

“FOOD SECURITY AND AMMA UNAVAGAM” IN TAMIL NADU - WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MADURAI CITY

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Abstract

The main objective of the study is to know the perception of the consumers towards “Amma Unavagam” the budget canteens run at Madurai Corporation Limit, which is an innovative by the Honorable Chief Minister of Tamilnadu Miss. J. Jayalalithaa.

Introduction

Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu is the eleventh-largest state in India by area and the sixth-most populous. The state was ranked sixth among states in India according to the Human Development Index in 2011, and is the second largest state economy in India with 13,842 billion in gross domestic products. Tamil Nadu was ranked as one of the top seven developed states in India based on a “Multidimensional Development Index” in a 2013 report published by the Reserve Bank of India.

Madurai District

The Madurai district is the second largest in population of the 32 districts of the State of Tamil Nadu in Southeastern India. The city of Madurai serves as the district headquarters. As of 2011, the district had a population of 30, 38,252 with a sex-ratio of 990 females for every 1,000 males.

Madurai City

Madurai city is governed by Municipal Corporation which comes under Madurai Metropolitan Region. As per provisional reports of Census India, population of Madurai in 2011 is 1,017,865; of which male and female are 509,302 and 508,563 respectively. Although Madurai city has population of 1,017,865; its urban / metropolitan population is 1,465,625 of which 733,821 are males and 731,804 are females. Among the big States, Tamil Nadu is the most urbanized with 48.45% of its population living in urban areas (Census 2011). In the last 20 years, the rate of urbanization in Tamil Nadu has been rapid. From 34.15% in 1991, the State's urban population rose by 14.3% by 2011. In the last 10 years alone, the percentage of the population living in urban areas has risen by nearly 5%. Tamil Nadu has a very good spatial spread of a large number of small, medium and large towns. This opens up the scope for non-farm livelihood opportunities as the agrarian crisis intensifies. However, one can nevertheless notice people migrating towards destinations that are experiencing a construction and service sector boom. Since Chennai, Madurai, Coimbatore, Trichy, Tiruppur, Salem happens to be the ultimate crucible, it has garnered a significant chunk of the Intra-State rural-urban migration. Further, there is a steady flow of migrants from other parts of the country into the city. Due to the impact of globalization and privatization as well as economic recession prevailing in our country it became very difficult

almost to restrict the price level of the essential commodities. Particularly the increase in price level of commodities like onion, dhal etc. had a severe impact on the middle class people and those who come under the middle class category. While we have a lot of programmes to aid the rural poor, none exists for their urban cousins. In the absence of a social safety net like MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act), the urban poor suffer a lot," says J. Jeyaranjan, Director, and Institute for Development Alternatives, Chennai. Their income almost went insufficient to run their life in cities like Chennai, Madurai, Salem, Tiruchirappalli, Coimbatore etc.

It has been found that despite rapid economic growth since the 1990s, the access and food absorption indicators of urban food insecurity point to the miserable state of affairs on nutritional intake and worsening livelihood insecurity (M S Swaminathan Research Foundation - MSSRF and WFP, 2010).

India's growth story has been impressive since its economic liberalization in 1991 in terms of GDP and per capita income with improvement in development indicators on health, education etc; however, food and livelihood insecurity, and malnutrition especially among the urban poor has been heightened due to growing internal migration. 29.8 percent of the population lived in poverty in 2009/10 as measured primarily on the cost of a nutritionally adequate diet. There is growing evidence of a high percentage of poorer households in both smaller and bigger cities experiencing food insecurity and malnutrition.

Besides, NSSO (National Sample Survey Organization) survey 2011 indicates that urban females between 15 and 59 years have the highest unemployment rate at 15.7% as compared to 9% for males belonging to the same age group; and nearly 20 % illiterate and semi-literate poor women are employed in the informal sector³as part time domestic helps, sweepers, vendors, hawkers etc, with low wages and little or no job security. In India with nearly 29 % of population living below the Poverty Line in 2011-12 and vast sections of deprived and poorer segments including women surviving at subsistence levels, social security and social safety nets are critical.

