CHAPTER - II

Profile of Tiruvannamalai District

Introduction

Tamil Nadu, the southern most State of India and the heartland of the Tamil classical culture literally means the “homeland of the Tamils”. The region has been the home to one of the last surviving classical civilizations of the world, the Tamil civilization, which dates back to 2500 years. It is comparable to other ancient civilizations of the world like the Mesopotamian and Egyptian civilization. The Tamil language is considered among the oldest classical languages of the world. It has witnessed the rule of great dynasties like Chera, Chola, Pandya and Pallavas in ancient times. In the medieval period the Tamil country witnessed the glorious rule of the imperial Cholas and later Pandyas. During this period there was a significant development in various fields. Later in the period of Vijanagar, Nayak and Maratha rule also the Tamil country witnessed remarkable developments in various spheres. Around 1609, the Dutch established a settlement in Pulicat which is in the northern direction to present Chennai.\(^1\) In 1639, the English under the English East India Company, established a settlement further south, in the present Chennai. During this time the English exploited the rivalries among the provincial rulers to expand their sphere of influence throughout the Nizam’s dominions and southern India. But in their venture the French stood as obstacles. However, with the superior generals, efficient military force and strategy English were successful in their struggle against the European and indigenous forces in India.

Indigenous rulers handed over the tax revenue collection rights to the English East India Company by the end of the 18th century. Some of the chieftains and Poligars of southern India who fought the English East India Company when it was expanding its territorial occupations were Maveeran Sundaralinga kudumbanar, Veerapandiaya Kattabomman, Pulithevan, Marudu brothers and Dheeran Chinnamalai. But they were all either completely suppressed or liquidated. By the end of the 18th century the English almost became the master of South India.

In the early 19th century, the English East India Company consolidated most of the southern Indian territories into Madras Presidency coterminous with the dominions of Nizam of Hyderabad. Till 1858 India was under the strict rule of the English East India Company. But the Great Mutiny of 1857 brought an end to the Company rule and India came under Crown’s rule and the Imperial rule continued till 1947. Under Crown’s rule till 1947 Madras Presidency witnessed many developments in various fields of human activity. The Madras State as it was called since 1947 was comprising of the present day Tamil Nadu, coastal Andhra Pradesh up to Ganjam district in Orissa, northern Karnataka, and parts of Kerala. It was subsequently split up on linguistic lines in 1956. In 1968, Madras State was renamed as Tamil Nadu, meaning the Land of the Tamils.

Lying in the southern most part of the Indian Peninsula and bordered by Puducherry, Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu has Chennai as its capital. It is bound by the Eastern Ghats in the north, the Nilgiris, the Anamalai Hills and Palakkad on the west, Bay of Bengal in the
east, Gulf of Mannar, Palk Strait in the south east and Indian Ocean in the South.²

Among “Panchalinga Sivasthalams”, (Abodes of Lord Siva) Tiruvannamalai, the capital of the district, Lord Siva is represented as “Agnilingam”, (fire) and the other four are “Bhoomilingam” (earth) represented in Kancheepuram “Varunalingam” (Water) represented in Thiruvanaikaval “Vayulingam” (wind) represented in Thirukkalahasthi (Sri Kalahasthi in Andhra Pradesh) and “Ahayalingam” (sky) represented in Chidambaram. “Arunachalam” in Sanskrit means Sun–mountain or The Mountain with the qualities of fire.³

The Lord of Tiruvannamalai is in the form of Jothi (fire) whose top and bottom were not traced by Lord Brahma (the Lord of creation) and Lord Vishnu (the lord of protection). Because of this, the place is considered sacred. As indicated earlier it is said that the very thought about this place Tiruvannamalai would help a devotee to attain Liberation (Mukthi). Every year lakhs of devotees visit this place at the time of the “Karthigai Deepam” festival to have peace of mind and happiness.⁴ Skandapurana declares that there is no “Kshetra” better than Tiruvannamalai Arunachaleeshwara.

