The study area of this research comprises of the three southern most districts of Tamilnadu namely Tirunelveli, Kanyakumar and Tuticorin. The researcher has made a review of the physical features, agro climatic conditions, demographic features and infrastructural setup of those three districts which would enable the researcher to get a gainful knowledge of the social background of the research area under study.

3.1. Thoothukudi District Profile

Thoothukudi district has been endowed with a number of historical, cultural and political developments to its credit.

Tucked in extreme south of Tamil Nadu, Thoothukudi owns an enviable reputation for its history, geography, religion, tourism and trade.38

Thoothukudi is called, the ‘Pearl City of India’. It is a ‘Port City’ also. Its strategic location has been upgraded as the busy nerve centre of economic activities round the clock.

Formation of the District

Thoothukudi is the newly formed district by bifurcating the original Tirunelveli district into Tirunelveli district (western portion) and Thoothukudi district (eastern portion) in 1986.

Administration

Thoothukudi district has three revenue divisions, eight taluks and 468 villages. At the local bodies level, Thoothukudi has one municipal corporation, a municipality, 12 panchayat unions, 20 town panchayats 408 village panchayats and 10,121 small villages and eight taluks, one Parliament Constituency and seven assembly constituencies.

Area and Location

The district covers an extent of 4,621 sq.km in the South-Eastern portion of Tamilnadu and it is rectangular in shape. It is bounded by Thoothukudi and Ramanathapuram districts in the North, Kanyakumari district in the South, Gulf of mannar in the east and Tirunelveli district in the West. The district is roughly triangular in shape between $8^0.05'$ and $9^0.80'$ of the northern latitude and $77^0.05'$ and $78^0.25'$ of eastern longitude.

Topography:

The river Tamirabarani flows through this district. The area under the river basin within the district is 78,698.8 hectares. According to topography,
the district can be divided into three regions. The northern part consisting of black soil, mostly dependent on seasonal rainfall for agriculture; the central part is irrigated by water flow from the Western Ghats; and the southern part is red loam area. The normal rainfall is 662.mm. which is less than the state normal of 1009.1mm.

General Details of Thoothukudi District

Thoothukudi has become the 10th Municipal Corporation of Tamil Nadu. It is the head quarters of the newly formed district. The district is comparatively advanced industrially with a majority of the industry located in and around Thoothukudi. There are large numbers of private coconut oil mills within the town. The public sector undertakings are the Thoothukudi Thermal Power Station unit, Heavy Water Plant and Port Trust.

Demographic Features

The total population of this district as per 2001 Census is more than 15 lakh. The density of population per square kilo metre is 315 as against the 428 for the state. The sex ratio is 1050 females for every 1000 males. The percentage of literacy is 81.5 per cent.
TABLE 3.1

GENERAL DETAILS OF THOOTHKUDI DISTRICT - 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>General Details</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Urban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Area in hectares</td>
<td>416650.66</td>
<td>21706.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Residential Houses</td>
<td>42343</td>
<td>59872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Households</td>
<td>382260</td>
<td>157647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Population</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>766823</td>
<td>327569</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>805450</td>
<td>337204</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1572273</td>
<td>664773</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Children (0-6) years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>94431</td>
<td>39535</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>89980</td>
<td>38188</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>184411</td>
<td>77723</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Information Centre, Thoothukudi.

TABLE 3.2

LITERACY RATES IN THOOTHKUDI DISTRICT

(in Per cent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>82.02</td>
<td>64.57</td>
<td>73.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>88.66</td>
<td>75.64</td>
<td>81.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Information Centre, Thoothukudi.

The table reveals that female literacy was 75.64 per cent in 2001. It has increased from 64.57 in 1991.
**Agricultural Sector**

The main food crop in the district is paddy. Out of the total area of 4,50,954 hectares, 2,11,811 hectares have been brought under the cultivation of different crops, which work out to 47 per cent of the total area of the district. The important food crops in the district are paddy, cholam, cumbu, ragi, varagu, samai and commercial crops like cotton, chillies, sugarcane, groundnut and banana.

