CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION
The present research work is an attempt to deal with the socio, economic and religious life of Patnul Salis in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh. Patnul Salis are one of the major backward castes in the State of Andhra Pradesh. They originally hailed from Gujarat State. They are known as Patnul Salis or silk-thread weavers. So they consider and claim themselves to be in the position of the caste hierarchy of the Hindu society. The study is intended to observe the community as a whole, with regard to the changes in their social, economic and religious life. In fact, it is contended in the presearch research work that the society cannot be understood unless connections between the different institutions (political, social, economic, cultural and religion) are understood and that the urbanization and modernization play an important role in affecting the changes in their day-to-day life and their values and norms of the society. In the present study an attempt is also made to discern the nature and type of changes that have taken place and are continually taking
place in all spheres among Patnul Salis in Chittoor District over a period of time, consequent upon the changes taking place in the society.

Population

The total population of Andhra Pradesh as per the Census Report of 1991 is 66,304,854. Out of this the population of Chittoor District is 3,249,565. The population of Tirupati (Urban) area of study according to 1991 Census is 1,74,393. Out of this the population of Patnul Salis constitutes 1,418.

Origin of the Caste System

According to Manu, Hindu caste system was mainly divided into four major categories, namely, (1) Brahmans, (2) Kshatriyas, (3) Vaisyas, and (4) Sudras. These caste groups were classified according to their vocation in life¹. Those who were learned and acted as Gurus and performed all

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sacred rites were called as Brahmans (meaning possessing knowledge of Brahma). Those who were well versed in the art of wielding weapons and making wars were called Kshatriyas and they ruled and protected their subjects. Those who were well versed in trade were known as Vaisyas and they were in charge of trade. The rest of the people who cultivated land, practiced other handicrafts like carpentry, sanitary and other menial jobs were treated as Sudras.

According to the classification, Patnul Salis fall under the category of Sudras. But, they claim themselves to be Saurashtra Brahmans. As early as 1705 AD, the Brahmans of Madura questioned the rights of Patnul Salis to perform Brahminic rituals. They wear the sacred thread (yagnopavitham). They are divided into four heads, called Goudas (chiefs), Saulins (elders), Voyddooos (physicians) and Bhoutuls (religious men). Some traces of this division have survived in the now neglected institution of Goudas.

The chiefs acted as judges in both civil and criminal affairs. They were helped by a body of noble Saulins. The office of the Saulins was to enquire into all cases
connected with the community. The Vegudoos and Bhoutuls were honoured on all important occasions.

They were originally a class of the Sun worshippers. They were Madhvas, but after settling in Southern India some of them were influenced by Sankaracharya and Ramanujacharya and were converted into Saivites and Vaishnavites.

Origin and History of Patnul Salis

Patnul Salis are one of the backward castes in the State of Andhra Pradesh. A Patnul Sali forms one of the castes of the fourth order in the hierarchy of our ancient social order. "A sociologist would define caste as a hereditary endogamous, usually well-organized group having traditional association with an occupation, particular position in the local hierarchy of castes". In the above context, Patnul Salis are treated as a caste as they are localised group with traditional occupation of silk weaving.

The Hindu caste system is characterised by a rigid

right of Patnul Salis to perform Brahmanic rituals. The matter was brought to the notice of the Queen Mangammal and after conferring with pandits, she issued a cadjan (palmleaf) sasanam permitting them to follow the Brahmanic rites.

