CHAPTER III
PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA

3.1 Introduction

Chapter II explained the concepts related to unorganized women workers, theoretical background of the study and empirical reviews related to the present topic. Chapter III explains the Profile of the Study Area, i.e., Coimbatore.

3.2 History of Coimbatore

According to ancient manuscripts, Coimbatore’s history can be traced to the Irula tribal chief Kovan and his clan who were its earliest settlers of “Kovanpatti” an area that comprised forests when Sundaramurthy Nayanar visited the Patteeswarar temple in Perur. The Chera King who accompanied Nayanar wanted the place to be converted into a town. Years later, the surrounding forests were cleared and the new village was formed called “Kovanputhur”, Thus, Kovanputhur (later known as Coimbatore) came into existence in 9th century A.D. Historical reference of Coimbatore city dates back to 1200 AD. Ruled by Cheran rulers, the city was developed as a strategic town during the Nayakas’ rule of Madurai. Tipu Sultan conceded the town to British colonialists in 1799, who subsequently promoted Coimbatore as a military transit town between Palghat in the west and Gazal Hatty in the north. Beginning 1879, the city started emerging as an administrative and industrial town in its own merits. In the year 1866, Coimbatore was constituted as a Municipal Town with an area of 10.88 sq.kms., and in the same year the Madras-Podanur rail link passing Erode was opened, thus improving its connectivity to the region.

a) The Setting

The Coimbatore district is spread over an area of 7,469 square miles and lies between 10’15’ and 11’18 N and 76’39’ and 78’14’E. The region is bordered by a series of hills including the famed Blue Mountains (Nilgris), the Anamalais and a smattering of hillocks of Eastern Ghats. The Nilgris Biosphere is one of the world’s most enchanting biodiversity hotspots and adds charm to the geographical location of the districts. The faint blue hint of Blue Mountains is visible from virtually every part of the city and dominates the rural landscape. The region itself is a series of plains, with undulating
slopes and is criss-crossed by rivers that hasten to join the Cauvery. The Bhavani, Amaravati, Siruvani, Aliyar and the Noyyal rivers have legendary pasts and have enriched its glory in many ways. Fresh water has always been a scarce resource in the region and the landlocked boundaries may have dulled the setting if it were not for the enterprising spirit of the people. Consequently, numerous tank systems to harbour fresh water were constructed around the city and still continue to feed the growing populace.

b) Location of the City

Coimbatore is located at a distance of 500 kms., from Chennai, in the district of Coimbatore. The city traversed, in the middle, by the river Noyyal rising from the Vellingri hills on the west. It is surrounded by Nilgiris, a rich tea producing hinterland in the north, Pollachi, the receiving centre for forest production in the south and Cochin harbour in the south west. The Municipal towns of Mettupalayam, Pollachi and Tirupur are within a radius of 40 km., from Coimbatore. The city is well connected with all major cities of the country by rail, road and air. The city is situated on the banks of the river Noyyal, a tributary of river Cauvery and the foothills of Nilgiris Mountain. It is the administrative headquarter of Coimbatore District since 24th November, 1804, whereas Bhavani and Dharapuram were the headquarters of Coimbatore district before that. Coimbatore is situated in the extreme west of Tamilnadu, near the state of Kerala. It is surrounded by mountains on the west, with reserve forests and the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve on the northern side. The eastern side of the district, including the city is predominantly dry. The entire western and northern part of the district borders the Western Ghats with the Nilgiri biosphere as well as the Anaimalai and Munnar ranges. A western pass to Kerala, popularly referred to as the Palghat Gap, provides its boundary.