Tiruvannamalai is one of the most venerated places in Tamil Nadu. The temple town of Tiruvannamalai is one of the most ancient heritage sites of India and is an important place of the saiva religion. The Arunachala hill and its environs have been held in great veneration by the Hindus for centuries. The temple is grand in conception and architecture and rich in

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⁴ Census of India (2001), Tiruvannamalai District, District Census Hand Book, Part – A, Director of Census Operations, Chennai, p. 3.
tradition, history and festivals. The main Karthigai Deepam festival of Tiruvannamalai attracts devotees from far and wide to this place. Even during the period of imperial rule, the rituals and religious functions were conducted with all Agamic principles and traditions.

Formation of the District

After Independence, Tiruvannamalai was in the North Arcot district. The civil district of North Arcot was divided into Vellore district and Tiruvannamalai district for administrative convenience in September 1989. P. Kolappan was the first collector of Tiruvannamalai district. As indicated earlier it was first called as Tiruvannamalai Sambuvarayar District. It was formed with Cheyyar and Tiruvannamalai Revenue Divisions with Tiruvannamalai as the District capital.

Location and Size

Vellore district forms the Northern boundary of the Tiruvannamalai district. A part of Kancheepuram district and a part of Villupuram district occupy the Southern boundary. A part of Dharmapuri district and a part of Vellore district occupy the Western boundaries. The district came into existence on 30th September 1989 after the bifurcation of the erstwhile North Arcot district. The district lies between 11.55° and 13.15° of North latitude and 78.20° and 79.50° of East longitude.

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Total Area

The total geographical area of the district is 6191 Sq KM. comprising the Revenue Divisions of Tiruvannamalai and Cheyyar. The district has 7 Taluks viz. Tiruvannamalai, Chengam, Thandrampat, Polur, Arni, Cheyyar and Wandavasi. There are 18 Blocks viz. Vembakkam, Cheyyar, Anakavur, Wandavasi, Thellar, Peranamallur, Arni, West Arni, Chetpet, Polur, Javvadhu Hills, Kalasapakkam, Pudupalayam, Thurinjapuram, Kilpennathur, Tiruvannamalai, Chengam, Thandarampet, constituting the district under Rural sector and four Municipalities Viz. Tiruvannamalai, Arni, Cheyyar (Thiruvathipuram), Wandavasi representing urban sectors along with 10 Town Panchayats Viz. Kilpennathur, Vettavalam, Chengam, Pudupalayam, Polur, Kalambur, Chetpat, Kannamangalam, Peranamallur, Desur and 1067 Revenue Villages, 860 Village Panchayats.

Physiography

The North–western part of the region covers portions of Eastern Ghats and their spurs. The Javvadhu Hills are the highest mountains of the region. They cover the eastern part of Tiruppattur Taluk, the north western portion of Chengam taluk and the western part of Polur taluk with small hills running into Vellore taluk upto 9 KM. The general elevation of the Javvadhu Hills is 2500 feet. With peaks rising up to 4200 feet constitute parts of Kalvarayan hill range in Villupuram District. There are also a large number of small hills in Polur and Chengam taluks. The general slope of the region is from west to

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9. Potential Linked Credit plan (2009-2010), Tiruvannamalai District, Tamil Nadu, p.1
10. Tiruvannamalai District of Tamil Nadu, (2010-2011), Backward Regions Grant Fund District Plan, p.11.
east. The hills in Tiruvannamalai and Pavala Malai at Polur taluk are famous for their spiritual sanctity.\textsuperscript{12}

**Population**

The total population of this district is 21,86,125 comprising 10,95,859 men and 10,90,266 women as per 2001 census.\textsuperscript{13} The urban population is 4,00,761 constituting 18 percent of the population, the remaining 82 percent i.e. 17,85,364 is rural population. The density of the population is 352 per sq. KM. The SC & ST population is about 4,67,532. The total literate among male are 7,61,403 and that of female are 5,35,748.\textsuperscript{14}

