CHAPTER - III
PROFILE OP THE STUDY AREA

The profile of Dindigul District and the sample blocks and sample town - Athoor Block and Dindigul Town are explained in this chapter. The profile includes the location, administrative setup, population, literacy, Physiography, climate, irrigation, forest, agriculture and land use pattern, industry, rivers, tourist attraction, livestocks, co-operation, trade, transport, communication, etc.

3.1 Dindigul District

Location,

The District is bounded by Erode, Coimbatore, Karur and Trichy Districts on the north, by Sivagangai, Karur and Trichy Districts on the East, by Madurai and Theni District on the South and by Coimbatore District and Kerala State on the West. It's spread over an area of 4217.36 sq.km.

Administrative set-up;

For the administrative convenience, Dindigul District is divided into three Revenue Divisions, namely, Dindigul, Palani and Kodaikanal and Oddanchatram. The district comprise seven
taluks. They are Dindigul, Natham, Nillakottai, Palani, Vedasanthur, Kodaikaiial and Gddanchatram. There are 3 municipalities in the district. They are, Dindigul, Palani and Kodaikanal. The 14 Blocks of the district are: Athoor, Batlagundu, Dindigul, Gujiliamparai, Kodaikanal, Natham, Nillakottai, Oddanchatram, Palani, Reddiarchatram, Shanarpatti, Thoppampatti, Vadamadurai and Vedasandur Blocks. The district also comprises of 39 Revenue Firkas and 357 Revenue villages.

Population

According to 1991 census, the total population of the District is 17,60,601, which covers the Male population of 8,90,783 and Female population of 8,69,818. The taluk wise population is as follows:

- Dindigul : 6,41,378
- Natham : 1,19,222
- Nillakottai : 2,27,976
- Kodaikanal : 3,34,388
- Vedasandur : 2,56,232
- Palani : 98,598
- Oddanchatram : 23,578
Physiography

The district has extensively hilly and rocky areas with undulating plains. Palani hills forming the Northern part of the Western Ghats ranging in height from 1000 to 2700 meters. The upper plains with an average height of 2500 Mts comprise valleys and contain several peaks like Perumal Hill, the Vandarvey Hills etc. They consist largely of plateaus made up of rolling down covered with coarse grasses and isolated shoals in the valleys.

The lower plains consist of jungle of peaks from 1000 to 1700 Mts height, separated from one another by steep and beautiful wooded valleys. Those hills are Thandigudi, Virupatchi Hills etc. On the eastern side, Sirumalai, Alagar Malai and the Natham and Ayyalur hills are found.

A large number of isolated peaks namely Karumalai, a sacred hill, tapering Kodarangimalai, great rock of Dindigul, Rengamalai etc., are also found. The rest of the District is characterised by an undulating plain covered mostly by Red Soil (85%). The upper plains have thick layer of black earth over yellow clay.
Climate

Semi-arid tropical monsoon type of climate is prevailing in the plains. However, upper plains records low temperature and fairly heavy rainfall. In the plains, the Maximum and Minimum atmospheric temperature are 40c and in the Hill stations 37c and 8.5c respectively. Pleat becomes intense in April and May and shoots further up unless interfered by rains. Dust storms winds blow from various quarters towards the end of March. Except at these times and the period of monsoon, the air is calm and undisturbed. The severity of wind storm is evidenced by sand deposition and subsequent sand dunes over vast area, especially in Palani Taluk.

The moisture regime of the district is dusty when the moisture control section is most continuously at least 90 consecutive days. This period can be profitably utilized for crop production. However it is rainy for more than 90 cumulative days in a year and limited moisture is available for plant growth but supplementary irrigation is necessarily warranted or else the land may have to be put under dry crops. Considering the atmospheric temperature as an index for soil temperature,
temperature regime is found to be hyper-thermic in the plains. For, Kodaikanal, the regimes are udic and isothermic respectively.