c) Climate and Rainfall

Coimbatore is situated at an elevation of about 398 metres. The climatic condition is moderate and the weather is uniformly salubrious owing to its proximity to the continuous stretch of hills covered with thick forests and the cool breeze blowing through the Palghat Gap during the monsoon. The temperature in this part of India is quite pleasant throughout the year. The average maximum and minimum temperatures are 39.6°C and 17.3°C, respectively. The temperature during both summer and winter varies between 37°C
and 25°C. The best time to visit Coimbatore is between the months of July and February. The highest temperature is 41°C and the lowest is 12°C. The area receives rainfall mainly from North East monsoon and the contribution from South West is marginal only. Nearly 55 percent of the rainfall is received from North-East monsoon. The average normal rainfall of Coimbatore city is 623.00 mm whereas it is 714.00 mm for Coimbatore District. Due to the presence of the mountain pass, major parts of the district benefit from the South-West monsoon in the months from June to August. After a warm and humid climate in September, the regular monsoon starts in October lasting till early November. These monsoons are brought about by the retreating North-eastern monsoon. Annual rainfall is 61 cm. Although this rainfall is not enough to sustain the needs of the city for the entire year, small rivers like the Siruvani and Atthikadavu fulfill the city's water needs. The Siruvani River is well known for having water of the purist taste. This is because of the large numbers of Amla trees present in the mountains where the Siruvani river originates; this making the Siruvani river one of the greatest assets of Coimbatore.

The soil is predominantly black, which is suitable for cotton cultivation, but it also has some red loamy soil. The rich black soil of the region has contributed to Coimbatore’s flourishing agriculture sector industry and the successful growth of cotton has served as a foundation for the establishment of its famous textile industry.

d) Administration

The Coimbatore Municipal Corporation was constituted in 1866 and was elevated as Municipal Corporation in 1981. An elected council comprising of a directly elected Mayor and Ward Councillors represent the elected wing. The Commissioner is head of the administration and is assisted by Deputy Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner (Personnel). The General Administration Department is responsible for establishment matters such as appointment, transfers, pay and allowances, housing, employee welfare schemes, correspondence with other departments and Government, public relations, redressal of public grievances, legal matters and law suits, and all matters related to office administration. For administrative convenience, the Corporation has been divided into four zones: East, West, North and South, each headed by an Assistant Commissioner. In addition to the above, there are three Assistant Commissioners in the main office dealing with Personnel, Revenue and Accounts. Coimbatore and its neighbouring areas
were undoubtedly influenced by numerous cultures and people. However, it was the paucity of water that triggered the spirit of enterprise. With inadequate water, people were naturally compelled to find new ways to sustain themselves.

e) Population Growth Trends

The population of Coimbatore city is 14.46 lakhs as per the 2001 Census. The population has grown from 0.47 lakhs in 1911 to 8.16 lakhs by the year 1991 with an average annual growth rate of 2.62 percent and an average decadal growth rate of 26.30 per cent. The availability of power, clubbed with raw material availability for textile processing, from 1935, led to the establishment of many industries, thereby resulting in a nearly 52 percent increase in population between 1941-1951. The city has registered the highest decadal growth rate of 32.91 percent during 1971-1981. This is attributed to the upgradation of Coimbatore Municipality to the status of Corporation, whereby additional areas were included in its jurisdiction.

Table 3.1
Population Growth- Coimbatore City

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population (in lakhs)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>0.68</td>
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<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>0.95</td>
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<td>1941</td>
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<td>1951</td>
<td>1.98</td>
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<td>1961</td>
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<td>1971</td>
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<td>1981</td>
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<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>8.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>14.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: www.tn.nic.in/tnudp/image/trendscbe.pdf
f) **Highlights of Coimbatore as per 2011 Census**

Total population of Coimbatore is 3,472,578 as per latest provisional figures released by Directorate of Census Operations in Tamil Nadu. This shows increase of 18.46 percent in 2011 compared to figures of 2001 census. The initial figures of data shows that male and female were 1,735,362 and 1,737,216 respectively. Coimbatore District of Tamil Nadu comprises an area of 4,850 sq.kms. As per Census 2011, density of Coimbatore District per square km is 748 compared to 631 per sq.km of 2001. Sex ratio of girls in Coimbatore district per 1000 boys was recorded as 1001, i.e., an increase of 33 points from the figure of 2001 Census which puts it at 968. Children's proportion in total population was around 4.81 percent. This figure was around 4.67 percent as per 2001 Census. Male literacy and female literacy were 89.49 and 79.16 percent respectively. In all, there were total 2,678,637 literates compared to 2,056,377 literates of 2001 Census.

