CHAPTER III

PROFILE OF TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT

This chapter is devoted to present the vital aspects and unique features of Tirunelveli District, the study area. It is expected to throw adequate light on the geographical, natural, social, economic and commercial and demographic aspects of this district.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Tirunelveli District was formed on September 1, 1790 (Tirunelveli Day) by the East India Company (British) and named it as Tirunelveli district though their headquarters was first located in Palayamkottai the adjacent city, where they had their military headquarters during their operations against the Palayakars. There are three reasons attributed for naming the district after Tirunelveli. The prime one is that it has been serving as the main city of the district and the second one is that it has been called called as Tirunelveli Seemai under the Nayaks and Nawabs. Finally it served as the south capital in the period of Pandyan Kingdom. Both Tirunelveli and Palayamkottai grew as the twin cities of the district.

Tirunelveli District enjoys the benefit of the early showers of south west monsoon and of the later rains of the north-east monsoon. The district is chiefly irrigated by rivers rising in Western ghats. The dams and anaicuts constructed on
Tamiraparani and Manimuthar rivers serve both agriculture and power generation. The total fall, though is light, averaging about 814.8 mm per annum, is generally well distributed. The Tamiraparani rivers affords perennial irrigation to a fairly large area on which two crops are normally raised. Several tanks and wells form part of the other source of irrigation.

The district has peculiar climate and receives rainfall in all the seasons which represent 953.1 mm in 2005-2006. Tirunelveli District benefits from both the North East Monsoon and the South West Monsoon. The maximum precipitation is contributed by the North East Monsoon at 548.7 mm followed by the South West Monsoon at 147.8 mm and the Summer 184.2 mm. The district is irrigated by several rivers originating in Western Ghats, like the Pachaiyar River which soon mergers with the Tambaraparani River. The Tambaraparani River and the Manimuthar River both have many anicuts and dams with reservoirs that provide water for both agriculture irrigation and power generation. The Tamiraparani River provides consistent irrigation to a large agricultural area. The Chittar River also originates in this district. Courtallam and Manimuthar Waterfalls are the two major waterfalls in the district.

The Tamiraparani is a symbol of Tamil culture and civilization and an identity of the far south of India. In Tamil and Sanskrit literature of earlier times, the Pandyas were referred to as the rulers of the land where the Tamaraparani
flowed. Tamiraparani is the chief river of the district which has a large network of tributaries which includes the Peyar, Ullar, Karaiyar, Servalar, Pampar, Manimuthar, Varahanathi, Ramanathi, Jambunathi, Gadananathi, Kallar, Karunaiyar, Pachaiyar, Chittar, Gundar, Aintharuviar, Hanumanathi, Karuppanathi and Aluthakanniari. The two rivers of the district which are not linked with Tamiraparani are the Nambiar and the Hanumanathi of Nanguneri taluk. (There are two Hanumanathis in the district).

The glory of Tirunelveli District is the pride of Tamils. The crawling clouds on the Western Ghats, the picturesque Pothigai hills and the Courtallam waterfalls are the special features which make Tirunelveli unique. The city also goes by the name Nellai. The district is known for its paddy fields. The name 'Tiru-Nel-Veli' owes to a Hindu mythological story where Lord Shiva protected the paddy ('nel') by creating a fence ('veli').

Tirunelveli District, the penultimate southern most district of Tamil Nadu, is described as a microcosm of the State. The district has diverse geographical and physical features such as lofty mountains and low plains, rivers and cascades, seacoast and thick inland forest, sandy soils and fertile alluvium, a variety of flora, fauna, and protected wild life.