Food security has been a matter of concern in recent years due to the global food crisis and rising food prices. For the urban poor, access to food is low due to high unorganized or informal sector employment which usually fetches an income that is not only low but also irregular and therefore provides relatively poorer access to food. A major concern of any government today is to avert deprivation and find some sustainable livelihood opportunities for the most neglected sections of the society.

The street food sector plays an important role in urban food security, state-led food security measures in India have failed to provide a role for poor urban street food buyers to engage in the distribution and consumption of healthy foods. Instead, state-led food security schemes, whether production, distribution, or consumption oriented, have viewed the urban poor simply as beneficiaries of subsidized grain. One major concern for India today is to alleviate poverty through welfare measures for averting deprivation and to provide some sustainable livelihood opportunities for the neglected sections of the society. In India, both the Central Government and State governments have a range of promotional, preventive and protective social measures to tackle deprivation, food insecurity and poverty alleviation. Since the poor lack purchasing power to buy food at the market price, India has worked on two fronts to ensure food availability to them. One is through poverty alleviation schemes and second through Public Distribution System (PDS). Under the PDS, essential commodities such as rice, wheat, sugar, kerosene etc. are supplied to the public at a low cost.

Governments at the Centre and States in India have worked on two fronts to ensure food availability because the poor lack purchasing power to buy food at the market price. One is through poverty alleviation schemes and second through Fair Price Shops, which sell subsidized grains and essential items. In South India, the Government of Tamil Nadu is known for its successful social welfare interventions to ensure food security like Mid-Day Meal Scheme for Children. Amma Unavagam - is a latest social welfare initiative of the State Government to tackle food insecurity of the urban poor by taking a leaf out of cooperative management and social inclusion. Amma Unavagam - an initiative towards urban food security by providing cheap food to anyone who wants it - has to be seen in the context of growth. For growth to be inclusive, the

precariat (those without any security in the towns and cities) have to be supported with the basic minimums. Clearly, providing the hungry with food is the first step. The paper discusses how the Amma canteen providing cheap food and, in doing so, how improve urban food security in Madurai?

Objectives of the Study

This study explores a recent Social Welfare initiative of Tamil Nadu government termed as Amma Unavagam. That aims at reducing food insecurity of urban poor. Amma Unavagam has been essentially designed with dual goals- one to ensure food security and also to keep food prices in check. The study looks at this innovative experiment as a case study to understand how this experiment has become a vehicle for achieving the objectives of mitigating food insecurity and livelihood insecurity through cooperative management with the help of members of Self Help Groups drawn from slum settlements.

- To study the consumers perception towards Amma Unavagam at Madurai City.
- To know about that preference level of customers towards Amma Unavagam.
- To find out the consumers' level of satisfaction towards the food varieties and service rendered by Amma Unavagam.
- To know about the consumers' expectations towards Amma Unavagam.

This study consists of a sample size of 300 public in Madurai city. The researcher collected the required data through structured non disguised questionnaire method and followed the Convenience sampling technique which comes under the Non - Probability sampling method.

Methodology

The data collected for this study is qualitative based on participant, observation, personal Interviews, as well as customers of Amma Unavagam and Public in the city of Madurai, twelve (1.Arapalayam, 2.Anaiyur, 3.CMR Road, 4.Gandhipuram, 5.Govt. Rajaji Hospital, 6.New Ramnad Road**, 7.Palanganatham, 8.Pudur**, 9.Ramarayar Mandabam, 10. Thirupparankundram**, 11.West Gate**, 12.Sundararajapuram) Amma Unavagam outlets in Madurai, the city formed part of sample for the study. (** ISO 9001:2008 Certified)

The researcher has done a descriptive research to study the Perception of consumers towards Amma Unavagam. Information was gathered by the author during the month of May & June 2017 using convenient sampling method. Additionally, information from secondary sources from websites, sparse studies and media reports supplemented the author's information. The data has been analyzed with the statistical tools like percentage analysis.