**3.3 Industrial Development of Coimbatore**

Coimbatore enjoys a place of significance in the industrial map in India. During the pre-Independence period, Britishers used to export cotton to England and as the demand for cotton increased, cultivation of cotton also became an attractive proposition. The rich black soil of the region has contributed to Coimbatore’s flourishing agriculture and industry, and the successful growth of cotton served as a foundation for the establishment of its famous textile industry. The first textile mill came up in 1888, but now there are over a hundred mills. The result has been a strong economy and a reputation as one of the greatest industrial cities in South India.

Coimbatore known as ‘the Manchester of South India’ is the district headquarters of Coimbatore district. It is the largest city in Tamil Nadu and houses numerous textile mills and small engineering units. Setting up of the first textile mill in the year 1888 by the British was a harbinger to the industrialization of Coimbatore. In 1931, protected water supply from Siruvani was made available which led to the setting up of a number of industries. Between 1951 and 1961 about 20 large textile mills were established in and around Coimbatore. The Coimbatore Municipality was upgraded from Special Grade Municipality to Corporation in the year 1981 and spreads over an area of 105.6 sq.kms.
Coimbatore is called the Manchester of South India due to its extensive textile industry, fed by the surrounding cotton fields. It is also called as the pump city of India. The city houses a large number of small scale engineering companies. The motor and pump industry supplies two-thirds of India’s requirements, while its wet-grinder industry has a near monopoly. Agriculture is still the major occupation in the district as in any other part of the country. General trade attracts people from all over the state including the neighbouring Kerala. Coimbatore, the largest industrial city of Tamil Nadu with a beehive of over fifty thousand large, medium and small-scale industries has risen to world standards due to its sheer entrepreneurial spirit. It has, even today, the highest textile activity per square kilometre in the world and accounts for 84 percent of the textile machinery manufactured in the country.

Coimbatore consists of more than 30,000 small, medium, large and tiny industries and textile mills. Coimbatore city is known for the entrepreneurship of its residents as it is the home for many industries that produce a wide range of products like Machine Tools, Steel Castings, Electronic Goods, Automobile Spares and Consumer Products like Wet Grinders, Mixie, Motors, Pumps, Textile Cloth, Hosiery and Yarn, etc. The city is also known for its handloom products. There are a number of technical institutions. The neighbouring city of Tirupur is home to Asia’s largest garment manufacturing companies, exporting hosiery worth more than Rs. 50,000 million. Coimbatore is also emerging as an IT and BPO city. Coimbatore is ranked at 17th place among the global outsourcing cities.

Because of the importance of the city of Coimbatore as an industrial and trading centre, Coimbatore district stands out prominently on the urban and industrial map of the state of Tamilnadu. The first motor was manufactured here ignited the fire of entrepreneurship. It is from that day onwards that Coimbatore has been going up the later progressively, systematically and scientifically creating more and more factories and more and more intellectuals. The enterprising thirst has never seen a dip in the scale. Some of the groups which have contributed to the growth of the Coimbatore like Lakshmi Machine Works (LMW), European Lubricating Grease Institute (ELGI Group), Premier Instruments and Controls Limited (Pricol) United Motor Services (UMS) and thousands of small and medium-sized enterprise and have contributed the growth of Coimbatore. One can see the enterprising skills, hard work and multi-vision to are some
of the factors which have contributed to the growth of Coimbatore. Yet another factor for the growth of Coimbatore is the chain of popular educational institutions like PSG, Coimbatore Institute of Technology and Government College of Technology, Coimbatore. The presence of these institutions within Coimbatore has given lot of pep to the industrial activity by way of constructions catering to the requirements and more conspicuously the industry-institution interactions.

