



## WELFARE PROGRAMMES IN THANJAVUR DISTRICT (1947-1967)

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### **Abstract:**

Thanjavur district which has always been the center point of administration in the reign of the cholas and pandyas. Thanjavur was declared a third grade municipality in 1866. After that with changing needs and Thanjavur progressed to second then first and special grade Municipality since 1983. After Independence Congress Government took various measures for the promotion of rural welfare programme in Tamilnadu as well as Thanjavur district. Tamilnadu being a welfare state, the purposeful endeavours of the Government are aimed at the social, economic and political upliftment of the people in the rural areas. Rural development aims at improving the rural lives with the participation of the rural masses. Rural Welfare Programme, otherwise known as Firka development scheme, was formulated by the National Government in 1946. This scheme envisaged the construction of roads, improvement of water-supply, sanitation, and health, development of agriculture, live-stock, and cottage industries, introduction of electricity, encouragement of Khadi, provision of basic education, formation of Co-operative societies, and the reorganization of the Panchayats. The above welfare measures taken by the Congress ministry of Tamil Nadu after 1947, stimulate the people for the improvement of their social and economic status.

**Key Words:** Rural Welfare, Child-welfare, Women Welfare & Harijan Welfare.

### **Welfare Programmes in Thanjavur District:**

Thanjavur district which has always been the center point of administration in the reign of the cholas and pandyas. Thanjavur was declared a third grade municipality in 1866. After that with changing needs and Thanjavur progressed to second then first and special grade Municipality since 1983. The present study area Thanjavur district consists of thirteen taluks and six revenue divisions. After Independence Congress Government took various measures for the promotion of rural welfare programme in Tamilnadu as well as Thanjavur district. Tamilnadu being a welfare state, the purposeful endeavours of the Government are aimed at the social, economic and political upliftment of the people in the rural areas. Rural development aims at improving the rural lives with the participation of the rural masses.

Rural Welfare Programme, otherwise known as Firka development scheme, was formulated by the National Government in 1946. This scheme envisaged the construction of roads, improvement of water-supply, sanitation, and health, development of agriculture, live-stock, and cottage industries, introduction of electricity, encouragement of Khadi, provision of basic education, formation of Co-operative societies, and the reorganization of the Panchayats. The scheme could not be implemented at once in all villages. The Government selected for its implementation, 34 firkas in the various districts.<sup>96</sup> In the Tanjore district, they selected first the Saliyamangalam Firka consisting of 30 villages, and later on, two more firkas, namely, the Vedaranyam and the Talanayar firkas.<sup>1</sup>

The Collector of each district was placed in direct charge of the scheme. In order to co-ordinate the work in the various firkas and to attend to the technical aspects of the scheme, a Provincial Firka Development Officer, later called the Director of Rural Welfare, of the status of a Head of Department, was also appointed, with two Regional Firka Development Officers to assist him.<sup>2</sup> It was initiated only towards the close of 1946. One of the important measures that has been initiated under the scheme is the construction of roads. By 1950, in the three firkas in Tanjore, new roads for a length of 10 miles and 6 furlongs were formed and several existing roads were repaired; 4 footpaths were also cut, and 28 culverts and one riverment were constructed.<sup>3</sup>

Clean drinking water is not generally available in the villages. The digging of drinking water wells and the construction of sanitary latrines and drains have therefore been given priority. A sanitation squad has been formed in each village under the guidance of the Grama Sevaka for giving necessary advice to the villagers, for supplying cheap disinfectants, for providing sanitary latrines, dust bins, soak pits, and drainage. Maternity and Child-Welfare Centres and dispensaries were also opened. By 1950, in the three firkas in Tanjore, 18 draw-wells and 17 bore-wells were sunk, and 14 latrines of the Wardha type and 25 latrines of other types were constructed. Besides these, several drains were made, pits were filled up, manure heaps were removed to place outside the dwelling localities, and proper soak pits were dug. A Maternity, and Child-Welfare Centre was also opened.<sup>4</sup> In the field of industries, it has been proposed to revive the cottage industries. In 1946, an elaborate scheme was drawn up for the development of cottage industries in the selected firkas. The units were to be confined to 25 firkas and to six basic trades, namely wood-work, blacksmiths, light-metal casting, sheet metal work, tanning, and leather goods manufacture. None of these schemes, however, was introduced in the Tanjore firkas.<sup>5</sup>

