Janakshema Samajam: An Ambitious Project of Janab Thangal Kunju Musaliar

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Of the many great contributions of Janab Thangal Kunju Musaliar, perhaps the most original is the creation of the *Janakshema Samajam*. It deserves comprehensive and detailed study. Janab Musaliar was deeply moved by the sufferings of the people of the region during the food shortages and famines, which gripped several parts of India during the second world war.

As Musaliar himself originally came from a very humble background he was able to easily understand the sufferings of the people. He decided that something had to be done to prevent the recurrence on the future of such calamities. It was out of this mindset that the Janakshema Samajam was born. The first steps were taken in 1952. A series of meetings presided over by Janab Musaliar were held. E.V Abdul Razak, P.K. Narayanan, K.M.P Unnithan, Adv. Chavara Muhammed, A.V. George, Eachan Veettil Mytheen Kunju and myself were some of the leaders of this movement. Opinion was sought from various quarters. Leading industrialists and businessmen were roped in. It was decided that corpus had to be created to set in motion a massive and comprehensive programme. The capital, it was decided, would be two crore rupees. Some of Janab Musaliar's friends and advisers felt that it was a too huge an amount. But he found a solution to the problem by declaring that a small fee of ten paise could be collected per tin of cashew exported. The Janakshema Samajam was registered as a charitable society with the Registrar of Properties, Quilon. Officers were appointed to put the scheme into action. A plot of about six thousand acres was identified near Malayattoor for the development of a model farm and an ideal village which would provide employment to hundreds of families and produce enough food to feed thousands. Even the equipment needed to carry out the farming operations was manufactured. A poultry farm consisting of about fifteen new varieties of chickens, was also established at Kilikolloor as part of the movement.

Such an ambitious plan could succeed only with the help of the needed economic strength, sufficient human resources, necessary social support and adequate political backing. All these factors, except the last, were present. As India was then going through a transition phase, it was found difficult to muster the necessary political support. And a great scheme which could have revolutionized the socio-economic life of Kerala became defunct.