As per the 2011 census the total population of this district was 24,68,965 comprising of 12,38,688 Men and 12,30,277 women. The urban population is 4,96,343 constituting 20 percent of the total population, the remaining 80 percent i.e. 19,72,622 is rural population. The density of the population is 399 per sq.KM. The total literates among male are 9,26,089 and that of female are 7,27,195.\textsuperscript{15}

**Rivers**

Palar, Cheyyar and Pennaiyar are the rivers running through this district. Palar rising near Nandidurg in Mysore enters Vellore District passing through Gudiyattam, Walajapet and Arakkonam taluks before entering into Cheyyar taluk of Tiruvannamalai district. The other important river is the Cheyyar river which arises from Javvadhu hills. Flowing in a southern


\textsuperscript{13} Sathanai Malar, *Seithi Makkal Thodarbu Thurai*, Tiruvannamalai District, p.6.


direction at first it turns South–East near Chengam and after flowing over a distance of 13 KM it passes through Polur, Wandavasi and Cheyyar taluks. Pennaiyar originate from Nandidurg of Karnataka. It passes through Dharmapuri district and enters the Southern part of Chengam taluk. After flowing through these parts, it enters Vellore district. It is a perennial river. At Sathanur, about 30 KM west of Tiruvannamalai, a dam was constructed across this river which is a notable picnic spot of this district. The Sathanur reservoir also provides drinking water facility to Tiruvannamalai Town, besides providing water for irrigation.\textsuperscript{16}

**Minerals**

No mineral is mined in this district. Quartz, however, is available in little quantity in the regions bordering South Arcot district. Pirhotite is said to be available in Polur. Black and multi–colored marble stones are available in plenty in the regions of Chengam and Wandavasi. These were made use of by the Sambuvarayas in the past for exhibiting their architectural skills.\textsuperscript{17}

**Soil**

The soil of this region is mostly red ferruginous variety both sandy and loamy with black clay. Black soil is mostly found in the neighborhood of the rivers of Palar, Pennaiyar and Cheyyar. Red series of sand is found in all the taluks of the district but more predominantly in Tiruvannamalai and Wandavasi taluks.\textsuperscript{18}


\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p.13.

Forests

The area covered by forests in the region is about 153,318 hectares which is about a quarter of the area of the centric region. Thick forest areas of this district are found in Chengam and Polur taluks. The reserve forest in the taluks consists of hill forests, plain forests, scrub growth and Palar river plantation. The hill forests contain sandalwood and bamboos. The forests of the region are of great value and good source of revenue to the Government. Apart from the above, herbal plants, and tamarind trees are prevalent in these forests.

Hills and Mountains

The North–Western part of the region contains portions of Eastern Ghats and their spurs. The Javvadhis are the loftiest mountains of the region. They cover the Eastern part of Tiruppattur taluk, the North Western portion of Chengam taluk and the Western part of Polur taluk with spurs running into Vellore taluk up to 9 KM of Vellore town. The general elevation of the Javvadhu hill is 2500 feet with peaks rising up to 4200 ft. The hills in the Southern part of Chengam taluk are parts of Kalvarayan range in the Villupuram District.\footnote{19. Census of India (1991), op. cit., p. 13.}

Fisheries

The importance of fisheries in the district is restricted to inland waters. With the construction of reservoir over Sathanur in 1958, a new fish seed–collection centre was established. A good stock of fish seeds are stocked here. Fishery Statistics reveals that inland fish catch is about 110.0 tones and the number of fishermen engaged is 62 persons in Sathanur Dam. Fishing by
mechanized boats engaged in the hill smelters is 29 and transwellers is 9 and mechanized boats with plain bait boats is 2.\textsuperscript{20}

**Climate and Rainfall**

The climatic condition of the region vary occasionally because of its Physiography. The highest temperature recorded in the recent past was 112 degrees and the lowest was 54 degrees. The radiation of the heat from the rocky hill slopes and the blinding glare of the dry sandy bed of the Palar and the discomfort caused by the rays was about 37.8 Inches and the average number of rainy days was about 52. The rainy months are ordinarily from May to December. The rainfall of the region depends on the South West and the North–East monsoon and the latter had been somewhat stronger except in the Southern taluks of Cheyyar and Wandavasi.