Dasapara was brought to a state of great prosperity and a noble and unequaled temple of the bright rayed (sun) was caused to be built by the silk cloth weavers with the wealth acquired by their craft. After the destruction of the Mandasor by the Muslims they seemed to have traveled towards extreme south to Devagiri, the modern Daulatabad, the then capital of the Yadavas and from there when the Muslims again appeared on the scene in the Fourteenth century to Vijayanagar and eventually to Madura. A curious ceremony confirming this conjecture to this day is observed at Patnul Karan’s wedding ceremonies in South India. A Marathi manuscript contains the same tradition made in the year 1822 at Salem under the direction of the then Collector Mr. M.D. Cockburn. Most of the Patnulkarans can still speak Telugu, which raises the inference that they must have resided a long time in the Telugu country. While their Patnuli contains many Canarese and Telugu terms, they observe the
feast of Basavanna, the founder of Lingayat organisation which is almost peculiar to the region of Bellary, at present in Karnataka State. After the downfall of Vijayanagar Empire, some of them seemed to have gone to Bangalore. In the Mysore Census Report 1891, it is noted that "with silk they manufacture a fine stuff called katri; which no other weavers are said to be able to manufacture. It was said that Haider Ali, while returning from his expeditions against Madras forcibly brought with him some twenty five families of these weavers, who were living in the Tanjore District and established them at Ganjam near Srirangapatnam. In order to encourage silk and velvet weaving, he exempted them from certain government taxes. The industry flourished till the fall of Srirangapatnam, when most of the class fled from the country. Mr. H.A. Stuart writes to say that "they are originally Brahmins living in a town Surat called Devagiri in which twelve streets were entirely populated by them". For some reason, of which they profess to be ignorant, the residents of one of these streets were excommunicated by the rest of the

caste and were expelled. They traveled southwards and settled down in places like Tirupati, Arni and Vellore as well as in Trichinopoly, Tanjore, Madura and other large towns, where they carried on with their craft of silk weaving. Another version is that they were found producing a certain number of silken clothes at each Deepavali feast in Devagiri for the Goddess Lakshmi, the consort of Lord Vishnu. One year their supply fell short and they were cursed by the Goddess Lakshmi, who decreed that they should no longer be regarded as Brahmins. In religion they are divided into Smartas, Vaishnavas and Vyaparis, some among the Smartas being Lingayats.

The Patnul karans, according to one tradition, claim descent from a certain Brahman sage, known as Tantu Vardhanar meaning literally the man who improves threads. In the Manual of the Madurai District, the Patnul karans are described as a caste of Surat silk-weavers, whose ancestors were induced to settle in Madurai by one of the earlier Nayakan kings or in response to an invitation from Tirumala Naik. They prospered so well that they became very well to do and the most numerical of all castes residing in the town of Madura. They have their representatives today in the
Municipal Councils and in the local district boards. In the History of the Sourashtras in Southern India, it is recorded that when the Sourashtras settled in the South, they reproduced the institutions of their mother country in the new land, but owing to the influence of the Southern Dravidians some of the institutions became extinct. The people were divided into four heads called Goundas (Chiefs), Saulins (elders), Voyddoos (physicians) and Bhoutals (religious men). Some traces of the division still survived in the now neglected institution of Goundas. The masses enjoyed the property under the joint undivided Hindu family system as prescribed in the code of Manu. According to Karve, the joint family is a group of people who generally live under one roof, who eat food cooked at one hearth, who hold property in common and who participated in common family worship, and are related to each other as some particular type of kindred. The chiefs acted as the judges in both civil and criminal affairs. They were helped by a


5. Irvati Karve, Kinship Organisation in India, Deccan College Post-Graduate Research Institute, Poona, 1983, p.10.
body of noble Saulins. The office of the Saulins is to make enquiries and try all cases connected with the community, and to abide by the decisions of the chiefs. The Voydóos (Pandits) and Bhoutuls had their honours on all important occasions, such as ceremonies of excommunication Prayán-schittas for admitting the renegades. The Goundas at present are not exercising any of their powers except in some religious matters. The Pātnul karan means silk weaver and is sometimes erroneously applied to the Sourashtras. On the contrary the term strictly applies to all classes of weavers in Southern India Sāniyars, Kakkolars, Devangas, Saliyars, Padma Salayas but not to Sourashtras in any way. The Sourashtras, it is said, were originally a class of sun worshipers from Soura, meaning Sun, but the term Sourashtras means inhabitants of the fruitful kingdom. They were originally Madhvas, but after their settlement in Southern India, some of them owing to the preachings of Sankaracharya and Ramanujacharya, were converted into Saiyvites and Vaishnavites. The Sourashtras like others in India are divided into four great divisions, viz., Brahma, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra. The Vaisyas and Sudras are to be found in almost all towns and villages, and especially at Tirupati,
Nagari, Narayanavanam, Arni, Kottur, Palanipalem, Cottali, Vilangudi and Vivia Vanalluri.

