CHAPTER - III

Socio-Economic Condition of Tiruvannamalai District

Society in the district of Tiruvannamalai is a miniature India-famous for her Unity in Diversity. It is an epitome of several castes, classes, religions and races and yet it significantly stands at a point of cross-roads as the orthodox society also yielding to reforms and changes on the threshold of modern India.

The population of the district during the period of the study comprised of chiefly the Hindus, Muslims and Christians. The Jains and the Buddhists form a microscopic minority.

In the district we find a large number of communities speaking different languages, and belonging to different communities. Before the advent of the Vijayanagar Empire, the district comprised of mainly the Tamil speaking people. But when the region was absorbed into the Vijayanagar Empire, the Telugu and Kannada speaking people found their way into the district. These people did not go back to their respective places, their native lands, but once and for all settled in the Tamil country.

We find a good number of Muslims in Tiruvannamalai district in addition to the Hindus. The Nawabs patronized Arabic scholars.\(^1\) The district was economically a backward area, and the Christian missionaries took advantage of the local conditions for their evangelical work, and as a result the number of Christians in the district increased considerably.\(^2\) Though in the seventeenth century the district consisted of some people belonging to other religions like Jainism and Buddhism the Muslims, the Christians and


the Hindus who were basically Tamils dominated this district in their number and professional pursuits.

**Communities: Hindus**

Hindus were in majority who were in larger number in this district. Among the Hindus, the Brahmins occupied a prominent place in the social organization and were respected as learned, intelligent and well versed in the sastras. The Brahmins were once priests, and today many of them are employed in the administrative service and they also practice as lawyers in places like Tiruvannamalai and Arani. The Brahmins who had taken to civil occupations were respected more for their official positions and economic status than for their caste. There are many Tamil speaking Brahmin families in Polur and in the neighborhood whose forefathers had in the past worked as administrators under the Nawabs of Arcot.

The Brahmins of this district lived in separate localities called Agraharams. They would not on any account touch the plough and work in the fields. Their lands were chiefly cultivated by the people of the inferior castes. In ancient times, the people called Kshatriyas came next to the Brahmins (Brahmanas) and they were warriors. Later on, not only the Kshatriyas, people belonging to different castes also served in the army of the kings.

The merchant caste of this region consisted of the Tamil Speaking Chettiyars and the Telugu speaking Chettiyars. The Telugu speaking

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Chettiyars had migrated to the district from Andhradesa and settled down in this region. Vellalas of this region were considered as the backbone of the district since they were engaged in active agricultural pursuits. There are some divisions in the Vellalar caste. They are much advanced in the field of education in recent times and a considerable number of people belonging to this caste had migrated to Madras and its neighborhood, for business purposes and for seeking jobs in government offices and other public organizations.⁷

**Muslims**

The district stands second in Tamil Nadu in the matter of Muslim population, the first being Thanjavur. The Muslims came to this district under various circumstances. It is said that the first set of Muslims came from Egypt and settled in Malabar and in due course moved to the district.⁸ They were engaged in different trades and had been contributing to the economic development of this region.

**Christians**

Like the Muslims, the Christians also form the major religious group in the district. It should be pointed out that Christianity made much progress only after the British conquest in the eighteenth century. The Christians may be divided into three large groups namely, the Europeans the Asians and the native Christians. Among these three main groups there were the Roman Catholics and the Protestants. The Adi Dravidas were treated badly by the Hindus for a long time and their age long suppression forced them to seek

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succour else where. These poor people were given food, shelter and clothing by the Christian missionaries. However, the missionaries were successful only in converting the people of the lower classes. We do not get any reference regarding the conversion of the people belonging to the higher sector of the society.\(^9\)

The upper castes looked upon conversion as tantamount to their degradation to the lowest social status. The habit of eating beef by the Christians was not liked by the Hindus. These practices of the missionaries were against the traditional customs of the Hindus.\(^10\) Yet, there were no emotional clashes among these Communities.

### Jains

During the ancient and medieval times, the district was a stronghold of Jainism. But during the seventeenth century they formed only a small minority. In the 16\(^{th}\), 17\(^{th}\) and 18\(^{th}\) centuries, they had to face many hardships in life and hence the Jains slowly began to give up their religion in preference to either Hinduism or Christianity.\(^11\) But Thirumalai, a place in Polur taluk, had been inhabited by the Jains and some of the Jain families had preserved the old copies of the religious works of Jainism.

### Languages

The Census Reports give information on the languages spoken by the people of the regions. It is gleaned from the Census Reports that Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam and Hindi had been the languages spoken in this region. Though it is predominantly Tamil region, the Hoysala and

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Vijayanagar connections were responsible for the existence of Kannada and Telugu speaking people in this region. But the other language groups of people are small in number and they are engaged in minor trades.

**Women Self-Help Groups in Tiruvannamalai**

In the year 1992, Women’s Society was started by Shanthimalai Research and Development Organization. In 1997 many branches were established. Some of the nationalized banks provided to the groups loan with less interest and there are many NGO’s in Tiruvannamalai, and the following can be stated as examples.¹²

1. Community Integrated Development Association,
2. Rural Women and Children Society,
3. Integrated Rural Development Society,
4. Mahatma Educational and Rural Development Society,
5. Rural Organization for Social Education,
6. Rural Women Development Trust,
7. Rural Reconstruction and social Service Centre,
8. Bharathi Magalir Grama Munnetra Iyakkam,
9. Women Education and Action for Liberation

These organizations work for creating awareness among the people and particularly of women of the villages about different kinds of developments around and also work for the progress of women.

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Women Self-Help Groups in Tiruvannamalai

Many Women in India, right from ancient times had been suffering from various disabilities. Excepting some women from affluent families many of the women had been subjected to inhuman treatment. They were not considered equal to men. They rarely enjoyed social and economic rights. Poverty in addition added to their misery. This had been the condition almost in all parts of India.

Ray of light came to them only from the 19th century. Social reformers of India tirelessly worked for their upliftment and took great efforts to pull them out of their deplorable condition. In this task women’s associations also lent their support.

Many women in Tiruvannamalai region remained in poverty as their men folk took little effort to improve the family condition. Failure of monsoon and colonial governments' indifference to indigenous industries threw the agricultural and industrial labour out of jobs. The men were in despair and the women to suffer along with them. But during the post Independence period, these women were helped by the government through different Government Schemes. New hopes had dawned in the minds of the women folk.