**Working Population**

The following table shows the urban working population

**TABLE 3.3**

**URBAN WORKERS TO TOTAL POPULATION - 2001 CENSUS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>11.60</td>
<td>50.90</td>
<td>32.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>18.42</td>
<td>56.37</td>
<td>37.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoothukudi District</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>11.56</td>
<td>15.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: National Information Centre, Thoothukudi

From the table, it is clear that the total urban workers to total population in India is 32.20 per cent. Of this 11.60 per cent are females. Out of 37.59 per cent of the workers in Tamil Nadu, 18.42 per cent are females. In Thoothukudi district 4.01 per cent are female urban workers, out of 15.57 of the urban workers.
From this table it is clear that the percentage of female urban workers in Thoothukudi district is very low. This is because of lack of employment opportunities for women.

**Industries**

The district constitutes 70 per cent of the total salt production of the State and meets 30 per cent requirement of our country. There are two industrial estates, one at Kovilpatti with 11 units and the other at Thoothukudi with 20 units. The former is managed by SIDCO and the latter by SIPCOT. Small scale industries such as match industries, food-based and metal based industries are generally concentrated in Kovilpatti and Thoothukudi taluks. There are 2,200 and above small scale industries registered in the district and about 12 major industries. These are engaged in the production of cotton and stable yarn, caustic soda, PVC resin, fertilizers, soda ash and carbon dioxide gas in liquid form. The important major industries are SPIC, TAC, Dharangadhara Chemical Works, Loyal Textiles Ltd., Madura Coats Ltd., Sterlite Copper Industries, Kilburn Chemicals, Ramesh Flowers, Nila Sea Foods, Deva and Co. and Transworld Granite Industries.

The public sector undertakings are the Thoothukudi Thermal Power Station Unit, Heavy Water Plant (HWP) and Port Trust. The District Industries Centre and the Tamil Nadu Industrial Investment Corporation (TIIC) are catering to the needs of the small and large scale industrial units.
The Government is also encouraging unemployed youth and others to start industries by providing financial assistance and technical guidance.

**Educational Institutions:**

Thoothukudi has one Maritime Academy, two B.Ed Colleges, 10 Arts Colleges, one Medical College, six Polytechnic Colleges, one Agricultural College, one Fisheries College, eight I.T.I Schools, 97 Higher Secondary Schools, 73 High Schools, 284 Middle Schools, 1076 Primary Schools and many education oriented courses.

**Health Department:**

Thoothukudi has 19 Government hospitals, one Medical College hospital and 249 health welfare departments.

**Public Welfare Department:**

For the benefit of the public, there are 164 banks. To maintain law and order there are 44 police stations. Of this, there are two all women police stations remaining under the direct control of superintendent of police and 62 Theatres for entertainment.

**Transport and Communication:**

The district has a road length of 2,310 km, comprising of 1,232 km of metallic roads, 665 kms. of non-metallic roads and 413 km of kutchra roads.
3.2 Profile of Kanyakumari District

The Kanyakumari District derived its name from the name of Goddess Kanyakumari for whom a temple of historic fame was built at the southern most tip of the Indian Peninsula, now called Kanyakumari Township

Formation of Kanyakumari District

The present Kanyakumari District was, formerly, the southern most part of the erstwhile princely state of Travancore. Nature’s bountiful gifts of majestic hills, dales, and peaks, as well as the extensive and colourful coastline, undulating valleys and plains between the mountains and the sea coast, so closely interwoven with temples and churches and other edifices of the area impressed Lord Connemera so much that he called this region ‘a fairy land’

The Southern Division of the State of Travancore consisted of four taluks namely Thovalai, Agasteeswaram, Kalkulam and Vilvancode. The people of these taluks are mostly Tamil speaking. After India’s independence there began a people’s movement demanding the merger of the Tamil taluks with the Madras State (the present Tamil Nadu). Intensified agitation resulted in the constitution of the State Reorganisation Commission in 1956. Based on the recommendations of the Commission, the Indian Parliament passed the State Reorganisation Act in March 1959, according to which the four taluks of Thovalai, Agasteeswaram, Kalkulam and Vilvancode were constituted into a
new district of Tamil Nadu called Kanyakumari District on 1 November 1959 with Nagercoil as its headquarters.

