Chapter – III

Profile of the Study Area
Thanjavur and Pudukkottai Districts
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PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA: THANJAVUR AND
PUDUKOTTAI DISTRICTS

Thanjavur District

Thanjavur district stands unique from time immemorial for its agricultural activities and is rightly acclaimed as the Granary of the South India laying in the deltaic region of the famous river Cauvery and criss-crossed by lengthy network of irrigation canals, this coastal district about in green paddy fields, tall coconut groves, vast gardens of mango and plantain trees and other verdant vegetation. Various testimonials available in the ancient Tamil literature referring to the Cauvery as possessing the sanctity of the Ganges in conformity with the legendary and mythological stories attributed to its divine origin, rightly point out why the river is popularly called the “Mother Cauvery” and its sacredness is evident from ‘Kaviri-thala-Puranam’. The river has also been named ‘Ponni’ because it is yielding ‘Pon’-Gold in the form of paddy. That is why it is said with pride that every iota of the earth of Thanjavur is equal to an iota of gold. The tillers in Tamil literature have been rightly called as ‘Kauvirippudhalvars’ – the sons of the Cauvery as they along are worthy of this title for the rich production of grains in this fertile soil.
It is no wonder therefore that at the very threshold of the district itself one can feel the distinguished green vegetation and call Thanjavur as ‘the green mansion’ of the South. With an average annual rice yield touching 7.024 lakh metric tones during 2001-2002 or roughly about one-third of the total rice yield of Tamilnadu, the district tops all the other districts of India in the production of rice and remarked as the rice bowl of India. The economy of the district is, therefore, primarily agrarian in nature with very few industrial units.

Thanjavur is conspicuous among all the thirteen coastal districts of Tamilnadu in the production of marine fish which accounts for about 5 per cent of the total marine fish catch of the state. The district is famous for its exquisite ancient handicrafts making of bronze icons, Thanjavur art plates, bell-metal castings, bowls, napkin and powder boxes of metal with a beautiful and artistic in-laying and engraving work of motifs well known as “Thanjavur swamy work”. It is equally well-known for pith-work, ornamental fans, mats and making of musical instruments of jack-wood. It is also a flourishing centre of handloom silk and cotton saris.

Thanjavur attained prominence under the Chola rulers who were paramount in South India during 9th to 12th centuries. They were not only excellent rulers but also mighty builders, who erected a large number of exquisite temples in their empire, some of which constitute the finest
specimens of architecture. Hence, the district stands distinguished in the state even in its large number of temples, whose legends extend deep into early historic times. Many of these temples reflect the power, genius and architectural grandeur of their authors displaying the unique and magnificent proficiency in sculpture, painting and wood carving. Art gallery the great Saraswathi Mahal library, the Sangeetha Mahal (hall of music), the thriving of classical music and dance known as ‘Bharathanatiyam’ and the celebration of grand annual music festival at Thiruvyaru, in honor of the great Saint Thiagaraja, all bear testimony to the cultural heritage.

The period of Chola Kings was not only considered as epoch-making but also an era of the cultural renaissance. Under the Chola rulers Thanjavur is the cradle of Tamil culture. Literature and civilization and the rare Tamil Manuscripts in the Thanjavur library corroborate this fact. Another notable feature is that in spite of several alien invasions, on-slaughters and internal conflicts, the ancient culture and civilization have not suffered much devastation. The inhabitants have successfully concentrated their histrionic talents in the field of art, literature, drama, music and dancing and are known for their rich cultural and religious fervour. They live in close harmony as a well knot community and the three main religious groups’ viz., Hindus, Muslims and Christians; celebrate their fairs and festivals with a sense of mutual respect. In the case of some Hindu festivals, the temples are thronged
by a substantial number of persons belonging to other religious group as well,
who have a staunch faith and come in full reverence to pay homage to the
presiding deities.

