

Chapter V

Profile of the Study Area

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter profile of the study area is presented in terms of social, geographic, demographic, economic and industrial aspects. The three districts of Tuticorin, Tirunelveli and Madurai in Tamilnadu constitute the study area. The researcher wishes to put forward four things in this regard. First, area profile of this much detail, which otherwise is not required, is presented in the belief that it will give valuable information regarding many facets of life of the people in respective areas. More clearly, data pertaining to demographic indices, trade patterns, natural resources, vocations, forms of employment, living opportunities and many other socioeconomic indicators shall contribute to the understanding of newspaper reading habits and associated preferences of people. This is due to the fact that socioeconomic condition is one of the instrumental constituent factors that shapes attitudes and preferences within individuals, families and communities. Second, the data are almost sourced from previous unpublished research works, that were referred from back volumes of universities. As quite a substantial part of this chapter is adapted without much modification, those research reports constitute the primary source of information. They are provided at the end of the chapter. However many other sources were referred for verification, which are listed as the

secondary sources of information. Thirdly, the research is restricted to the Census of 2001. This is because the most recent Census 2011 concerning the State of Tamilnadu is due to be released officially by the first week of June 2013. Therefore waiting for that and rearranging everything will be a tedious and time consuming task. If the pertinence of the latest data is needed, percentage of increase or decrease in every socioeconomic indicator shall be ascertained and a qualitative or quantitative extrapolation shall be effected. Finally, readability of the chapter is affected by the enormity of data, acronyms, transliterations, historical descriptions and explanations within brackets.

5.2. Area Profile of Tuticorin

5.2.1. *Brief History*

Tuticorin district lies in the southeastern tip of Tamilnadu. The district is roughly rectangular in shape. Christened originally as Chidambaranar district after the freedom fighter V.O. Chidambaram Pillai, who was born in this district, Tuticorin district was formed as the 20th district of Tamilnadu by the bifurcation of Tirunelveli district in 1986. The district headquarters is the city of Tuticorin, a municipal corporation. Since the bifurcation, Tuticorin, in contrast to Tirunelveli, became an important industrial center. Nicknamed as Pearl City, quite a number of seamen here were much famous for pearl diving and pearl fishing.

5.2.2. Geography and Constitution

The district is surrounded by Viruthunagar and Ramanathapuram districts in the north, Gulf of Manner in the east and Tirunelveli district in the west and south. Having an area of 4,621 sq. km, (1,784 sq. miles), the district is one of the chief manufacturing belts of fish, salt, pearls, palm products and medicinal plants. It comprises seven taluks viz. Kovilpatti, Ottapidaram, Sattankulam, Srivaikundam, Tiruchendur, Tuticorin and Vilathikulam, under three revenue divisions of Tuticorin, Kovilpatti and Tiruchendur. In addition, Tuticorin district has 12 development blocks. There are 20 town panchayats, 408 village panchayats and 2 municipalities.

The district's relatively lengthy coastal lines and the Tamiraparani River form the economic nerve centre, contributing to various commercial and livelihood activities. High grade coral reef is found along the coast from Tuticorin to Pamban, which is a sanctuary for unbelievable range of marine flora and fauna. It is a world heritage site.

However this rain-shadowed coastal belt continues to reel under drought owing to successive monsoon failure. Hence drying up of the Tamiraparani River and scaled down agricultural activities are frequent scenes in the district. The other major lines of trade are fishing, salt and palmyra (sugar palm) tapping. Over exploitation of natural resources and environmental pollution are its thorny problems.

5.2.3. Demographic Data

Total population of this district according to the 2001 census was 14,55,920, which was an 7.8 percent increase over the previous census, with 48.67 percent males and 51.33 percent females. The density of population per sq. km. is 315 as against 428 for the State. The sex ratio is 1051 females for every 1000 males. On the whole, literacy rate is 63 percent while that of rural literacy rate is 59 percent. Out of the total population of 14,55,920 in the district 8,56,220 live in rural area. Birth rate per 1000 population is 17.8 and death rate is 6.9. The district has got a scheduled caste population of 53,958 which represents 17 percent of the total population, 3,174 schedules tribes which represents 0.21 percent of the total population.