The affairs of the Patnul karans at Madura are managed by a Sourashtra Sabha which was started in 1895.

The main objectives of the Sabha for which it was established may be noted as follows:

(a) To manage the Madura Sourashtra School and establish reading room, libraries, etc., with a view to enable members of the Sourashtra community to receive on moderate terms, a sound, liberal, general and technical education.

(b) To manage the temple known as Madura Sri Parama Venkateswara Swami’s temple and contribute towards its maintenance by constructing, repairing and preserving buildings in connection with making jewels, velidas and other things for festivals thereof.

(c) To find charitable institutions such as orphanages, hospitals, poor houses, choultries (resting places for
travellers) water sheds and other things of a like nature for the good of the Sourashtra community.

(d) To give succour to the suffering, the maimed, the lame and the blind in Sourashtra community.

(e) To give pecuniary grants in aid of Upanayans (thread marriages or initiations) to the helpless of the Sourashtra community.

(f) To create such works of utility as bathing ghats, wells, water foundations, and other works of utility for the benefit of the Sourashtra community.

(g) To fix and reuse subscriptions known as mahanams (a sort of income tax).

A few years ago, the Sourashtra community submitted a memorandum to the Governor of Madras stating that the backward Sourashtra community needed the requisite capital of half a lakh of rupees for imparting to their members both general and technical education. The Sourashtra Sabha, Madura suggests that a lottery office may be kept for
collecting shares at one rupee each from such of the public at large as may be willing to give the same, on the understanding that every time the collections aggregate to Rs. 6,250, Rs. 2.50 should be set apart for the expenses of working the said office and two-thirds of the remainder for educational purposes and one-third should be awarded by drawing lots among the subscribers in the shape of five prizes, ranging from Rs. 100 to Rs. 125. In passing orders on this sporting scheme, the Government stated that it was not prepared to authorise the lottery. It has been well said that the Patnul karans have a very strong esprit de corps, and this has stood them in good stead in their weaving, which is more scientifically carried on, and in a more flourishing condition than is usual elsewhere.

Mr. A. Chatterton, Director of Technical Enquiry, Madura once said about Patnul karans, that as a rule they are in a flourishing condition and are much better than the Sourashtra weavers in Salem. Consequently they are less affected by fluctuations in demand for their goods. In various ways the Sourashtras of Madura have furnished evidence that they are a progressive community particularly in the field of education and on their look out for
improvements in the methods of their art. They tried many of the so-called improvements and rejected as they are unsuitable for Indian conditions. As an example, sometime ago one, Mr. A.A. Kuppuswamy Iyer invented certain improvements in the native shedding apparatus, whereby ornamental patterns are woven along the borders of silk and cotton cloth. This was no doubt an improvement over which is ordinarily used by the weavers. Many weavers fitted their looms with this modern apparatus and obtained a patent for it, but this is resisted by some other weavers and a suit is pending with the district court. One of the important weaving enterprises of Madura is the Meenakshi Weaving Co., with a capital of Rs. 1,00,000. The Madura Dying Co., is in the hands of Soursastras and dates back to 1895. During the short period the industry has grown to a very large extent. According to Mr. N. Subramanya Iyer, "the Patnul karans are generally of yellowish complexion and in possession of handsome and more intellectual features than the Tamil castes". In Travancore like elsewhere, they keep aloof from other castes and are independently of general society, speaking a foreign language. They have preserved and stuck to it all the years and recently an alphabet has been invented and books have begun to be
written in that dialect. They are very conservative of a
very remarkable religious order, skillful and industrious
workmen. They take intense pleasure in music and dance and
many of them are excellent singers. They generally spend
their leisure in singing devotional songs. They believe in
omen, good as well as a bad. Male Patnuls appear externally
as Tamil Vaishnava Brahmins whereas the women follow the way
of the Telugu Brahmin women indicating at least a temporary
residence of the caste in the Telugu region on their way
from Gujarat to Madura of South India. It is said in Tamil
that a male Patnul without his wife will be taken for a
Vaishnava Brahmin whereas in the case of the Tata case a
woman without her husband will be taken for an Aryan. Ta
Hooing prevails amongst them to a large extent.

