2.1 INTRODUCTION

This part of the study includes general profile of the district, profile of industries in Tirunelveli district. Further, this chapter also deals with the socio-economic profile of the sample women entrepreneurs and their enterprises. Percentage analysis was used to determine whether there is any relationship between the sample women entrepreneurs’ socio-economic profile and their level of entrepreneurship.

2.2 GENERAL PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA

The usefulness of any research study can be fully appreciated only when the results are studied with the geographic features and demographic characteristics. Hence, an attempt is made to present a profile of the study area.

In this section details regarding the historical importance, location, population, infrastructural facilities and the practice of industries relating to the study area, namely, Tirunelveli district are presented.

2.2.1 THE HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE OF TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT

Tirunelveli, meaning “The Sacred Paddy Hedge” has derived its name after the story in which Vedasarma, a devotee of Lord Shiva received his blessings. The Puranic version goes that one Vedasarma, a staunch devotee of Siva, on his pilgrimage from the North to the South was invited by Lord Siva, in his dream, to his abode on the banks of the sacred river Tamiraparani. In deference, the delighted devotee came to the place, bathed at ‘Sindupoondurai’ and worshipped the Lord. He stayed there with his family and did his daily prayer by offering rice cooked out of the freshly harvested paddy. Once, there was a famine which forced the devotee to collect paddy by begging for carrying on his routine prayer. One day he spread the paddy to dry under the sun before
the Lord and went for his ablution in Tamiraparani. He prayed to the Lord for rain which he thought would be a remedy for the famine. His prayer was answered and when he was bathing, a thunderstorm broke out and it rained heavily. Vedasarma rushed to the place where he had spread the paddy. He witnessed a miracle. Despite rain around the area, no drop of rain fall on the paddy that he had spread and the paddy escaped getting soaked. The area where the paddy was spread was well under the bright sunlight. Since that day, according to Purana, the town was called Tirunelveli. Nestling in the Western Ghats is Mount Pothigai, where the famous Tamil Saint, Agasthiar lived prior to the Sangam Age. There is a Puranic story, which states that the entire population of the South migrated to North to witness the wedding of Lord Shiva with Parvathi at Mount Kailasa, thus creating some sort of imbalance. To rectify this, Saint Agasthiar was directed by Shiva to go to the South, to maintain the old balance. Tamil literature points to Mount Pothigai as the birth-place of the Tamil Language. Saint Agasthiar is believed to have compiled a grammar text for Tamil. It is often said that it is in Tirunelveli District alone that Tamil is spoken grammatically and clearly by the public even today.

Pioneering efforts to attain freedom from British domination were made by Puli Thevan, Palayakaran of Nelkattum Sevel and Kattabomman of Panchalamkurichi. The composite Tirunelveli district (Present Tirunelveli- and Thoothukudi Districts) has been associated with the freedom struggle from the very beginning. In Maniyachi Railway Station, which lies in at Ottapidrarm Taluk a young man Vanchinathan shot at Mr.Ash, the then English Collector of Tirunelveli District and them committed suicide. The Great poet Subramania Bharathi, born at Ettayapuram composed many patriotic songs in Tamil, which kindled the spirit of independence in the minds of the people. The famous patriot V.O.Chidambaram Pillai, launched the first Indian ship and he was
imprisoned for life at the Coimbatore Jail, where he was made to pull “Chekku” (Oil Extractor). He is affectionately referred to as “Chekkizhutha Chemmal”.

2.2.2 LOCATION

Tirunelveli district covers an area of 6,823 sq.kms. It is in the south eastern part of Tamil Nadu and is triangular in shape. It lies between 08o 08’ and 09o 23’ of northern latitudes and 77o 09’ and 77o 54’ of eastern longitudes.\(^1\) It is bound by Virudhunagar district in the north, Kerala in the west, Kanyakumari district and Gulf of Mannar in the south, and Thoothukudi district in the east. The district comprises, Tirunelveli, Cheranmahadevi and Tenkasi revenue divisions, 11 taluks, 19 blocks and 628 revenue villages.