The district has 1020 primary schools, 306 middle schools, 51 high schools and 46 higher secondary schools. Technical and professional education is provided by 2 industrial training institutes, 2 engineering colleges, one medical college and 2 polytechnics. There are 7 teacher training institutions and 2 teacher training colleges, and 12 arts and science colleges.

5.2.4. Vocations and Industries

Tuticorin has come a long way now from what it was a few decades ago. A number of industries came up in Tuticorin after the renovation and enhancement of the Port of Tuticorin, which is vital to the industrial growth of this region. It has a minor airport with daily connectivity to Chennai. Moreover, two national highways cut through the city.

Yet, most commercial and livelihood activities revolve around agriculture, fishing, salt and palmyra palm. Banana, coconut, rice, cotton, aromatic flowers, palmyra products, betel, senna leaves, mud crabs, lobsters, shrimps, prawns, a variety of fish and various forms of salt are exported and sold indigenously. Asia's best salt is produced in Tuticorin. The district contributes about 80 percent to the total salt needs of Tamilnadu.

As far as industry is concerned, there are two industrial estates, one at Tuticorin with 96 units and the other at Kovilpatti with 27 units. The former one is managed by SIDCO and the latter by SIPCOT (Small Industries Promotion Corporation of Tamilnadu). There is also one Industrial Cooperative Estate at Korampallam, near Tuticorin. There are 1,925 registered SSI (Small Scale Industry) units in the district. The Union of SSI's has set up a branch office each at Tuticorin, Tirunelveli, Kanyakumari and Ramanathapuram districts. In addition, two research centres namely. Research Centre for Marine & Fisheries and Chemical Research Centre were established at Tuticorin by the central and state governments respectively. Large industrial units in Tuticorin are listed in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1

Large Industrial Units in Tuticorin

Public Undertakings	Joint/Private Undertakings
1. Tuticorin Thermal Power Station	1. SPIC
2. Heavy Water Plant	2. Tuticorin Alkali Chemicals
3. Tuticorin Port Trust	3. Darangathara Chemical Works
	4. Loyal Textiles
	5. Madura Coats
	6. Lakshmi Mills
	7. Sterlite Copper

Finally, owing to its port many clearing and forwarding agents (locally called, shipping companies), who carry out export and import activities on behalf of the exporter or importer for a commission, have made Tuticorin as their logistical base. Moreover ship repairers, chandlers, stevedores and peripheral transport operators rely on port and its allied industries.

5.2.5. The Port of Tuticorin

The Port of Tuticorin is on the southeastern coast adjoining the Gulf of Mannar in Tuticorin district. The natural harbour with a rich hinterland has activated the development of the port. It is now 25 years since the port has been declared a major port. In these 25 years, the port has, in its way of growth, made many accomplishments. Table 5.2 has the details.

Table 5.2

Important Milestones of the Port of Tuticorin

S. No.	Event	Date
1.	Declaration as a major port	11.07.1974
2.	Constitution of the port trust board	01.04.1979
3.	Certification of ISO 9002	12.03.1996
4.	Introduction of night navigation	12.10.1996
5.	Sanction of capital dredging project	21.07.1998
6.	Certification of ISO 9001	23.04.2003

Exporters and importers in Tamilnadu and neighbouring states prefer Tuticorin to any other port in south India for its ISO 9002 certification, ethical and hardworking labour, round the clock operations, night navigation facilities, low handling charges, minimal clearance time, near-absent work disruption throughout the year, proximity to the strategic East-West International Sea Route, well managed vessel cut-off periods, international collaboration in berthing and container handling, and vast covered and open area for handling, storage and warehousing.