The Patnuls internally may be divided into three
categories on religious basis: (1) Pure Vaishnavites who
wear the vertical Vaishnavite mark and call themselves
Vedugals or northerners, (2) those who are mainly Smartas,
(3) those who are Sankara Vaishnavites and who wear gopi
(sandal paste) as their sect symbol. The Travancore Patnuls
fall to the last of these religious sects. The religious
differences do not create a distinction in the caste. The
The main divinity is Venkatachalapathy of Tirupati. They worship Lord Venkateswara during September and October and offer their vows. In addition to this, they observe fasting on all Saturdays. On those days, they take an idol of Garuda in procession in the streets. The Deepavali, Pannamari in Chittiray and the Vaikunta Ekadashi are other important sacred days. The Dasara, Srirama Navami, Ashtami, Rohini, Avani, Avattam and Varalakshmi Vratam are also observed by these people. The serpent and banayan tree are specially worshipped. The Patnul karans have a temple dedicated to Sri Rama at Kottar. This temple is visited even by upper Hindu caste people. The Acharya or the supreme religious authority in Travancore or a Vaishnava Brahmin known as Libhaya Vedanta Koti Kanyakadonor Tata Charlyan who lives at Aravankuran near Tinnevelly, and has a large number of disciples. Once a year he visits his devotees in Travancore. Elders are appointed to decide social disputes and manage the common property of the caste.

**Aims and Objectives**

The present work is an attempt to study and deal with the socio-economic conditions of Patnul Salis in the Chittoor District. Since the majority of the Patnul Salis
live in Chittoor District of Andhra Pradesh, the purpose of the study is to assess the various patterns in their socio, economic conditions and religious life besides to examine the changes that have taken place.

It is purely a sociological study, both normative and empirical. Keeping this in view, the following specific objectives are drawn which are as follows:

(1) to know the history and background of Patnul Salis;

(2) to study their social life which includes family and marriage;

(3) to measure their literacy and education;

(4) to study the economic conditions of Patnul, which include their level of income, their occupation, their savings and expenditure housing conditions, food habits and so on; and

(5) to study their religious life, the rituals and festivals practised and observed by them.
METHODODOLOGY

(i) Area of Study

The study is mainly confined to Tirupati town in Chittoor District in the State of Andhra Pradesh for two obvious reasons. First, a large number of Patnul Salis is concentrated in Tirupati town. Second, the town is a fast growing urban centre. It has all educational facilities. Besides, three universities, namely, Sri Venkateswara University, Sri Padmavathi Mahila University and the Central Sanskrit University, many professional colleges and other degree colleges are located here. Apart from this, since it is a well known pilgrimage centre, in terms of trade and business, the town has made good progress and development. Above all, the town has a good number of small and medium scale industries; thus, it is well industrialised. Hence, the impact of all the factors on Patnul Salis in their day-to-day life is felt and seen. The possibility of changes is more and good for evaluation. Another significant reason for choosing this town for the study is that the Researcher herself comes from it. And, hence, it is felt easier to study and assess the changes in Patnul Salis.
Tirupati is a Grade II Municipal Town. For administrative purposes, it is divided into thirty six wards, each ward is represented by an elected representative known as Municipal Councillor. Patnul Salis are inhabiting the fourth and fifth wards.

(ii) The Sample

The study area (Tirupati town) has a total population of 1,74,393 (as per 1991 Census). There are altogether 250 Patnul Sali families. All the 250 families were chosen for the study. The respondents include only the heads of their respective families. The sample comprises 226 males and 24 females. Majority of the respondents are males. However, 24 females are heading their families. These respondents are widows.