**Location**

The Kanyakumari District is situated near the Equator between 77°05’ and 77°36’ east longitude and 8°03’ and 8°35’ north latitude. It is bounded on the north-east by the Tirunelveli District, Trivandrum District of the Kerala State on the north-west, the Arabian Sea on the west and the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Mannar on the south and the south-east respectively.

**Physical Features**

The Western Ghats on the eastern side of the district, run almost parallel to the West Coast with an altitude ranging from 300’ to 6000’ above mean sea level and an unequal breadth, diminishing from the north and converging to a point at its southern extremity. Mahendragiri and Muthukuzhivayal are the highest peaks with a height of 5700’ and 4400’ respectively. The Ashamboo Hills, the Maruthuva Malai, the Thadakai Malai and the Velimalai are the other important peaks of the southern section of the Western Ghats. The Western Ghats are a natural barrier on the east between the Tirunelveli District and the Kanyakumari District, the only corridor across it being the Aramboly Pass.

**Population Characteristics**

According to the census of 2001 the total population of the Kanyakumari District is 16,69763. Female population exceeds male
population. The density of the population is 999. The split up figures for different categories of people are given in Table 3.4.

**TABLE 3.4**

**DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF POPULATION IN THE KANYAKUMARI DISTRICT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Figures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>1669763</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>829542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>840221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>1330240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>270109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Caste</td>
<td>76862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Tribe</td>
<td>5223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literates</td>
<td>1148778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male workers</td>
<td>395041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female workers</td>
<td>69046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural workers</td>
<td>387350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban workers</td>
<td>76737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivators</td>
<td>243710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Labourers</td>
<td>177410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household industry</td>
<td>13377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other workers</td>
<td>235777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginal workers</td>
<td>24044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-workers</td>
<td>1112218</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** AGRO STAT, Joint Director of Agriculture, Kanyakumari, 2009, p.2.
Climate and Rainfall

The Kanyakumari District enjoys a favourable agro-climatic condition suited to the growth of different varieties of crop. Semi-arid tropical monsoon type of climate prevails in the plains. In the plains, the maximum and minimum temperatures are 37.5°C and 25.7°C respectively.

Natural Divisions

Based on the agro-climatic and topographic conditions, the Kanyakumari District is divided into three natural divisions as follows:

1. The mountainous region of the north-east along the Western Ghats in the Vilvancode and Kalkulam Taluks and the hill bases are called the High Lands, suitable for raising crops like rubber, cloves coffee, coconut, pepper and pineapple.

2. In the extreme south-east, south and south-west there is the 68 kilometer long sea coast called the Low Lands, ideal for growing coconut, cashew etc.

3. In between the Uplands and the Low lands is found a strip of undulating valley known as Mid Lands with broad patches of coconut groves, smiling paddy fields, tapioca and banana farms.

Soil

Agriculture in any region depends on its soil conditions which constitute the physical basis for the same. Contrasts in agriculture are caused by the
differences in soil textures, drainage and fertility. Seasonal rains and the fertility of the soil in the Kanyakumari District enable the farmers to raise different varieties of crop. While climatic variations all over the district are not very conspicuous, soil conditions in the different parts of the district differ considerably within short distances.