Results and Discussion

Noon Meal:-

The concept of a free meal is not new to Tamil Nadu. Government records suggest that a noon meal scheme existed in 1923, in the days of the British Madras Presidency, and that this scheme benefited quite a few schools in the city. The National School Act, the bedrock of America's subsidised and free lunch programme in schools was signed into law by Harry Truman only in 1945. In the early 1960s Congress chief minister

K.Kamaraj introduced a midday meal scheme that began in Chennai, and eventually spread to the districts. But the big thrust finally arrived in 1982 with the launch of M.G. Ramachandran's now legendary Sathunavu Thittam (nutritious noon meal scheme) that didn't just make the free lunch more nutritious with an egg in the mix, but images of MGR dining with school children have left an indelible impact on the state. This scheme has been successfully implemented by successive governments in Tamil Nadu, and 12 other states replicated it in the 1990s.

In Tamilnadu the mid day meals scheme for school children started by the K.Kamaraj and extended more widely as sathunavu Thittam (Nutritious meal scheme) by the late M.G.R, elicited a lot of criticism and even ridicule, but now being followed with local variations in almost all the states in India, and undoubtedly and unobtrusively has spawned at least two generations of literate Indians who otherwise might not have even seen the inside of a school in their life time.

Tamil Nadu seems to have set the benchmark as far as populist schemes go. Annadurai started

the subsidised rice initiative in 1967; Karunanidhi came up with the 1 kg Rice for Rs.1 scheme that many pollsters believe helped the DMK win a close election in 2006; and Jayalalithaa, too, got into populist mode with the free 20kg rice for family card.

The State of Tamilnadu has been a pioneer in devising innovative social welfare interventions to achieve food and livelihood security. It has an impressive record in providing essential support to the poorer sections -by effective use of self help group's movement to achieve desired outcomes in the area of women empowerment, livelihood promotion and food security. Many of the schemes of the Government of Tamil Nadu for uplifting the socio-economic conditions of the poorer sections were on the launch pad of the micro-credit initiatives or SHG movement with successful results. For instance, it has one of the best functioning non-targeted PDS. This has been possible because it runs the PDS with the support of cooperatives and Self Help Groups (SHGs) thus allowing no private player. However, despite good penetration of the public distribution system in Tamil Nadu, food insecurity in urban areas is found to be high.

Amma Unavagam

The project was originally thought of to address public health concerns. "Over a million people in Chennai do not have access to hygienic food. They are susceptible to water borne diseases as they eat at road side eateries," says a senior health official at the Chennai Corporation. "We were looking at providing low-cost food for these people. When this plan was presented to the Chief Minister, she saw the bigger picture and converted the scheme into a tool for the poor to overcome food inflation. The hallmark of Amma Unavagam lies in its innovative design of co-opting SHGs from local slum settlements in running and managing these canteens. In the process of ensuring food security through subsidized cooked food, these community kitchens have generated regular employment and remunerative wages to the SHG members.

A Profile Amma Unavagam refers to a chain of subsidized restaurants/canteens started in 19th February 2013 by the Chennai Corporation and municipalities. The foundation behind this social welfare scheme was to shield the urban poor from food insecurity in the face of spiralling prices and food inflation by offering a cheaper and nutritious substitute to the expensive food sold by private restaurants and street eateries.

Amma Unavagam is a carefully thought out constructive intervention designed with some innovative features to meet the main objective of overcoming food insecurity for a sizeable segment of urban poor migrants working as daily wage earners, besides a tool for generating employment to poor women slum dwellers. Based on the announcement made by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu on the floor of the Assembly on 15.05.2013, 90 "Amma Unavagams" each ten in Madurai, Coimbatore, Tiruchirappalli, Salem, Tirunelveli, Tiruppur, Erode, Vellore and Thoothukudi Corporations have been inaugurated by the Hon'ble Chief Minister on 02.06.2013.