**Brief History of the District**

According to the known history dating back to Sangam age, the Cholas
ruled over Thanjavur for about one thousand years. It was here that plans were
formulated to extent the Chola supremacy by spreading their glory from
Kanniyakumari in south to Himalayas in the north. They also under their
patronage cultivated fine art, erected temples, constructed anicuts, built ports
and cities.

Among the Chola kings who found place Sangam literature, Karikala
was the most prominent. The name ‘Karikala’ which in Tamil refers to a
charred leg was derived by this King from a fire accident. He was assailed,
imprisoned and deprived of his birth right by his enemies. He, however,
managed to regain the throne and in the great battle at Venni he defeated
Pandiya and Chera rulers and secured for himself the hegemony over them. He
crushed both the internal and external opposition and became complete master
of his country. He renovated the capital of Uraiyur, built up the renowned port
of Puhar (Kaveripoompattinam) and patronized liberal arts and letters.
Karikala was succeeded by two rival kings Nalangilli and Nedungilli who ruled
from Puhar and Uraiyur respectively. The next Chola King, Killivalavan from Uraiyur as a brave and able warrior, besides a patron of letters.

Of the Chola of later Sangam age, Koccengan was more brilliant and illustrious in both war and peace. He showed equal zeal for both Saivam and Vaishnavism, built numerous saivite temples including the famous Jambukeswara Temple at Thirunaraiyur.

After a brief set back in the Chola regime in between the third century to ninth century A.D., the Cholas became the mighty race of rulers. Once again Vijayalaya (850 – 870) A.D., the founder of the new Chola dynasty, drove away the Muttaraiyar Chieftains from Thanjavur and assisted the Pallava King to stem the tide of the Pandiyan over lordship. His son Aditya – I (870 – 907) soon over-threw the Pallava King, Aparajita and expelled him from his territory. After conquering the Kongu country and Pandyas, he further extended his kingdom. He was an ardent saivite like his father and built temples along the banks of Cauvery from Sahyadri to the sea. Parantaka – I (907 – 955) was more powerful and under his rule Cholas acquired a domination which foreshadowed the great empires of Rajaraja and Kulottunga. With the rise of Rajaraja – I (985 – 1014), the days dawned to bring about new and brilliant chapter in the history of Cholas. Both in war and peace Rajaraja and his son Rajendra proved themselves as the most outstanding personalities of their time.
Rajaraja conquered Kerala (Chera country), the whole of the Pandya country and Malainadu (Coorg) and extended his domination. He also invaded Ceylon and destroyed Anuadhapura, its capital. He was also a great statesman and administrator and endeavoured his best to establish his empire on a firm footing. He built the most magnificent temple of Rajarajeswara at Thanjavur, the fine specimen of Tamil architecture. Rajaraja was succeeded by his son Rajendra – I (1014 – 1044). He had the advantage of possessing an empire which had already been organized on sound lines. He set about at once to improve its organization and increase its glory. He undertook expedition to north and search of the Ganges and assumed the title of “Gangai Konda Cholan”. His most glorious expedition was to Kadaram which shows the great naval strength of the Cholas. Rajendra – I was succeeded by four rulers Rajadhiraja, Rajendra – II, Virarajendra and Adirajendra’s reign was brief and it became weak in his time and later the kingdom passed on to the Eastern Chalukyan. Rajendra Kulottunga (1070 – 1120) was a remarkable personality. He was more a statesman than a warrior. From 1120 to 1163, three Chola Kings, viz. Vikrama Chola (1120 – 1135), Kulottunga – II (1136 – 1163) succeeded Kulottunga – I and under all these rulers no wars or invasions distracted the country. During the reigns of Rajaraja – III (1216 – 1246) and Rajendra – III (1247 – 1279), the Pandyas in the South and Hoysalas in the North monopolized all the power. By the beginning of the 13th century, the Chola dynasty became extinct and it gave away to Pandyan supremacy.
The Pandiyan regime was short lived. When the Pandiyan Kingdom was in the thrones of civil war, the Muslim ruler Ala-Ud-Din Khiligi, the Sultan of Delhi, took advantage of it and over powered the Pandiyas. Thanjavur then came under the Muslim rulers. Muslim dominations continued till the middle of the 14th century when Vijayanagar Kings for a long period. The Nayak dynasty was established during this period and Sevappa the founder of Nayak Kingdom of Thanjavur made his appearance on the scene (1532 – 1560). In 1560, Sevappa Nayak made over kingdom to his son Achuyutappa Nayak. His rule, unlike that of his father was not one of unbroken peace. Shortly after getting old he abdicated the crown in favour of his son Regunatha (1600 – 1630). During his reign, a Danish settlement was established at Tranquebar (1620). The Nayaks of Thanjavur were loyal to Vijayanagar after the battle of Talaikotta and helped Vijayanagar in repulsing the attacks of the Nayak of Madurai and their temporary ally Golkonda, but the beginning of the 17th Century saw the end of the Vijayanagar Empire.

