways for the betterment of the scheme by applying the redressal mechanism. The scheme aims at creating a casteless society and nurturing communal harmony. Now a day *Samathuvapuram* villages have become another Dalit colonies. Upper caste people were not

accepted mingled with downtrodden people. So they are sold their houses downtrodden people. Even houses were built properly gap between upper caste people and downtrodden people.

End Notes

1. Sethu Pillai , R.P. *Tamilagam Urum Perum*,(T) Chennai, 1987, P.15 .
2. *Ibid*
3. *G.O.(MS) No.171*, Adi - Dravida Tribal Welfare Department, Government of Tamil Nadu, Chennai, October 22, 1997.
4. *G.O.(MS).No.50*, Adi Dravida and Tribal Welfare Department, Government of Tamil Nadu. April 08,1999.
5. *Report of the High Level Committee formed under Justice S. Mohan (Rtd.)*, for prevention of Caste Clashes in Southern Districts of Tamil Nadu, January 31, 1998. pp. 20-21.
6. *Ibid*, pp. 115-116.
7. **Tamil Nadu Police Policy Note**, 2000-2001, Government of Tamil Nadu, 2000, P. 15.
8. *Government Order No.78*, Adi - Dravida Tribal Welfare Department, Government of Tamil Nadu, Chennai, October 22, 1997.
9. *Ibid*.
10. *Government Order No. 43*, Adi- Dravida and Tribal Welfare Department, Government of Tamil Nadu, Chennai , May, 15,1998.
11. *Ibid*.
12. *Booklet issued by the District Authorities on the Day of Panchayat union department*, Virudhunagar District, December 20, 1998.
13. *Ibid*.

14. Jothi Sivagnanam.K.,and Sivaraj.M.,*TamilNadu Samathuvapuram: Towards Spatial Equality'. Economic and Political Weekly*, 28 September, 2002. p 399.
15. *Personal interview with Karthick*, people of *Samathuvapuram* Village, Virudhunagar District, dated 10.08.2018.