(iii) Tools used for Data Collection

The Researcher employed various conventional techniques like Interview Schedule and Participant Observation to gather relevant information from the respondents. An Interview Schedule consisting of various questions dealing with their socio-economic and religious aspects was administered to all the heads of families to collect the
necessary information. Narrative and focused interviews were held to collect information from the aged respondents to know about their traditional practices. Young, educated and middle aged people were also interviewed to ascertain their attitudes and beliefs regarding various traditional customs, present economic situation, modern education and employment, etc.

(iv) Data Collection

The Researcher herself visited the houses and collected the data over a period of six months. Now and then she stayed with them, took part in their various festivals, fairs, other religious ceremonies and observed their attitudes and behaviour. Apart from this the Researcher attended various periodic and non-periodic rituals on different occasions and carefully recorded the information. This was done in order to ensure the accuracy in the collected data in the Schedule. In addition, the elders of the caste, the ward Councillors and ritual heads were interviewed for authenticity of the data. As evidence to their marriages and other rituals, necessary photos were taken and appended at the end of the thesis. Having thus collected the material with some more occasional visits to
the field area, the Researcher finally prepared the draft. As and when gaps were revealed, the Investigator paid intermittent visits to the field.

The Census Reports, standard works of different scholars, scriptures and stories from mythologies, etc. were studied and made to become a part of the present work.

Body of the Thesis

The collected data was later processed, tabulated and analysed.

The entire work is divided into six chapters. The first chapter deals with the introduction. It includes the origin and history of Patnul Salis, methodology and research setting.

Second chapter examines their social conditions. This comprises family, marriage and educational progress made by Patnul Salis.

Third chapter is devoted to the study of their economic conditions which include aspects like their occupation,
income, expenditure, savings, borrowing, dress pattern, housing conditions and so on.

Fourth chapter is mainly concerned with the rites of passage.

In chapter five an attempt has been made to study various festivals observed by Patnul Salis.

The last chapter comprises summary and conclusions.

Review of Literature

Unlike on other social groups, sociological studies on the Patnul Salis are not many. In fact, no significant attempt has been made to study this particular group in Andhra Pradesh. However, fragmented information on their life was recorded here and there, in official papers, Census Reports, district gazetteers, monographs and village records.

M.N. Srinivas in his handbook entitled Caste in Modern India and Other Essays gives a definition of caste and its
position in the local hierarchy of castes.\textsuperscript{6} Ghurye, G.S. in his book \textit{Caste and Race in India}\textsuperscript{7} defines "Caste Panchayat" and other relevant aspects of castes. A number of authors like E. Thurston in his book \textit{Castes and Tribes of Southern India},\textsuperscript{8} A. Ayyappan, in his book \textit{A Report on the Socio Economic Conditions of the Aboriginal Tribes of the Province}\textsuperscript{9} and K. Bala Surya Prasad, in his book \textit{Andhra Vijnanam}\textsuperscript{10} have recorded certain general factors regarding the socio, economic, political and religious features of various communities in the State, but did not make any detailed study. In his book \textit{Kinship Organisation in India}\textsuperscript{11}, Karve defines the setup of a family. V.V. Prakasa Rao, V.V.

\textsuperscript{6} Srinivas, M.N., \textit{Caste in Modern India and Other Essays}, Published by P.S. Jayasingha, Asia Publishing House.


\textsuperscript{8} Thurston, E., \textit{Castes and Tribes of Southern India}, Government Press, Madras, 1909.


\textsuperscript{11} Iravati Karve, \textit{Kinship Organisation in India}, Deccan College of Post-Graduate Research Institute, Poona, 1953, p. 6.
Nandina Rao, in their book entitled Marriage, the Family and Women in India\textsuperscript{12} discussed the status of women in detail. Reece, M.C. Gee and Others in their book Sociology An Introduction\textsuperscript{13} studied marriage and its implications with regard to family. M.N. Srinivas in his book The Remembered Village\textsuperscript{14} has touched upon the aspect of the relationship of sex and occupation.