5.3. Area Profile of Tirunelveli

5.3.1. History

The history of Tirunelveli is bound up with that of the Pandya dynasty. It had been Thenpandiyanaadu for them. Imperial Cholas named it Mudikonda Cholamandalam, but the Nayaks changed it to Tirunelveli Seemai. The British East India Company created the district in its present shape in 1790 and called it Tinnevely. Finally it is Tirunelveli for the Independent India. The district was

bifurcated as Nellai Kattabomman and Chidambaranar districts with Tirunelveli and Tuticorin as respective headquarters. As per the decision of the government to call every district by the name of its headquarters, Tirunelveli, it is now the District of Tirunelveli.

5.3.2. Name Cause

Tirunelveli is surrounded on all sides by paddy fields. Therefore it was used to be called, 'Nel Veli', that is 'paddy hedge', or more precisely, 'hedged as if by paddy'. Since the temple in the town was dedicated to god Shiva, the salutation 'Thiru' was added and called Thiru-Nel-Veli. In official parlance however it is Tirunelveli. There is also a legend that states that Shiva protected a devotee's rice crop there.

5.3.3. Geography

Tirunelveli is the penultimate southernmost district of Tamilnadu. The district is located between 08° 8' and 09° 23' latitude and 77° 09' and 77° 54' longitude. It is the second largest district in Tamilnadu after Viluppuram with a total geographical area of 6,823 sq. km. It is surrounded by Virudhunagar district on the north, Tuticorin district in the east, Kanyakumari district on the south and Western Ghats in the west. The district has diverse geographical and physical features such as lofty mountains and low plains, rivers and cascades, seacoast and thick inland forest, and sandy soils and fertile alluvium. It has rare varieties of flora and protected fauna including tiger. The perennial Tamiraparani River is the lifeline of this district. The river sustains various

spheres of activities in agriculture and industry, besides providing drinking water.

The district comprises all the five geographical divisions referred to in Tamil literature. The Western Ghats form the Kurinji (mountainous) land, the Kalakkadu and Mundanthurai forests form the Mullai (forest) land, the regions watered by the Tamiraparani form the Marudham (paddy fields) land, the seacoast and adjacent semi forests along the Gulf of Mannar form the Neithal (coastal) land and the Theri (arid sand dunes) region forms the Palai (desert) land. It gets 100 cm of annual rainfall with temperature ranging between 20 and 40 degrees Celsius.

5.3.4. Administration

The district has 3 Revenue Divisions, 11 Taluks, 1 Municipal Corporation, 7 Municipalities, 36 Town Panchayats, 425 Village Panchayats and 628 Villages. Moreover it has 2 Parliamentary and 10 State Assembly constituencies. The city of Tirunelveli, on the banks of the Tamiraparani River, is the district headquarters.

5.3.5. Population and Education

Total population of the district is 30,72,880 with 15,78,595 males and 15,54,285 females. That is, for every 1,000 males there are 985 females. As per the 2001 census, it was however 1,042 females. Total literacy rate of the district is 82.92 percent with male and female segregate being 89.66 percent and 76.38 percent respectively.

The city of Tirunelveli, along with its twin town of Palayamkottai, is popularly known as the Oxford of South India. This is not only because it has quite a number of schools and colleges of historic importance, but also it remains for more than a century as a prominent centre of learning for students of adjoining and faraway districts. Three colleges in Tirunelveli share the fame of existing for more than a century. The Madurai Diraviam Thayumanavar Hindu College was started in 1859, St. John's College in 1878, and Sarah Tucker College in 1895. Jesuit Missionaries run the St. Xavier's chain of institutions here. Also, the district has a large number of schools, polytechnics, industrial training institutes, and community colleges, both in government and private sectors.

5.3.6. Economic Scene

The district as a whole is industrially backward. Agriculture is the most important sector of the economy. Other major industries are cement, cotton yarn, calcium carbide, cottonseed oil, paper, cigar, jewellery and rice and flour mill. Most of the population is engaged in agricultural and commercial activities from or near the household itself. They do farming, herding, hand loom, khadhi and handicraft, mat weaving, basket making, tie making, blacksmith works, carpentry, leather tanning, and metal works. After the liberalisation period, many business and institutional entities in banking, financial, telecommunication, health care, hospitality, real estate, educational, hospitality and automobiles have come up in and around the city of Tirunelveli.