There are also some drawbacks in the progress of women. For example, 33 percent reservation for women in Local Government organizations was not strictly followed in several places. Even if it was followed it was only followed carelessly and women were not recognized with that official identity. When women become the President of Panchayats their husbands execute the work in the place of their wives and attend to all responsibilities on their behalf. This kind of practice is not checked. But during recent times the scenario has started changing. According to the
Collector of Tiruvannamalai, women study well and after their graduation hold many high offices in the villages and they are equal to men in all respects.\textsuperscript{14}

**The development of the Status of women through Self-Help Groups**

It was in the later part of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century that the government took effective measures to empower the rural women to get out of their miserable life. Welfare measures were undertaken for them and the programme of Self-Help Groups was instrumental in alleviating their sufferings. Government’s efforts in this direction were laudable. The Chief Minister offered loans to the Self-Help Groups in the Cities of Tamil Nadu for their improvement. It is by such efforts the women improved their income. The women Self-Help Groups in Tiruvannamalai had 37 crores as savings during the financial year 2009-2010.

Earlier, women were not willing to come out of their houses; but at present, they are out of their houses and getting education and working in different fields. This factor helps them to fight for their rights.\textsuperscript{15} Every year on Women’s Day which had been celebrated on 8\textsuperscript{th} of March, they had taken vow to distinguish themselves in different spheres.

In the district of Tiruvannamalai, there were 14201 Women Self-Help Groups functioning actively during 2009-2010 and there are 2,28,810 members in these groups. 529 Women Self-Help Groups were given training in growing flowers, vegetables, seeds and cattle fodder as well as designing dress and producing fertilizers.\textsuperscript{16}

\textsuperscript{14} District Rural Development, (2008), Tiruvannamalai District, Tiruvannamalai, p.5.
\textsuperscript{15} Dhinakaran, (Vellore), 31-03-2008, p.17.
\textsuperscript{16} Dhinakaran, (Vellore), 30-03-2008, p.18.
Education

The only wealth that can neither be robbed nor be destroyed is education. Words and figures are kins to the human eyes. Even though 20 lakhs of people live in Tiruvannamalai district, only 9 lakhs of them or 44.19 percent are literates. The literacy rates among males and females respectively are 66.71 percent and 39.26 percent as against the State figures of 73.55 percent and 51.33 percent. Ninety percent of the people in the district had their abode in rural areas. Upto the period of study there were only 4 Municipal towns, 18 Panchayat Unions (Community Development Blocks) and 865 Village Panchayats in the district. There are two Government Arts Colleges, 14 Private Arts Colleges and 11 Private Engineering Colleges with 9500 students and 529 Teachers. There are 58 Higher Secondary Schools with 45,000 students and 1030 teachers, 136 High Schools with 25,300 students and 637 teachers, 237 middle schools with 62,400 students and 1230 teachers and 1683 primary schools with 147,687 students and 3200 teachers in the district.\(^{17}\) The average distance between one primary school and another is 3.5 km. There are also Libraries in various parts of the district which are frequented by the people of this district.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EDUCATION</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Universities</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Arts and Science Colleges</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Colleges for Professional Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Medicine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Allopathy</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii. Indian Medicine</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. Homeopathy</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Engineering Colleges</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Agricultural Colleges</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Veterinary Colleges</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Law Colleges</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Colleges for Special Education (Nursing)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Primary School</td>
<td>1496</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Middle School</td>
<td>455</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) Secondary School (10th)</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h) Higher Secondary School (+2)</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) Matriculation School</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j) CBSC School</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k) Teacher's Training Institutes</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: District Hand Book, Tiruvannamalai District.\(^{18}\)

**Literacy**

A person aged 7 years and above who can read and write with understanding in any language is taken as literate. A person who can only read but cannot write is not literate. It is not necessary that to be considered as literate a person should have received any formal education or passed

any minimum educational standard. Literacy could also be achieved through adult literacy classes or through any non-formal educational system. People who are blind and can read in Braille are treated as literates.\(^{19}\) According to 1981 census all children of age four years or less are treated as illiterates although they may be going to school and can read and write a few odd words. During 1991 census this limit was raised up to the age of six years.\(^{20}\)

**Literacy by Block and Gender**

There had been a very significant rise in the literacy rate in all the blocks of Tiruvannamalai district between 1991 and 2001, particularly so with Jawadhu hills, Polur, Thurinjapuram and Chengam. But there are wide variations across blocks and across social grouping in the district as a whole during 2001. First five blocks performing relatively better with respect to literacy rate were Arani, Tiruvannamalai, West Arani, Cheyyar and Wandavasi. The place Jawadhu Hills was the block with only 30 percent literacy rate. This was followed by Thandarampet, both standing apart from other blocks in terms of very low literacy. The performance of the other three blocks was poor in terms of literacy rate in year 2001 and they were Kalasapakkam, Chengam and Pudupalayam. The literacy rates of all the other blocks were lower than the State average except Tiruvannamalai and Arani.\(^{21}\)

The female literacy rate in Jawadhu hills was also found to be very poor (just 26.22 percent). Female literacy in the rest of the blocks was in the range of 46 to 64 percent. All the blocks had female literacy rate lower than that of the State. Considerable positive changes in female literacy rates in 2001


\(^{20}\) *District Census Hand Book, (2001), Census of India* Tiruvannamalai District, Tamil Nadu, p. 18.

were observed in the blocks of Polur, Thurinjavaram and Chetpet. A positive feature in this district was that the male–female literacy gaps had narrowed in all the blocks except Jawadhu hills between 1991 and 2001. The lowest male-female literacy gap that was observed in the block of Tiruvannamalai was also above the State average.

**Elementary Education**

India had been criticized for investing more on higher education to the neglect of basic education. The situation has changed to a large extent in the recent past in terms of policy making and in the share of investment. In 2002, the 93rd amendment to the Constitution decreed free and compulsory education to all children between the ages 6 and 14. Through the primary education project, which was an externally funded scheme and Sarva Shiksha Abigyan, (SSA) an exclusively government funded Scheme, specific focus was given to universalize elementary education.

**Children Out of School**

The number of children out of school in the district during 2000-2001 was 23319. Through enrolment in formal schools and in the bridge courses, the number was reduced to 4456 in 2005. Even after accounting for over reporting, this is a major achievement for the SSA programs in the district. As per a survey report published by the District Elementary Educational office, Tiruvannamalai, majority of the children out of school were in the following four blocks; Javvadhu Hills (1287), Chengam (484), Tiruvannamalai (433), and Thandarampet (376). The least number of children out of school was

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found in the Thellar block (53). The highest number of children out of school was found between 11 to 14 age group, indicating that recent efforts by the State to improve enrollment, retention and mainstreaming the children out of school had paid off well.\textsuperscript{25} The total number of children out of school had been declining over years. Sociologists suggest that various strategies are to be tried out to mainstream the children out of school with vigor in the above-mentioned 4 blocks, there can be a significant reduction in the number of children out of school in the district.

