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CONSTRUCTIVE MEASURES OF K. KAMARAJ IN TAMIL NADU, 1954-1963

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Abstract:

From the position of an ordinary Congress volunteer K. Kamaraj, within a span of three and half decades rose to the position of the Chief Minister of Madras from 13th April, 1954 to 2nd October, 1963 through various phases of trials, mainly by his own dedicated selfless services to the Tamil Society and for the development of Tamil Nadu and India. His fruitful aims, laborious efforts and committed services on the Gandhian path, paved the way for him to serve the Tamil Society through his welfare and reform measures which were much constructive nature and always speaking and chanting his name in the annals of political history of Twentieth Century Tamil Nadu and after. In that regard, Kamaraj imprinted his caliber as an indelible mass leader. With proper planning and looking at the future, he approached all the problems and issues. His plans were dynamic useful for the growth of the State of Tamil Nadu. He was a man of simplicity, tireless worker, true follower of Gandhi, disciple of Satyamurthi, frontline freedom fighter, king maker in Indian Politics and above all the champion of downtrodden people. His Period of Chief Ministership Madras State was full of achievement aimed at the construction development of Tamil Nadu in the progressive path.

KEYWORDS:

Irrigation, Industry, Welfare, Project, Five Year Plan, Scheme, Dam, Factory, Panchayat.

INTRODUCTION:

Kamaraj, the Chief Minister

He was the Chief Minister of Madras State from 13th April, 1954 to 2nd October, 1963 for three terms spread over a period of nine years.¹ On 13th April 1954 Kamaraj took the oath of office.² To have good control, to avoid extravagance, to concentrate on earnest services and to avoid competition and enviousness, Kamaraj formed his ministry with only eight ministers including him and it was the smallest ministry formed in any State of the vast democratic Indian subcontinent.³ His victory in the Gudiyatham Assembly Constituency was a remarkable one.⁴ His victory was even hailed by opposition party newspapers and he himself was appreciated as Kula Kolundhu and Gunalan.⁵ As soon as Kamaraj assumed charge, he pointed out that he had taken up that post mainly to redress the grievances of the poor. As a practical socialist, Kamaraj pointed out that only hard work done alone will relieve people from poverty and the wealth should be distributed to all instead of dumped in a single hand.⁶ He practiced what he preached. He constituted the State Development Committee in 1955 to review this schemes and projects undertaken by the Government and also to avoid administrative delay and redtapism.⁷

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IRRIGATION DEVELOPMENT

Kamaraj, the multi-dimensional dynamic personality of original thinking as Chief Minister devoted to the promotion of agriculture by improving the irrigational facilities. Being a visionary he had the two fold aims of increasing the food production and construction of dams and reservoirs for purposes of agriculture. He also thought of electricity power generations through the implementation of hydel projects. As a practical economist he believed that developments both in electrification and irrigation will promote not only agricultural production but also it will strengthen the industrial prospects of the State.⁸ Before going into the details one should note that the Madras State ranked third in power generation and first in rural electrification during the regime of Kamaraj.⁹ Kamaraj was known for his plans for the future. With the aim of assisting the poor rural farmer and to give electricity to the villages he planned his activities. As Kamaraj came to power during the First Five Year Plan Period (1951-1956) and was in power during the full Second Five Year Plan period and three years during the Third Plan period Kamaraj was able to turn out of a lot by appropriate planning. The State Development Committee comprised of Ministers, Secretaries and others of various departments. This Committee met once in three months and reviewed the progress and suggested ways and means.¹⁰

During the period of Kamaraj nine irrigation schemes were undertaken.¹¹ The Lower Bhavani Scheme which was started in 1948 was completed only in 1958. The total cost of expenditure was Rs.5.50 crores. By this scheme 1,94,000 acres of lands were brought under irrigation.