The high rate of transpiration indicated that this will affect the soil moisture and high transpiration from crop plants thereby affecting the crop growth in years of low rainfall. Hence, precipitation below evapo-transpiration is a direct indication of drop condition in the area. The climatic condition reveals that the ideal season for irrigated crops lasts between May and September. The remaining months may be put under dry land management.

Irrigation

The river system is complicated to some extent due to several Hills and Valleys and seasonal dependent on rainfall. The pattern of drainage may be described as dentatric on the plains and sub-parallel to the Hills. The plains around Dindigul and Palani drained north-eastern by four almost parallel tributaries of Amaravathi river rising in the plains. The vedasandur taluk is drained by kodaganar and part of Mllakottai taluk by Manjalar. A number of streams flowing in the District mostly drain into tanks.
There are 41 Government canals, 2612 tanks and 79275 wells in the district. About 29 percent of the net area is irrigated. Wells form the chief source of irrigation followed by tanks. There are 79275 wells to provide irrigation to 68236 ha. Palar - Porandalar, Kodaganar and Manjalar Schemes are important irrigation schemes. Canals irrigate 12310 ha. 2612 Tanks for irrigation covers 16607 ha.

Forest

Forest covers 18.8 percent of the total area of the district. Forests fall naturally under 3 main formations, the mixed deciduous, the ever green and the grass land. The natural vegetation is rich and varied. About 700 species accounting for 50 to 80 percent of the flora of whole Indian Peninsula have been identified in plains besides a large number of species peculiar to themselves.

Agriculture and land use

The total Geographical area of the District is 508016 ha. Net cultivable area is 274707 ha. Out of the net area sown as low as 9 percent is sown more than once. Dry farming is predominant in the District and the important wetland track is
located in the Shanmuganathi and Kodaganar basin. Paddy is the principal crop (37%) followed by oil seeds (23%) fruits and vegetables (24%) Cholam is the major irrigated crop (30%) followed by oil seeds (18%) and paddy (11%).

Sirumalai and Virupathci Hills are known for a special variety of plantains. Fruits like Orange, Lime, Mango and Grapes are of special interest in Dindigul, Nilakottai and Palani taluks. Colecrops and temperature fruits grow chiefly in Kodaikanal, lower plain yield coffee, and Cardamom. About 900 ha. are put under Kurvai system of cultivation and the crops raised are Potato, Cabbage, Tenai, Samai, Brinjal, Cotton and Ragi in the forest reserves.

Infrastructue

The District has two Universities Viz., Gandhigram Rural Institute at Gandhigram and Mother Teresa Women University at Kodaikanal, 5 Arts and Science colleges three colleges for professional education, one college for special education, and 125 colleges for general education. The Nation's prestigious Highway NH-7, passes through the District besides NH-45, and a network
of roads. Dindigul is an important Railway Junction. A broad gauge Railway line from Karur to Kanniyakumari has been completed. The nearest aerodrome is located at Madurai, which is 65 kms away.

Marketing facilities are inadequate. Madurai market committee has gained momentum in this direction. Exports of the district include hides and skins leather, dyes and tans, cotton and silk fabrics, tea, cardamon etc.

In 1997, there were 78 post and Telegraphs, 437 Post offices and 3 Telegraphic offices in the District. The district has 141 Commercial Bank Branches, 83 Rural Bank Branches 30 Semi urban and 28 Urban Bank Branches.

Industries

Next to farming a sizeable population depends on Industries. Dindigul is the important industrial centre. A number of Spinning Mills are functioning at Vedasandur and Vadamadurai blocks, besides a few paper mills in Swaminathapuram. A steel industry has been established. Tobacco and cigar manufacturing, metal industry, dyeing, iron industry, cotton spinning and weaving are the promising industries.
The district is having a thriving handloom industry at Chinnalapatti which is located 11 kms away from Dindigul. Chinnalapatti silk sarees and sungadi sarees are famous throughout India. More than 1000 families are engaged in this industries. At present, there are 8009 registered small scale industries and 61 Large and Medium scale Industrial units in Dindigul District.