Temperature and rainfall in the district are generally moderate. In Tiruvannamalai and Chengam, the climate is cool in winter and very hot during summer. The district gets most of its rainfall during North–East monsoon. Cyclonic storms are not uncommon which cause good rainfall. But they do not cause much damage.\textsuperscript{21}

**Flora and Fauna**

No distinct variety of flora is observed in this district. The hilly area is of “dry” deciduous type. In the low land, the ordinary vegetation include tamarind trees, teak wood, sandal wood, van teak and bamboo which are important trees in the district. As regards fauna, although no special distinguished variety is found in the district, some wild animals are found in the mountainous tracts. Bisons are seen in small number in Javvadhu hill

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., p.16.
ranges and tigers are occasionally seen. Leopards, Black bears, Hyena, Samburs, Spotted deers, Jungle Sheep, Barking deer, and varieties of snakes including Cobras are spread over at different parts. Elephants were found near Chengam forests. However, Elephants are not seen here in the recent times. Pea fowls and Jungle fowls are found in small number.  

**Land use**

As per the available data, the total geographical area of the district is 6191 Sq. KM and the land that is used for agricultural purposes is 5,01,463 acres. The net area sown forms 32.1 percent and area sown more than once is 1,57,352 acres which forms 10.8 percent and the total cropped area is 658,815 acres forming 42.2 percent of the total geographical area.  

**Agriculture**

Tiruvannamalai district cannot be equated with some of the agriculturally prominent districts like Thanjavur, Tiruchirappalli and Villupuram. Yet, it is an important area in the field of agriculture. Cultivation is the mainstay of the people of the district. The district is dependent on seasonal rains for successful agricultural operations. Some of the taluks, in particular, which enjoy irrigation facilities like Tiruvannamalai, Cheyyar, Polur and Wandavasi, are known for their substantial contribution to the agricultural production of the district.

Tanks and wells are the chief sources of irrigation and there are enough water in them, when monsoons occur normally. Electricity is provided to all the villages in the district. In the last four decades, there had been a spurt in the installation of electrical pump–sets for irrigation and this had

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given a boost to the practice of agricultural techniques in the use of fertilizers-Pesticides, etc., which resulted in increased agricultural production.

Irrigation

The three major rivers that contribute largely to irrigation in this district are Palar, Pennaiyar and Cheyyar across which dams have been constructed. Construction of Sathanur dam across Pennaiyar started during the first Five Year Plan. It is 770 meters long and 36.27 meters high with a storing capacity of 4600 M. feet, and it irrigates about 162,266 hectares of land. It reserves water and supplies throughout the year for irrigation to Chengam and Tiruvannamalai taluks and also for the Villupuram district. Palar Dam benefits Cheyyar taluk, whereas Cheyyar Dam irrigates Cheyyar and Wandavasi taluks.24

Transport and communication

93 KM. of broad-gauge rail transport in the Katpadi and Villupuram segment is utilized for both passenger and goods movement. 1600 KM of various kinds of roads are frequently used. The district has two Head Post offices, 81 Sub–offices, 458 branch post offices besides one Telegraph office, 2 Telephone divisions and nearly 71,588 phone connections till 1982.25 Road transportation and communications were developed subsequently and there was an increase of 50 percent in their growth by the close of the 20th century.26

Animal Husbandry

Previously intensive cattle development projects in key villages were carried on in cattle development in limited areas of selected districts of the State. Now, the Department of Animal Husbandry is undertaking implementation of the World Bank assisted projects through livestock development Programms from 1991–1992 under the intensive cattle development projects and key centers have been reorganized into 20 cattle breeding and fodder development units in the State, so that they can exclusively attend to cattle and fodder development work in all the districts.

