2.1 HISTORY OF MADURAI

2.2 MADURAI AND GANDHI

2.3 ADMINISTRATION

2.4 DEMOGRAPHICS

2.5 CITY ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING

2.6 ECONOMY

2.7 INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

2.8 PROFILE OF STUDY AREAS
**PROFILE OF MADURAI**

Madurai is situated on the banks of Vaigai River in Tamil Nadu, a southern Indian state and is known as the city of temples and festivals. It is the second largest city of Tamil Nadu and has a population in excess of 1.1 million. It is well known for the Meenakshi temple situated at the heart of the town which attracts tourists as well as pilgrims. The city is surrounded by small but prominent hills viz. Yanai malai, Nagamalai and Pasumalai. A teeming city is the hub of political activity in the state. It is often called the political capital of Tamil Nadu.

This old city was laid out around the temple with most of its streets running parallel to the walls of the temple. In essence, the city grew in concentric rectangles of bigger and bigger sizes as one moved away from the central temple. Each or these four streets are then named after the direction in which they lie. There are thus north, south, east and west streets in each rectangle.

Madurai has a rich cultural heritage passed on from the great Tamil era more than 2500 years old, and has been an important commercial centre even as early as 550 AD. The Madurai city profile is given in Table 2.1.1
2.1 HISTORY OF MADURAI

It is narrated in legend that Madurai was originally a forest known as Kadambavanam. One day, a farmer named Dhananjaya who was passing through the forest, saw Indra (The king of the gods), worshipping a swayambhu (self created Lingam) under kadamba tree. Dhananjaya, the farmer immediately reported this to King Kulasekara Pandya. Kulasekara Pandya cleared the forest and built a temple around the Lingam.

The Pandya King Kulasekaran built a temple, which would later be known as the Meenakshi Temple, and a city was soon planned with the temple as its centre, thus created a lotus shaped city around the temple. Legend has it that on the day the city was to be named, as Lord Shiva blessed the land and its people, divine nectar was showered on the city from his matted locks. This city was henceforth known as Madhurapuri, meaning "The Land of Divine Nectar". According to a different theory, the name Madurai is actually a transformation of the Tamil word "Marudhai" (மருதை), which means a fertile agricultural land with...
alluvial soil. Many natives continue to refer to the city as Marudhai. Madurai is also referred to as 'Then Madurai' or south Mathura, 'Vada Madurai' being Mathura in North India.

Madurai has a rich mythological background. It is said that Lord Shiva himself performed sixty-four miracles called Thiruvilaiyadals. The city has been called the "Athens of the East" because of its great architecture and meticulous planning, comparable to that of the Greek capital. Madurai is Tamil Nadu's oldest city and one of India's oldest cities, with a history dating back to the Sangam period of the pre-Christian era. It was home to the ancient Tamil Sangam (The Academy of Tamil Learning), the literary conclave that produced the first Tamil epic Silappathikaaram and other masterpieces of Tamil literature. Megasthenes, the ancient Greek diplomat and envoy to India in 3rd century BC, had written in glowing terms about it in Indica, his celebrated account on India. But Madurai was to reach its heights of glory in the hands of the Cholas, and finally the Pandyas in the 13th century. After all, the Pandyas were the ones that made the city their capital, and built the Meenakshi Temple, which has always been the greatest attraction of the city. The city flourished under Pandya rule when it was a major trading hub with trading contacts with Greece, Rome, and Middle Eastern countries.
Madurai flourished until 10th century AD when it was captured by Cholas, the archrivals of the Pandyas. The Cholas ruled Madurai from 920 AD until the beginning of the 13th century.

In 1223 AD, Pandyas regained their kingdom and Madurai once again became prosperous. Pandyan Kings patronized Tamil Language in a big way. During their period, many masterpieces were written. Silapaathikaram, the great epic in Tamil was written based on the story of Kannagi who burnt Madurai enraged at the injustice caused to her husband Kovalan.