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) survey sighted Coimbatore as the fourth industrial-friendly city for anyone to develop and to grow into a mighty empire. Coimbatore is surrounded by a satellite of places where a number of industries are located. A number of units in all the sectors work independently, and also, some of them act as feeder industries to large-scale units. For example, Coimbatore, basically being a textile-based industry originally, is slowly turning into a big engineering based empire. Of course, though a number of textile mills have closed down due to general recession, some of them have sprung up adopting lot of modern technologies and aligned them up to global scenario and competition. The textile machinery manufacturers consist of finished machinery and also manufacture of spares. Lakshmi Machine Works, supposed to be one of the prides of Coimbatore, is the 4th biggest manufacturer of quality textile machines in the whole world. The reason for this is the upgradation of technology adopted by them, taking into account the new global competition and the customer satisfaction. Similarly, yet another field, which is emerging as a strong base, is the foundry sector of Coimbatore.

Coimbatore is basically very popular for its quality castings which are produced even from the tiniest foundry unit. The people of Coimbatore have started looking beyond the boundaries of India, for global market. The 90s made a change in the outlook of the industry and started the exercise of catering to the needs of the various manufacturers of automobile, machinery, special equipments, related components, etc. Many automobile giants, after their visit to India, particularly to Tamilnadu, started concentrating on Coimbatore foundry units. Brake drums, hubs, rubber parts, forged components, electronic items, etc., are being manufactured in this industrial town thus taking care of the requirements of automobile manufacturers. It is one among the five centres in India, where foundry industries are located. The Coimbatore Foundry Industry Owners Association (COFIOA), Coimbatore Tiny and Small Foundry Owners Association
(COSMAFAN) have also taken lot of initiatives to help the foundry industry in a big way to enable them to make a mark in the local as well as global markets.

### 3.4 Textile Industries in Coimbatore

In the past, hand spinning of cotton, handloom weaving, basket making, etc., flourished in Coimbatore. The potentiality of cotton cultivation and small industries let to the establishment of the first textile mill "The Coimbatore Spinning and Weaving Mill" in 1888 by Sir Robert Stanes. From there onwards the textile industries developed on a large scale. The district has earned the name as ‘Manchester of South India’ because of its textile industries. By the beginning of 1950s Coimbatore accounted for 55 percent of all textile mills in the state of Tamil Nadu. The industry still dominates the city and provides about 50 percent of registered manufacturing employment.

The Coimbatore region is famed for the quality of its cotton and dyed fabric. Documented records reveal that the traditional weavers perfected the art of quality dyeing and that woven fabric from here was known for its colour fastness and vivid patterning. In 1888, Sir Robert Stanes founded the Coimbatore Spinning and Weaving Mills (also known as Stanes Mills) in the northern edge of the town after starting a coffee curing factory in Trichy Road, thus kick-starting the industrial journey of Coimbatore. The Stanes Textile Mill he started is the forerunner to the huge textile industry of world repute which Coimbatore has today. Sir Robert Stanes would later assist several others in setting up their ventures. He was to be awarded the Kaiser-I-Hind Gold Medal for his services to Coimbatore and to education and was subsequently knighted in 1920 for his high sense of honour. By the 1930s, several textile mills had been established around Coimbatore due to the cheap power offered by the Pykara power station. The South Indian Mills Association (SIMA) established in 1933, is very active in the Coimbatore region and governs most of the textile industry in South India. SIMA has a membership spread across the southern states and protects the interest of the textile mills and its workers.

Even during the late 1800s, Coimbatore district had cotton cleaning and pressing factories and textile was exported to Mumbai (then Bombay) and England. A spinning mill was established around this time and employed over 300 people. Growth of more than 40,000 small, medium and large industries including textile mills and foundries have
become an alternative to the poorly irrigated 16,000 acres of agricultural lands in and around the city. The industrial pollutants from western and northern portions of the city have disturbed the biotic life in Noyyal and its tanks. Since drinking and domestic water come from outside the city, it would be in the fitness of things if civil society and the governing bodies renew their efforts to conserve these wetlands. Encroachments in the form of slums, housing units, bus depots, roads, railway tracks, electricity sub-stations, etc. have come up on these precious wetlands. Today, Coimbatore is hailed as the region with the highest concentration of textile activity in the world. It has numerous centres that specialize in spinning, weaving, power looms and knitwear, woven apparel and home furnishings. The growth of textiles naturally led to the inception of textile machinery manufacturing. Today, some of the best known global brands in textile machinery and component manufacturing are home-grown enterprises.