Attempts were then made by the Nayaks of Madurai and the Sultan of Bijapur to capture Thanjavur. The Marattas also came to Thanjavur in the later half of the 17th century. Ekogi became the first Maratta ruler of Thanjavur (1676 – 1683). The Marattas ruled Thanjavur for some time but became later vassals of the Mughal Governor of Karnataka. Subsequently there were hostilities between the Arcot Nawab and the Maratta ruler of Thanjavur. The
French and English also began interfering in the internal affairs of South India. The supremacy of the English was later established. Saraboji – II the adopted son of Taljaji was made King of Thanjavur in 1798, after agreeing with all the conditions laid down by the British Government. A pact was signed between the Maratta ruler and the English by virtue of which the status of the Raja was reduced to a mere vassal.

The administration of Thanjavur was given over to English fully under the Treaty of 1799. The ruler of the Thanjavur was allowed to retain the fort of Thanjavur only with limited power of administration. When the ruler died in 1841 without heir, the Thanjavur fort was also annexed by the British and it became part of the then Madras. Thanjavur remained under the British until 1947 when India attained freedom.

**Physical Aspects**

Thanjavur district, with vast expanse of rice fields and fruit gardens, is one of the coastal districts of Tamilnadu lying 185’ above mean sea level in between 9.50 to 11.25’ northern latitude and 78.45’ to 70.25’ eastern longitude. It extends to an area of 3396.57 Sq. kms, bounded one the north by Coleroon which separate it from Perambalur and Tiruchirapalli which the latter surrounds the western border South Arcot and Tiruchirapalli districts also. It is flanked
on the south by the districts of Pudukkottai and the Palk Strait while on the east is the Thiruvarur and Nagapattinam districts.

The district can be divided into two distinct divisions, viz. the deltaic region, the upland area or non-deltaic region. The deltaic region covers the whole northern and eastern portions of the district, where the Cauvery with its wide network of branches irrigate more than half of the district. It comprises the whole of Kumbakonam, Thanjavur, Papanasam and Pattukottai taluks. This entire area of vast flat alluvial plain of unending paddy fields, interspersed with rich groves of mango, coconut and other trees, slopes gently towards the sea. A good portion of upland regions which was dry has now been brought under irrigation with the help of Grand Anaicut canal, fed by the Cauvery-Mettur Project and by extension of the Vadavar River. Non-deltaic region is also devoid of hills and slopes gradually seawards.

Forestry

The headquarters of Thanjavur forest division is located at Thanjavur and consists of one territorial range, five plantation ranges and one farm foresting range. The forest division comprises natural forests in scattered patches, some of which are of special ecological value as these forms the compact plantations raised on the banks of rivers and canals etc., over the entire district. The plantations raised in reserved forests as avenue teak have
been handed over Public Works Department and the compact teak plantations have been retained by forest department. Total area under forest in the district is 1.9 per cent of the geographical area.