There are three kinds of soil namely: Sandy soil, Laterite Soil and Red Soil. Sandy Soil is found along the high lands, laterite soil in areas with high rainfall and red soil in the mid-lands. Laterite soil with moisture holding capacity with varying amounts of aluminium hydroxide is found in the Thiruvvattar, Munchirai, Kurunthancode, Rajakkamangalam, Killiyoor, Thuckalay and Melpuram Blocks. In these Blocks the chief crops are tapioca, rubber, coconut and spices. Red Soil is classified into red loam soil and red sandy soil. Red soil has low moisture holding capacity and so it is not as fertile as the laterite soil. Mixed type of red and alluvial soil occur in Agasteeswarm and Thovalai Blocks. Red loam laterite soil is generally fertile and hence paddy cultivation abounds on such soil.

**Irrigation**

Irrigation is the artificial application of water to soil for the purpose of crop production. As the timing and amount of rainfall are not adequate to meet the moisture requirement of crops, irrigation is essential to raise crops and meet the need for fodder and fuel.
Revenue Divisions and Development Blocks

For the purpose of administrative convenience and revenue collection, the Kanyakumari District has been divided into two Revenue Divisions namely Nagercoil and Padmanabhapuram. There are in all 81 Revenue Villages. The four Taluks of the district namely Thovalai, Agasteeswaram, Kalkulam and Vilavancode have their headquarters at Boothapandi, Nagercoil, Thuckalay and Kuzhithurai respectively.

In order to promote agricultural development, the Kanyakumari District has been divided into 9 Development Blocks with separate headquarters as shown in Table 3.5.

TABLE 3.5
NINE DEVELOPMENT BLOCKS AND THEIR HEADQUARTERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of Taluk</th>
<th>Name of Block</th>
<th>Name of HQrs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Thovalai</td>
<td>(i) Thovalai</td>
<td>Thovalai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Agasteeswaram</td>
<td>(i) Rajakkamangalam</td>
<td>Pazhavilai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(ii) Agasteeswarm</td>
<td>Perumalapuram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Kulkulam</td>
<td>(i) Thiruvattar</td>
<td>Thiruvattar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(ii) Thuckalay</td>
<td>Kozhiporevilai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(iii) Kurunthancode</td>
<td>Kurunthancode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Vilvancode</td>
<td>(i) Melpuram</td>
<td>Pacode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(ii) Munchirai</td>
<td>Munchirai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(iii) Killiyoor</td>
<td>Tholaiyavattam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are 66 Town Panchayats, 88 Village Panchayats and 4 Municipalities. The four Municipalities are Nagercoil, Thuckalay, Kuzhithurai and Colachel.

**Infrastructural Facilities**

Infrastructural facilities include trade, marketing, storage, transportation and communication, credit institutions, research institutions and extension agencies to promote agricultural production.

From time immemorial the Kanyakumari district had been an important trade centre, having Kottar as its central market. In the early days the main commodities of commerce at Kottar were pepper, ivory, teak, sandalwood, rosewood and fruits. At present it is an important paddy milling centre.

The Kanyakumari District has a well developed network of roads. It consists of National Highways, State Highways, District Roads and Rural Roads. The trunk road Chennai – Nagercoil – Trivandrum passes through important places in the district. The distance covered by this road in the district is 62.4 km. It is one of the busiest National Highways in the country. The average road length of road in the district is 1.17 km. per sq.km.

The district had no rail route till 1979. The first rail route from Kuzhithurai West to Nagercoil Junction and the branch line from Nagercoil to
Kanyakumari were opened on 16th April 1979. On 3rd August 1984 train service between Kanyakumari and the Himalayan border was inaugurated.

In the early centuries of the Christian Era, Kanyakumari served as a harbour. Similarly Manakudi and Rajakkamangalam were also ports and trade centres. From the foreign coins unearthed at Muttom it becomes evident that Muttom was a leading centre of foreign trade. Colachel on the West Coast has been a natural port, engaged in export trade. The chief exports are palmirah fibre, mineral sands, fish and salt.

This district has no airport. The nearest airport is at Trivandrum, the capital of the Kerala State which is 84 KM away from Nagercoil.

As a result of recent technological development in the field of communication, every village in the district is provided with postal and telecommunication facilities. At present there are more than 40,000 telephone connections.