Table: 1 Time and Prices of Food Served at Amma Unavagam

Food Items	Unit	Quantity in grams	Price in INR
Breakfast (7 A.M - 10 A.M)			
Idli-Sambar	1	100	1
Pongal	1 plate	350	5
Lunch (12 P.M - 3 P.M)			
Lemon Rice	1 plate	350	5
Curry Leaf Rice	1 plate	350	5
Sambar Rice	1 plate	350	5
Curd Rice	1 plate	350	3
Dinner (6 P.M - 9 P.M)			
Sappati (Roti)	1 plate	2 pieces	3

The prices for the food served at *Amma Unavagam* are presented in Table 1. From the Table, it is not far to seek how and why the swift growth of *Amma Unavagam* chain has happened.

Amma Unavagam scheme's low cost nutritious and hot food also has seen modest numbers of middle class white collar workers eating in outlets that are proximate to their office complexes. In any social welfare scheme, universally targeted at the poor, there is a scholarly acceptance that it is practically difficult to weed out the miniscule percentage of non poor's participation. Though the

State government is seized with this issue, however, it is optimistic that the scheme can be scaled up efficiently like it did with some of its earlier schemes in the social sector. Based on the announcement made by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu on the floor of the Assembly on 15.05.2013, 90 "Amma Unavagams" ten each in Madurai, Coimbatore, Tiruchirappalli, Salem, Tirunelveli, Tiruppur, Erode, Vellore and Thoothukudi Corporations have been inaugurated by the

Hon'ble Chief Minister on 02.06.2013. Further, on 11.02.2014, the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu has inaugurated 11th Amma Unavagam, in Government Rajaji Hospital, Madurai. On an average in each Amma Unavagam, breakfast and lunch is being supplied for 300 persons. Up to June 2014, 4, 66, 38,455 Idlies, 1, 06, 99,821 Sambar rice and 90.25,878 curd rice has been supplied to the public at a lesser price of Rs.1 per idly, Rs.5 per Sambar rice and Rs.3 per Curd rice. On opening of the Amma Unavagams in the Corporation areas, the economically weaker section, labourers, school going children are being benefitted by getting hygienic and healthy food at lesser price. This scheme is functioning successfully with overwhelming response from the people.

Further, the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamilnadu in the statement dated 01.06.2014 has announced that in order to extend the benefit of the Amma Unavagam which is functioning as security shield of poor and downtrodden people in Chennai Corporation and other Corporations, to the people in other urban areas. In the next phase, other than Madurai, Vellore, Tirunelveli and Thoothukudi, in all the Government Hospitals in the District Headquarter Towns 27 Amma Unavagams in 124 Municipalities, 2 Amma Unavagams on each in Thanjavur and Dindigul Corporations, two additional Amma Unavagams one each in Coimbatore and Madurai Corporations, totally 160 Amma Unavagams will be opened shortly. As per the above announcement of the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, action has been initiated to establish Amma Unavagams in the above towns. The 12th 'Amma canteen' in the city at Sundararajapuram, was inaugurated by chief minister J Jayalithaa through video conferencing. The canteen came up near the food corporation of India's warehouse. The CM inaugurated more than 200 canteens on the day.

The canteen was established at a cost of Rs 20.42 lakh. It can serve up to 1,200 Idlies in the morning and 300 plates of Sambar rice and Curd rice.

Addressing the gathering, Rajan Chellappa said the first set of 10 Amma canteens in the city were inaugurated on June 2, 2013. The eleventh one at Madurai Government Rajaji Hospital was inaugurated on February 12, 2014. Those at K.Pudur, Santhapettai, Thirupparankundram and Melavasal have ISO certification. Between June 2, 2013 and May 23, 2015, these canteens catered to nearly 58, 52, 575 people in the city limits, he said.

The corporation has spent Rs 9.57 crore on the canteens. The returns from sales amounted to Rs 2.55 crore and the excess amount of Rs 7.02 crore was spent out of the corporation general fund, the mayor said.

The new canteen will be a boon to poor and marginalised people, especially to hundreds of load men working in the warehouse, he said. Four of the 11 canteens have ISO certification and he hoped the rest of the canteens also will achieve the same standard in a short time.