Tourist attractions

Dindigul District is privileged to have one of the six celebrated hill abodes of lord Muruga at Palani Hills, Famous Dhandayuthapani temple is situated on the hills. The pilgrims are praying this holy temple during festival days. The income of the temple, which is the large in the state, is growing year by year and now it exceeds Rs.4 Crores.

Besides this renowned Murugan temple, there is also another Murugan temple at Thirumalaikeni, 25 kms away from Dindigul Town which is growing into a pilgrim centre. Abirami Amman Temple in Dindigul Town and Rajakaliarnman temple at Thethupatti 20 kms away from Dindigul is the other temple worth mentioning.
Kodaikanal, a popular summer holiday cum health resort, located at an altitude of 2133 meters in the Western Ghats is the famous hill station of this District. Peranai, 40 Kms from Dindigul and Sirumalai 25 Kms from Dindigul are the fine Picnic spots this in District. Vedasandur is having Tobacco Research Station, which serve the nearby village growing tobacco. Nilakottai is famous for brass vessels. Oddanchatram town of this district is a noted market centre for vegetables like tomato, Brinjal, Chillies, Onion and Cauliflower. It is famous for the export of butter manufactured in the nearby village using cream - separators. The town Batalagundu is an important centre for tomato.

Livestock

a. Livestock Population : 816392
b. Livestock farm cattle : Nil
c. Sheep farms : Nil
d. Poultry extension centres : 1
e. Veterinary Dispensaries : 27
f. Veterinary Hospitals : 4
g. Key village sub centres : 11
h. Clinic laboratories : Nil.
Co-operation

The development of cooperatives in Dindigul district has shown a positive trend. There are 30 Cooperative Banks, 33 Cooperative Housing Societies, 6 Consumer stores and Federation, 68 Weavers Cooperative Societies and Federations. 1 Khadi Village Industry Cooperative Society, 549 milk producers societies, 1 wholesale store, marketing societies and federation are also found in this district.

3.2 Dindigul Town

It serves as the District Head Quarters of this District, has a holy past. Once this City was under the way of famous King 'Thippu sultan'. This ancient city has a historical Rock Fort, which was constructed by the famous Naik King Muthukrishnappa Naicker. Since the shape of the rock resembles cushion, this city is called "Dindigul". It is located between 10.05° and 10.9° North latitude and 77° and 78.20° East longitude.

Dindigul Town Municipality has 45 wards. Dindigul town's total population according to 1991 census was 1,82,293. Total Male members were 927,50 and female members were 89,543. Total number of households were 43,256 in Dindigul.
Town. The Schedule Castes were 32495 and 1813 Schedule Tribe. The total main workers were 58498 and non workers were 63961. The town literacy rate was 63 percent. During the period of Kamaraj, a drinking water scheme was provided through the construction of Kamarajar Dam which is 13 km away from Dindigul.

In Dindigul there are 234 commission mandies for selling agricultural products like onion, chilies, groundnut, cotton etc. About 3500 people are working in tanneries around the town. In addition, workshops timbers shops and sawmills are also functioning in this town. For a long time Dindigul Town has been associated with locks of good quality and durability. A lock-manufacturing unit under Co-operative sector is functioning here. Another Industry for which Dindigul is noted is leather tanning. The Widely known Anguvilas Scented tobacco and Roja Supari are produced in this town, and being sent to other places.

Dindigul, which is an important wholesale market for Onion and groundnut, has the network of inter-district roads connecting Coimbatore, Erode, Karur, Trichy, Madurai and Sjvagangai Districts. Educationally, Dindigul is a well-
developed and popular city. It has got 'Many High School and Higher Secondary Schools, Colleges, Professional Colleges to its credit.