But these efforts had not stopped the increase in the number of “children out of school” in full. The reason for this mainly is the economic roots. Poverty and economic compulsion were the major reasons for the children to abstain from schools. This had fastly increased over the years. But there has been considerable positive change in the attitude of parents now regarding education of their children which is very much capitalized by the private schools.\textsuperscript{26} So it is advised by educational experts that livelihood enhancement needs to be addressed in a focused manner in the regions so as to encourage the children to develop the passion to go to school.

\textbf{Quality of Education in Primary Standard}

In the year 2004-2005, 75 percent of the class V students passed out with more than 60 percent marks in Tiruvannamalai district. The performances of the blocks of Anakavur, Vembakkam, West Arani, Wandavasi and Tiruvannamalai were better than the other blocks. The poorly performed blocks included Pudupalayam, Chengam and Javvadhu hills. The Girls performed better than the boys. But many students passed eighth standard with less than 60 percent marks and the situation in the district was

\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Booklet}, (2003), District Elementary Educational Office, Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu, p. 43.
\textsuperscript{26} \textit{District Information for Education}, Tiruvannamalai district, 2001-2002, p. 47.
very poor. This indicates the poor quality of education in terms of learning outcomes.27

Nirupam Bajpai and Santee Goyal 2004 identified weak teacher motivations in India, their apathy towards teaching and high teacher truancy as the reasons for the poor quality of elementary education. They also argued that the low quality of the school system contributes to parental apathy towards actually sending their children to school even when most parents recognize the importance of education as a means to social and economic mobility for their children.28 This situation calls for shift of focus from quantitative parameters of primary and upper primary education to that of quality parameters.

Higher Education

It can be seen that while the enrolment of girl students was more or less equal in the colleges for general education, their presence was very poor in the technical colleges. Considering that major proportion of students going out of the district for education, particularly for professional education would be males, the overall presence of females from this district in higher education seems to be quite low. This would have a significant adverse impact over the gender aspects of the wellbeing by worsening the relative position of women with respect to men.29

Schools for General Education and strength of Students and Teachers – 2009 - 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Institutions</th>
<th>No. of the Institutions</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Higher secondary schools</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>19274</td>
<td>16231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>High schools</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>18751</td>
<td>17867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Middle schools</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>63528</td>
<td>59983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Primary schools</td>
<td>1496</td>
<td>106033</td>
<td>100703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3722</td>
<td>207586</td>
<td>194784</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Chief Educational Office (CEO) - Tiruvannamalai.

District Primary Education Program-Sarva Shiksha Abigyan (DPEP-SSA)

District Primary Education program followed by Sarva Shiksha Abigyan, which has Universalization of Elementary Education as the aim, is based on community-ownership of the school system. The main aim is to universalize elementary education by the year 2010. They have focused on enrollment and retention in primary and upper primary education and creation of necessary manpower and infrastructure. Further, focus on improving human resources was given through on-the-job training by various setups like Cluster Resource Centre and Block Resource Centre. Continuous monitoring is also ensured through these institutional arrangements. The major improvements in elementary education witnessed in the Tiruvannamalai District.

district can be attributed to DPEP and further, SSA also undertakes special targeted activities in this district.\textsuperscript{31}

**Noon Meal Scheme**

In order to attract the children to the school Noon Meal Scheme was introduced in the madras presidency in the early part of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century by the Justice Party government. It was discontinued after some years and was started again in the post-Independence period. It was one of the most popular initiatives of the State and it has earned a good name for significantly influencing enrollment and attendance. This initiative was tried in many other States also. In Tiruvannamalai, there were 1862 Noon meal centers catering to food and nutrition requirements of the government school students.

Further, Education Guarantee Scheme Centers, Bridge Courses, and Back to School Camps and Residential Camps were also conducted to bring back the out of school children into the education system.\textsuperscript{32} During the last years of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century and in the beginning of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century there was a welcome change and notable increase in the number of children attending primary schools.

**Adult Education Centers**

There are 873 Adult education centers running in the district of Tiruvannamalai. Maximum number of Adult education centers was least in the block of Javvadhu hills followed by Chengam, Pudupalayam, Thandarampet and Kilpennathur. The major problems encountered by the


adult education centers were non-attendance of some members as well as the irregularity in the salary payment to the teachers. Effective steps had not been taken to rectify this situation.

**Drop’out Rate**

The average dropout rate in the district as a whole had declined sharply during 1999-2005. As in other indicators, the highest dropout rate (31.51 percent) in the primary standard was observed in the block of Javvadhu Hills. Government officials felt that this block needed special attention to encourage the students to continue their study particularly in primary sections. The dropout rate in all the blocks had reduced except in a few which included Cheyyar, Peranamallur, Pudupalayam and Chengam. The average dropout rate of the girl children in primary section was slightly higher than that of the boys.

Drastic decline was also witnessed regarding the dropout rate in the upper primary education in the district when the data of 2005 was compared with that of 1998-99. Similar to that of primary section, here also the dropout rate of the girls was slightly higher than that of the boys. The lowest dropout rate in upper primary standard in the year 2005 was observed in the block of Peranamallur. The highest dropout rate was observed in the block in Chengam to the tune of 19 percent closely followed by Javvadhu hills. This was the case even after the reduction of dropout rate in 2005-06 over the previous years. The dropout of Scheduled Caste (SC) girl students in upper primary section was more than that of the boys in the district in 2005.