The Parambikulam – Alyiar Project was a joint venture of Kerala and Tamil Nadu Governments. This project was undertaken during the second five year plan period at an estimate cost of Rs. 48 crores. This dam irrigates 2.40 lakhs acres of land. By this multi purpose project arrangements were also made to produce 1,85,000 K.V. electricity.¹²

The help the lands of Tirumangalam, Melur and Ramanathapuram areas the Vaigai Dam project was taken up in 1954. The total estimate cost was Rs.243.3 lakhs¹³ and it was completed within a year. Mettur Canal Scheme was also a scheme of the first Five Year Plan period and it provided irrigation facilities for 45,000 croes of lands in the Salem and Coimbatore Districts.¹⁴ The Sathaiar dam was constructed across Pennar river at the cost of Rs.263 lakhs. It covers an irrigation areas of 1,14,425 acres of land.¹⁵ The Manimuthar Project was undertaken in 1950 by the efforts of K.T. Kosalam, the Member of Parliament of Tiruchendur Constituency. He collected Rs. one crore from the public and handed it over to the Government. This covers an area of 25,000 acres for irrigation. This was compelled during the period of Kamaraj. The Amaravathi Reservoir scheme was completed on 1st August, 1958. By that 21,923 of land are irrigated.¹⁶

During the First Five Year Plan the Kauvery Delta Drainage Improvement Scheme, Manimuthar, Araniyar, Amaravathi, Vaigai, Sathaiar and Krishanagiri dams were undertaken and completed before the commencement of the Second Five Year Plan period during the period of chief ministership of Kamaraj. All these schemes were undertaken at the cost of Rs.29 crores and they covered the irrigation of 3,34,000 acres of lands.¹⁷

Four major schemes and two minor schemes were undertaken during the Second Five Year Plan period. Among them the New Kattalai High Level Canal Scheme and Pullambadi Canal Scheme were completed in two year's time i.e., before September 1959. The Vidur dam was completed in December 1959.¹⁸ The new schemes were beneficial for irrigating 2.92 laksh of acres of lands.¹⁹ By such measures before the end of the Second Five Year Plan period 90% of the river water of the State had been utilised.²⁰

Since all the potentials of the rivers had been utilised successfully during the Third Five Year Plan period the Government of Madras devoted to the execution of minor irrigation schemes such as improvement of tanks, desilting, land and tank reclamation works etc. Those activities also assisted the enhanced agricultural production.²¹ It should be remembered that by Kattalai High Level scheme 20,622 acres of lands obtained irrigation facilities. The expenditure for this was Rs.156.65 lakhs. The Pullambadi Canal scheme was covered with an expenditure of Rs.142.43 lakhs. Between 1951 and 1961, 1600 tanks were desilted and that helped 1.50 lakhs of acres of land to get irrigation facilities. All those marine irrigation schemes were achieved by the hopes, efforts and activities of Kamaraj. They even testify to his administrative skill and ability in tapping all the resources.²²

GROWTH OF INDUSTRIES

Kamaraj being a socialist was aware of the fact that mixed economy alone will be congenial and conducive for the promotion of the economy. The State Development Committee meetings helped him a lot in stream lining the economic pursuits of the State.²³ Due to his practical mindedness the expansion work of

the Madras harbour was undertaken in the Royapuram side and the proposed work of expansion in the side of the Fort St. George was dropped because he felt that will spoil the beauty of the city.²⁴ Many industries and activities assisted the promotion of the economy of Tamil Nadu and they are all the which activities came up due to his efforts. By utilizing the fund allotted by the Central Government on National Policy basis he utilised the allotted amount properly and made the Madras State as a industrially developed state.²⁵

For encouraging the small scale industries nine Industrial estates were established at places like Guindy, Trichy, Madurai, Virudhunagar etc.

Subsequently by the beginning of the five year plan 13 more industrial estates were also established at places like Ambattur, Ranipet etc.²⁶ For making the Industries to grow steadily Madras State was divided into five industrial zones, namely, 1. Madras, 2. Neyveli Project Area, 3. Tuticorin Belt, 4. Salem-Pallipalayam and 5. Coimbatore - Polloachi

Because of such divisions many heavy and small scale industrial units emerged there.²⁷ That was also beneficial for the full use of the raw materials. They offered employment opportunities also.

With Swiss assistance the Central Government of India, he established the Madras Perambur coach factory at the cost of Rs.12 crores. By making arrangements to establish this factory Kamaraj was able to give employment opportunities for 10,000 people. Further it assisted the introduction of many subsidiary industries. Such investments improved the overall standard of the economy.

In 1956 at an estimate of Rs.160 crores Neyveli Lignite Corporation was established. The multi purpose project produced 250 megawatt electricity. This Central Government unit was given to Madras State by the efforts of Kamaraj. With the French support the Hindustani Photo Film Ltd., was established at Ootacamund at the cost of Rs.11 crores. That was also an economy fetching industry.