It was a fall from eternal glory to deep abyss for Madurai when the Tamil Kingdoms disintegrated, and its wealth was plundered by the ravaging armies of Delhi’s Muslim Rulers. In April 1311, Malik Kafur, the general of Alauddin Khilji who was then the ruler of Delhi, reached Madurai and raided and robbed the city of precious stones, jewels, and other rare treasures. This led to subsequent raids by other Muslim Sultans. In 1323, the Pandyan kingdom including Madurai became a province of the Delhi sultanate under the Tughlaks.

In 1371, the Muslim rule of Madurai was put to an end by the Vijayanagar dynasty of Hampi who annexed the city to their Kingdom. The Vijayanagar Rulers had the practice of appointing Governors to administer their distant territories. The Governors appointed to rule Madurai were
called Nayaks (or Naiks), The Nayaks paid a fixed amount annually to the Vijayanagar rulers and it was during their rule that the city regained some of its past glory. After the death of Krishna Deva Raya (the stalwart king of the Vijayanagar Empire) in 1530 AD, the Nayaks became independent and ruled the territories under their control.

The Nayak Rulers, Thirumalai Nayak, in particular, gave a good boost to the architectural legacy of the city by creating new structures and expanding the existing landmarks in and around the city. The Raja Gopuram (The Main Tower) of the Meenakshi Temple, Puthu Mandapam (The New Mansion) and the Thirumalai Nayak Palace are living examples of his unparalleled contribution to the city's architecture.

On Thirumalai Nayak's death in 1659, the kingdom began to break up. His successors were weak rulers and invasions of Madurai recommenced. Shivaji Bhonsle, the great Maratha Ruler, invaded the south; and so did Chikka Deva Raya of Mysore and other Muslim Rulers, resulting in chaos and instability all around. The one redeeming feature of this period of confusion and anarchy was the regency of Rani Mangammal, who stood up against these invasions. Though her rule lasted no more than two decades, she will forever be cherished by the people of Madurai for the prudence,
determination and courage she exhibited during a particularly troublesome period, with very little support from outside.

With the fall of the Arcot Nawab, Madurai soon started slipping into the hands of the British East India Company. Lord Welleslley, after defeating the King of Mysore, Tippu sultan, captured his areas and annexed them to Madras forming the Madras Presidency. In 1751, the East India Company came to hold the Carnatic Nawab Mohammed Ali. Taking advantage of his weakness, the British appointed George Procter as the first collector of Madurai and by 1801, the whole of Madurai district, which then was made up of Dindigul, Palani, Kodaikkanal, Ramanathapuram and Sivagangai was brought under the control of British East India Company.

2.2 MADURAI AND GANDHI

Madurai has a unique place in the history of the freedom movement. It marked an important event in the life of the Mahatma, during his visit to Madurai, Gandhiji, stayed in the residence of Sri Ramji Kalyanjii, 175- A, West Masi Street, who had respectfully invited him to his houses, on 21.09.1921. During his stay there, he had observed that the farmers and poor people of the place dressed only in a small lion cloth/ dhoti around the waist. They were shivering with cold while Gandhiji with his long turban, kurtha ad dhotis was quite comfortable. At night he was greatly agitated and worried about this stark disparity.

So overnight he took a decision that he would be a model to everyone and would dress in a simple manner just like the peasants and poor people he witnessed on his journey to Madurai and he changed his dressing habits from the next day itself. On the morning of 22-09-1921 (the next day) everybody was shocked to see him in a lion cloth a dress that Gandhiji
adopted for the rest of his life. At the meeting in Madurai (The place is now called Gandhi Pottal) at 0700hrs, he explained to the world the reason for his new mode of dress. Madurai thus has the unique distinction of changing the dressing habits of Gandhiji forever; a plaque at the railway station records this for posterity.

It was in Madurai again that the doors of great Meenakshi Amman Temple were thrown open to Harijans, thus winning a historic battle against “Untouchability”. Gandhiji visited the Temple in the year 1946 along with Harijans as a triumph for the cause of Harijan Temple Entry. After independence the Gandhi Memorial Trust allocated Rupees Ten Million from the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi for the purposes of setting up Gandhi Memorial Museums in seven places in India associated with the life of Gandhi. The Gandhi Memorial Museums at Madurai has been built and organized by the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi.