To benefit the poor and needy people residing in slum areas, daily - wage worker, auto drivers and elders, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu has made an announcement to open "Amma Unavagam" to provide hygienic food at subsidised price. The Greater Chennai Corporation has opened 293 Amma Unavagams at different locations and 7 Amma Unavagams in Government hospitals, totally 300 Amma Unavagams are running successfully. The price list in Amma Unavagam is that one idly for '1, pongal for '5, variety rice for '5, curd rice for '3 and in the evening 2 chapattis with dhal for '3 are provided to benefit the poor and needy.

Till 18.07.2016, 31.81 crore Idlies, 12.49 crore variety rice and 15.27 crore chapattis have been sold through Amma Unavagams. Through these Amma Unavagams approximately 3 lakh poor people are benefitting every day. This project programme in the world and is also considered as the driving force for future socio-economic developments especially among the people living below poverty line. Remaining 107 Amma Unavagams will be opened by October 2016.

Strategy of Amma Unavagam

The outlets are open between 7 A.M and 9 P.M and serve three meals a day with a limited menu of steaming hot south Indian cuisine prepared and served by SHG members in a hygienic manner. The menu offered is nutritious and healthy. Another key feature of Amma Unavagam is that the food served is to be consumed in the outlet itself with no take away allowed thus preventing the possibility of the low cost food being resold outside the outlets.

Table: 2 Personal Details

S.No.	Particulars		No. of Respondents	%	Total %
1.	Age	Below 25 yrs	33	11	100
		25-35 yrs	36	12	
		35-45 yrs	79	26	
		45-55 yrs	102	34	
		55 yrs & above	50	17	
2	Gender	Male	268	89	100
		Female	32	11	
3.	Marital Status	Married	244	81	100
		Unmarried	56	19	
4.	Monthly Income	Below Rs.5000	100	33	100
		Rs.5000-10000	150	50	
		Rs.10000-15000	35	12	
		Rs.15000and above	15	5	

Inference

From the above table, it is clearly evident that most of the respondents belong to the age group between 25 to 45 years, 89 % are male, 81% are married and most of the respondents’ income level is between Rs.5,000 - 15,000.

Table 3 Awareness of the Respondents towards the Low Price Level at Amma Unavagam

Particulars	No. of Respondents	%
Fully aware	261	87%
Partly aware	22	7%
Somewhat aware	15	5%
Not at all aware	2	1%
Total	300	100%

Inference

From the table it is evident that 87% of the respondents are fully aware about the low price level at Amma Unavagam.

Food Prices

An important offshoot of *Amma Unavagam* has been in curbing high prices charged by private food vendors/canteens in the city and halting the food inflation. This was expressed by many low income customers interviewed by the author. Besides, many of the private restaurants were compelled to revise their prices or were seen offering discounts in kind (for instance, additional side dish) to retain existing customers.

Table 4 Opinion towards the Sufficient Quantity of Food Provided at Amma Unavagam at the Lowest Price

Particulars	No. of Respondents	%
Agree	270	89%
Not Opinion	24	8%
Disagree	6	3%
Total	300	100%

Inference

The above table shows that 89% of the respondents agree that sufficient quantity of food is being provided at Amma Unavagam

Customer Perceptions and Satisfaction

During the survey of *Amma Unavagam* canteens, the researcher found the canteens milling with customers ranging from school children, daily wage earners, abandoned old people to low salaried employees in small and medium enterprises like delivery boys, sales staff, casual labourers, and coolies. A cross section of reactions revealed high customer satisfaction in getting cooked food at such low prices. More importantly, the customers found *Amma Unavagam* has been a boon to them in the face of their low incomes and spiralling prices. After the launch of *Amma Unavagam* canteens, they perceived that they have been able to eat reasonably balanced and healthy food served hot in a neat and hygienic manner by the SHG women who run and manage these canteens. Some low income internal migrant employees perceived that their out of pocket expenses on food has reduced quite a bit thus allowing them to save a bit more and send money to their families. Some educated customer appreciated Amma Unavagam canteen for its ‘women oriented employees.’ Finally the overall sense of satisfaction of Amma Unavagam intervention was rated with thumbs up sign by nearly all those met by the researcher.

