Chapter III

Profile of the Study Area
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3.0 INTRODUCTION

In the present chapter it is attempted to provide a brief profile of the study area, namely, Coimbatore.

3.1 LOCATION

Coimbatore located in 11°1'6" north latitude and 76°58'29" and east latitude, is the second largest city in the state of Tamil Nadu. It is the administrative headquarters of Coimbatore District. It is situated on the banks of the Noyyal River, Coimbatore is known for its textile factories, engineering firms, automobile parts manufacturers, health care facilities, educational institutions, pleasant weather, hospitality and for its Kongu Tamil.

3.2 HISTORY OF THE DISTRICT

Information about the origins of Coimbatore is scarce. During the early period it was ruled by the Karur Sangam era Chera. Later, the region passed to the Kongu Rattas and was the heartland of the Ganga kingdoms. A second Chola empire arose in the mid-9th century, and gained the territory encompassing Coimbatore. They established a planned layout, with the Koniamman temple in the center. It is also found that in early days this area was ruled by tribals, Kosars tribe being the prominent one among them. They had their headquarters at Kosampathur, which probably later became the present Coimbatore.

From the Cholas, then to the of Karnataka in 1291. By the early 14th century, the region was ruled by the Muslim rulers of Madurai under the Delhi Sultanate. The Muslim
rule in Madurai was ended in the late 14th century by the newly formed Vijayanagara Empire. The Vijayanagara reign brought new settlers from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. In the 1550s, the military governors (Telugu-speaking Nayaks) of the Vijayanagara Empire took control of Madurai, with Coimbatore belonging to their territory. After the downfall of Vijayanagara Empire, the Madurai Nayaks established their state as an independent kingdom, with other Vijayanagar offshoots forming new kingdoms in Vellore, Tanjore, Gingee, Chandragiri and Mysore. The Nayaks introduced the Palayakkarars, who were military governors of their respective regions. By the 1700s, frequent fighting between Madurai and Mysore forces in the Coimbatore region resulted in the region being ruled by Mysore. At this time Coimbatore was still a village of around 3000 people.

In the 1760s, the Mysore throne was usurped in a coup by General Hyder Ali. Ali was hostile to the British, who were gaining a foothold in the area with the help of Arcot Nawab. A series of wars between the British and the Mysore forces continued till Tipu Sultan's death in 1799, when the Mysore throne was handed over to the earlier Mysore rulers. At that time the British annexed the Coimbatore region into the Madras Presidency. When Hyder Ali acquired Coimbatore, the population was around 3000. The village dwindled to 1500 by Tipu's death.

Coimbatore played a prominent role in the Second Poligar War against the British in 1801, when the first attack was done against the British Columns stationed in Coimbatore by the Poligars of Salem, Coimbatore and Dindigul region along with some Malabar and Mysore rebels.
In 1804 Coimbatore was established as a capital for the newly formed Coimbatore district and in 1848, it was accorded the municipality status. Sir Robert Stanes, a British entrepreneur and philanthropist, became the first Chairman of the Coimbatore City Council and also founded the Stanes School in 1862 a major higher secondary school that has stood until the present day as a jewel of the city.

In 1981 Coimbatore became a corporation with annexation of the Singanallur municipality.

3.3 GEOGRAPHY

Coimbatore is situated in the extreme west of Tamil Nadu, 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. Because of its close proximity to the Western Ghats, the district is rich in fauna.

Many lakes and ponds were constructed near the river in ancient times. The city of Coimbatore has nine lakes (wetlands). In most of the urban ecosystems, these wetlands are the major life-supporting component with high concentrations of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish and invertebrate species. The Coimbatore Urban wetlands harbours more than 125 species of resident and migratory birds, with August – October being the peak season. Spot-billed Pelican, Painted Stork, Open Billed Stork, Ibis, Spot-billed Duck, Teal, Black Winged Stilt are some of the migratory birds that visit Coimbatore wetlands regularly.
Apart from the species common to the plains, wild elephants, wild boars, leopards, tigers, bison, various species of deer, Nilgiri Tahr, sloth bear and black-headed Oriole can also be found. The Anamalai Wildlife Sanctuary (88 km) in the Western Ghats at an altitude of 1,400 meters covers an area of 958 km. Among the region’s livestock animals are Kangeyam breed bulls (cross-bred by Mandradian family in 17th century to suit the terrain). This breed, which helped the region gain a foothold in the dairy industry, are found only in Coimbatore and neighbouring districts. More than 20 per cent of the district is classified as forest, lying in the west and north. The forests here are abundant in commercially significant trees such as teak, sandalwood, rosewood and bamboo. The Nilgiris slope of the Mettupalayam range is rich in sandalwood trees and bamboo. They vary from rich tropical evergreen forests of Punachi range to jungles of shrubs in southern ranges.