2.2.3 WORKING POPULATION

The distribution of population, category wise in Tirunelveli district is presented in Table 2.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No</th>
<th>Particulars</th>
<th>Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Total geographical area in hectares</td>
<td>6,82,308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Population (2001 census)</td>
<td>28,01,194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a) Male</td>
<td>13,72,082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Female</td>
<td>14,29,112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Cultivators</td>
<td>2,15,257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) Agricultural Labourers</td>
<td>3,49,069(^1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Number of households</td>
<td>6,88,253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Average Size of family</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Unpublished Records of District Statistical office, Tirunelveli

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\(^1\) Report from the Director, Geological Survey of India, Operations, Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry, Madras, Dated 22\(^{nd}\) September 1993.
It is found from Table 3.1 that there were 6,88,253 households in the district during 2000-2001. The 2001 census recorded the total population to be 28,01,194 persons (13,72,082 male and 14,29,112 female). The average size of the family in the district was four. Of the total working force, 2,51,257 were cultivators and 3,49,069 agricultural labourers.

### 2.2.4 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

The demographic characteristics of Tirunelveli district are given in Table 2.2

#### TABLE 2.2

**DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT – 2001 CENSUS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Area in sq.kms.</td>
<td>6,823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Population</td>
<td>28,01,194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Density of population per sq.km.</td>
<td>411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Literacy rate in percentage</td>
<td>68.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Total workers</td>
<td>11,80,369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Marginal workers</td>
<td>74,326</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Unpublished records of District Statistical Office, Tirunelveli

Table 3.2 shows that according to the census 2001, the total population of Tirunelveli district were 28,01,194 persons. The density of population per square km was 411 and the literacy rate was 68.44.
2.3 PROFILE OF INDUSTRIES

2.3.1 TINY INDUSTRIES

Agricultural products, pottery, smithy, carpentry, construction activity, and wood carving were the every day occupations for the artisans who where by birth, more or less bound to pursue the vocations. Weaving, especially of cotton cloth, was another old time industry. Other industries in the district are safety matches industry, bell metal, brass vessels, lacquerware industries, bullock cart manufacturing, basket making, korai mat weaving etc. the noteworthy feature of the district is the concentration of certain types of industries in a particular area like the bell metal industry in vagaikulam, korai mat weaving units pathamadai and veeravanallur, lacquerware manufacture in Ambassamudram, safety matches production in SankaranKoil, palmyra products manufacture in Naguneri and Radhapuram taluks, bricks units in Ambasamudram and Tenkasi Taluks, and cane furniture making and saw mills in shencottai and Tenkasi taluks. Some of the old time industries vanished due to severe competition from the mechanized industries and change of techniques in manufacturing and the development of research in industrial designs and technologies. Poor partrongage also led to the fall in demand which finally led to the decline of these industries. The ordinary artisans, carpenters, goldsmiths, blacksmiths and potters lived in most villages and their work was much the same as in other districts.²

Scientific development and technological advancement brought innovation, invention and improvement in the consumer durables. This trend has brought a change in the attitude of consumers who played a vital role causing the decay of certain industries like those producing bell metals, brass articles, bullock carts etc. Another

reason for the decay of certain industries was the low percentage of profit margin. This resulted in the decline of certain industries like basket making, manufacturing of agricultural implements with primitive technology and so on.

a) BRASS WORKS

Brass vessels are made out of plates of metal, which are heated and beaten out on the anvil; sections are welded together and reduced to their final shape by a process of gentle hammering. Hindu idols are produced at Vagaikulam; elsewhere the productions are chiefly domestic vessels.

b) BELL METAL INDUSTRY

Bell metal vessels are made in various parts of the district. The industry is mainly found in places like Vagaikulum and Mannarkoil in Ambasamudram taluk, Tirunelveli and Narasinganallur in Tirunelveli taluk and Sankarankoil. The products of Vagaikulum, which include lamps, temple bells and domestic vessels, are the best known and the demand for them is brisk.

c) LACQUERWARE

This craft is practiced mainly at Ambasamudram. The craft came into being about a century back. The craft is being practiced by a separate set of people locally called Marakadasalkkarar. Mainly toys for children, flower vases, kumkum boxes, bowls, pintrays are being produced.