Like the two preceding indicators, there was only a marginal difference between SC students and the overall district dropout rate. But there was a

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drastic difference between the dropout rates of the Scheduled Tribe (ST) students and that of the overall dropouts in the district. This was the case both in the primary and in the upper primary sections. There were more than 30 percent dropout in the primary section and 18 percent drop out in the upper primary section among the ST students in the block of Javvadhu Hills.}\(^{36}\)

**Economic Condition**

**Agriculture**

Agriculture proved to be the chief occupation of majority of the people in Tamil Nadu. The Rivers were almost dry during most of the year and the peasants had to totally depend upon the tank and well-irrigation. Like any other place in Tamil Nadu, the economy of Tiruvannamalai district mainly depended on agriculture. Though it cannot be compared with agriculturally prominent districts like Thanjavur, Thiruchirappalli and South Arcot, Tiruvannamalai district had shown notable progress in the field of agriculture. This district had always depended on seasonal rains for successful agricultural operations. Some of the taluks, in particular, which enjoyed irrigation facilities like Tiruvannamalai, Cheyyar, Polur and Vandavasi, had been known for their substantial contribution to the agricultural production of the district.\(^{37}\)

As mentioned earlier, the backbone of the district economy is agriculture as elsewhere in South India. More than seventy five percent of the people are engaged in agriculture in the district and it is among the highest in the district next to Thanjavur. The South West monsoon and the North East monsoon of the district were considered very essential since people solely


depended upon the monsoons for their agriculture. The main monsoon namely, the South West monsoon contributes 60 percent of the annual rain fall. Nearly two-thirds of the crops were cultivated with the support of the South West monsoon.\textsuperscript{38}

Both the wet (nanjai) and dry (punjai) have been the two major cultivation in the district, and it depended not only on the quantity of the rain but also on the timing of the rain. Early rains in May and June are necessary for the principal punjai crops comprising Cholam, Cumbu, Ragi and Varagu but the July rains are needed more for ploughing and sowing in punjai lands. July is also an important month for the sowing of seeds of the first nanjai. Rain in August and September might be used for raising though not extensively, certain punjai crops like Oilseed, Bengal gram and Gingili.\textsuperscript{39} The September month marks the beginning of ploughing and sowing of the seeds for the second major nanjai crops like Samba, which is positively terminated by November.

Ragi, Cholam, Cumbu, Varagu and Samai are the other important millets grown in the district. Red gram, Horse gram and country beans are also grown along with Pulses as red soil is always suitable for pulses.

There are three seasons namely, Swarnavari, Samba and Navarai. All the three seasons are suitable for paddy cultivation in the district. Swarnavari and Navarai are short duration varieties, that is, the crops are grown in three to four months. In samba seasons long duration varieties have been cultivated.

\textsuperscript{38} Personal Interview, R. Periyasamy, \textit{Assistant Agricultural Director}, Tiruvannamalai, 1-06-2013.

\textsuperscript{39} Personal Interview, P. Dhandapani, \textit{Agricultural Director} (Rtd.), Tiruvannamalai, 1-06-2013.
The peasants of this district had been using primitive methods in ploughing. But the principle of rotation of crops have been generally recognized and followed to some extent; mixed cropping was very common in the district. Cholam had been generally grown as a mixed crop with other grains, pulses and sometimes with cotton and indigo. The rotation of crops had been carried on in respect of Varagu, Cholam, Indigo and Ragi.

**Land Use**

As per the available data the total geographical area of the district during the 1990-1991 is 6191 square kilometers and of this area, 5,01,463 acres have been used for agricultural purpose. The net area sown forms 32.1 percent and added to this, 10.8 percent is cultivable area and the total cropped area is 6,58,815 acres forming 42.2 percent of the total geographical area.\(^{40}\)

The second important land is the forest area, occupying 3,78,857 acres forming 24.3 percent of the total geographical area. Land put to non-agricultural uses is 2,21,900 acres (14.2 percent of the total geographical area). The non-agricultural use represents lands occupied by buildings, roads, Railways, and water bodies like Rivers and canals. About 9, 137 hectares (1.55 percent) of the area is under miscellaneous use (Three-Crops land not included in net area sown) The rest of the area of about 27.9 percent represents barren and uncultivable land including mountains, cultivable wastes, pastures, grazing lands and fallow lands.\(^{41}\)

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Irrigation

The three major rivers which contribute largely to irrigation in this district are Palar, Pennaiyar and Cheyyar across which dams have been constructed. Sathanur dam has been built across Pennaiyar during the First Five year plan. It is 770 meters long and 36.27 meters high with a storage capacity of 4600 m.cft. It irrigates about 38,250 acres of land. It reserves the water and supplies throughout the year for irrigation to Chengam and Tiruvannamalai taluks and also to the Villupuram District. Palar dam benefits Cheyyar taluk, whereas Cheyyar dam irrigates Cheyyar and Wandavasi taluks. Apart from this, several hill streams feed numerous tanks and these sources meet the water requirements of this region. There are 144 Canals, 1804 tanks and 15066 wells which have been very useful for irrigation in this district.

River Irrigation

The rivers in the district are not perennial. During those few months when the rivers got flooded, the anicuts (dams) across the rivers diverted the water into the channels. The three important anicuts in the district are the Palar, the Cheyyar and the Ponnai anicuts.

The Palar anicut is situated at a distance of about 6 KM from Arcot. The four channels which branch off from this anicut are Mahendravadi, Kaveripak, Chakramallur and Dhusi channels. After filling 317 tanks, these channels irrigate about 80,916 acres of land.

The Cheyyar anicut is located around 16 KM to the east of Arani. The main channel which takes off from the anicut feeds a number of tanks. The

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total number of tanks fed by this system is 144. About 24,000 acres got irrigated by the scheme. Cheyyar and Wandavasi taluks have been mainly benefited by this anicut.45

**The Sathanur Reservoir Project**

Of all the irrigation works undertaken in the district in recent years, the Sathanur Reservoir Project is the most important one. The idea of building a reservoir on the South Pennaiyar in this district is an old decision. As early as in 1926, proposals were drawn for the construction of a reservoir of 11,000 m.cft. Capacity and a canal to serve 1,10,000 acres of dry crops. The site was the same as the present Sathanur Dam site. Owing to various reasons, the scheme was deferred. In 1954, during the First Five Year Plan period, the execution of the project was sanctioned by the State Government.46 Sathanur Dam is located at a distance of about 34 KM from Tiruvannamalai town across South Pennaiyar river in a narrow gorge between the Chinnpadi Hills on the East and corresponding low range of hills on the west. The South Pennaiyar which rises in Mysore State in Chennakesava Hills east of Nandidrug traverses through thick jungles of the Pennaiyar reserve forest in North Arcot district. The river, whose total length is 415 KM, has 34 KM in this district. The supply in the river is affected less by the rain which falls locally than by that at its source in Mysore.47

Tiruvannamalai and Chengam taluks did not have good irrigational facilities.50 They had no means to utilize the water flowing periodically in the Pennaiyar, and the two taluks now are greatly benefited. The dam is 2558

feet long; the height of the dam is 147 feet. The storage capacity of reservoir is 4,600 m.cft. The unique feature of the project is that the water spread area lies within reserve forests and no village got sub-merged so far by sudden floods. Irrigation is effected through channels taking off from a pickup anicut 6 KM below the reservoir. The pick-up anicut is 400 feet long. The dam irrigates 15,000 acres in Vellore and Tiruvannamalai districts and 5,800 acres in Villupuram District.\(^{48}\)

**Crops and Methods of Cultivation**

Tiruvannamalai is one of those districts in the State which had depended to a large extent on seasonal rains for successful agricultural operations. Paddy is the main food grain produced in this district during specific period viz. Sornavari (May and September), samba (August to February) and navarai (December to May).\(^{49}\) Three methods of raising paddy are distinguishable in this district, viz. The dry seed, the sprouted and the transplanted. Further, the method of cultivation adopted in lands which got irrigated by tank, well and river was different from that followed in dry land which directly depended on rain fall.

