

PERIYAR NINAIVU SAMATHUVAPURAM

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To promote social justice and spread Thanthai Periyar's message of social equality, Government of Tamil Nadu established Samathuvapurams since 1997-98 in the districts where all communities live with unity and brotherhood.²⁴ In each Samathuvapuram, 100 houses are being constructed. Roads, street lights, drinking water supply and Public Distribution shop are also being provided in each of the Samathuvapurams. A statue of Thanthai Periyar should be installed in each of the Samathuvapurams. While selecting the site for Samathuvapuram, an approximate area of 8 to 9 acres of land should be selected in the rural area of the District. The site so selected should be abutting a bus route road and should not be too far from the District/ Division/Taluk/Block Headquarters. Villages with higher population may be preferably selected for construction of Samathuvapuram. Construction of Samathuvapuram is to be done within 12 months period and delays should be avoided. The approval of the lay outs by the Town and Country Planning authorities usually involves delays in the entire process. Samathuvapuram houses will be constructed by the Government. Each house should have a separate bathroom and toilet and an appropriate disposal system like septic tank with soak pit. The model type design of Samathuvapuram houses is being communicated separately. The beneficiaries for Samathuvapuram will be selected as per the following criteria;²⁵ As far as possible, the beneficiaries should be selected from the Village in which Samathuvapuram is being constructed; If sufficient number of eligible beneficiaries are not available in the concerned Village Panchayat, the beneficiaries from the adjoining village having the highest population will be considered for being selected for Samathuvapuram. If sufficient number of beneficiaries is not available even from the neighbouring Village Panchayat with the highest population, another adjoining Village Panchayat with the next highest population may be taken up and this process may be extended till the 100 beneficiaries for the Samathuvapuram are selected as per eligibility norms. Allotment of the houses to the beneficiaries will be in the following proportions: SC – 40; BC – 25; MBC – 25; and Other categories – 10. Pattas should be issued to the beneficiaries in such a manner that families of all communities live adjacent to each other in an inter-mixed manner and the following allocation criteria for a set of 20 houses each should be followed in general;²⁶

There is an order of accommodating castes in the houses in the following manner:

1. SC - 2,4,7,10,12,14,17,20
2. BC - 1,5,9,11,15
3. MBC - 3,6,13,16,19
4. Others - 8,18

It is believed that this practice and arrangement will eradicate the caste discrimination in due course. This seems to be a radical policy outlook in a caste-ridden society.²⁷

RESERVATION POLICY

In many parts of South India, Brahmins were the first to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by Western education. By the beginning of this century they had acquired a near-monopoly of posts in the government and dominated the liberal professions. This was resented by the non-Brahmin castes, and they founded the Justice Party in 1917 in Madras to advance their cause. Dislike, if not hatred, of Brahmin dominance brought together all non-Brahmins, a hospitable category which included not only all Hindus who were not Brahmins but also Muslims, Christians, Anglo-Indians, etc., The leaders of the non-Brahmin movement demanded reservation of seats and scholarships in schools and colleges, preference in appointment to government posts and finally, representation in local self-government bodies. The Justice Party functioned as a political party which cooperated with the British Government when the Congress was leading the struggle against the British. During this period, the Non-Brahmin leaders obtained all the concessions and preferences which they were seeking, and several discriminatory rules against the Brahmins were built into the administration.²⁸

The Justice party came into power in 1920, and issued a series of Communal GOs. The First Communal GO (MRO, Public, Ordinary Series, G.O. 613, September.16, 1921) says, "In order to increase the proportion of posts in Government offices held by Non-Brahmins, the Government direct that the principle prescribed for the Revenue Department in Board's Standing Order No 128 (2), on the subject of the distribution of the appointments among various castes and communities, should be extended to appointments of all grades in the several departments of the Government." The Heads of the Department were further instructed to maintain the information of employees according to 6 different communal categories.

The Second Communal GO (MRO, Public, Ordinary Series, G.O. 658. Aug. 15, 1922) declared that the government concurred entirely with the desire of the members of the Legislative Council for information on the 6 categories set out in the First Communal GO, not only for new appointments but also for all Government employees, including personnel in permanent, temporary, or acting appointments, and those appointed either for the first time or promoted. Though the Justice Party had lost power, Non-Brahmin Movement was still strong through independents and congress, and hence another GO was brought in 1927.