The meaning and origin of the name Tamiraparani is reasoned out differently. Bishop R. Caldwell, in his book, A History of Tinnevelly discussed
the various interpretations of the word ‘Tamiraparani’ at length. According to him the meaning of the name Tamiraparani in itself is sufficiently clear, but its application in this connection is far from being self-evident. Tamara means, red, parani means parana, a tree which has leaves. Tamiraparani might, therefore mean a tree with red leaves, but, this is a strange derivation for, the name of a river and the ideas naturally suggest itself that some events or legends capable of explaining the name lies beyond. He further discussed the similarity of the name Tamiraparani and of the old name of the present Sri Lanka which was called in olden days as Tambrabane and tried to find out the political, cultural and anthropological intercourse of the land of the river with that island. He concludes that it seems more natural that Tamiraparani, the tree with the red leaves should have been first the name of a tree, then of a town, then of a district and then of a river (it being not uncommon in India for villages to adopt their names from remarkable trees).

Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve Wild Life sanctuaries, District Science Centre, Tirunelveli, Birds Sanctuary at Koonthankulam, Courtallam Health Resort, Krishnapuram Sculptures, Pulithevan Palace, Swamy Nellaiappar Temple & Kanthimathi Ambal Temple, Sankaranainarkoil, Manjolai - Hill Station, Kappal Matha Church, Uvari, Pottalpudur Dargha, Thiruvalluvar Two Tier Bridge, Holy Trinity Cathedral (Oosi Gopuram).
3.2. **GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Tirunelveli District having geographical area of 6759 sq.kms, in the Southeastern portion of Tamil Nadu is triangular in shape. It lies between 8°.05’ and 9°.30’ of the Northern latitude and 77°.05’ and 78°.25’ of Eastern longitude.

3.3. **TOPOGRAPHY**

The district is located in the southern part of Tamil Nadu and surrounded by Virudhunagar District on the north, Western Ghats on the West, Kanniyakumari District on the south, Tuticorin District on the East. The lifeline of the district river Tamiraparani feeds the district and quenches the thirst of residents of Tuticorin district too.
3.4. ADMINISTRATIVE SETUP

This District is having 3 Revenue Divisions comprising of 11 Taluks, 60 Firkas 19 Development Blocks, 616 Revenue Villages and 425 Village Panchayats.

3.5. DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS

The population of this District was 2723988 as per 2001 Census and 30,72,880 as per 2011 census. The Density of Population per sq.km. was 399 as per 2001 census and 455 persons as per 2011 census. Tirunelveli, Tenkasi and Ambasamudram are the most densely populated Taluks in the District as per 2001 census.

The Sex ratio is 1024 females for every 1000 males in the District as per 2011 census. The Literacy rate is 76.09% in the District as per 2001 census.

Out of the total population, males are 1333939 and females 1390049 as per 2001 census. Out of the total population, males are 1518595 and females 1554285 as per 2011 census. The district having Schedule caste population of 481052 which represents 17.66% to total population as per 2001 census. Schedule Tribes are found to be very small in numbers 8358 which is 0.31% of the Total population. 4.36% of State population lives in Tirunelveli district, 1415742 live
in Rural area and 1308246 live in urban area forming 52% and 48% respectively as per 2001.

3.6. CLIMATE AND RAINFALL

The district has peculiar climate and receives rainfall in all the seasons which represent 947.6mm in 2010-2011. The maximum precipitation is contributed by the North East Monsoon (555.08mm) followed by the South west monsoon (189.6mm) and the Summer (127.7mm) and the Winter (74.5 mm).

3.7 OCCUPATION

Agriculture plays a Vital role in the District’s economy. The total cropped area was 171155 hectares, which worked out 25.32% of the total area of 675850. The important food crops are Paddy, Cholam, Ragi, Cumbu Maize and other minor millets. The commercial crops are Cotton, Chillies, Sugarcane and Groundnut. Of the total cultivated area of 145047 hectares in the district, 26108 hectares were sown more than once.