d) WOOD CARVING

The style of wood carving in this part of the state is entirely different from that of other carvings. The history of the craft dates back to the era in which bullock carts
were first introduced. The panel type of carving is done with ordinary carpentry tools and they have their own traditional beauty depicting inherited designs mostly floral or animated.

e) BASKET MAKING

The palmyra grows in abundance in Nanguneri and Radhapuram Taluks. Its tender leaves are used for making baskets. It is pursued by women in the villages in the south of Nanguneri taluk. The tender leaves are cut into strips and dried in the sun and are often dried to a variety of colours. Fancy articles, such as models of processional cars and animals are also made. In many villages in south Nanguneri, Nadar and Muslim women make nice fancy basket suitable for betel and tobacco boxes out of tender palmyra leaves.

f) COTTON WEAVING

The weaving of cotton cloths was the hereditary employment of kaikkilaiyars, pattasalaiyars and pattunulkarars and formed the chief occupation of a large number of muslims and of some other communities. Wide streets lined with double rows of trees to give shade to the workers at the long line of outstretched warp were the familiar signs of a settlement of weavers. The main centres were Ambasamudram, Kallidaikurichi, Viravanallur, Pattamadai, Pottalpudur and many neighbouring villages in Ambasamudram taluk. The other chief centres were Tenkasi, Kadaianallur, Tirunelveli, Palayamkottai, Melapalayam and Eruvadi (Nanguneri Taluk).

g) SILK WEAVING AND LOOMS

Cloths of pure silk were not woven in the district. The pattasalaiyars and pattunulkarars made clothes for women out of a mixture of silk and cotton. The looms
used for weaving of all kinds were mostly of the old indigenous pattern. Flying shuttles were rarely used in the looms in the important centres of Ambasamudram taluk since they damage the warp. One or two machine looms, in which the whole business was done by treadles were found in ambasamudram taluk.

h) MAT MAKING

Palmyra mat weaving: Mats of varying degrees of coarseness are made from the leaves of palmyara in almost all parts of the district where that tree is plentiful. The manufacture of palmyra articles forms a regular employment for the women folk of the tapper families during the off-season.

Grass mat weaving: Mats of korai grass are made mostly muslims in Pattamadai, Alwarkurichi, Veeravanallur, Harikesavanallur and Kalakkadu. For ordinary mats, Korai is obtained from the beds of tanks and channels in the district, after getting the permission from the government. It is dyed to a variety of colours and woven by hand on to a warp, which is usually made of aloe fibre. The finished articles are sent in large quantities to Pettai, where they are distributed within the district and other parts of the State and Country. A mat of very superior composition and considerable reputation is produced at Pattamadai. Its manufacture is the monopoly of some Muslim families even to-day.

2.3.2 SMALL, MEDIUM AND LARGE SCALE INDUSTRIES

The district had a total of 47 large and the medium scale industries in 2004-2005 of which 35 units were under the private sector, one unit under the co-operative sector and the remaining under the corporate sector. A description of some of the large and medium scale industries is given below:
a) CEMENT INDUSTRY

The Indian Cements Limited: It is one of the oldest cement plants in Tamil Nadu under the private sector large scale industry which started its commercial production in August 1949 with a licensed capacity of about 4.00 lakhs tones per year and it steadily increased the capacity over the years to 10.00 lakh tones per annum.

b) CHEMICAL INDUSTRY

Industrial Chemicals and Monomers Limited: This medium sized plant at Sankar Nagar manufactures chemicals from the year 1952 with a capacity of 300 tonnes per annum. The installed capacity was raised to 12000 tonnes per annum.

c) PAPER INDUSTRIES

Sun Paper Mills Limited: this Private sector medium scale paper industry was established in the year 1964 at Vadakku Ariyanayagipuram near Cheranmahadevi about 20 kms from Tirunelveli. Newsprint paper is the main product manufactured in the industry. The initial capacity of 15000 tonnes per annum was increased to 22000 tonnes.

d) FLOUR MILLS

Kovilpatti Lakshmi Roller Flour Mills Ltd: It is a medium scale private sector company established in the year 1964 at Gangaikondan, 16 kms from Tirunelveli with the installed capacity of 42000 tonnes. This plant produces maida, sooji, atta and bran.
e) FABRICS

Madura Fabrics: It is one of the reputed mills in spinning and textiles and it is a division of Coats Vyella India Limited. More than a century old industry under the private sector, it was established in the year 1880. It is functioning in collaboration with coats Vyella Pvt Ltd. It is engaged in spinning, weaving and processing. The spinning unit has 54800 spindles. The quantity of yarn produced per day is 19137 kg.