The building that houses the Gandhi Memorial Museum at Madurai is the historic Tamukkam Palace of Rani Mangammal of Nayak dynasty built about 1670 A.D. In the later years this was under the occupation of the Nawab of Carnatic, the East India Company and a few others Finally the palace remained for many years the official residence of the District Collector of Madurai it was in the year 1955 that the palace with about 13
acres of land was gifted by the Tamil Nadu state Government, to the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi for the purpose of housing the Gandhi Memorial Museum. Besides major renovation to the original building, a complete new wing was constructed for the library was also several other building and an open-air theatre.

The Museum has the following sections:

- “India Fights for Freedom” a special exhibition with 265 illustrations, depicting the history of the Freedom Movement.
- An Exhibition of Handicrafts donated by there States of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra and Kerala.
- Pictorial Gallery, that presents a visual biography of Gandhiji. It contains photos, paintings, sculptures, manuscripts, quotations, and some original articles used by Gandhiji.
- “The Hall of Relics” that contains some of Gandhiji’s personal belongings (originals and replicas).
- The Khadi and Village Industries Section in the ground floor, where Exhibits of some of the Village Industries, which Gandhiji revived are displayed.
- Big open-air theatre with a capacity to accommodate about 8,000 people.
“Gandhi Kudir” – a replica of Gandhiji’s hut in Sevagram. Library, which contains books on the cultural background of India, books on and by Gandhiji and allied subjects. 18,000 volumes, Photostat copies of about 27,000 letters of Gandhiji and 62 reels of Microfilms are some of the very important and valuable part of the collections in the library.

2.3 ADMINISTRATION

In the post-Independence era, Madurai District, headquartered at Madurai City, was one of the largest districts of Tamil Nadu. It was also the administrative headquarters of the neighboring Ramanathapuram District. However, in 1984, the then huge Madurai district was bifurcated into Madurai and Dindigul Districts for administrative convenience. Again, in 1997, it was bifurcated into Madurai and Theni Districts. Like all other districts of India, it is administered by a District Collector, a person from the Indian Administrative Service. The major city nearby are Thiruvananthapuram, Tuticorin, Coimbatore etc.

Presently Madurai district has two Revenue divisions, seven Revenue Taluks and thirteen Panchayat unions. It has fifteen Town Panchayats and four hundred and thirty one village panchayats and six hundred and sixty nine Revenue Villages. This is shown in Table 2.3.1 & Table 2.3.2.
The Madurai Corporation (since 1971) the second oldest in Tamil Nadu has an elected Mayor and 72 Councillors, each representing a ward. Madurai district has 15 representatives in the Tamil Nadu State Legislative Assembly and two Members in the Lok Sabha, the House of Representatives of the Indian Parliament.

The recent attraction is the Madurai Bench of Madras High Court in Ulaganeri, Madurai, the only location outside of Chennai to have such a setup.

2.4 DEMOGRAPHICS

The population of Madurai City is about 1.1 million. There are 976 females per 1,000 males. The literacy rate stands at 79%, well above the national average.

Tamil is the lingua franca of Madurai and is understood by almost everyone. Tamil spoken in Madurai is relatively pure, and devoid of influences from other languages, in direct contrast with Madras Tamil. Sourashtra is spoken by members of the transmigrant Sourashtra community which maintains a significant presence in the city. Other languages such as Telugu, Hindi and English are also spoken in pockets of the city.
2.5 CITY ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING

The City of Madurai, was originally built around the Meenakshi temple. Rectangular streets named after the Tamil months of Aadi, Chithirai and Maasi surround the temple, symbolizing the structure of the cosmos. Though there are numerous other temples in Madurai, which is why it is known as the "Temple City", the Meenakshi temple's architectural splendor outdoes all of them. The Temple Complex in itself is breathtaking, given the fort-like walls pierced with lofty Gopurams (Towers), over an area of 640,000 square feet (60,000 m²). The gopurams are adorned with figures of Hindu Gods, animals and mythological creatures. Upon entering the temple, one gets to view the spectacular "Potraamaraikkulam", meaning the Golden Lotus Pond, surrounded by corridors depicting murals from the "Thiruvilaiyaadal Puraanam". The "Ayirangaal Mandapam" (Thousand Pillared Hall) is another exhibit of impressive craftsmanship whose pillars feature sculptural work beyond comparison. Madurai has many other famous temples. Some of them are: Thirupparankundram, Pazhamuthircholai, two of the six temple shrines of Lord Murugan (son of Lord Shiva according to Tamil Mythology); Azhagarkovil, a prominent Vaishnavaite shrine; and Aappudaiyaar temple and Koodalazhagar temple.
Present-day Madurai is a sprawling Metropolis, extending on both sides of the Vaigai. The parts of the city adjoining the temple in the southern banks of Vaigai are bustling commercial hubs where one can find everything from basic necessities to electronic gadgets. As a result, they are congested and offer little scope for further expansion. However, across the river, is where one would find the chic, modern and young face of Madurai with its relatively spacious roads and structures with plenty of room for expansion and development. The Madurai Collectorate, Madurai District Court, Madurai Bench of Madras High Court, Madurai Corporation Building, Madurai Race Course, Government Offices, Schools, Colleges and Companies are located in the northern part of the city.

Madurai is well connected by air, rail and road. The railway station is the busiest in South India, with trains from every major city in India, and has computerized reservation counters. Madurai Division has repeatedly got the award for best maintained station in Southern Railway.

Madurai has five bus stands, which cater to the needs of the people: Centralized Bus terminus at Maattuthavani (North), Palanganatham (South), Arapalayam (West), Periyar (Central) and Anna Bus stand (East). The major bus stand is at Maattuthavani, from which many interstate buses and tourist buses operate round the clock.
Madurai Airport is approximately 13 kilometers from Madurai Railway station. It is a small airport which connects the city with Chennai and Mumbai. Jet Airways, Air Deccan, and Indian Airlines are the major operators.

2.6 ECONOMY

Madurai's economy is chiefly agrarian. Textiles and tourism contribute significantly to the local economy. Madurai is famous for "Sungudi", a fine-count, zari-bordered, fabric painted cotton saree. However, in the past few years, overt dependence on monsoons, and international competition and cheaper imports has dented the performance of agriculture and textile sectors respectively.

Madurai has a thriving flower industry, Jasmine in particular. "Madurai Malli" Jasmine is well known across TamilNadu for its enchanting fragrance. The cultivation of jasmine is done at the foothills of Kodaikanal near Madurai, with its red soil which retains water. The flowers are in good demand in other parts of India like Mumbai, Bangalore, Delhi, Kochi, Thiruvananthapuram, Kolkata and Hyderabad. They are also exported to Middle East and Singapore where they are mostly used in perfumes.
2.7 INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

Madurai has long been a laggard in industrial development as compared to other parts of Tamil Nadu and India. The only major industries that are in Madurai are TVS, India, manufacturer of automobile and automobile parts; TVS Srichakra, manufacturer of tyres and tubes for two wheelers; Fenner, manufacturer of solid woven PVC conveyor belting; and Madura Coats, manufacturer of textiles. Honeywell, a diversified technology and manufacturing company, serving customers worldwide with aerospace products and services; control technologies for buildings, homes and industry; automotive products; turbochargers; and specialty materials has also quite recently started operation in this temple city.

The State and Union Governments, acknowledging the fact that there has been little industrial development in Madurai district, have adopted a multi-pronged approach to give a much-needed fillip to industrial growth.