Thus, the department of Animal Husbandry has provided facilities exclusively for cattle and buffalo development in all the districts in the State. The Animal Husbandry Centre of Tiruvannamalai district provides the following data on Veterinary facilities to the livestock population.27

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Institutions</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Veterinary Hospitals</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Veterinary Dispensaries</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Clinic Centre’s</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mobile Veterinary Units</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Total Sub – centres</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Industries

Before bifurcation, North Arcot district gained fair momentum during the seventies and eighties from the special measures taken by the government consequent on its being declared as backward district. But after the recent bifurcation of Tiruvannamalai district and Vellore district, the silk industry in Arni Taluk, the Centre State Farm in Melchengam and a few other industries support the employment of a segment of the population. Even this newly formed district has been declared as industrially backward by the Government of Tamil Nadu which has given rise to an Industrial Estate at Cheyyar.28

Arni town in Tiruvannamalai district is situated at a distance of 120 KM south of Madras. While agriculture is the main livelihood of the rural people, the town of Arni is famous for its production of all varieties of rice and also silk sarees which display very attractive designs and colors. There are as many as 150 twisting factories, both big and small in Arni Taluk. Raw silk is twisted and supplied to handloom sectors.29

There are also a number of small scale industries in the district. The number of small scale industries in the district with persons employed in 1999–2000 is as given below30

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Industry</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Capital (Lakhs of Rupees)</th>
<th>Employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food products</td>
<td>985</td>
<td>492.5</td>
<td>3,940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton Textiles</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>175.2</td>
<td>584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wood products</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>153.5</td>
<td>1,228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubber &amp; Plastics</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non - Metallic</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>612.0</td>
<td>408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metals</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>206.0</td>
<td>408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electrical &amp; Electronics</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous &amp; Synthetic Textiles</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>186.0</td>
<td>1,116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cottage Industries

Stone carving is done in some parts of Polur taluk by the traditional workers. Horn and bone works are done in some places of Cheyyar taluk. Mat-Weaving is an important pursuit as cottage industry in many of the villages of this district. Soap-making, bee hive keeping, production of handmade paper, development of palm products and handloom cotton and silk industry have been brisk activities in this region to supplement the Integrated Rural Development Projects (IRDP).31

Banking

To help the financial needs of the people, a network of 20 commercial banks with 105 branches, one district Central Co–Operative Bank with 23 branches, Primary Co-Operative Agriculture and Rural Development Bank (PCARDB) 8, 4, Urban banks one Tamil Nadu Industrial Investment

31. Ibid., p.19.
Corporation (TIIC) 1, 159 primary Agricultural Co–Operative Banks are operated in Tiruvannamali district.\(^{32}\) Undoubtedly they had improved the economy of the region.

**Sathanur Dam**

A dam over Pennaiyar river was long contemplated for developing the region and it was executed in the post Independence era. The Sathanur dam construction was started in 1954 and was completed and inaugurated on 10-11-1957. It is situated 30 KM away to the west of Tiruvannamalai with a height of 120 feet, benefiting 45,000 acres of land for irrigating some parts of Tiruvannamalai district. It supplies drinking water to the main city of Tiruvannamalai. It was developed beautifully and it attracts tourists from all over Tamil Nadu and India.\(^{33}\)

**Jamuna Maruthur Hills (Javvadhu Hills)**

Being the extension of Javvadhu Hills, Jamuna Maruthur Hills area is a beautiful tourist resort. In summer it is considered as a Mini–Ooty. The water falls at Beaman Medu and the lake here are of tourist importance. There is a proposal to provide boating facility in this lake. About 12 KM away from Jamuna lies Maruthur Raja Kambira Malai and it is proposed to build there a temple of Lord Rama at an estimated cost of 5 crores. This may perhaps be a prospective place of tourist importance.\(^{34}\)

**Places of worship and tourism**

Tiruvannamalai is one of the most venerated places in Tamil Nadu. Festivals like Karthigai Deepam festival, Maha Shivarathri and Pournami

\(^{32}\) District Statistical Hand Book (2009-2010), p.5.