Electrification of the firkas has been given priority with a view to providing power for agricultural, for industrial as well as for domestic purposes. Some of the villages in the Vedaranyam firka were supplied with

electricity by 1950.<sup>6</sup> Self-sufficiency in cloth is one of the primary objects of the scheme, and to attain this objective, in 1946, the Government, formulated an intensive Khadi Scheme, and in 1949 an extensive Khadi Scheme. The spinners are encouraged to grow their own cotton. A subsidy was also given to the spinners. Till 1950, the All-India Spinners' Association guided the activities of the schemes. An extensive khadi scheme has been introduced in the Saliangalam firka, and till 1950 more than 200 charkas were introduced in this firka.<sup>7</sup> In 1950, in the Tanjore firkas, there were 25 rural credit societies and 21 other types of Societies established, covering 83 villages. The Panchayats have evinced a keen interest in rural welfare work and their activities have embraced almost all the activities of the firkas.<sup>8</sup>

The primary object of the Rural Welfare Scheme was the improvement of the economic condition of the people in the villages. Temperance reform, the forerunner of prohibition, was hailed as a blessing by all thinking persons in India.<sup>9</sup> In Tanjore, prohibition was introduced from 1st October, 1947 by extending the prohibition Act of 1937 to that district. All dealings in liquor and intoxicating drugs were prohibited. A series of measures were at the same time taken in the district to provide counter - attractions to drink, and employment to ex-toddy tappers. In 1949-50, not less than 961 Prohibition offenses were committed in Tanjore. This considerable number of offenses was ascribed to the warning of public enthusiasm and Co-operation. But, it cannot be denied that Prohibition has effected a general improvement in the social and economic condition of the numerous ex-addicts and their families.

The credit for passing legislation for the removal of the civil and social disabilities of the Harijans belongs to the first Congress Ministry presided over by Sri C. Rajagopalachari. During the period of this Ministry, two Acts called the Removal of Civil Disabilities Act (Madras Act XXI of 1938) and the Temple Entry Authorization and Indemnity Act (Madras Act XXII of 1939) were passed. The first enactment removed several disabilities of the Harijans, their disability to have access to public streams, rivers, wells, tanks, pathways, sanitary conveniences, means of transport, and also their disability to be appointed to public offices.<sup>10</sup> The second enactment identified and protected officers of the Government, trustees, etc., of the Sri Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple in Madurai as well as six other temples, including the Sri Brahadeeswarar Temple in Tanjore, against legal action for having permitted the Harijans to enter those temples and offer prayers and, at the same time, permitted the trustees of other temples to throw open the temples for the worship of Harijans. These two Acts were further modified and amplified by three more Acts passed by the National Government in 1947 and 1949 (Madras Act XI of 1947, Madras Act V of 1947 and Madras, Act XIII of 1949).

It is needless to say that the Harijans of Tanjore enjoy all these benefits granted by these Acts and the constitution. Since then, a separate department called the Harijan Welfare Department, under a Director of Harijan Welfare, has been organized. The Collectors of the districts are primarily responsible for the work of the departments in the district. These measures, consist of the provision of house-sites, the grant of special educational facilities, the provision of water supply and sanitary amenities, and the assignment of lands for cultivation. In the Tanjore district, they were mostly occupying manaicuts belonging to their landlords and owing to the strained feeling existing between them and their landlords, they were in danger of being evicted at any time. The Government have therefore taken urgent steps to provide house-sites to them by granting them poramboke lands or by acquiring and assigning to them private lands. For this purpose, in 1950 - 51, a sum of rupees Five Lakhs has been sanctioned and special staff has been appointed. It may be stated that from the commencement of the Harijan welfare scheme, in Tanjore in 1950 - 51, not less than 3,699 house-sites were assigned to the Harijans from the Government lands and 9,239 house sites were assigned, the land acquired from private person.<sup>11</sup>

In 1950-51, there were 153 schools opened in Tanjore district. In these schools, 296 teacher and 10,727 students belonged to the depressed class. Mid-day meal scheme was operated in these schools. Formed education was given to all Harijan students in all elementary and secondary schools. In the case of high schools, however, the concession of fee has been allowed only the income of the parents does not exceed Rs.1,200 per annum, and in the case of colleges only if the annual income does not exceed Rs.1,500/-. Income certificates for fee concessions which were formerly required to be produced from Government officials are not insisted upon. Many scholarships, including residential scholarships, have been offered to Harijan Students in Elementary and Secondary Schools as well as in colleges. In 1950-51, in Tanjore, 587 non-residential scholarships of the value of Rs.7,215 were given to Harijan Students studying in non-Harijan Schools, besides several residential scholarships to those studying in colleges and other educational institutions. Full exemption from the payment of examination fees has also been granted to Harijan Students. On the case of all Government examinations, and in the case of University examinations whenever half exemption is granted, the Government have made grants to the students to meet the other half. Several Government hostels for Harijan students have likewise been provided and where private hostels for such students exist, they have been subsidized by the Government. In 1950-51, in Tanjore, there were 13 private hostels for the Harijans subsidized by the Government. Of these, the Rajam's Hostel at Orathur was the largest; it had 75 boarders and it received a subsidy of Rs.11,250.