**Hill**

There is no hill or hillock existing in the district of Thanjavur.

**Soil**

The soil of the district can be classified into four categories—alluvial, regar (black series), red ferruginous and arenaceous. The soil of the delta region is entirely alluvial but varies greatly in quality. The best of the alluvial is found in the western part of the district and the quality decreases generally as we move towards east. The rich soil is also found in the north and south. This land is in striking contrast to the rich lands near Thiruvayaru which are known as the “Breast of Thanjavur”. Along the banks of rivers in Thanjaur, Kumbakonam, Papanasam taluks lands are found to be very rich padugai lands. The upland tracts of the district consist of red ferruginous soil. The red soils are equally fertile if well irrigated. Towards the sea-coast in Pattukkottai and Peravurani taluk, the soil is arenaceous.
Rivers

The river Cauvery and its tributaries are the most remarkable feature of Thanjavur district. Cauvery is considered to be the best of the rivers that drain the Southern Peninsula of India. The river flows from Karnataka state and passed through Dharmapuri, Salem, Periyar, Tiruchirpalli and Thanjavur districts covering a distance of about 770 kms and draining an area about, 72,800 Sq. kms in all. Springing from a spot lying on Brahma Giri mountain of western ghat at a height of 1,320 meters above sea level, Cauvery meanders its way across Karnataka and Tamilnadu and showering not only economic property on millions of people but also carving a niche for itself in their lives in historical, culture and religious realms.

Emerging as a small rivulet from the Coorg Mountains, the river Cauvery expands rapidly increasing in volume as hundreds of streams and rivulet merge with it which are mostly fed on the heavy rainfall of the south west monsoon. After Sivasamuthiram falls in Mysore, the Cauvery again forms beautiful water falls in Hoganekal in Dharmapuri district.

The three minor tributaries, Palar, Chinnar and Thoppar enter into the Cauvery on her course, above Mettur, where the famous dam has been constructed. The Mettur Dam joins the Sita and Pala mountains beyond that valley through which the Cauvery flow, up to the Grand Anicut. The Dam
Mettur impounds water not only for the improvement of irrigation but also to ensure the regular and sufficient supply of water to the important Hydro-Electric generating station at Mettur. The river further runs through Periyar district where river Bhavani merges with it. While passing through Erode, two more tributaries viz., Noyyal and Amaravathi join it before it reaches Tiruchirapalli district. Here the river becomes wide, with a sandy bed and flows in an easterly direction till it split into two at upper anicut, about 14 kms west of Tiruchirapalli. The northern branch of the river is called the Coleron while the southern branch retains the same name Cauvery and then goes directly eastwards into Thanjavur district. These two rivers join again and form the Srirangam Island near Tiruchirapalli.

The Chola King “Karikalan” has been immortalized as he has constructed the bank for the Cauvery all the way from Puhar (Kaveripoompattinam) to Srirangam. It was built as far back as 1600 years ago or even more. On both sides of the river are found walls spreading to a distance of 1,080 feet. The dam Kallanai on the border between Tiruchirapalli and Thanjavur constructed by him is a superb work of engineering, which was constructed with earth and stone and has stood the vagaries of nature for hundreds of years. On 19th century, it was renovated in a bigger scale. The name of the historical dam has since been changed to “Grand Anicut” and stands as the head of great irrigation system in the Thanjavur district. From
this point, the Coloroon runs north-east and discharges herself into the sea at Devakkottai a little south of Parangipettai. After Grand Anicut, the Cauvery divides into numerous branches and cover the whole of the delta with a vast network of irrigation channels and gets lost in the wide expose of paddy fields. The mighty Cauvery River here is reduced to an insignificant channel and falls into the Bay of Bengal at the historical place of Poompuhar. The river Cauvery flows the entire district in different names through its tributaries and its branches viz., Grand Anicut canal, Vennar, Panaiyar, Koraiyar, Vettar, Kodamurutiyar, Nattar, Vadavar, Pamaniar, Mullaiair, Ayyanar, Adappar, Harichandranathiti, Thirumalairajanar, Arasalar, Veeracholanar, Mudikondan, Nollar, Vanjiar, Vikramanar, Nattar, Kirtimar, Nandalar, Manjalir, Mahimalayar, Palavar, Cholasundaranar, Puthar, Valapar, Pandaraiyuar, Odambogi, Kattar, Kaduvarajyuar, and all these branches off into a number of small streams.