3.8 IRRIGATION

The District is blessed with the western ghats from which all the perennial rivers follow and drain towards the east. The surface water of the District is drained into major river basin viz Thamiraparani, Vaippar, Nambiar and
Hanumanathi. Thamiraparani is the major river basin in the District. The other Streams which are seasonal in nature are Servallar, Manimuthar, Ramanathi, Pachayar, Chittar and Uppodai rivers which drain into the Tamiraparani basin. The source of irrigation are Canal, Tank and Well, which covers 133106 hectares. Among the total area irrigated, Well irrigation covers 50096 hectares, Tanks 55382 hectares and Canal 27128 hectares

3.9 TOURIST SPOTS

Courtallam is situated at the Western Ghats in Tenkasi Taluk. The famous waterfalls on rocks and tiny droplet are sprinkled in the air. The water falls of Courtalam have medicinal value as they run through forest and herbs before their decent. Pappanasam Agasthiar falls also attracts tourist and pilgrims. There is a Wild life sanctuary at Mundanthurai and Kalakadu. Spotted deers, Liointailed monkeys, Elephants and Tigers are plenty.

3.10 RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE

The Nellaiappar temple at Tirunelveli, Sankaranainar temple at Sankarankoil, Kasiviswanathar temple at Tenkasi and Vanamamalai Temple at Nanguneri are the land marks of the District signifying the Hindu Culture. Palayamkottai has many Christian missions and Athankaraipallivasal & Pottalpudur Darga have considered to be important sacred places for Muslims.
3.11 AREA UNDER PRINCIPAL CROP

In Tirunelveli district, paddy is the predominant crop cultivated in 72121 acres - 52.77 percent of the net area sown. The details of area and percentage of net area sown are given in Table 3.6

TABLE 3.1
AREA UNDER PRINCIPAL CROPS IN TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Crops</th>
<th>Area (in Hectares)</th>
<th>Percentage of net Area shown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Paddy</td>
<td>72121</td>
<td>52.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Sugarcane</td>
<td>8447</td>
<td>6.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Gingely</td>
<td>2277</td>
<td>1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Cotton</td>
<td>6874</td>
<td>5.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Blackgram</td>
<td>4872</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Chillies</td>
<td>3594</td>
<td>2.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Banana</td>
<td>38474</td>
<td>28.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Net Area sown</td>
<td>136659</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


It is seen from Table 3.1 that among the principal crops, paddy, occupies 52.77 percent of the net area sown in the district, followed by banana, sugarcane and cotton.
3.12. INFRASTRUCTURAL FACILITIES

Tirunelveli district enjoys sound banking and infrastructure facilities.

I. Transport

Tirunelveli District has been well served by a good network of roads and rails. There are short water-ways in hill areas.

(a) Road ways

The length of national highways is 71.40 km state highways 654.849 km major district roads 387.140 km and other district road 1795.164 km.

There are 3820 commercial vehicles and 30017 non-commercial ones.

There are many village roads.

(b) Railways

The district enjoys good rail services. The rail route length of the District is 170.24km and the track length is 239.42. There are 26 railway station for the convenience of passengers.

II Boarding and Lodging Facilities

Tirunelveli District has a number of boarding and lodging units. Two of them enjoy star status. Others also are fairly maintained and run professionally on modern times.
Totally there are 115 boarding and lodging (BAL) units in this district where mostly internationally exposed groups of hotel owners venture and do good business.

As per as food items are concerned local, regional, national and international varieties are severed at reasonable prices. Tourist seen to be much interested in them.

Most of the BAL units are able to give a professional touch.

III. Commercial Infrastructure

The commercial infrastructure of Tirunelveli District has been wide and vibrant.

Commercial centres like Tirunelveli, Vallioor, Tenkasi, Sankarankoil, Kurumbur, Alangulam, Thysayanvilai, Pavoorchatram, and Surandai are significant market towns. Tourists are interested in dealings in such places.

There a number of super markets and nine markets. The sellers deal in all modern and specialized items.