The State Government assigned lands to establish the Hindustan Tele Printer Factory at Guindy, Madras. At Avadi, Madras Heavy Vehicles Factory was established and modern Tanks are produced. In addition to that a new industry to produce surgical equipments was started at the cost of Rs.5.25 crores. This was due executed with the collaboration of the Soviet Union technology.²⁸ Thus the establishment of large and small scale industries with the support of the Central Government and collaboration of foreign countries enriched the standard of living of the people of Tamil Nadu.

Due to the Cordial Centre State relations during the regime of Kamaraj upto 1963 the Central Government of India invested Rs.175 crores in Madras State.²⁹ Centrally sponsored industries such as Neyveli projects were implemented in Tamil Nadu. The Trichy Bharat Heavy Electrical Ltd., Kalpakkam, Atomic Energy Plant, Pallipalayam Seshayya Paper Mills, Sankaridurg India Cement, Nellikkuppam Sugar Factory will all stand testimony to the multi dimensional Industrial growth of Tamil Nadu during the period of Kamaraj.³⁰

Kamaraj took efforts to start Co-operative and Private Spinning Mills at Coimbatore and made Coimbatore city to be called as the Manchester of India. Madras State Co-operative Industrial Bank was established by the State Government in 1958. This encouraged the creation of Co-operative units for developments of handicrafts and others. Nearly 365 Co-operative societies were also started. In 1963 in the Madras State there were 6,365 industries of different types and 3,52,563 workers were working in them. Thus the state met with a planned development

Due to the Industrial policies and activities of Kamaraj Madras State occupied the Third Place among the Indian States. His small ministry as given below assisted him a lot in launching many programmes successfully and effectively. His Ministry in 1954, consisted eight, in 1957, also eight Ministers and in 1962 Nine Ministers

The industrial development during the Kamaraj Ministry was remarkable and there was tremendous growth. In 1959 a number of Industries were available in Tamil Nadu. For instance there were 230 Engineering Industries, 106 Chemical Fertilizers and 226 Paper and Soap Mills

WELFARE MEASURES

Kamaraj, being a humanitarian, devoted to the welfare of the needy at all levels. In 1955 when Cyclone affected Rameswaram and Dhaunskodi he helped the affected by providing food materials. Even loans were supplied. By employing the Government machinery he redressed their grievances largely.³¹ The Agricultural Co-operative Credit Societies established by him assisted the promotion of agriculture to a great extent. Old age pension scheme was introduced to assist the retired people. The retirement age of the teacher was enhanced to 58 from 56. From 1961 onwards Panchayat System under Community Development Scheme was launched. He made arrangement to distribute the monthly journal, Grama Nalam, (Welfare of Village) to all Government offices. In all the Panchayat Unions in 1962 he established Agricultural Societies. He was responsible for establishing veterinary hospitals for cattle in all the

Panchayat Unions. The Tamil Nadu Transport Corporation was his innovation and that was established to link the different parts of Tamil Nadu.³² To promote house building in the urban areas he formed the City Improvement Trust in 1956.³³

For promoting and developing the villages and rural areas he introduced Panchayat Raj and Community Development Scheme in 1956. This was a measure of decentralisation of administration based on the Gandhian Philosophy of Village autonomy.³⁴ Much was done for the uplift of the Depressed classes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Attention was also paid for the implementation of the family planning schemes for having a successful and happy family. Even before the various steps were taken by the Central Government in this regard, Kamaraj by instituting the Family Planning Board took steps to implement steps on family planning with the belief that planned family will be way to success in life. For improving the status and condition of women steps were taken through the Social Welfare Board. Steps were taken to promote their health and education along with the improvement of the working condition of women.³⁵

As a matter of fact, Kamaraj, the farsighted statesman was a pragmatist and looked at everything in a broader perspective of the welfare of the people and state. His chiefministership in a critical period of infant India put the Madras State in the right perspective of many sided and multifaceted developments. Economically, socially, educationally, he brought the Tamil State to the forefront. His cordial relationship and political influence with the Central Government allowed him to lead the State in the right path way. He was able to utilize all the resources for proper progress. He laid the foundation for the strong placement of Tamil Nadu at the vanguard due to his progressive policies and forward vision and idealism. By setting aside conservatism, he stood for the progressivism in its real sense in the overall development of Tamil Nadu.

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CONSTRUCTIVE MEASURES OF K. KAMARAJ IN TAMIL NADU, 1954-1963



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