Following persistent demand by the Backward Classes League, SCs, and Other associations, the Government revised the communal GO in 1947. Communal GO 1947: For the first time Non-Brahmin Backward Hindus were separated from Non-Brahmins Hindus. This bifurcation was done on the basis of the then existing list of backward castes for educational concessions.²⁹

After independence the First Constitutional Amendment was enacted to protect the reservation. This Amendment added a Clause 4 to Section 15. In 1954, the quota for SCs was raised to 16 percent. The rise to power of the DMK in 1967 marked the beginning of Tamil Nadu aggressive quota politics. The DMK government appointed the Tamil Nadu First Backward Classes Commission headed by A.N. Sattanathan.³⁰

The DMK ministry enhanced reservation for the BCs from 25 percent to 31 percent and for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SCs-STs) from 16 percent to 18 percent in 1971. However, it did not offer separate reservation for the MBCs; or implement the recommendation to prescribe an annual income of Rs. 9,000 on BC families, lest it should incur the displeasure of vested interests among the BCs. As a belated attempt the M G Ramachandran-led AIADMK ministry issued a GO in July 1979 prescribing an annual income limit of Rs. 9,000 on BC families for eligibility to the reservation benefits.

Shortly after the announcement of the income criterion, MGR and his education minister, C Aranganayagam, defended it publicly: Social justice and fairness demand it, asserted MGR. Later MGR announced, on the eve of the dismissal of his ministry, the withdrawal of the GO, and outwitting his adversaries, also an increase in the reservation for the BCs from 31 percent to 50 percent.

As a result of the Vanniyar agitations, the DMK which assumed office after the January 1989 elections, ordered compartmental reservation in March 1989. Out of 50 percent reservation for 201 communities, it set apart 20 percent for 39 MBCs and 68 Denotified Tribes, together accounting for about 31.1 percent of the BCs, and 30 percent for rest of the BCs accounting for about 68.9 percent of the total BC population in the state. About three years after this new arrangement came the Supreme Court ruling in the Mandal case (Indra Sawhney), restricting overall reservation to 50% and eliminating the creamy layer from the notified BCs. The campaign that followed the ruling by chief minister, J Jayalalithaa to protect the state's 69 percent quota (following a court order in 1990 the government gave the STs separate reservation of 1 percent making the overall reservation 69 percent) was gross opportunism when seen against her earlier social justice pedantry. The DMK supported the 69 percent reservation. But as a net result of all these efforts the Tamil Nadu Reservation Bill obtained President's assent on July 19, and under further pressures, by the Constitution (85th) Amendment Bill passed unanimously by the Rajya Sabha on August 24 and Lok Sabha the next day, was included in the Ninth Schedule under Article 31B.³¹

RATIONALISM AND RELIGION

In order to hail the glory of the mother tongue Tamil which is more than their Lives for the Tamils who lived with the noble idea that birth is equal to all, the DMK government is convening the World Tamil Classical Language Conference at Coimbatore. This Government is further committed to services, such as, protecting the priceless properties of the Temples having artistic and historical importance, maintaining the temples, causing no decline in their traditional and ancient values, conducting daily poojas and festivals, carrying out proper renovations, kumbabishekams, implementing welfare schemes that provide necessary facilities for the devotees visiting the temples.³²

It is unfair to discriminate one's community as a qualification for performing poojas for God at places of public worship. Based on this ideology a Government Order has been issued declaring that Hindus of all communities may become Archakas in Hindu Temples if they possess the required qualifications and necessary training. On this basis four Saiva Archaka training institutes have been started in Tamil Nadu at Madurai, Palani, Thiruchendur and Tiruvannamalai. Two Vaishnava Archaka training institutes have been started at Chennai and Srirangam. Totally 207 students including 34 Scheduled castes students, 76 backward Classes students, 55 Most Backward Classes students have completed the one year "Junior Archaka Certificate" course and have received the certificates.³³

The DMK government has taken several steps to fulfill the wishes of the public and devotees to Worship in Tamil in the temples and to make Tamil to reverberate in the Holy shrines forever. Many Religious discourses and Music recitals are organized to be performed in Tamil. To perform Archana for the deities in Tamil, "Archanai Potri" books have been published. To encourage the Archakas performing Archanai in Tamil, prizes have been announced.³⁴

For the benefit of Village Poosarigal, performing Poojas in the village temples which are not under the control of Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department, a separate Board namely "The Village Temple Poosarigal Welfare Board" has been constituted under the Chairmanship of the Hon'ble Minister for Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments. This Welfare Board is implementing

welfare schemes for the benefit of Village Temple Poosarigal such as providing refresher training for poosarigal, Rs.500/-, for purchase of spectacles to village poosarigal, Rs.6,000 for maternity/abortion expenses of Poosari's spouse or daughter, Rs.1,000 to Rs.6000 for the higher studies of the children of the member, Rs.6000 for marriages of Poosari or for his son/daughter, Rs.2,000 for the funeral expenses on the death of the member, and Rs.15,000 as financial assistance to the legal heirs. So far, 38,946 persons have been enrolled in this Welfare Board as members. Out of them 700 poosarigal have received welfare assistance to the tune of Rs.16.07 lakhs and benefited.³⁵ Since the Government have announced that the first day of the Tamil Month Thai as the Tamil New Year day, it has been ordered to celebrate this day as Tamil New Year day in the temples.³⁶

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