Anne Marie Do Weal Malfijt in her book An Introduction to Anthropology of Religion\textsuperscript{15} stressed the fact that rituals were the core of the religion, irrespective of man's belief or disbelief and Harrison insisted myth and rituals were counterparts. Arnold Van Gennep in his book The Rites of Passage\textsuperscript{16} described the rituals concerned with life cycle.

\textsuperscript{12} Prakasa Rao, V.V. Nandini Rao, V.V., Marriage, the Family and Women in India, Heritage Publishers, New Delhi, 1982.

\textsuperscript{13} Reece, M.C. Gee, and Others, Sociology: An Introduction, p. 372.

\textsuperscript{14} Srinivas, M.N., The Remembered Village, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1976.

\textsuperscript{15} Anne Marie Do Weal Malfijt, Religion and Culture - An Introduction to Anthropology of Religion, pp.187-190.

They are composed of three elements, namely, separation, transition and reintegration. Malefijt in her book Religion and Culture postulated in theory that the elements of separation, transition and reintegration marked separate stages of an individual's life.

Y. Subhashini Subrahmanyan in her book Social Changes in Village India said that childbirth pollutes the concerned family and also the families with the same surname or intiperu. In the same book she discussed Andhra society. Since it is patrilineal the family name of the boys does not change, but a girl's family name is changed after marriage.

Frazer, J.G. in his book The Golden Bough points out the universal fear of man of menstured blood and this in turn leads to stringent restrictions on women on their mestruration or puberty.


Chitralekha Gupta in her book The Brahmanas of India\textsuperscript{22} deals with the Brahman community and their growth of various professions. She also discussed the temples and the role of priests in temples including their religious distribution. Lakshmichand Sarma in his book Rural Craft Survey Art of Weaving Himachal Pradesh\textsuperscript{23} explained the various types of material culture for weaving purpose. Jorapur, P.B. in his book Indian Caste System and Education\textsuperscript{24} discussed the caste


\textsuperscript{21} Kapadia,K.M., Marriage and Family in India A Dictionary of Sociology Edited by G. Duncon Mitchell, p. 113.

\textsuperscript{22} Chitralekha Gupta, The Brahmanas of India, Sundeeep Publications, 1983.

\textsuperscript{23} Lakshmichand Sarma, Rural Craft Survey Art of Weaving, Himachal Pradesh, Cambridge Printing Works, Delhi 1968.

\textsuperscript{24} Jorapur, P.B., Occupational Mobility of Industrial Workers, Karnataka University, Dharwad, p. 5.
system in India, its origin and the aspect of education among various castes and communities. J.H.Battla Charya in his book Hindu Caste and Sects discussed castes and subsects in detail. According to Hazara, C.F. in his book Studies in Puranic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs occupational mobility was allowed among the lower castes even during classified Hindu period. Brown, W.N., in his book Class and Cultural Tradition in India and Hoeart, A.H. in his book Caste A Comparative Study have made similar observations. While Hoeart observed that this latitude is not modern, not brought about by the influence of Europe.


Davis Kingsley in his book The Population of India and Pakistan\(^2\) writes that only half of male workers are engaged in traditional occupation. The Census of India, 1921 reveals that Madigas were untouchable castes, tanning was their traditional occupation. Later they have deviated from their traditional callings in Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema.

Lakshmann, C., in his book *Caste Organisation and Occupational Mobility in Rural India*\(^3\) (A Study of Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema Region of Andhra Pradesh) found that the respondents' occupational deviation from the grandfather occupation was slightly more marked than that from their father's occupation.

All the studies that have been referred so far in the preceding pages have nearly touched upon the caste system in Indian society. No particular study has been made on indivi-

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\(^{3}\) Lakshmann, C., *Caste Organisation and Occupational Mobility in Rural India*, Rajeswara Prasad, Concepts of Indian Society.
dual castes, their patterns of living. Although, a number of studies have come into existence on various individual castes, some more castes have been left untouched by the sociologists. Among these groups, Patnul Salis may be noted. They are unaccounted and untouched by the sociologists. So far, no one has conducted any significant study on Patnul Salis. Hence, the present work forms the pioneering one and this study will make us understand more about the backward castes in India, their way of living, the changes that have affected them and so on. This microscopic study will awaken curiosity among social researchers and take up further studies in respect of backward castes in India.