The Government has set up industrial estates in different parts of the city to push industrial growth in identified key areas, thus building entrepreneurs and creating new jobs. The following industrial estates are currently operational:

1. SIDCO Industrial Estate, K.Pudur
2. SIDCO Industrial Estate, Kappalur

3. Hoisery Estate, Urangaanpatti

4. Electrical and Electronics Industrial Estate, Kappalur

5. Automobile Industrial Estate, Kappalur

To reduce unemployment and to promote equitable growth of small-scale industries in all areas, District Industries Centers (DIC) was formed throughout the country. DIC's primary objective is to provide aspiring and budding entrepreneurs all necessary assistance. In Madurai, it was formed in 1979. DIC conducts workshops periodically to motivate students of Engineering Colleges, Polytechnics and Industrial Training Institutes and how they can put their entrepreneurial skills to work. DIC also organizes programs to promote entrepreneurship among women.

2.8 PROFILE OF STUDY AREAS

Three rural blocks viz Madurai West, Madurai East and Thirupparankundram and one urban area viz Madurai Corporation are the areas chosen for the study. The rural blocks profiles are given below.

1) THIRUPPARANKUNDRAM

Madurai South taluk started on 1.10.1967. This taluk consists only one blocks namely, Thirupparankundram. It consists of 80 revenue villages
under Seven Firkas. It consists of Thirupparankundram panchayat union & having 4 Town Panchayats, namely Thirupparankundram, Avaniapuram, Thirunagar & Havipatti. Figure 2.8.1 shows the Map of Thirupparankundram panchayat union - village panchayats. Arulmigu Subramaniasamy temple is at Thirupparankundram one of the Arupadaiveedu for Lord Muruga, Hindu’s worshiping place in this block. In this block, the Airport at Perungudi is transporting Jasmine Flower to Foreign Countries Daily and it is the Main Airport for Southern Region. The Madurai Kamaraj University is situated at Vadapalanji on the route of Madurai- Cumbum highways road. The Mathagu Anai at Virahanur, a falls in Pulluthu village are the important tourist places in this Block.

2) MADURAI WEST

Madurai West Block is situated in the Northern side of Madurai city. This block is in Madurai North Taluk and it is surrounded by Madurai Corporation in the south east, Thirupparankundram in the south, Vadipatti Block in the West, Alanganallur Block in the Northwest, Natham Block of Dindigul Dist, in the North. Figure 2.8.2 shows the map of Madurai West Panchayat union – Village panchayats. Madurai East Block is in the Eastern Side there is a “WATER THEME PARK, ATHISAYAM” IN Samayanallur Village and Hawavalley Park in Kadavur Village, People enjoy these parks
as a good picnic spot. The Statue of “TAMILANNAI”, installed in front of the Thamukkam Ground in Madurai City.

3) MADURAI EAST

Madurai East Block is one of the biggest blocks in Madurai District. It is located in the North Eastern direction of Madurai city. It consists of 106 revenue villages and 39 village panchayats. Figure 2.83 shows the map of Madurai East Panchayat Union – Village Panchayats. Agriculture is the main occupation of the people. It has one Agriculture College which is located at the Centre place of this Block. It was started in the year 1965. A Home Science College is also functioning in this campus. This block is having one self financing Engineering College at Veerabanjan village, One Arts & Science College, Two Polytechnics, Two ITI’s Two Hr. Sec. Schools and Five High Schools 7 Metric Schools, 2 Metric Hr Sec Schools, 1 1.S.C.E Schools. One pharmacy and physiotherapy college is also functioning in this block.

The famous “Pandi Muneeswarar” temple is located at Madurai Ring Road. Thousands of devotees come to this temple for worshiping especially on every Friday and Sunday. Another one “Vainava-CHAKKARATHALWAR” temple is located at Thirumohur Village. In this block is one hill at Othakkadai which seems to be and elephant. Hence the
village Othakkadai called in the name of “YANAMALAI OTHAKKADAI”
The photo of the same is exhibited in the open front page of this Hand Book.

A Bench of Madras High Court has started the Judicial Service in this block at Ulaganery Village near Othakadai. Elevation of this building seems to be a palace of Chittenad Style. Stainless Steel household utensils are manufactured in small scale at Othakadai village. Here is one SIDCO near the village Uranganpatti in which 50 units are in operation out of 150 units constructed. These are under the maintenance of the “MAHIA” (Madurai Hosiery Industries Association).