The Abirami Amman temple and Raja Kaliaman temple at the Thopampatti 20km away from Dindigul the temples worth mentioning. The Annual Rainfal pattern rainguage wise for the last 6 years in Dindigul town, was 868.90 m.m in 1992, 1452.20 mm in 1993, 864.23 m.m in 1994, 120.30 m.m in 1995, 99.30 m.m in 1996, 1295.00 m.m in 1997.

3.3 Athoor Block

Athoor Block is located in the Southern region of Dindigul District. Its Northern boundary of the Reddiarchatram and the western boundary are Kodaikanal Block. Batlagundu Block and ISTilakottai Block are the southern boundary and Nilakottai and Dindigul Block is eastern boundary of the Athoor Block. Athoor Block has a total area of 94.89 Sq Kms. Numbers of occupied residential houses are 31765 and the numbers of households are 31774.
Total population including institutional and houseless population was 136049 lakhs. In particular, the male population was 68218 and female population was 67831. The Scheduled castes were 29270 and among them males were 14774 and females were 14496. Scheduled tribes population was 266 consisting of males 130 and female 136.

In Athoor block, the total literates were 71337. Among the literates male were; 42841 and females were 28496. The total main workers were 64354. Among the main workers, males were 39976 and 24378 Females. There were more number of male cultivators i.e., 7196 and 7182 female cultivators in the block. The agricultural labourers were totalling to 34528. Among the total farm labourers, male agricultural labourers were 17910 and 16618 female agricultural labourers.

The block have manufacturing, processing, servicing and repairs, and other household industrial workers. Among the are 1442 male and 1147 females. Marginal workers are 2030 consisting of 139 males and 1891 female workers. Non working population was also very high i.e., 69665 in Athoor block. In particular male; in Non-workers group was 28103 and female were 41562. The block consists of the following panchayats:
Attoor, Akkaraipatti, Alamarathupatti, Ambathurai, Aiyankottai, Podikkanamvadi, Settiyapatti, Devarappanpatti, Gandhigram, Ceevel Saragu, Kaligampatti, Manloor Munnilaikottai, N.Panjampatti, Paraipatti, Palayamkottai, Pillayarnatham, Pittalaipatti, Sempatti, Vakkampatti and Veerakkal.

Level of Economic Activity, Poverty, Wealth and by Implication to PDS.

The predominant economic activities in the district are lock manufactures, leather manufactures, readymade garments and agro processing. Though Dindigul locks are famous they are unable to compete with those of Aligarh despite being better in quality. Hence there is an urgent need to modernize the lock industry. There are nearly 70 tanneries in the district with the commissioning of the common effluent treatment plant, the tanneries have started functioning. However there is a lull in the leather market due to which many units are not functioning well. Most of the tanned leather is sent to Chennai and North Arcot District for further processing to derive the end product. Instead the tanners can be encouraged to produce finished leather goods for direct
incentive to the tanners for producing finished leather goods. South India's largest vegetable market exists at Oddanchathram and an agro processing complex is being setup at Pallapatti. Hence, there is an excellent scope for agro processing in the district.

Innovating areas of development in agro processing, Hi-tech schemes, export oriented units, horticulture, aquaculture etc. As the District is predominantly horticultural in nature, there is a very good scope for agro processing vegetable processing can also be taken up.

In this district, abounds in the number of NGO's and as such many women group have been formed and the groups have also undergone training in various farm and non farm activities. The district offers excellent scope for providing credit to women on a substantial scale.

Government sponsored programmes called the Public Distribution System. This system envisage supporting the families below the povety line means of a group approach with the objective of bringing them above the poverty line with the Government food subsidy. The achievement under public
distribution system during 1999-2000 was every village has fair price shops, there may be still certain areas, which far away from the existing shop. And its main aim is necessary to open part time fair price shop in Dindigul district. Because, most of the workers are working in shift basis. The PDS system is helping to the below the poverty line people for improving their life style.

The foregone chapter has briefly presented a brief profile of Dindigul district, blocks, and towns were very useful in analysing the performance and functioning of Public Distribution System during the liberalisation period.
References