Balaramavarma Textile Mills: It was started in the year 1948 in Shencottai as a Public Ltd., Company. Later it was nationalized in the year 1974 and was taken over by the National Textile Corporation in 1976. The mill is manufacturing blended yarn.

Gitanjali Mills Ltd: It was established in the year 1956 at Gomathipuram in Sankarankoil. It is a medium scale spinning factory.

A number of medium scale spinning factories are functioning in different parts of Tirunelveli district. They are Gomathy mills, Viravanallur, Sankar Spinning Mills Private Ltd., Sankarnagar, Karpagam Spinners Private Ltd., Vagaikulam near Thiruppanikarisalkulam, Sivaskumar Spinning Mills (P) Ltd., Sankar Nagar, Syed Cotton Mills (P) Ltd., Moontradaippu, Co-operative Spinning Mills at Pettai, Sundaram Textiles Limited, Nanguneri, Nellai Cotton Mills Limited, Sankar Nagar, Sri Ganapathy Mills, Sankar Nagar and Thirumalai Mills at Gandhi Nagar.

f) SUGAR INDUSTRY

Dharani Sugars and Chemicals Limited: This large scale industry at Narayanapuram, 9 kms from Sivagiri was established in the year 1989 by non-resident
Indians. The initial installed crushing capacity of the industry was 2500 tonnes a day and subsequently the crushing capacity increased to 3000 tonnes a day.

g) MINERALS AND MINERAL BASED INDUSTRIES

Limestone, kankar, garnet and ilmenite are available in large quantities in the district. The kankar and limestone are used for the production of cement by M/s India Cements Ltd., Sankar Nagar and Tamil Nadu Cements Corporation Ltd., Alangulam in Virundhunagar district. There were 41 mining leases for limestone and kankar, and four leases for garnet granted by the Government.

h) HANDLOOM INDUSTRY

Handloom weaving is an ancient industry. The textile cottage industry includes cotton, silk, and bleaching, dyeing, finishing, hosiery, lace embroidery, silk reeling, silk twisting. It is the chief means of livelihood to people who entirely depend upon it. The chief classes among them were the Kakkallayars, Pattasalayars and Pattunulkarars.

2.3.3 INDUSTRIAL COOPERATIVE SOCIETIES

The Tirunelveli Weavers’ Co-operative Production and Sales Society Ltd., produces and sells yarns. The Kallidaikurichi Weavers’ Co-operative Production and Sales Society Limited produces bed sheets, pillow covers, lungies and dhoties. Valliammalpuram Industrial Weavers’ Co-operative Production and Sales Society produce sarees, dhoties and polyester fabrics.

The Sankarankoil Small Match Producers’ Service Industrial Co-operative Society Ltd., produces match boxes.
Thenpothai Potter’ Co-operative Cottage Industrial Society Ltd. Produces jars and toys in different varieties. The Urkad Tiles and Brick Workers’ Industrial Co-operative Society Limited manufactures roofing tiles, flooring tiles, ridge tiles, chimney tiles and gunlay bricks. Fine mud products such as waterpot, hundi, mud fridge for storing vegetables, mud tab and other varieties are made by Karukurchi potters’ Co-operative Cottage Industries Society Limited.

2.3.4 KHADI AND VILLAGE INDUSTRIES

The Khadi Village Commission has implemented programmes for the development of hand spinning and hand weaving, carpentry and blacksmithy, manufacture of methane gas from cow dung, hand made paper, pottery, processing of cereals, pulses and foot wear.

