CHAPTER –IV
PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA

Physical and Geographical Features

Location

Salem District is one of the land locked Districts in Tamilnadu state. It is
bounded on the North by Dharmapuri district, on the South by Namakkal
district, on the West by Erode district and, on the East by Villupuram district.
The elevation of landscape generally ranges from 500 ft to 1200 ft. above MSL
with the exception of Yercaud which is at 5000 ft. above MSL.

Administrative Set up

The Geographical area of the district is 520530 Ha. The district has 4
Revenue divisions, one corporation and 3 municipalities. There are 20
Panchayat unions in the district as detailed below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Taluks</th>
<th>Blocks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salem</td>
<td>1. Salem</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Veerapandi</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Panamarathupatti</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Ayodhiapatnam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Valappadi</td>
<td>5. Valappadi and part of Ayodhiapatnam block</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attur</td>
<td>6. Attur</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Peddanaickenpalayam and one firka of Talaivasal block</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gangavalli</td>
<td>8. Talaivasal</td>
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<td></td>
<td>9. Gangavalli</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sankari</td>
<td>10. Sankari</td>
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<td></td>
<td>11. Magudancha</td>
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<tr>
<td>Idappadi</td>
<td>12. Idappadi</td>
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<td></td>
<td>13. Konganapuram</td>
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<td>Mettur</td>
<td>14. Kolathur</td>
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<td></td>
<td>15. Mecheri</td>
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<td></td>
<td>16. Nangavalli</td>
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<tr>
<td>Omalur</td>
<td>17. Omalur</td>
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<td></td>
<td>18. Taramangalam</td>
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<td>19. Kadayampatti</td>
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<td>Yercaud</td>
<td>20. Yercaud (Town Panchayat)</td>
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</table>

**Rainfall**

The average rainfall for the first 5 years (1991-96) works out to 851.90 mm which is lower than the State average of 943 mm. The north east monsoon period is the major rainy season accounting for 66 per cent of the normal rainfall, followed by southwest monsoon (30 per cent).
Temperature

The average mean minimum temperature is 32.4°C while the average mean maximum temperature is 24.20 °C.

Soil

Major soils of the district are clay, black loam, black sand, and red ferruginous and red sand. The black loam is considered most fertile. The red soil is equal to loam in Productivity in and around Attur. Black soil is due to alluvial deposits with red subsoil. Status of Soil and Water conservation programmes

As on 96-97, 103 percolation ponds and 70 check dams have been constructed in the district benefiting about 3000 Ha. of land. The implementation of soil and water conservation programmes is significant in terms of water harvesting and arresting of soil erosion.

Trend in consumption of Fertilizers and Pesticides

The consumption of chemical fertilizers and bio-fertilizers are put at 84712 tons and 50168 tonnes respectively. The analysis of the trend in consumption of fertilizers and pesticides indicate that consumption of both chemical fertilizers and bio-fertilizers are increasing. From 34716 tonnes in 1980-81, the chemical fertilizer consumption has more than doubled in 1995-96 to 84712 tonnes. The consumption of bio-fertilizers also increases steadily.

Demographic features

Population

The total population as per 1991 census is 2547367. The proportion of male and female in the total population works out at 52.44per cent, and 47.56per cent respectively. Out of total population nearly 68per cent live in rural areas and 32per cent live in urban areas.
Literacy Level

Literacy level has increased considerably from 38.69 per cent in 1981 to 65.78 per cent in 1991. However, there is a cause for concern in case of female literacy, which is put at 37.70 per cent.

Birth Rate

The analysis of the trend is birth rate indicates that there had been considerable decline during 1971-1981. From 314.30 per thousand in 1971, the birth rate had come down to 179.10 per thousands in 1981. However, during 1981-91 the birth rate has considerably increased, from 179.10 per thousand to 207.90 per thousand.

Death Rate

The death rate in the district had come down considerably during the period between 1961-71 and 1971-81, from 111.30 per thousand to 60.30 per thousand respectively. However, there has been an increase during 1981-91, which is put at 71.83 per thousand. Infant mortality rate has also been declining steadily. From 636.40 per thousand in 1961-71, the rate had come down to 335.60 per thousand in 1981-91.

Density of Population

The overall density of population in the district has increased from 398 persons per sq.km in 1981 to 507 persons per sq.km in 1996. The population density in both urban and rural areas has shown considerable increase. It has increased from in 1981 to 3375 persons per sq. km in 1996, in urban areas.

Decadal Growth rate of population

The population of the district has grown from 16.04 lakhs in 1961 to 43.86 lakhs in 1996. The decadal growth rate indicates that there has been a considerable growth in rural as well as urban population.
Population below Poverty Line (PBPL)

The analyses of Population below Poverty Line (PBPL) indicate that the percentage is higher in rural areas than in urban areas. While the percentage of PBPL in rural areas works out to 28.06 per cent of total rural population, in urban areas it works out to 30.19 per cent of total urban population.