Among the various names by which the holy Cauvery is known during its course, the most popular in Tamilnadu is “Mother Cauvery” due to the high sanctity attached to it. It is worshipped by the people irrespective of caste, creed or religion during Maha Magam festival celebrated at Kumbakonam once in 12 years. The pilgrims after a bath in Mahamagam tank proceed for a holy dip in Cauvery which is believed to purge of all sins. In the Tamil month Adi (July-August) on the 18th day, (Adi Perukku), the people throng the bank of the
river for the holy bath and pray the Mother Cauvery for their prosperity. In the Tamil month of Aypasi (October-November), thousands of devotees participate in a festival called “Kadai Muzhukku” celebrated on the banks of river Cauvery at Mayiladuthurai. Many famous temples on the banks of the river Cauvery and its tributaries have also earned fame as either sacred religious center.

**Agriculture**

Thanjavur district has occupied an important place in agricultural sector due to its deltaic alluvial soil blessed by river ‘Mother Cauvery’ and her numerous branches which serve as main source of irrigation. Agriculture forms the mainstay of 70% workers who inhabit in the district. The district also plays a key role in Tamilnadu by producing about one-fourth of the total output of rice in the state and is rightly called the ‘Granary of South India’.

Normally paddy is raised in the entire district in three crops. The first crop is known as ‘Kuruvai’ the short term crop with duration of 100 to 105 days from June/July-October/November. The crop cultivated after harvesting ‘Kuruvai’ is called ‘Thaladi’ which has duration of 120 to 150 days from October/November to February/March. ‘Samba’ the long term crop with duration of 145 to 150 days from August to January is raised in very limited area as a single crop where the water is very less and not available for two crops.
Considerable improvement has been made in the cultivation of paddy, since the introduction of Five Year Plans and especially after the pay package plan. As a consequence, there has been rapid increase in the per hectare yield of paddy in the district which shot up to 5,120 kg/per hectare in 90-91.

The services rendered by the Agricultural Research Station at Aduthurai, Water use management Research station at Kattuthottam and Coconut Research station in Pattukkottai are very important, especially for the improvement of paddy cultivation in the district.

The provision of liberal credit facilities has enabled the riots to take the advantage of various facilities provided to those under this scheme. There are two Central co-operative banks and 516 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies apart from Nationalised Banks to issue loans to farmers in the district. Besides 17 Primary Land Development Banks are functioning to provide loan for purchase of farm machinery and erecting tube wells etc.

The Cultivators have not only adopted the latest high yielding varieties but are also utilizing liberally the chemical fertilizers and pesticides as it will be evident on this day.
Due to escalation of cost of production of paddy due to various reasons, agriculturists are changing the cropping pattern from the traditional paddy cultivation and effectively using the new methods of cultivation directed by agriculture department. As new sugar mill have come up in Thirumattangudi, Papanasam taluk the farmers of Kumbakonam, Tiruvidaimarudur and Papanasam taluks have started the sugarcane cultivation which seems to be profitable for them. Soya beans, sunflower and plantain are also cultivated by the farmers in small extent.