Table: 5 Opinion towards the Preparation of Food in hygienic Manner

Particulars	No. of Respondents	%
Agree	202	67%
Partially agree	47	16%
Don’t agree	51	17%
Total	300	100%

Inference

67% of the respondents agree that foods are being prepared in hygienic manner at Amma Unavagam.

Table: 6 Opinion towards the “Good” Taste of Food Types Provided at Amma Unavagam

Particulars	No. of Respondents	%
Good	121	40%
Average	151	50%
Poor	28	10%
Total	300	100%

Inference

50% of the respondents opine that taste of the foods at Amma Unavagam is average.

Table 7 Opinion of the Respondents towards the Response and Hospitality Shown by the Employees of Amma Unavagam

Particulars	No. of Respondents	%
Excellent	60	20%
Good	134	45%
Average	96	32%
Poor	10	3%
Total	300	100%

Inference

Most of the Respondents state that the response and hospitality shown is good at Amma Unavagam.

Table 8 Whether Respondents are regularly to come on Amma Unavagam?

Particulars	No. of Respondents	%
Regularly	156	50%
Occasionally	24	20%
Not come	120	30%
Total	300	100%

Inference

50% state that they are loyal and regular to Amma Unavagam.

Among the three important Components of food security (viz., availability of food in the market, access to food through adequate purchasing power, and absorption of food

in the body), access to food at affordable price is a major problem for the urban poor. In this respect, the prices charged for the food served in these outlets is unusually low and are within the means of the urban poor. More importantly, the urban poor benefits greater because the prices charged is even lesser than what the poor require to buy per day as per the poverty threshold set by C.Rangarajan Committee on poverty estimates. Amma Unavagam scheme has demonstrated that the food served is both reasonably balanced and nutritious and reasonably priced facilitating the urban poor living below the poverty line to access food; thus lessening their food insecurity.

According to the National Family and Health Survey conducted in 2015, Indians still continue to struggle with BMI (body mass index) and anaemia. In states like Andhra Pradesh, 14.8% of men and 17.6% of women were found to be underweight. In Madhya Pradesh the numbers were 28.4% and 28.3%. “In India, nutrition is a big issue, low BMI is a concern even for adults. In such a scenario, a balanced wholesome meal is part of the state’s responsibility but it has to be done well to succeed,” says Dipa Sinha, a right to food campaigner and assistant professor at Ambedkar University, Delhi. She cites the example of Brazil’s popular restaurant and community kitchens that serves nutritious food at affordable costs. It is, however, not a simple matter of launching a subsidized food scheme. There are several other factors that need to be taken into account like the kind of food being served, the condition under which it is served and the overall hygiene of the place. One of the other advantages of the Amma Canteen is the employment it provides to a large number of women. “At a time when we are looking with worry at the declining number of women in the workforce in India, schemes like this are a great way to bring more women into the work-force,” says Sinha. Basanta Kumar Kar, chief executive of Coalition for Food and Nutrition Security (India), calls this “adding colour to the plate. It is not just about giving food to eat but meeting the body’s requirements also. Vegetables, lentils, rice, food grains integral to our diet are important if we want to combat India’s food issues.”

According to Kar, around 15% of India’s population is food-insecure. He is quoting from the report, The State of Food Insecurity in the World released in 2015 by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. “In India 194.6 million people are mal-nourished. Another big issue in India is anemia. More than 50% of women in the age group of 15-39 are anaemic and more than 20% men. When we talk about these schemes, we need to know this background,” says Kar. He is responding to concerns about schemes like these being populist in nature and a burden on the exchequer. In 2015, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India’s report on local bodies had

stated that the expenditure on Amma canteens crossed Rs100 crore in Chennai though the revenue continues to be far less than that amount. "These programmes are important because of the lifestyle, migration, job compulsions of people," says Kar. It is a point Sinha is in agreement with, taking it a step further. "In Chennai, children of domestic workers come to eat at these canteens. The mother doesn't have time to cook and instead of eating less healthy food, these canteens offer a great alternative."