Tirunelveli is also one of the milk procurement bases of Aavin, The Tamilnadu Cooperative Milk Producers' Federation Limited. Limestone is the chief mineral resource of the district. Red garnet sand is another valuable resource. Light traces of sulphides also occur at some places. The 1,22,055 ha. area of the forest (including 81,700 ha. set apart as tiger reserve in Mundanthurai and Kalakadu) and about 20 small rivers contribute to livelihood and economic activities.

5.4. Area Profile of Madurai

5.4.1. Brief Historical Profile

Madurai is a place of immense historical importance and has a cultural heritage that is 2,500 years old. It is internationally acclaimed as the place of temples and festivals. More than its having been the capital of the Pandiya kingdom and Nayak dynasty, it was the seat of the third and last Tamil Sangam (Tamil poetic conclave) wherein volumes of sophisticated literature were produced. It patronised very famous Tamil poets like Nakkirar, Kumaragurubarar, Seethalai Chathanar and Ilango Adigal.

Owing to its cultural diversity many languages like Tamil, English, Sourashtra, Telugu, Urudu and Hindi are spoken here. Many British and American missionaries, scholars and administrators stayed here to carry out their respective vocations and assignments. Even Dr. G.U. Pope and Beski (called, Veeramamunivar) stayed in Madurai for some time for their literary works.

Madurai still produces Tamil literature. It is also famous for fine lamps, stone and bronze sculptures, handicrafts and exotic products of fine arts that are sold in national and international markets. Madurai city has three small but prominent hills as its boundary. They are named Yanaimalai (Elephant Hill), Nagamalai (Cobra Hill) and Pasumalai (Cow Hill) for their supposed resemblance to those animals.

5.4.2. Geography and Constitution

The district had one of the largest land areas in Tamilnadu as created by the British. It was therefore bifurcated in 1984 to create a new district namely Dindigul. Subsequently in 1997 Madurai was once more split up to create Theni district. Now Madurai district is bordered by the districts of Dindigul and Thiruchirapalli on the north, Sivagangai district on the east, Theni district on the west and Virudhunagar district on the south.

The district covers an area of 3,741.73 Sq. km and has 2 revenue divisions, 7 taluks, 52 firkas and 670 villages. Under these subdivisions, the district has a municipal corporation, 6 municipalities, 12 town panchayats and 431 village panchayats. There are 10 State assembly constituencies and 3 Parliamentary constituencies in the district. The city of Madurai, a municipal corporation on the banks of Vaigai River, is its headquarters.

5.4.3. Population and Education

The district has a total population of 25,62,279 as per the 2001 Census, comprising 12,95,124 males and 12,76,155 females. That is, males constitute 51% of the population and females 49% with a sex ratio of 968 females per 1,000 males. Thus, unlike Tuticorin and Tirunelveli districts, the sex ratio is much weaker, for the district is ill-famed for female infanticide. However the district has a literacy rate of 78.65% and ranks 7th in the State. The population density is 689 heads per sq. km.

Madurai is home to some of India's oldest institutions including the Thiagarajar College of Engineering and Thiagarajar College of Arts and Science, American College and Madura College. Madurai Kamaraj University started in 1966 is made up of 72 departments and 18 schools of academic education and research. It pioneered the concept of Distance Education throughout India. Several other arts and science colleges are present in the district, affiliated to Madurai Kamaraj University. Madurai is also home to Lady Doak College started in 1948, the oldest college for women in south India. Fatima College is yet another well known college for women. As far as schools are concerned, the Sethupathi Higher Secondary School is over 100 years old. Subramanya Bharathi, the famous Tamil poet, was a teacher in this school. The OCPM Girls Higher Secondary School is over 200 years old.