Apart from the high altitude regions of Western ghats, most of the forest area has come under Lantana invasion. The locals refer to it as Siriki chedi.

3.4 FLORA AND FAUNA

Coimbatore has a pleasant, salubrious climate, not reaching the high temperatures of other southern India cities. Situated in the Western part of the state of Tamil Nadu, Coimbatore is located at an elevation of about 398 meters. The mean maximum and minimum temperatures during summer and winter varies between 35°C to 18°C. In the months from July to February, highest temperature is 38 °C and lowest is 12 °C.

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, humid September, the regular monsoon starts from October lasting till early November. These
monsoons are brought about by the retreating North-eastern monsoon. The average annual rainfall is around 700 mm with the North East and the South West monsoons contributing to 47 per cent and 28 per cent respectively to the total rainfall. Although this rainfall is not enough to sustain the needs of the city for the entire year, small rivers like the Siruvani and Atthikadavu fulfil the city's water needs. The Siruvani water is the second sweetest water in the world. This is because of large numbers of Amla trees present in the mountains where the Siruvani river originates.

The soil is predominantly black, which is suitable for cotton cultivation, but it also has some red loamy soil. Coimbatore falls under the Class III/IV Seismic Zone, having experienced a 6.0 Richter scale earthquake in 1900. The Sálim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History is located at Anaikatty in Coimbatore district.

3.5 DEMOGRAPHY

According to 2001 census, as of the 2001, Coimbatore had a population of 930,882 in Municipal Corporation limits. More recent estimates peg the population of Coimbatore at some 15 lakhs (1.5 million) people. Males constitute 52 per cent of the population and females 48 per cent. The child population within the age group of 6 years forms 11.64 per cent of the total population. The density of population is 17,779 per square kms. The sex ratio is 963.

Coimbatore has an average literacy rate of 78 per cent, higher than the national average of 59.5 per cent. Male literacy is 81 per cent and female literacy is 74 per cent with 11 per cent of the population under 6 years of age.

The city's population is predominantly Hindu, along with sizeable Muslim and Christian populations. Sikhs and Jains are also present in smaller numbers.
The city is a Municipal Corporation as well as the district Headquarters. The city has a Mayor, Deputy Mayor and several councillors elected by people representing administrative wards, as well as a corporation Commissioner to administer the city headed by the District Collector. The District court is the highest court of appeal in Coimbatore. Despite being the largest revenue earning districts, insufficient state government funds have resulted in the city's basic infrastructure being underdeveloped.

3.6 ECONOMY

The city's primary industries are engineering and textiles. The district also houses the country's largest amount of hosiery and poultry industries. Most of the industries are run by entrepreneurs, often indigenous with family based or community financing. The city's industrial growth started in 1920's and accelerated after independence, without any government assistance or the entry of external industrial houses. The city serves as the homeground for most of the well known industrialists from Tamil Nadu. Of late, information technology companies have started opening offshore development centres in the city.

3.7 INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT
3.7.1 INDUSTRY

In spite of it's prominence as a bustling industrial city, Coimbatore still remains one of the most pollution free cities in India. Covering an area of 23.5 square kilometers, the city houses some of the biggest names in Indian Industry. The major industries include textiles, textile machinery, automobile spares, motors, electronics, steel and aluminium foundries. Tirupur - a neighbouring town has carved a niche for itself in the garments market. Agriculture however remains the major occupation. The rich fertile soil and tropical climate is excellent for the growth of millet, paddy, cotton, tea, oil seeds and tobacco.
3.7.2 EARLY INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENTS

When the British occupied Coimbatore, the territory connected the Malabar ports with the rest of India (apart from Konkan coast). The British later expanded their railway network in 1862 passing through Podanur to Cochin for quicker transit of raw materials required in England.

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 services to Coimbatore and to education and was subsequently knighted in 1920 for his high sense of honour. Two more mills (Kalleeswara and Somasundra mills) were established in 1910. Lakshmi Mills Company commenced their operations in 1911. By the 1930s, several textile mills had been established around Coimbatore due to the cheap power offered by the Pykara power station.