Topography of Chittoor District

Chittoor is one of the Rayalaseema districts situated in Southern most part of the Andhra Pradesh. It lies between the Northern Latitudes 120° 31' and 14° 08' and between Eastern Longitudes 78° 03' and 79° 55' of Andhra Pradesh and Chengalpet district of Tamil Nadu, on the West of Kolar district of Karnataka on the North to a great extent by Cuddapah district of Andhra Pradesh and on the South by North Arcot and Dharmapuri districts of Tamil Nadu.
The Chittoor District occupies eighth place with an area of 15152 sq. kms. which accounts for 5.51 per cent of the total area of the State. According to the Census of 1991 the total population is 3,246,565. Which include from rural and from urban areas. There are altogether 66 Mandalas, each Mandal is headed by an elected head known as Mandaladhyaakshudu who in turn is assisted by an officer appointed by the State Government known as Mandal Development Officer (MDO). Besides, the district has five Municipalities. The present study is undertaken in Tirupati Urban which comes under the administration of Tirupati Municipality. Linguistically the district is a peculiar blend of Telugu and Tamil.

Geology and Minerals

Geologically the district may roughly be divided into the two regions, viz., (1) the Hills and Uplands and (2) the Plains. The most extensive range of hills of the District that made one of the most picturesque in the State are the Eastern ghats. The Lord Sri Venkateswara temple is located on this ghats, known as Tirumalai Hills. The District bears no perennial rivers, but some important minor rivers are like the Papagni, Pincha, Koundinya, Paler, Ponne, Arani,
Swarnamukhi, Bahuda, Kalangi and Kusasthali. Among the minerals the barites (Srikalahasti taluk), gold (Kuppam taluk), iron (Srikalahasti and Naidupet), clay, lead, granite, etc., are important occurings in the District.

Climate and Rainfall

The District has a dry and agreeable climate. The year may be divided into four seasons. (1) Cool (December-February), (2) Summer (March-May), (3) South West Monsoon (January-September) and (4) Post monsoon (October-November). The average annual rainfall in the district is 327.5 mm (32.58"). The mean daily maximum temperature is 348°C - 253°C whereas minimum 23.9 - 15.4°C. In October-November, some of the storms and depressions from the Bay of Bengal cross the East coast and affect the district and its neighbours, causing widespread heavy rain and gush winds. Thunderstorms occur in the summer and post-monsoon seasons.

Flora, Forest and Fauna

The district, despite heavy biotic influence presents unique flora in view of its peculiar climate topography and geology. Ficus species and other epiphytic species come up which help on the process of breaking up of the rocks and
their eventual disintegration as has been evidenced from the Tirupati Hills. Apart from these green paddy fields, green patches of mesophytic type of flora like syggium cumini (neredu), Pongamia globra (kanuga) and large trees of perminalia Arinna (Erra Maddi and Tella Maddi), mango, phoenix sytrestris (ita) are also seen seasonally from this district. The forests of the district can broadly be classified into three principal types, viz.,

(1) Dry tropical South Indian, dry mixed deciduous forests. They experience a rainfall about 1,000 mm. The important species are Albiggia, Anone, Bamboos, Bamlirc, Hard Wickre Binate, Pongan and Red Sanders.

(2) Southern catch thorn forest groups chief species are Acacia Carissa, Prosopis, Jigghtus, Dolichandrone and others.

(3) Tropical dry, every green forests. The chief species are Atlantic, Eugenia, Hugonia, etc.

(4) Fauna: The hill range of Bhakarapet and Tirupati of this district is reported to be rich both in flora and
fauna. The big game animals like elephants, bisons, etc., carnivora like tigers, panthers and cheetas are greatly depleted and almost extinct. Other common forms of wild animals such as sambur and spotted deer appear rare. Apart from these the animals, wild dog (Cuon alpinus-resukukka), wild pig (Sus cristatus-Adavi Pandi), jungle cat (Felis Change-Adavi Bull), takkal (Camis aureaus-Nakka), fox (velper bengalensis-Gunta nakka) and wolf (Canis lupus - Thodelu) are seen. The birds like crow, eagle, kites, quails, patridges, pig cons and the reptiles, cobra, russels viper and branded krant are common in the district.