**Paddy Cultivation in irrigated lands**

Paddy cultivation and its harvest largely depended upon the fertility of the soil. If the lands are irrigated lands, the method of cultivation is very easy. Generally, for every acre of the main field a nursery bed of about ten cents was prepared a month before the commencement of season. Water was let in and initial ploughing with iron plough was carried out. The land was well ploughed. Green manure at the rate of 10,000 pounds per acre was applied

\(^{48}\) North Arcot District, *Five Years Achievement* (1951-1956), op. cit., p.32.

\(^{49}\) Sarada Raju, (1941), *Economic Conditions in the Madras Presidency* (1800-1850), University of Madras, Madras, p. 69.
to the field. After this two or three more ploughing were given till the soil got fully impregnated with manures and the field was then leveled by using a leveling board. This process is carried on in the district very meticulously.\textsuperscript{50}

**Paddy cultivation in dry lands**

The peasants of Tiruvannamalai district had always been taking efforts on new lines to increase the production in agriculture particularly in dry lands cultivation, they had laboured hard to have a good harvest. On the dry land before commencement of rain, land had been ploughed four times by using country ploughs. And in dry lands the process of cultivation had been a little bit difficult one. The cultivation largely depended on rain fall. After the initial preparations such as trimming, cattle manure had been applied to the field and it used to be incorporated into the soil by repeated ploughing. Sowing used to be carried on behind a country plough. Rain water percolation had always helped the growth of the crop.\textsuperscript{51} Thus, ploughing, sowing of seeds, weeding and hoeing work were to be carried on. Finally the harvest was to be commenced after 3 or 6 months depending upon the crops. Such a hard work by peasants of this district paid rich dividends to them.

**Millet**

Ragi, Cholam, Cumbu are the principal dry crops of this district. These crops are called millets. The cultivation of these crops is comparatively easy and inexpensive. But for the monsoon rains no regular irrigation facilities are required for the production. These crops are sometimes raised as second crops after paddy was harvested. The field is to be slightly ploughed, after application of manure. Generally the crops are ready for harvesting in about

\textsuperscript{50} Census of India, (1961), op. cit., p. 28.
four months. They are removed to the threshing ground and then to the district granaries.

All the millets in this district had not been cultivated in one season. For instance, ragi was cultivated generally during the period from May to August; Cholam was cultivated during the period July to December, and the methods of cultivation also differed from crop to another crop. Ragi was one of the principal millets grown mostly as an wet crop like paddy. A nursery bed was found necessary and so it was created for ragi cultivation in the later part of the 20th century. About five cents of nursery bed was required for every acre of the main field and cattle manure was used in this cultivation.52

Other Millets

Varagu and Samai are the other important millets of this district. These two millets had been cultivated in the district on a limited scale, and their cultivation was comparatively easy and not expensive. They are short term crops and are mostly rain fed. Pulses like red gram, black gram, green gram, horse gram, Bengal gram and varieties of beans were also cultivated as inter-crops along with wet and dry cultivation methods.53

Sugarcane

Sugarcane cultivation had been another important one which gave good income to the peasants of this district. But it requires good irrigation facilities. The land was initially ploughed for six times. Then farm yard manure at a rate of 40 tons per acre was applied. Soil and manure were mixed up thoroughly by ploughing. Ridges and ferrous had to be formed in the land leaving about

53. Ibid.
3 to 3.5 feet between consecutive ridges. \(^{54}\) Top sets of sugarcane were used as seed materials. About 15000 sets were to be planted in the ridges prepared in one acre.

The land had to be irrigated once in every seven days at the beginning and afterwards with an interval of 10 days, and usually six bags of fertilizer were to be applied per acre in doses. The first dose had to be applied 45 days after planting and the second one on the 90 days before searing up. \(^{55}\) This is the method followed in the district during the last few years.

**Groundnut**

Another important crop of the region is groundnut. Groundnut was first cultivated in Brazil, and it was introduced in India by the Portuguese Jesuit Fathers. The seeds introduced into India were of the Brazilian variety. Groundnut used to be sown during the navari season as a rain fed crop. At the time of harvest, as a first step tilling around the plant is done. \(^{56}\) The usual method is that the plant is lifted from the soil and then the groundnuts are separated from the plant. In heavy soils footing may be done first since it makes digging easier. The groundnut seeds are generally taken to the nearby mills for the extraction of oil. The groundnut oil cake is used to feed the cattle and it is also used as manure for the fields. \(^{57}\)

**Gingili**

Gingili is known as “Yellu” in Tamil. It is an early crop sown in Swarnavari season. The seeds are sown at a rate of three pounds per acre. The land is usually manured heavily with cattle manure as gingili needs that

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\(^{55}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{56}\) A.N. Shivchand and Kapoor. (1959), *Land and agriculture of India*, Metropolitan Book Co. Ltd., Delhi, p.70.

\(^{57}\) N.G., Mukerji, (1901), *Hand Book of Indian Agriculture*, p. 222.
support. The duration of the crop is 90 days and it requires only one weeding.\textsuperscript{58}

The plants are generally kept near the ground and they are dried up for a week so as to separate gingili seeds from the plant. The seeds are taken to the nearby mills for extraction of oil. The gingili oil cake is given to the cattle, particularly to cows for yielding more milk.\textsuperscript{59} Production of gingili in this district is very much notable.