\(^{34}\) Census of India (2001), Part-A, *op.cit.*, p.21
girivalam attract large number of tourists and lakhs of devotees from far and wide throughout India and abroad. Further, the main features of the district are its historic places namely Tiruvannamalai, Arni, Wandavasi and Devigapuram, which are also connected with the activities of the English and French East India Companies. It is also to be stated that there are well maintained and beautiful tourist places in this region such as Sathanur dam, Javvadhumalai, Amirthy Game Park and the Panoramic and grand Arunachalewara temple and other religions institutions like Sri Ramanashram and Sri Seshadri Swamigal Ashram.35

In the later Chola period, the Sambuvarayar chiefs developed Padaiveedu near Arni as their Headquarters and ruled this region. We can find their fort and a Siva temple namely, Kailasanathar koil in Arni town. On the whole Tiruvannamalai had been traditionally rich in historic and spiritual values but it had lacked in industrial growth.36

Cattle Shandai a market held on special occasions of Tiruvannamalai

An important feature of the temple town of Tiruvannamalai district is that it had been hosting the annual “Karthigai Deepam” festival for over centuries and attracting three to five lakhs of devotees every year. But a little known fact is that a spectacular week – long annual cattle and horse shandai is also held in this town to coincide with the festival.

Beginning five days prior to Deepam festival and ending a day after that, the cattle and horse shandai attracts buyers and sellers from various parts of Tamil Nadu besides neighboring States like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and the Union Territory of Pondicherry. According to the versions

35. K. Balaguru, *Tamil Nadu Muzhu Vilakkam*, Kala publication, Sivakasi, p.41
of the long time residents of this place, there was large turn-over of people for this festival which had started in the early part of this century influencing traders to buy and sell cows, bulls and horses. The venue of this shandai is spread over a vast extent of land at the foot of Annamalai Hills presenting a lovely sight of the cows, bulls and horses grazing happily while their owners are busy in haggling over the prices.

During 1999–2000, nearly 25,000 pairs of cattle were brought to the shandai which attracted a lakh of traders. There were many leading businessmen who were the owners of dairy farms who visited Tiruvannamalai exclusively to trade in this shandai. The specialty is that it attracts cows and bull’s world over whose price even goes up to Rs 50,000. The number of horses traded in the shandai had come down over the years owing to the decline in use of horse as a “means of transport” compared to the 25,000 pairs of cattle traded. In the shandai, held a few years back, only about 1000 horses were traded. Many horse-owners come from Madanapalli in Andhra Pradesh to the shandai to sell their horses.

Apart from the above Shandai there are about 26 different trading centers in the district where weekly shandais transact business regularly. Besides cattle other products like food grains, cloth, cereals, pulses, etc., are also traded here.  

Sericulture

Sericulture is an agro-based labour intensive cottage industry which is a synthesis of activities like cultivation of mulberry, rearing of silk worm, and extraction of silk. While the first two activities are agricultural in character the third one is industrial in nature. As mulberry constitutes the only satisfactory

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food of the silk worms, the quality of mulberry leaf has a direct bearing on the development of the worm and this will have an effect on the quantity and quality of the silk.

**Tiruvannamalai, as a district**

Tiruvannamalai is an ancient region known for its religious traditions. It is believed that this region is an abode of Lord Siva and the Saivaites have a strong belief that the very thought about this place will bring salvation to a person. It is also for long strongly believed that Tiruvannamalai had been the living place of innumerable Siddhas, the great Saivaite saints. Though it was a part of North Arcot district before 1989, its viability and potentials induced the government authorities to make it a separate district in order to nurture its long traditions and culture. Its hoary past and blooming modernity in social, economic and cultural spheres are a feast to the pilgrims, visitors and tourists to this place.