The city has its share of professional, vocational and technical institutions of higher education. It has 33 arts and science colleges, 12

engineering colleges, 5 medical colleges, 2 agricultural colleges, one law college, 2 music colleges, 8 industrial training institutes (ITI), 8 polytechnic colleges, 11 paramedical institutions and 9 teacher training institutes (TTI). In school education, Madurai has 378 pre-primary schools, 936 primary schools, 304 middle schools, 93 high schools and 120 higher secondary schools.

5.4.4. Economy and Industry

Agriculture and farming remain the backbone of the economy in the district. Madurai is famous for flower cultivation. Its jasmine is acclaimed for its captivating fragrance. Madurai is also famous for its fabric painted cotton saree brand named Sungidi. The saree is manufactured with yarn of fine count with intricate artworks in its borderline. Two other sectors that contribute significantly to the economy are textiles and tourism. The greatest hindrance to the economy is the noticeable decline in population and sex ratio witnessed over the years. Female infanticide and foeticide are prevalent in the villages of the district.

Compared to many other districts of the State, Madurai is a laggard in industrial development. No new large scale venture has been started after the 1980's. Lately however the facade of its industry is changing. Many old famous names in manufacturing such as Madura Coats, Fenner India and TVS Group, which once were jewels in the industrial crown of Madurai, have given way to information technology, banking and finance, health care, telecommunications, hospitality and food, transport, land promoters and real estate and many other

service based organisations and institutions. Yet other historically famed and established names are struggling to get on.

As far as the famous ones are concerned, TVS Group manufactures automobiles, automobile parts, heavy braking systems, tyres and tubes. Fenner India manufactures solid woven PVC (Poly Vinyl Chloride) conveyor belts. Madura Coats manufactures bleached and dyed cotton yarn, synthetic yarn, printed and woven fabric and various textile products. TAFE (Tractors and Farm Equipment Limited) manufactures tractors and farm equipments.

Industrial estates that are currently operational are Small Industries Development Corporation (SIDCO) Industrial Estate at K.Pudur, SIDCO Industrial Estate at Kappalur, Hosiery Estate at Urangaanpatti, Electrical and Electronics Industrial Estate at Kappalur and Automobile Industrial Estate at Kappalur. The District Industries Centre (DIC) was formed in 1979. It provides aspiring and budding entrepreneurs all necessary assistance. Similarly there is a Centre for Entrepreneurial Development functioning under Madurai Kamaraj University. The global computer giant, IBM, has established its Regional Center of Excellence in Madurai. The district administration has identified two sites for setting up IT Parks and one for Tidel Park. The government has also taken initiative to transform Madurai into a tourism corridor of southern Tamilnadu.

5.4.5. Problems and Shortcomings

It is a bitter fact that Madurai's ranking in social and economic performance has sunk in the past few decades. It has lagged behind in attracting new domestic and foreign investments as much it failed to capitalise on its inherent strengths. Although there is no dearth of potential and talented manpower in Madurai, it has not been able to retain, utilise and compensate them. In the years that followed the Information Technology boom, the city witnessed an exodus of professionals to other urban centers such as Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Mumbai. The State government is blamed by commercial and social bodies for limiting industrial development to Chennai and its adjacent areas. Although this claim is partially true, the main reasons for Madurai's condition lies in its endemic caste discrimination, lack of ethicality in work and labour, widespread hooliganism, and lack of self-worth, esteem and initiative among the populace. This is a vicious cycle of socioeconomic deterioration wherein the state of being underdeveloped contributes to the the social evils which forces the torchbearers of society to migrate to other cities that in turn engenders a void and direction less society that leads to criminality and then underdevelopment. This is continuing until this day as many individuals and families have opted out of Madurai in search of better opportunities and living, even from the school education itself.

5.5. Conclusion

This chapter detailed the profile of the study area. This information shall help to understand the social and economic conditions of the people in respective areas. Moreover with this, their newspaper reading and subscribing preferences shall be understood to some extent. In addition, if this information is correlated to the circulation figures of these areas, it shall provide practical suggestions and solutions to address both grey issues and areas of improvement. Finally, this gives a taste of the diversity in the reader base of the study area.

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