2.3.5 THE BELL INDUSTRIAL ESTATE

The Bell Industrial Estate was founded in the year 1952 as a tiny industry with a total employment of 20 persons and with a connected power load of 25 HP producing paper pins, paper clips and office staples. The unit has spread over more than 30 acres of land on the Tiruchendur - Thoothukudi highway. Later during the 1960’s another unit was started to produce safety pins exclusively. Another independent unit was started to produce steel wires of very fine diameter, both copper coated and Zinc plated. A few more units for producing fire works, knitting needles, concrete blocks, concrete pressure and non-pressure pipes and health care products like cotton buds were also set up in the estate during the 1980’s. The estate is a full-fledged composite unit producing the required capital machinery, raw materials and the end product. The total employment in the whole of the Bell Industrial Estate is more than 600 and the connected power load
has crossed 1500 HP. About 70 per cent of the total employees are women. Pollution control methods have been adopted in effluent treatment.

2.4 THE DISTRICT INDUSTRIES CENTRE, TIRUNELVELI

The Tirunelveli District Industries Centre was formed to gear up industrialization and render all assistance required for the setting up of new units under one roof in the district. The District Industries Centre has been functioning in this district from 1st July 1978. It provides assistance to small-scale industries in the sphere of finance, getting clearance for various licenses, registration, incentives and loan assistance offered by the Government of Tamil Nadu. The District Industries Centre assists entrepreneurs in selecting viable industries, provides project reports, registers provisional small-scale industrial units, permanent units and ancillary units and gets clearance for various licenses through a single window clearance committee. It provides information to entrepreneurs relating to machinery, buyer and seller details facilitates hire purchase of machinery with assistance from the National Small Industries Corporation and helps in the import of capital goods, machinery spares and raw materials. It makes arrangement for finance through banks and other financial institutions, and arranges seed money assistance form financial institutions. Through Entrepreneur Development Training Programme it guides the entrepreneurs in starting new industries and provides technical information and guidance. It provides margin money assistance to sick units under the Sick Industries Rehabilitation Programme. It conducts motivation campaign in panchayat union areas and identifies entrepreneurs.
2.5 THE TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT SMALL AND TINY INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION (NELSTIA)

The Tirunelveli District Small and Tiny Industries Association popularly known as ‘NELSTIA’ was founded in 1979. The object of the association is to represent the problems faced by the tiny and small industries to the authorities, to conduct seminars regarding investment pattern, technology transfer and export and import guidance. It also conducts industrial exhibitions. There are other associations like the District Timber and Saw Mill Association and the District Candle Manufacturers’ Association and the District Clay and Tile Manufacturers’ Association.

2.6 INDUSTRIAL POTENTIAL

Tirunelveli district has all the basic infrastructure and resources for the development of small and tiny industries. Further, the incentives given by the Tamil Nadu State Government and various industrial development agencies of the State and the existence of Thoothukudi district have also added to the advantage for accelerating the industrial progress of the district. As there are about 47 large and medium scale industries, there is a scope for the growth of ancillary industries, to meet the requirement of these industries, by manufacturing components and spare parts. The food processing industries have more units in the district, the growth of which can be augmented by increasing agricultural production and utilizing barren and cultivable land and fallow land available in the district. In view of the availability of natural and human resources, the chemical, textile and forest based industries have a good scope in the district. The industrial policy of the State Government which aims at starting new industries in the developing districts has helped in placing Tamil Nadu in an enviable position in the industrial map of the country. Tirunelveli district has joined in the mainstream of
industrialization in a phased manner by utilizing the subsidies and concessions. The District Industries Centre and other agencies are playing a crucial role to achieve this goal.

2.7 SUMMARY

The profile of the study area and the industrial development of the district selected for the study were presented in this chapter. In the historical background of Tirunelveli district the origin of the district’s name was explained with reference to the puranic association. It lies between 08° 08’ and 09° 23’ of northern latitudes and 77° 09’ and 77° 54’ of eastern longitudes and covers an area of 6,823 sq.kms. The 2001 census recorded the total population as 28,01,194 persons (13,72,082 male and 14,29,112 female). The density of population per square km was 411 and the literacy rate was 68.44.

Under the profile of industries various industries like Micro, Small, Medium and Large Scale Industries found in the district are presented. The role and functions of DIC, Tirunelveli which play a vital role in the promotion of entrepreneurship is also presented. Regarding the role of industries association in the promotion of industries, the functions and objectives of Tirunelveli District Small and Tiny Industries Association (NELSTIA) and the other associations functioning in Tirunelveli district are presented in this chapter.