Credit and finance facilities are extended to the people of the district by about 123 commercial banks and cooperative banks. The banks extend both investment credit and production credit. Investment credit is extended for minor irrigation, land development, farm mechanisation, plantation, horticulture and waste land development. Production credit is extended in the
form of crop loans. The Central Cooperative Bank, Nagercoil, with its 16 branches extend easy credit to the farmers.

3.3. PROFILE OF TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT

The Tirunelveli district was formed in 1790 by the East India Company, later came under the direct control of the British Crown Queen Victoria. This has several distinctive features of ethnological, religious and it is little wonder that references to this little district were formed in our epics. The name Tirunelveli has been composed from the three Tamil words, that is, “Thiru-Nel-Veli” meaning “Sacred Paddy Hedge”.  

For the purpose of effective administration, Tirunelveli district has been divided into three revenue divisions namely Tirunelveli, Chermadevi and Tenkasi and these three revenue divisions are sub-divided into 11 taluks comprising 19 blocks.

Revenue Divisions, Taluks and Blocks of Tirunelveli District

---

Location

Tirunelveli district covers an area of 6,823 sq.kms. It is in the south eastern part of Tamil Nadu and is triangular in shape. It lies between 08\(^0\) 08’ and 09\(^0\) 23’ of northern latitudes and 77\(^0\) 09’ and 77\(^0\) 54’ of eastern longitudes. It is bound by the Virudhunagar district in the north, Kerala in the West, Kanyakumari district and the Gulf of Mannar in the south, and Thoothukudi
district in the east. The district comprises Tirunelveli, Chernmahadevi and Tenkasi revenue divisions, 11 revenue taluks, 20 blocks, 425 panchayats and 628 revenue villages.  

**Climate**

The district in general experiences a tropical climate with minor changes. The temperature at selected places in the year 2005 – 2006 reveals that the normal temperature varies between $32.3^0$ C and $38.5^0$ C at mean maximum and between $21.4^0$ C and $27.1^0$ C at mean minimum. The district experiences the hottest climate from March to May with mercury reaching $38.5^0$ C at the highest. The climate is comparatively cool during the months from November to February.

**Irrigation**

Irrigation is the artificial application of water to soil for the purpose of crop cultivation. As the timing and amount of rainfall are not adequate to meet the moisture requirement of crops, irrigation is essential to raise crops in order to meet food and fodder requirements for human beings and animals. The irrigation system in Tirunelveli district consists of the river Tamirabarani and its tributaries, Manimuttar, Pachayaru, Nambiyarau, and Chittar which originate from the Western Ghats and meander through the gentle slopes of the midlands.

---

Soil Type

The soil condition of the district can be grouped into two main varieties namely, red soil and black soil. The black soil is of a higher value compared to the red soil. In the south-east coast, the soil is deep, loose red loam surfaced by sand with its depth varying from a few inches to 20 feet.

Infrastructural Facilities

Tirunelveli district enjoys sound banking and infrastructure facilities.

(a) Transportation

The district has a well-built transportation network. The surfaced and the unsurfaced roads cover the distance of 4,55,115 kms. and 86,116 kms. respectively. Besides, the district has a 247 km. long railway track. The length of road per 1000 sq.km. area is 782.58 kms and the length of surfaced road per 1000 sq.km area is 653.23 km.

(b) Financial Institutions

The district has a well-built banking structure catering to the needs of the farming population. The district is well served by 29 banks with their 252 branches including co-operative banks and 500 and odd non-banking finance companies. Both the public and the private sector banks play an active role in extending finance to agriculture in line with national objectives.
(c) 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 406 registered factories and 357 small scale industrial units in the district.

(d) Education

The district has 1,486 primary schools, 380 middle schools, 97 high schools, 93 higher secondary schools, 12 colleges and 10 professional colleges and a university.

(e) 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.

This is the profile of the study area which gives a detailed account of 
the geographic and infrastructural set up of the locality which in turn 
influences the socio- economic status of the people living in the study area in 
general and the cadets in particular.