**Cotton**

Cotton was not grown intensively in this district. Yet, the total cotton growing land area had been around 649 acres. Cotton was also grown in small amount in the taluks like Chengam, Wandavasi, Polur and Tiruvannamalai.\textsuperscript{60}

**Industrial Development**

**Silk Industry in Arani Taluk**

The black soil regions like Arani, Cheyyar, Wandavasi and Polur taluks are best suited for the growth of silk. Tiruvannamalai district ranks second in the production of silk after Kanchipuram among the districts of Tamil Nadu.\textsuperscript{61} Silk industry provides occupation and income to thousands of agriculturists in the off-season. But the advent of the power spinning and the production of cheaper, finer as well as larger quantities of mill-made yarn, the hand-made spin yarn practically disappeared.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., p.30.
\textsuperscript{60} Personal Interview, Suresh, Agriculture officer, Office of the Joint Director of Agriculture, Tiruvannamalai, 24-11-2012.
The first spinning mill in the district was established in Tiruvannamalai under the distinction of having the first Co-Operative Handloom Weaving Mill in Madras State. Most of the mills in the district are located at Peranamallur, Vembakkam, Cheyyar, Anakavur and Kilpennathur taluks. The silk spinning and weaving constitute as important industries in Arani and Cheyyar taluks. There are about 10 silk mills situated in the district. The produce of these mills are yarn and cloth.62

Anakavur mill is one of the biggest mills in Tiruvannamalai district which is located in Cheyyar taluk; it was established as two silk units for manufacturing silk in the 19th century. Virgin silk is generally purchased directly from other parts of Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. There were about 1000 workers employed in this industry and they produce gray silk yarn and staple fiber yarn.

The next biggest mill is Avoor Co-Operative Spinning Mills Limited, situated in Kilpennathur. There were about 500 workers employed during 2005-2010 and they produced mainly cotton yarn.63

Madura fabrics are one of the reputed mills in spinning and textiles production and it is a division of Coats India Limited. It was established in the 1880’s. It is functioning in collaboration with Coats Vela Pick, UK. It is engaged in spinning, weaving and processing works.64

A Co-operative Spinning Mill was established at Pettai in 1958. The mill started producing yarn with effect from July 14, 1958 and about 8000 spindles were running at the beginning. The mill is a major industry under the

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64. **Madras Information**, 1959, pp. 8-9.
Commissioner of Handlooms and Textiles, Chennai. This mill is a member of the Southern India Mills Association and All India Federation of Co-Operative Spinning Mills Limited. Many cotton mills and textiles production centres are situated in Tiruvannamalai. They are Sankar Spinning Mills Private Ltd. established in 1990, Karpagam Spinning Private Mills Ltd. (1998), Sivakumar Spinning Mills (2000), Seyed Cotton Mills (2000), Nellai Cottan Mills Limited (2000), Sri Ganapathy Mills (2001) and Thirumalai Mills (2001). A non-technical committee was constituted by the Government in May 1966 which recommended general assistance to the Cambodia Mills and Rs. 3.85 lakhs of financial assistance to the Gitanjali Mills Limited in Tiruvannamalai District.\(^{65}\)

**Sugar Industry in Polur Taluk of Tiruvannamalai District**

Sugar cane Crop Production had been high in Polur Taluk of Tiruvannamalai District. The Government of Tamil Nadu established Dharani Sugar Mill Corporation in 2001 through the non-resident Indians. The crushing capacity of the mill was about 1,250 tons per day and subsequently it was increased to 2,500 tons in 2003-2004 and afterwards improved to 3000 tons in 2006-2007. More than 350 employees were working in this industry during 2009-2010.

Sugarcane is largely grown in Polur. Tamil Nadu Sugar Corporation Limited has established a factory at Tiruvannamalai which has a crushing capacity of about 1,250 tons per day. The famous Sugar Industry in Tiruvannamalai is Dharani Sugar Mills Limited and it is ably promoted by Non-Resident Indians. They have set up a large scale sugar mill at Thandalam in Cheyyar taluk in the year 1989. It is located at a distance of 120 kilo meters from Chennai. The initial crushing capacity of the industry was 2500 tons a

day and subsequently it was increased to 3000 tons a day and Sugar is the main product and molasses and biogas are by-products.\textsuperscript{66}

**Sipcot**

The Tamil Nadu Industrial Investment Corporation (TIIC) as per its objectives extend liberal help to the existing and new industries. It also helps in the launch of factory services by SIDCO (Small Scale Industries Development Corporation) in a substantial way. It is generally desired that the modern technology should be introduced in all fields to quicken the process of production qualitatively and quantitatively. It should be imparted to all kinds of workers engaged in cottage industries, in the making of match boxes, match sticks, beedies, baskets from Palmyra fibers, mats, and stone sculpture.

Though there are no major and large scale industries in Tiruvannamalai, a few industries had made a mark in their industrial production. These industries are located in various parts of the district. The match industry is in Wandavasi, Arani, Cheyyar, and Polur. Heritage Milk industry is in Somasipadi, Hatsun Milk industries is in Arani, Arunachala Milk industry is in Tiruvannamalai, Cream milk industry is in Naidu Mangalam and Stone Sculpture Industries are in Madaiyur (Polur taluk). Arani Advisory Board is constituted to advise industries to function on proper lines. An overview of small industries that receive the attention of the government with their centers of activity are given in the Table below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Name of the Industry</th>
<th>Region for which the Board is to function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Modern rice mill industries</td>
<td>Kalambur, Arani, Karapet in Polur Taluk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Cotton industries</td>
<td>Arani Taluk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Milk chilling plant</td>
<td>Tiruvannamalai, Heritage Milk (Somasipadi), Hatsun Milk (Arani), Arunachala Milk (Tiruvannamalai), Cream milk (Naidu Mangalam Village) Chengam Taluk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Stone sculpture industries</td>
<td>Madaiyur, Polur Taluk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Spinning mills</td>
<td>Sagar Devi Spinning Mill-Shandavasal, Chidambaram Spinning Mill, Chengam Taluk.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The new policy of encouragement to the small-scale industries created a climate for the growth of small industries and the entrepreneurs in Tiruvannamalai district took advantage of it. Consequently, the period after 1995 witnessed the establishment of all kinds of small-scale industries in the district.

