Geographical Features
CHAPTER - II

GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES

The land of India displays great physical variation. The geographical condition of the country exercises a tremendous influence on the course of the country. Geography had a great influence in determining the life style culture and economy of the people of the country.

Geography governs history. The geographical features of a country like coastal lines, mountains, rivers and rainfalls, climate, irrigation and natural resources determine the political social and economic life of the people.

Geographically India can be divided into four distinct regions. 1

1. Mighty Mountain ranges in the North
2. The Great Indo-Gangetic plain
3. The Deccan plateau and
4. Coastal Ghats

The Deccan peninsula is a triangular table-land stretches from Vindhyas to cape comarin. The area lying to the south of Krishna and Thungabhadra is known as far south. The present territories of Mysore and Tamil Nadu constitute this region. 2

2 Ibid, p. 4.
Tamil Nadu has been described as a country almost a nation of its own. Although primarily defined in cultural terms as the land of the Tamil speaking people the geographical location of Tamil Nadu is in the south-eastern corner of the Indian sub-continent which has enabled it to develop and maintain a distinctive cultural character.

It had natural boundaries. Tamil Nadu was bounded on the south by the Indian Ocean, on the west by the Arabian Sea, on the east by Bay of Bengal and on the North by the Mysore Plateau. A small Island of Ceylon is situated to the south-east of peninsular India.³

**Western Ghats and Eastern Ghats**

The state has two large mountain systems, the Western and the Eastern Ghats. The chain of mountains in the Western Ghats is continuous except near the Palghat gap which is about 20 miles wide. The Eastern Ghats starts from the state of Orissa and run in a South-western direction until a little beyond the Krishna river where they turn to the south parallel to the coast line to a point opposite to the Pulicate lake. The State thus consists of a narrow stretch of land between Western ghats and the Arabian sea and the strip between the Eastern ghats and the Bay of Bengal elevated to tract lying between the two.⁴

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Source: Food and Agriculture in Madras State, Government of Madras, 1951.
Rivers

Tamil Nadu has a fine river system. Cauvery, Palar, Vaigai, Pennar, Vellar, Tamiraparani are the principal rivers. The perennial river Cauvery is among the most sacred rivers of India and is known as the ‘Dashina Ganga’. It flows through a length of 760 kms covering Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Its main tributaries are Bhavani, Noyil, Amaravathi and Kollidam. The rivers are non-perennial. In order to store water for irrigation and power generation huge amount of money have been spent on the construction of dams and Irrigation channels. There are two reservoirs on the river, the Kirshnarajasagar near Mysore and the Stanley reservoir in Mettur. All the rivers that flow towards Tamil Nadu originate from the Western ghats, flow towards Bay of Bengal cutting across the Eastern ghats.5

Irrigation and Crop cultivation

Tank irrigation is the resort of the people of Tamil Nadu due to seasonal rainfall. In India, interior Tamil Nadu and Andhrapradesh have more land under Tank irrigation. Canal and well irrigation is possible only in the broad alluvial river valley plains. The irrigated area under the Cauvery delta is about a million acres.6 Rice was the principal crop grown on Eastern districts. Intensive cultivation of rice is in the delta of the Cauvery.

South-West Monsoon period (June 1966 to September 1966)

North-East Monsoon period (October 1966 to December 1966)


{Graph showing rainfall data for various regions in October, November, and December 1966.}

Season & Rainfall

Regarding the seasonal condition of the state it can be divided into four.\(^7\)

1. the South-west Monsoon (June to September)
2. the North-west Monsoon (October to December)
3. dry weather period (January to March)
4. Hot weather (April to May)

The tropic of cancer passes through the middle part of India. As a result the southern half of the country has a tropical climate. The narrow coastal strip received over 40 inches of rain a year during winter months and interior region receive rainfall of between 20 and 40 inches.\(^8\)

Soil

The soils of the state can be divided into four main types.\(^9\)

i. the Alluvial soil
ii. the Black cotton soils or ‘Regur’ or ‘Ragada’
iii. the Red soil and
iv. the Laterite soil

Saline soil occurs scattered under a variety of environments and in the midst of other soil occurrences.

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\(^7\) Madras State Administration Report, 1951-52. Part II, p. 135.
\(^8\) A. Gopal Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 18.
For a century and a half—from the end of the eighteenth century until Indian Independence in 1947—Tamil Nadu was part of the Madras Presidency. The presidency consisted of 24 districts including the city of Madras which was turned as a district for administrative purpose.¹⁰

After independence, the Madras Presidency was known in the name of Madras State.¹¹ An election was held for the Legislative Assembly of the Madras State. From then onwards the state is under the leadership of popularly elected body which is responsible for the entire administrative machinery.

The formation of a separate Andhra State had been the long cherished goal of the people in the Telugu speaking area of the composite Madras State. The Andhra state thus came in to existence with effect from 1ˢᵗ October 1953 and the partition was effected in a smooth manner.¹²

The Andhra State was to include the district of Srikakulam, Visakhapatnam, East Godavari, West Godavari, Krishna, Guntur, Nellore, Chittoor, Cuddapah, Kurnool, Ananthapur and the taluks of Adoni Alur and Rayadurg of Bellary district.¹³

¹⁰ Ibid.,
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<th></th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>Rural 1961 Population</td>
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- Madras
- Coimbatore
- Chingleput
- North Arcot
- South Arcot
- Ramanadhapuram
- The Nilgiris
- Kanyakumari
- Tiruchirapalli
- Thanjavur
- Tirunelveli
- Salem
Of the seven remaining taluks of Bellary district, except Bellary Taluk were to be included in Mysore State. Madras City was to be a part of the Residuary State.\textsuperscript{14}

The Parliament of India accepted the recommendation of the State Reorganization commission for re-organization of the States in India from 1\textsuperscript{st} November 1956. The following changes were brought about in Madras State.\textsuperscript{15}

(a) Malabar district and Kasaragod taluk of South Kanara district were transferred from Madras to Kerala.

(b) South Kanara district and Kollegal taluk of Coimbatore district were transferred from Madras to Mysore.

(c) The Laccadive and Minicoy Islands in the Malabar district and the Amindivi Islands in the south Kanara district were constituted in to a New part C State; and

(d) The territories comprised in the Agastheeswaram, Thovala, Kalkulam and Vilavancode taluks of Trivandrum district and the Shencottah taluk of Quilon district of the former Travancore-Cochin State were transferred to Madras state.

The territories comprised in the first four taluks mentioned in (d) above have been formed in to a separate district named Kanniyakumari

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.,

\textsuperscript{15} State Reorganisation Committee Report, 1956.
district with its head quarters at Nagercoil and the territories comprised in
the Shencottah taluk have been incorporated in Tirunelveli district. Kanniyakumari district was created on the 1st November 1956.16

Prior to re-organisation of Madras State as on 31st October 1956, (according to 1951 census) the total population of the Madras state was 35,734,480 and the area in square miles was to 60362.17 The total population (1951 census) and the area in square miles of the Madras State after the reorganisation with effect from 1st November 1956 was 29,975,357 and 50,112 respectively.18


The nomenclature of the state of Madras is changed as Tamil Nadu in the year 1968.20 The origin of the British Administration and the expansion of their rule is described in the next chapter.

16 Ibid.,
17 Ibid.,
18 Ibid.,
20 The Madras State Alteration of Name Act, 1968.