3.5 Engineering Industry in Coimbatore

Coimbatore which is situated in an intensively cultivated region formed the basis for commercial cotton growing. The cotton textile industry still dominates the city and provides about 50 percent of registered manufacturing employment. Since independence, the engineering and metal-working industries developed rather rapidly with the initial impetus provided by the textile mills and commercial agriculture for electric motors and pumps. Now, engineering and metal-working industries dominate the city of Coimbatore although textile as well as trade and commerce continue to occupy a significant space in the urban economy of Coimbatore. The dynamic industrial development of the city has been due to a variety of factors, locational as well as historical, and this has probably attracted migration of people from the vast rural hinterland contributing to a rapid increase in the population of the city. Though Coimbatore city has many such distinctions, very few studies were carried out on Coimbatore labour market.

Coimbatore Engineering Cluster is a multi-sectoral cluster having a large number of pumps and motor manufacturing units and light engineering enterprises, in addition to the large number of foundries. The growth of the motor and pump industry started during the early 1920s and the first pump was developed in the year 1928 in Coimbatore. By the year 1980, Coimbatore became one of the five major foundry centres of the country with more than 500 foundries in the district, ranking second to Calcutta in the number of foundries and
melting capacity. From 1991-1992 to 1995-1996, the pump industry growth was driven mostly by the boom in industries and urbanization due to the liberalization policy. The major share goes to pumps/valves industry with 46 percent. There are more than 800 Business Development Service Providers (BDSPs) including public, private organized and unorganized in different sectors. There are good opportunities for foundry industries in export to European countries and common brand marketing. For motor pump industries, the opportunities are to manufacture non-agricultural pumps and enter the global market by exports.

More than 50,000 engineering units function in and around Coimbatore city. What began as a focused centre for the manufacture of textile motors in the early 1900s has today become a multi-disciplinary entity that is capable of catering to voluminous demands in the international market. Tooling divisions were incepted primarily as captive units for manufacturing houses and have become a major engineering activity in the region today. With time, many tooling divisions became profit centres of their own, owing to the consistent investment in technology. Today, several corporate houses offer precision tooling services to global industries. The light engineering industry in the Coimbatore region also specializes in offering customized engineering solutions for diverse requirements. Common interests of the industry are represented by common forums like the South India Engineering Manufacturing Association (SIEMA) and Coimbatore District Small Scale Industries Association (CODISSIA).

The demands of cotton spinning industry and money with most of the mill owners gave rise to other activities in Coimbatore, of which establishment and development of engineering industry has formed the basis for rapid industrialization in Coimbatore. Engineering industry gave special emphasis to textile machinery, light machine tools and prime movers. The growth of cotton textile industry is a necessary impetus for the growth of textile machinery industry and some of the best large scale units are located in Coimbatore. The locational advantage contributed to the city engaging as an important trading centre in the west coast directly linked with Palghat in Kerala. By the 1980s engineering and metal industries began to dominate the city, although textiles as well as trade and commerce continued to occupy a significant space in the urban economy of Coimbatore. Due to these two industrial activities, Coimbatore district stands out prominently in the urban industrial map of the state of Tamil Nadu (Harriss et.al. 1992).
The dynamic industrial development of the city has probably attracted migration of people not only from vast rural hinterland but also from the neighbouring districts (Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Thirunelveli, Kanyakumari) as well as from the Kerala State. This has contributed to a rapid increase in the urban population which in turn resulted in faster growth of industrial labour of Coimbatore indicating that while the pattern of industrialisation has changed over the decades, the structural pattern, composition and the characteristic features have also changed.