**Paper Industry**

The Paper industry in India is primarily using non-conventional raw materials, as 62 percent of the market was catered by paper products manufactured from raw materials like agro-waste, agro-residue and recycled paper.67

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During the first decade of the 21st century, the State of Tamil Nadu had produced about 42,000 tons of finished paper per annum and the industrial units that have contributed to the above production were the following with their capacity turnover.68 Tiruvannamalai paper and paper pulp are manufactured by the Arani mills. The Mill procures raw materials such as, wood, hosiery rags, waste paper, soft wood pulp, non-fiber raw materials, soapstone powder, starches, and husk for the manufacturing paper. During 1993 about 705 workers were employed in that unit. There are two workers’ unions namely, Sun Paper Mill Employees Union and Sun Paper Mills Anna Tholilalar Sangam in the industry and they work for the welfare of the labourers of the industries.69

**Handloom Industry**

Handloom industry is also one of the small-scale industries that had grown in the district. Handloom industry is concentrated mostly in Vandavasi, Cheyyar, and Tiruvannamalai taluks.70

**Handloom and Textiles**

Handlooms form a part of heritage of India with its richness and diversity of our country and artistry of the weavers. It plays a very important role in the economy. Handloom industry is the largest economic activity after agriculture. This sector is estimated to provide direct and indirect employment to more than 30 lakhs weaver households and about 130 lakhs weavers in the country (1998-1999). Due to effective State intervention through assistance and welfare schemes, this sector had been able to

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withstand the competition from the power loom sectors. Production in this sector was 6792 million square meters in 1999-2000. This sector contributes substantially to the national income through export.\footnote{B.S. Baliga, (1960), \textit{Compendium of History of Handloom Industry in Madras}, Madras Government Press, p.53.}

Handlooms and weaving activities had been popular in Tiruvannamalai, Peranamallur, Vembakkam, Cheyyar and Anakavur. According to the 1987 Handlooms census, there were 5 Handloom industries in Tiruvannamalai. The weavers’ co-operative Societies exist in rural and semi-urban areas where there is a large concentration of handloom weavers.\footnote{S. Ganeshram, \textit{Weavers and the Weaving Industry in Colonial Tamil Nadu}, Loyola College Endowment Lecture, Proceedings of South Indian History Congress, 33\textsuperscript{rd} Annual Session, 2013, Tiruvananthapuram, p. 828.} All the benefits of the development and welfare schemes implemented by the State Government and the Government of India are channelized through these societies.

\textbf{Textile Industry}

The textile industry is a major foreign exchange earner for the country. It earns more than 35 percent of the total exports revenue. Textile industry had been predominantly cotton-based industry and had been facing crisis due to adverse effect of globalization, excess production, decline in exports, non-availability of adequate quantity of quality cotton, increase in cotton prices, etc. The textile industry’s role is extremely crucial in terms of employment and economic well-being of the State. Hence, textile industry is considered to be the next important to agricultural sector in the scope of employment.

The average annual production of varieties of handloom goods by these societies approximately comes around 950 lakhs meters and the annual sales turn over was around Rs-450 corers. Tamil Nadu has always occupied
a pride of place in having the maximum number of handlooms in the country. This sector continues to thrive in spite of setbacks on account of quantum jump in the increase of Power looms. There are about 3 lakhs handlooms, of which 1.50 lakh handlooms had been within the Co-Operative fold. Co-Operative Societies had taken much efforts in improving the production in textile industries and this improved the revenue of the State.  

The textile Industry in the district had played an important role in the industrial field with regard to employment potential and overall economic and commercial activities. This industry enabled the Central and State Government to earn revenue besides foreign exchange through exports. Out of 25 percent of Indian yarn exported, 35 percent of Indian yarn had been from Tamil Nadu.

Khadi and Village Industries Board (KVIB)

Khadi-Board has established production centers for khadi cotton and poly vastra fabrics in different parts of the State. Currently 3888 spinners and weavers are being provided employment by the Board directly. KVIB is known for its exquisite Khadi Silk Sarees, made especially from original Zari, using eco-friendly and Natural dyes. Kumbakonam, Kancheepuram, and Arani in Tiruvannamalai are the major centers of production. The Khadi units working under KVIB are indicated below:

1. Rural Textile Centers (spinning Centers) 58 – Arani & Tiruvannamalai
2. Production centers-25-Chengam, Arani, Eraiyur

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75. Sarada Raju, (1941), *Economic Conditions in the Madras Presidency 1800-1850*, University of Madras, Madras, p. 146.
3. Skill Yarn Twisting Centers-5 – Arani Taluk
4. Silk Production Centers-34 – Arani Taluk
5. Dyeing Units-5 – Arani Taluk
6. Dyeing Bleaching and Printing Unit-1 – Arani Taluk
7. Quit Unit-1 – Arani Taluk
8. Tailoring Units-3 – Arani Taluk
9. District Godowns-26 – Arani Taluk

KIVB has been promoting Village Industries by establishing production centers in different districts, organizing Co-Operative Societies and granting margin money to entrepreneurs for establishing Village Industrial Units. KIVB provides support by providing raw materials required for production, technical guidance and marketing the finished products through sales outlets. The items produced by the Self-Help Groups are also sold through the Khadi Crafts.76 There are totally 1067 Self-Help Groups thriving in Tiruvannamalai.

Village and Cottage Industries

In Tiruvannamalai acres of land under mulberry has increased from 600 acres to 10,000 acres in April 2001. The production of coconut and raw silk have also correspondingly increased from 215 tons and 10 tons into 5,138 tons and 672 tons in 2001 respectively. At present 47,000 farmers are engaged in Sericulture. Further the industry provides employment to 1,00,000 persons directly and 35,000 persons indirectly in downstream activities of reeling and twisting of yarn throughout the year. Sericulture was taken up under the Central sponsored Programs, like Hill Area Development program, Western Ghats Development Program and Integrated Tribal Development Program. The outlay for sericulture for the Ninth Plan period was Rs.40 crores. Out of this an amount of Rs.3 crores was released which

76. G.O. Ms. No. 283, Finance Department, (BPE), Government of Tamil Nadu, 18-6-1998.
includes new schemes for an amount of Rs.1.40 crores and the balance was for Area Development Schemes. To provide maximum contribution to implement Catalytic Development Program assisted by Central Silk Board, a sum of Rs.1.54 crores was sanctioned from Sericulture Development and Price Stabilization Fund. An external aided project Seri 2000 was implemented at a cost of Rs.1.32 crores. The total provision was Rs.5.86 crores and the expenditure was Rs. 4.86 crores.\(^{77}\) By such programmes, Tiruvannamalai stands as an active centre of sericulture projects which yields notable revenue to the State.