The Topography of Tirupati Town

Tirupati, the famous pilgrim centre is situated in Chandragiri taluk, Chittoor district, Andhra Pradesh. The name Tirupati itself generally connotes both the town at the foot of the hills, the town known as "Tirupati" and the main pilgrim centre known as "Tirumala" on the hills. Tirupati is a Municipal town comprising an area of 5 square kms and with a population of about 1,74,393 (as per 1991 Census). They include 90,741 males and 83,612 females. It is situated at the foot of a picturesque range of hills in the Eastern Ghats known variously as Seshachala, "Venkatachala", 
etc. The town of Tirupati lies in the midst of an amphitheatre encircled by this range of hills. The Tirumala hills cover an area of 16 sq. kms. running continuously with the Seshachala Hills in the Cuddapah District and the Nallamala range in the Kurnool District. On the North and the Nagari Hills, all of which form part of the Eastern Ghats. Curves and loops of these hills give a serpentine appearance when seen from above and in the pious imagination of worshipers these hills are believed to be the body of the Divine Serpent Adisesha whose body Lord Vishnu reposes. The Seven Hills of Tirupati are said to represent the seven hoods of Adisesha.

To think of Tirupati is to think of Tirumala. The abode of Lord Vishnu popularly known as "Kaliyuga Vaikunta". Its fame owes its great allegiance to the Lord of Seven Hills. Tirumala is situated at an altitude of 840 mts above sea level, it offers an even climate which makes it possible for pilgrims to visit the place all the year round. The permanent population of Tirumala is about 8,000 and not less than 10,000, pilgrims on an average visit the shrine every day. The distance between Tirupati and Madras is 45 kms and easily accessible by bus or train. Renigunta Junction on
the way to Tirupati is on the Madras-Bombay section of the Southern Railway. Tirupati has two railway stations - Tirupati (East) and Tirupati (West) to which Tirupati East is next to Renigunta Junction in the Renigunta-Villipuram Section, within a distance of 10 kms from Renigunta consequent on the conversion of the metre gauge line between Renigunta and Tirupati into broad gauge. Six direct Express trains are available. They are Saptagiri Express (between Madras-Tirupati), Tirumala Express (between Tirupati and Vijayawada), Venkatadri Express (between Tirupati and Hyderabad), Meenakshi Express (Tirupati to Tiruchi) and Puri Express (Tirupati to Puri). There are a good number of broad gauge passenger trains running between Madras and Renigunta, Arkonam and Gudur and Tirupati.

Apart from these Railway services there are a good number of private as well as State Transport services from Tirupati to far off places like Srisailam, Vijayawada, Narasapuram, Anantapur, Bhimavaram, Hyderabad, Kurnool and Adoni in Andhra Pradesh, Madras, Tiruttani, Salem, Tiruvannamalai, Coimbatore, Tirupatur in Tamil Nadu and Bangalore, Chikkaballapur of Karnataka. Tirupati, in spite of its being the busiest pilgrimage centre in the whole of
the country, is able to retain its cleanliness, thanks to
the efficient Municipal administration. The Municipal town
has 36 wards and its limits being extended day-by-day in
view of the town’s stupendous growth on all directions. It
is not only a pilgrimage centre but also a centre of
education. It has to its credit of University installed in
1954 named after Lord Venkateswara. Besides, two more
Universities, Sri Padmavathi Mahila Visvavidyalayam and
Sanskrit University, have been recently established. The
town comprises all professional and technical colleges
besides degree and junior colleges. A host of schools
including Central School and Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeet are
situated in the town. In brief, Tirupati has come to be
known as a synonym for "Seat of Knowledge" which reputation
in olden days was owned by Kasi, Nalanda and Taxila.