Success of Amma Unavagam

Such has been the success of AMMA Unavagam that states like Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Andhra Pradesh have also started their own versions of subsidized food canteens. Now Karnataka too has announced the launch of Amma Unavagam in the state. In most states, the food that is served in these Unavagam is keeping in mind the local diet and preferences. So in Odisha, the canteens will serve dalma, a traditional lentil dish with vegetables. In Rajasthan, the Annapurna canteens list traditional fare like khichda, rice and dal on the menu. In Andhra Pradesh, Idli and curd rice can be found on the menu while in Delhi, the Aam Aadmi Canteen provides Roti, rice, dal and vegetables.

The nomenclature varies from state to state; so in Rajasthan it is the Annapurna Rios Yojana where breakfast is served for Rs5 and lunch for Rs8. In Madhya Pradesh, it is christened the Deendayal Canteen; in Andhra Pradesh, the NTR Anna Canteens and in Delhi, the Aam Aadmi canteens were launched in January where the state aims to provide a wholesome nutritious meal for Rs10. Whatever the names, the end objective is the same, to meet the nutrition requirements of the poor at a minimal rate in clean, hygienic surroundings. Karnataka has borrowed the idea of 'Amma Unavagam,' which were set up in Tamil Nadu during the tenure of former Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa. But the state's food and supplies minister UT Khader has said its service - called 'Indira' canteen - will be much better than the one that inspired it. Each portion of food served at these Unavagam is expected to weight around 300 to 450 grams. The food will be sold at subsidized rates, without any compromise on quality. The Karnataka government was in talks with ISKON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness), Bangalore, which runs one of the biggest midday-meal schemes in the state - Akshaya Patra.

Conclusion

The Amma Unavagam functions as any number of welfare or social security programmers. The money saved by switching to Amma Unavagam food can be thought of as a cash payment for the non-distorted consumption groups, as the meals are priced below the cost of production. But, is palatability the best allocator? In a subsidized meal program, it might be an efficient allocator when compared to formal registration for social security. Firstly, self-selection via palatability cuts administrative costs. Secondly, this method reduces inclusion or exclusion errors. Policymakers may simply set the wrong cut-offs for targeted programs. Further, targeting based on a single dimension, like income, may not reflect variance in costs of living or other individual circumstances. Thus, through the use of 'palatability', the programmed is more efficient than its alternatives. Many votaries of the scheme seem to be of the opinion that the better-off should self-select themselves out of the system so that the programmed would exclusively benefit those who need it the most. While this argument bears merit in the case of most universal in-kind transfers, Amma Unavagam is somewhat different. It is important to note that Amma Unavagam happens to be one site where many social barriers become irrelevant. This is because, in a highly stratified society like ours, any attempt at promoting joint eating has positive social effects. As a result, the calls for barring the better-off may not be in the best interest of anyone. In spite of its intended universality, problems still persist. Some legitimate criticisms have been voiced by common people. A number of individuals feel the programmer undercuts push-cart eateries and vegetable vendors. Many have said that the government is wrecking the economies of the small traders. There is also the issue of the government creating these canteens simply garner votes.

While the 'Gujarat Model' vs the 'Kerala Model' debate continues, the progress that Tamil Nadu has made on the socio-economic front has gained very little attention. Of course, this is just a putative assessment of welfares in the state, but Tamil Nadu's ability to combine economic

growth and pro-people welfare policies with success merits closer analysis. From this research, it is very clear that 'Amma Unavagam' has a great positive impact among the middle class people who are living in the Madurai city. Amma Unavagam scheme has demonstrated quite successfully in a short span of time. If the same strategy is continued or even improved, this scheme will create a great 'good will' on the government of Tamilnadu.

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