3.6 Foundry Sector in Coimbatore

The foundry product line of Coimbatore cluster is mainly catering to motor pumps and machineries and is slowly emerging to cater to valves and auto components sector from South India. There are no foundry clusters near Coimbatore. Coimbatore is an important foundry cluster in Southern India. The foundry industry at Coimbatore came up mainly to cater to the needs of the local textile and pump-set industries. There are about 755 foundry units in Coimbatore. The geographical spread of the cluster includes Thanneer Pandal/ Peelamedu, Avarampalayam, Ganapathy, Small Industries Development Corporation (SIDCO), Singanallur, Mettupalayam Road and Arasur Village. Most of the foundry units cater to the needs of the domestic market. A small percentage (about 10 per cent) of the foundry units is also exporting castings. Nearly half the number of foundry units are manufacturing castings for the pump-set industry. There are more than 5,000 foundry units in India, having an installed capacity of approximately 7.5 million tonnes per annum. The majority (nearly 95 per cent) of the foundry units in India fall under the category of small-scale industry. The foundry industry is an important employment provider and provides direct employment to about half a million people. Typically, each foundry cluster is known for catering to some specific end-use markets. For example, the Coimbatore cluster is famous for pump-sets castings, the Kolhapur and the Belagum clusters for automotive castings and the Rajkot cluster for diesel engine castings.

Coimbatore was one of the Indian cities to enter the manufacturing of cast components. Units that specialize in non-ferrous and ferrous casting abound in the region and serve a wide spectrum of industrial requirements. A majority of the cast components manufactures in the city go into the domestic market. They include grey iron, SG iron, shell-moulded aluminium and investment castings. Special units also cater to a thriving
bronze casting industry. Most foundry units have upgrading from traditional casting methods and currently employ state-of-the-art technology. Foundry talent requires special skill sets, and over the years the city has accrued a large talent pool of highly trained and qualified professionals. Consequently, several international companies have set up their foundry divisions in the city to meet the requirement for specialized castings. The foundry industry continues to be one of the top revenue earners for the region in both the domestic and export markets. It has also facilitated relocation of foundry units outside the city limits on 180 acres, creating foundry parks with common facilities at three locations. A business information and library centre have been created. Testing facilities for pumps, motors and foundry industrial applications have also been modernised by upgrading the facilities at Scientific and Industrial Testing and Research Centre (SiTarc). A raw material bank is also functioning under the association. These facilities will benefit a large number of small and medium scale pumpset manufacturing units, engineering units and foundries. The value of various items produced by the foundries amounts to around 45 crores per month generating employment, both directly and indirectly, to more than about one lakh persons in and around Coimbatore.

3.7 Summary

It is needless to point out here that Coimbatore city has grown on its own, in spite of the absence of external support and other mineral resources. It is only the hard work and perseverance of the people of Coimbatore that has shown the way for development which could be noted as a shining example for the efforts turning to success. It is pertinent to point out here that Coimbatore city has not been favoured with any type of large public sector undertakings and only private units have been instrumental for the development of this city in industrialization and in textiles. The success for the development of industries could be attributed to the innovative and technical skill of artisans who turned out to be technocrats and industrialists. Coimbatore could still better, if the Government extends a helping hand. The Government regulations and formalities discourage the entrepreneurs, causing hurdling for the expansion of industrial activities. The present rules and regulations are hampering the way of rapid industrial development. It does not mean that the rules and regulations are not required. But these should be practically
oriented and the development of industries should be the main criteria. No doubt, there is a variety of incentives offered by Government at regular intervals. For instance….

(i) State Capital subsidy at 15 percent of the cost of machinery is available to the new industries set up in the declared industrial backward areas, and

(ii) Power tariff subsidy for first 3 years from the date of production and interest free sales tax loan for 5 years.

But entrepreneurs find it difficult to avail these incentives because of cumbersome procedure. It is noticed that such benefits do not percolate to the bottom level and Coimbatore District Small Scale Industries Association (CODISSIA) has been making representations to the Government, emphasizing the necessity for a pragmatic approach and guidance as well as help towards industrialization without any hurdles.