**Lamps and Temple Bell Making Industry**

Tamil Nadu is one of the leading States in the country in the production of exquisite lamps of different shapes, sizes and designs. Beautiful artistic lamps and temple bells are produced at Cheyyar and Polur and remote villages about five Km from Anakavoor. Many artisans in the Village are masters in the art of manufacturing numerous varieties of lamps, a skill that had been passed on from generation to generation. In an unbroken tradition, craftsmen manufacture beautiful lamps in metal, terracotta and stone. There are lamps that are used for religious purposes at home. There are also standing lamps, swinging lamps, pedestal lamps and small lamps. Artistic lamps are also manufactured here. The availability of fine alluvial soil in the Thenpennai river bed promotes the craft in this part of the district.\(^{78}\)

The Poompuhar Brass and Bell Metal Production Centre has been functioning at Tiruvannamalai. The centre commenced its production on 1\(^{st}\) October 1985. The Poompuhar Brass and Bell Metal Production center was started by the Tamil Nadu Handicrafts Development Corporation at Polur.


The center was started in the early 1960s. It is the major producer of beautiful artistic lamps and temple bells. This center which was using traditional methods, had switched over to the latest technologies. The production center possesses an air blower, a land boring lathe and grinding, polishing and drilling machines. The center manufactures small Yali lamps, Vasamalai lamps, Lakshmi Deepam, Double Decker lamps, Rudra Deepam lamps and Malabar lamps. The center had helped in putting a grill in the Thiruchendur temple. The Handicrafts Corporation had received orders from Singapore and Malaysia a few years back during 1994-1999. Raw materials like brass scraps, and tin arid copper that were procured from Madurai and Thiruchirappalli had been under the direct control of the Tamil Nadu Handicrafts Development Corporation, Chennai. Brass lamps in various sizes and designs are manufactured here. Brass, copper, aluminum, lead, zinc, are the raw materials required for the product. The manufacturing work involves molding, fitting, turning, burning, engraving, polishing, shaping etc. Finished products are sent to Tamil Nadu Handicraft Development Corporation for marketing, and three are 23 varieties of lamps manufactured in Tiruvannamalai. Among these 23 varieties of lamps the most popular 14 varieties of lamps are mentioned below.

1. 4" Thonghuvilakku,
2. 10" Anna Villakku
3. Paladaivillakku
4. 1" ThonguThakali
5. 26" and 18"Ornamental lamp
6. 18" Five faces arthi
7. 18" and 27"Anna Vilakku
8. 18" and 13"Vilakku
9. Decorated Lakshmi lamp
10. Lotus shaped hanging lamp
11. 13” and 18” - Swan lamp
12. 27” and 10” Ornamental lamp 13” Ornamental lamp
13. 7” Sudar Vilakku
14. 12” Tree Branch lamp

Fine Mats of Wandavasi

Tiruvannamalai district has been an important center of mat weaving. Mats of very super composition and considerable reputation had been produced at Wandavasi taluk. The river Cheyyar flows at a distance of 3.2 Km from this village and the wild Korai grass growing on its banks provides the raw material for the weavers in the village of Wandavasi.\(^\text{79}\)

The Cheyyar river water and the growth of wild Korai grass are peculiar features only to Wandavasi and is the main reason for the establishment of this industry at Wandavasi, and it has been for centuries a world renowned center for the production of exquisite silk mats. Some of them could be folded like a sari. The silk of the artisans of Wandavasi impressed many dignitaries from various foreign countries. Besides the Korai grass mats, the Palmyra leaf mats manufacturing centre was established at Anakavoor Village in Cheyyar Taluk, and a number of Co-Operative societies are functioning in the district to promote this craft.\(^\text{80}\)

The popularity of mat weaving as an occupation stems from the fact that the work place is one’s own home which is a mini-mat weaving unit and the equipment required is primitive. The various aspects of the work like slitting of the Kora grass, dyeing and weaving are carried out at home. Generally the


\(^{80}\text{Ibid., p.43.}\)
colors used are, yellow, red, blue, violet and green. After dyeing, the colored filaments are dried in the shade. The filaments are then mounted on to the loom since weaving the looms are very simple and cheap. These Tiruvannamalai products are in great demand at outside markets.

**Handicrafts**

The Handicrafts sector is of special significance in the country’s economy due to its contribution to employment generation and foreign exchange earnings through exports. The handicrafts are the symbols of Tamil heritage and tradition. There are also other small scale industries in Tiruvannamalai which had given employment in many.

**Cane Furniture Industry**

Gandhi Nagar in Tiruvannamalai town is a major centre for the production of cane articles. More than 300 families are engaged in the manufacture of decorated chairs, cots, swings, teapoys and sofas, in the town and surrounding villages of Tiruvannamalai. These products manufactured in Tiruvannamalai district are marketed in other parts of Tamil Nadu and they brought about good income to the traders.

**Beedi Manufacture**

Beedi manufacture had been an important industry. Every village with a fairly large Muslim population has a small factory where beedies are made. In 1915, a woman from Bombay came to Melapalayam in Tiruvannamalai. She made beedies at her house and the people bought beedies from her. In 1920, a native of the same village started manufacturing beedies at his house and sold them in the local markets and nearby villages. In 1922 the Kamal Beedi Company was established in Melapalayam. People began to

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seek employment in beedi making units which provided regular employment. From 1935 onwards several beedi making units were started all over Tamil Nadu following the model of Tiruvannamalai.  

During 1937, about 38 beedi making units like Chavi beedi, Vairam mark beedi and Hanifa beedi works started manufacturing beedis. Between 1950 and 1960 beedi making units like 5 number beedi, Syed beedi, Kaja beedi, M.S.P beedi, Yanai beedi and Chamothi beedi competed with the unregistered beedi units. Between 1948 and 49 several small units declined on account of high competition. At the same time, new beedi manufacturing units like Momutti Beedi Company, Bamsha beedi, Insha beedi and Sunflower beedi appeared. After 1950, there was a steady progress in the growth of beedi making units. During 1950s nearly 25 units with 85 branches were functioning in Tamil Nadu and beedi production in Tiruvannamalai was notable. Of the 25 units, Khaja Beedi Company (1960), Ganesh Beedi Company (1980), 5 number Beedi Company (1990), Chandrika Beedi Company (1992) and Malliseri Beedi Company enjoyed a good market. Beedi making units were also found in places like Modaiyar and Wandavasi in Tiruvannamalai district. There were 1032 beedi making units in the district during the year 2000, providing employment to 1000 persons. Thus, it was a profitable industry during the last years of the 20th century.

Thus, the Socio-economic condition in Tiruvannamalai district is notable since the district thrives by the enterprising social communities and by the rich resources available in the fertile lands and forest areas.

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