IV. Uses of Electricity

Near self-sufficiency is found during normal times as for as availability of electricity is concerned in Tiruvelveli District. About 868million units of hydro
and 1145m.u of wind mill electricity is generated. There is no thermal use gas turbine also is not tried.

Even remote rural villages are electrified.

V. Entertainment.

Tirunelveli District has been popular for art and literature. Cinema houses, Music Sabhas and drama halls. There are six permanent air-conditioned cinema theaters and 36 non-air-conditioned cinema theaters are available in this district.

Parks and hill areas are in plenty

The scope for good entertainment has been growing from time to time. Tourists and excursionists much interest in these artistic adventures also.

VI. Tourst Guides

As far as tourist guides are concerned, Tirunelveli District seems to be at the infant stage. Efforts are needed to develops this service on professional lines.

VII. Financial Institutions

The district has a well-built banking structure catering to the needs of the farming population. The district is well served by 186 commercial banks with
their branches. This District has 47 DCCB and 36 private sector banks, 50 regional rural banks, 53 lead banks are also functioning in this District.

VIII. Markets

Sankarankovil, Shencottah, Alangulam, Tenkasi and Ambasamudram are the major marketing centres in Tirunelveli district. Groundnut, cholam, cumbu, ragi, blackgram, greengram, bengalgram, coconut oil, gingelly oil, groundnut oil and chilli are marketed through daily shandies located in these centres. The total storage capacity of the district is 34,575 tonnes. The district is served by the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and there are government regulated markets to protect the farmers from the possible exploitation in trading.

IX. Industries

Among the industries in the district, paper, tea, textile and cement need mentioning. The India Cements Ltd., at Thalaiyuthu, the Sun Paper Mills Ltd., at Cheranamahadevi, Madura Coats Ltd., at Ambasamudram and Bombay Burma Trading Company Ltd., (cultivating and processing tea) at Manjolai are the important landmarks in the industrial map of the district.

The significant village industries of the district include handlooms, poultry farming, brickkiln, jaggery production, mat-weaving and beedi making. The fine Pattamadai mat has a world market. The district is famous for the production of
handloom cloth. There are 597 registered factories and 357 small scale industrial units in the district.

There are 25 medium and major industries such as Cement, Cotton yarn, Calcium carbide, Sugar, Cotton seed oil, Printing papers and flour Mill etc. Among the other industries in the District Pin, Clip, Matches, Beedi, Vessels making and Engineering industries are important. The important Village industries functioning in the district are Handloom, Poultry farming, Brick making, Jaggary production. The Handloom products Lungi, Sarees etc are marketed in north India. So also the fine Korai mats from Pathamadi have one world fame. Kallidaikurichi Pappads, Karukurichi mud pots, also Tirunelveli “Halva” are specialities which earned many laurels to the District.

X. Education

The district has 1,757 primary schools, 429 middle schools, 169 high schools, 142 higher secondary schools, 24 arts and science colleges, 21 colleges for professional education, 25 colleges for special education and 2 Universities.

XI. Tourism

The famous Courtallam waterfalls the ‘Spa of the South’ in the Western Ghats in Tirunelveli district, is a great place of tourist importance. During June to September every year, people from far away places also visit Courtallam. The other prominent places of tourism are Manimuthar waterfalls, Agasthiar
waterfalls, Kalakadu-Mundanthurai Wildlife Sanctuary, Manjolai tea estate, Manimuthar, Papanasam and Chervalaar dams.

**XII. Communication**

The details about the number of telephone exchanges and number of post offices are functioning in Tirunelveli.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. Post &amp; Telegraph (in No.)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Post offices doing postal business alone</td>
<td>: 388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Post offices doing postal &amp; telegraph Business</td>
<td>: Nil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>II. Telephones</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) No. of Telephones in use</td>
<td>: 92557</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) No. of Public Call Offices</td>
<td>: 7186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) No. of Telephone Exchanges</td>
<td>: 81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This channel is applicable to the study area to a great extent.