Land Resources

Agricultural Resources

Out of the total geographical area of 520530 Ha, the net-cropped area accounts for 53.39 per cent. In places where irrigation sources are good, paddy, sugarcane, and turmeric are cultivated. Cash crops such as cotton, groundnut, tapioca, gingelly, tomato are also finding significant place in the cultivation. The land utilization details are

Trend in Production and Productivity of important crops

The total area under cultivation of cereal is placed at 1,10,708 Ha in 95-96. The area under cultivation is fluctuating year to year depending on the rainfall. The average productivity of cereals per hectare worked out to 2.11 Ton in 1995-96. The analysis of productivity of Cereals during 1986-89 to 1995-96 indicates that it is highly fluctuating. While the highest productivity is 4.80 ton/Ha during 1989-90, the lowest was 1.12 ton/Ha during 87-88. The area under cultivation of pulses and oil seeds is put at 48478 Ha and 86935 Ha respectively. The productivity of pulses and oil seeds is also fluctuating year to year. The fluctuation is attributed to the vagaries nature of rainfall.

Horticulture

The district finds significant place in the cultivation of Horticulture and plantation crops. The agro climatic conditions are well suited for the horticulture and plantation crops. The total area under Horticulture and plantation crops is put at 32600 Ha. Mango, banana, coconut, tomato, brinjal, are the import crops cultivated in the district.
Forest Resources

The area under forest cover is put at 46284.98 Ha, of which 95 per cent is reserve forest category, 4.50 per cent is reserve lands and 0.5 per cent is unclassified forests. The area under encroachment is put at 3057 Ha, which works out to 7 per cent of total forest area. The per capita forest cover is coming down which indicate the decline of forest cover.

Mineral Resources

Salem district finds very important place in the mineral map of Tamil Nadu state. Bauxite, Dunite, magnetite, quartz, limestone, soapstone, and granite are important minerals available in the district. Mining of minerals causes considerable air pollution. Dumping waste materials are created environmental problems in the local areas in the district.

Water Resources

Ground water is the major source of irrigation in the district. The district has maximum number of home wells in Tamil Nadu state. In many blocks over exploitation of ground water is noticed. Due to this, water table is going down remarkably. Though, watershed programmes and yielding positive result, towards improving water table, it is observed to be not adequate

Rivers

Cauvery, Thirumanimutharu, Sarapangandhi are the important rivers in the district. Except Cauvery, other rivers flow only during rainy seasons.

River Basin and Other Catchment Areas

Cauvery basin is the major river basin in the district. The total area of Cauvery basin in the district is put at Ha. And this is worked out 81.26per cent of total basin of the district.
**Fisheries**

The annual production of fisheries is put at 428 tons. Main source of fish production is Mettur Dam and PWD tanks.

**Heritage Resources**

Yercaud, which is popularly known as “Poormen’s Ooty” is an import hill station in the district. The growing construction activities in Yercaud affect the ecological balance. Mettur Dam also finds important place as a natural heritage centre.

**Energy Resources**

The district has one thermal power station and two hydro electric power stations. The total installed capacity is 110 MW. The contribution of non-conventional energy sources is meeting the power requirements is very limited.

**Social Infrastructure**

**Occupied Housing Units**

The total number of occupied housing units as on 1991 is calculated at 66700. There has been an increase in the number of households accessing piped water supply connection and toilet facilities in both rural and urban areas.

**Supply of Drinking Water**

River and ground water are the major source of drinking water in the district. Salem Corporation, Idappadi and Mettur Municipalities and a good number of town panchayats are covered by Cauvery water schemes. Also about 60 per cent of sample villages are covered by water schemes. Thus round the year water supply is ensured. Out of 3730 sample villages, 1409 sample villages are having water problem as on 1995 – 96.
**Domestic Waste Water Generation and Treatment**

The calculated sewage generation is 325.75 MLD among corporation and municipalities and 55.75 MLD and town Panchayats. Except in Salem corporation, water treatment facilities have not been established and hence there is no organized disposal of sewage water. Nature of disposal and quantity thorough river water is 123.75 MLD in Municipalities and 29.47 MLD in Town Panchayats. The district also lacks underground drainage system except Salem Corporation.

**Municipal Solid Waste Generation and Disposal**

Solid waste generation in urban bodies is increasing day by day. Among urban bodies Salem Corporation accounts for more than 50 per cent of total solid waste generation, followed by municipalities (32.5 per cent). Solid waste disposal pose severe environmental pressure in view of space occupation and air pollution. Scientific disposal so far has not picked up. It is understood that Salem Corporation is taking steps for scientific disposal of solid waste.