In 1900, Swamikannu Vincent, a railway engineer, built the first cinema in South India, the "Variety Hall" (now Delite Theatres). His son Paul Vincent introduced talking motion pictures in South India. In 1922, Narayanaswamy Naidu started a workshop to repair cane crushers and cotton ginning machines. Two years later, he established the Dhandayuthapani Foundry. Around the same time, G.D.Naidu started his unique bus service. He is also credited for manufacturing the first electric motor in India. In 1931, Pollachi Nachimuthu Gounder stated his transport business which grew into a multi-crore
industrial and trading house. In the 1940s, a Sheffield University graduate, D. Balasundaram Naidu from Avarampalayam in Coimbatore, started his company Textool to manufacture textile machines of his design. In 1965 another Textile family of VLB Naidu group set up Mopeds India Ltd after a technical collaboration with Motobécane of France to manufacture their legendary Motobécane Mobylette 50 cc moped under the name Suvega, but, only the central office was in Coimbatore while the plant was set up in Tirupathi. The manufacture of Wet grinders, considered to be India’s only product and engineering invention, later spun-off into several variants. LMW and Pricol would commence operations later growing into a multi-crore group.

3.7.3 INDUSTRIES TODAY

Coimbatore is the highest revenue earning district in Tamil Nadu. 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 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. The neighbouring city of Tirupur is home to Asia’s largest garment manufacturing companies, exporting hosiery clothes worth more than Rs. 50,000 million. Coimbatore is also emerging as an IT and BPO city. Coimbatore is ranked at 7th place among the global outsourcing cities. Textool offered a prototype of Sten Guns to the Indian Government after independence. They developed the first in-house designed car in the 1960s, which never saw the light of day due to the license raj. They made several
prototypes until the 1990s. They successfully manufactured India's first indigenously
developed diesel engines in 1972 for cars and their own CNC lathes in 1982. Today their
spin-off company, Jayem Automotives, offers R & D services to Mahindra, Tata Motors
and Hindustan Motors. Maruti Udyog and Tata Motors source up to 30 per cent of their
automotive components from Coimbatore. The city also houses numerous jewellers
engaged in jewellery exports. L&T has opened a 400-acre (1.6 km) plant on Eachanari
bypass road. Wind Energy major Suzlon has planned to set up a foundry & machine shop
in Coimbatore. Along with it Hansen Transmission, a Belgian Company which
manufactures gearboxes for windmills is setting up a plant here with an investment of Rs
940 crores.

Some of the major industries are Larsen and Toubro, Lakshmi Machine Works
Ltd (LMW), Premier Instruments & Control Limited (PRICOL), ELGI Equipments,
Shanti Gears, LGB, Roots Industries. The Major Pump industries Sharp Industries, CRI
Pumps, Texmo Industries, Deccan Pumps & KSB Pumps are renowned world wide.
Coimbatore is also called as the Pump City. Research and Development Organisations
like Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, South India Textile Research Association,
contribute a lot to the city. Other industries like PSG, Sakthi group contribute a lot, and
the now closed South India Viscose are one of the major employers in the city.

Coimbatore also has a 160,000 square feet (15,000 m) trade fair ground, built in
1999. It was named COINTEC due to its hosting of INTEC (Small Industries Exhibition).
The Trade Fair complex, one of the country's largest, was built in six months, and is
owned by CODISSIA (Coimbatore District Small Industries Association). It is also the
country's largest pillar-free hall, according to the Limca Book of Records.
The IT industry in Coimbatore is nascent compared to its textile and manufacturing industries, with Tata Consultancy Services, Cognizant Technology Solutions, Perot Systems, Robert Bosch GmbH and KGISL to name a few.

3.8 EDUCATION

Educational institutions played a major role in the city's development. The year 1867 saw the first group of students appearing for the SSLC Examinations. The city today has more than a dozen engineering colleges, two Medical Colleges, an Air-Force Administrative College, a Forest College, more than 75 Arts and Science Colleges and 6 Universities, churning out about 35,000 graduates every year. According to a survey by Outlook India, PSG Tech is the one of the best private engineering institutions in India. The Coimbatore Institute of Technology (1956) was started by MIT and Sloan alumnus P.R. Ramakrishnan and it stood all most the best forever in all areas. Coimbatore Medical College (1966) started functioning on land granted by some industrial families. Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (1971) has successfully developed several high yielding varieties of rice and millets. The University has seven constituent colleges, thirty two research stations and thirteen Krishi Vigyan Kendras throughout Tamil Nadu. The Government Law College (1978) started functioning in order to fulfil the long felt need for legal education in the district. Tamilnadu College of Engineering was established in 1984.