In regard to the Provision of water-supply and sanitation to the Harijans, the Collector of the districts have been authorized to sanction a non-recurring expenditure up to a limit of Rs.4,500/- each for the

construction of wells, tanks, pathways, latrines, leveling of house-sites, etc., and the Director of Harijan welfare has been empowered to sanction a similar expenditure up to a limit of Rs.7,500/-. Upto 1950 - 51, in the Tanjore district, 616 wells and 2 tanks were constructed at a cost of Rs.1,80,943/-. The 1948 Factories Act provides the licensing and registration of all factories. It prescribes standards for light, ventilation, and temperature. It prohibits the employment of children below 14 years, reduces the hours of work of young persons to 4 1/2 hours a day with a spread over of 5 hours and regulates the hours of work of adults to 9 hours a day or 48 hours a week. It also provides way for the payment of overtime wages to workers, imposes special precautions for their protection, and insists on the provision of sitting facilities, spittoons, latrines, good drinking water, first aid facilities, canteens, rest sheds, and creches and the appointment of special welfare officers in all factories employing 500 or more workers. In 1949, this Act was applicable to no less than 287 factories in the Tanjore district, of which the most numerous were the rice mills which numbered to 168.<sup>12</sup>

The minimum wages Act of 1948 (India Act XI of 1948) required the fixation of minimum wages in certain employments. The Employee's State Insurance Act of 1948 (India Act XXIV of 1948) provides sickness benefit, maternity benefit, disablement benefit, dependants' benefit, and medical benefit to the workers. The Madras Maternity Benefit Act of 1935 (Madras Act VI of 1935) prohibits the employment of women in factories for three weeks before and four weeks after confinement and provides for the payment of maternity benefit to them. These benefits are being shared by the workers and employees in Tanjore as in other districts.<sup>129</sup> One of the important welfare schemes undertaken by the Government is the women's welfare scheme. This scheme had its origin in the women's Auxiliary A.R.P. Corps started in 1941. In 1945, after the cessation of this corps was reconstituted to undertake general social welfare work among women. As soon as the National Government came to power, they decided to utilize this useful organization. In 1948, they constituted it into a separate department called the Women's Welfare Department.<sup>13</sup>

In 1950, it had one Assistant Women's Welfare Officer and Six Women's Welfare Organizers in the Tanjore district. The Department aims at the socio-economic and cultural improvement of the women at large and endeavours to achieve these aims by providing for field work, maternity welfare, service homes, and industrial training. In Tanjore district, in 1950, there were altogether 4 branches, and 15 centres established 6 in villages and 9 in towns.<sup>14</sup> The destitute and poor women of Tanjore have naturally availed themselves of the facilities provided by the Home and the Industrial School. For women who have received a limited education a Rural College at Tanjore was established. This college was formerly under the Education Department and transferred to the Women's Welfare Department in 1950. It is in charge of the Assistant Women's Welfare Officer.

Electrification of urban and rural areas were tried. Tanjore and Kumbakonam towns had began to produce electricity on a small scale with the help of oil engines and distribute it to the consumers. The Pykara and later the Mettur Schemes began to supply power to these towns. By the end of 1949-1950, it embraced no less than 235 towns and villages in the Tanjore District. In 1949 - 50, the district consumed 3.28 million units for domestic purposes, 7.48 millions units for industrial purposes, 0.14 million units for agricultural purposes, 1.91 million units for commercial lighting and power, 1.30 million units for public lighting, and 0.96 million units for miscellaneous purposes totaling 15.07 million units. Provision was made to maintain temples in Tanjore. The number of religious endowments in Tanjore have always been very large. In 1948 - 49, there were not less than 945 major institutions under the direct jurisdiction of two Assistant Commissioners of the Hindus Religious Endowments Board. Tanjore has two Assistant Commissioners to look after the endowments, one for the west Tanjore with head-quarters at Tanjore and the other for East Tanjore with headquarters at Nagapattinam.<sup>15</sup>

#### **Conclusion:**

The above welfare measures taken by the Congress ministry of Tamil Nadu after 1947, stimulate the people for the improvement of their social and economic status.

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