Irrigation

The presence of the river Cauvery and numerous irrigation projects that have been carried out even from days of Chola Kings can be considered as the best irrigation system in Tamilnadu. Especially in arenaceous soil tracts in Pattukottai, provision of irrigation has been proved very useful. The necessity for irrigation was realized very early and irrigation systems of the district are date back to days of early Cholas. Thanjavur today has one of the best irrigation systems in the State and ranks foremost in the area irrigated. Over 70% of the gross cropped area is under irrigation systems from one source or the other. It would be obvious if one see the net area irrigated in the district, over 90% of the net area sown enjoys the benefit of irrigation. The total area irrigated in the district stood at 518.733 hectares. The chief sources of irrigation in the district are rivers, a few rain fed tanks, tube wells and wells. These tanks
and wells situated mostly in the upland regions. Cauvery and Coleroon are the most important rivers in the district and as these rivers, a few rained have their origin in the Western Ghats, they are fed by the Southwest monsoon. Strictly speaking agriculture in the district is dependent on the river Cauvery as most of the irrigated area in the district derives water from Cauvery and its numerous branches. A bird’s eye view of the course of the Cauvery in Thanjavur will show how and where it has been tapped efficiently for irrigation. About 80% of the total net area irrigated is served by canals and these canals are fed by the river Cauvery. Thus Cauvery is the primary source of irrigation in the district. The Cauvery delta system in Thanjavur which comprises mainly three important projects viz., the Grand Anicut, Upper Anicut and the Cauvery Vennar Regulator project.

The oldest and the most significant among these three is Grand Anicut and is reported to have been constructed during the Sangam Age of Chola period. This has been built at the junction of rivers Cauvery and Coleroon about sixteen kilometers from Tiruchirapalli at the lower end of Srirangam island and is designed to regulate the water supply which comes down the Cauvery from the upper anicut. When the supply exceeds the requirements of the delta channels, the gates of the grand anicut are raised and the surplus water is passed down into the Coleroon where it proceeds down to the lower anicut and it is again regulated and utilized for irrigation by means of other canals.
The grand anicut was first built by granite stones and mud with an outer layer of granite blocks in lime mortar. Its length is 1080 feet and breadth is 40’ to 60’ with a depth of 15’ to 18’. Later on it has undergone numerous improvements. In 1806 it was raised further and in 1830 it provided with and scoring sluices. Some fifty years later, the stones were removed and replaced by lifting shutters in 1899. The main purpose of this anicut was to check and control the waste water running into Coleroon, Sir Arthur Cotton, an able engineer, built a masonry wall at the head of the Coleroon in 1836, in order to prevent silting up of Cauvery in the deltaic region by providing enough water through the Cauvery and also to check the flow down the Coleroon so as to keep enough water in the main river Cauvery. After the construction of the upper anicut, floods often threatened the anicut and then serious erosions occurred on the banks of the Cauvery. This danger was however minimized in 1845 by the construction of Cauvery dam. In order to avoid the danger completely, upper anicut was rebuilt in 1899 so as to provide passage flood water down the Coleroon in cases of emergency. Cauvery, Vennar, regulators which are immediately below the Grand anicut divide the stream between rivers and control flow of water. Just below these small regulators are built in order to effect proper distribution of water among various branches of the rivers and other numerous irrigation channels. The Coleroon anicut was also the product of the mastermind of engineer Sir Arthur Cotton and was built in
the order to irrigation the north eastern columns of the district, especially the Thiruvarur and Nagapattinam districts.

The idea to build a reservoir on the Cauvery in order to irrigate the deltaic regions of the district was that of Sir Arthur Cotton whom the entire district will remember and owes ever. Numerous proposals were put forward and investigations carried on before and finally in 1910, Colonel W.M.Ellis worked out a practicable scheme, but there was disagreement between Tamilnadu and the Karnataka Governments on the question of sharing Cauvery water. At the end, it was due to the efforts of Dr. C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer, the then member of the executive council, that an agreement was arrived at. According to this agreement, the scheme was to be executed subject to certain conditions and most important of which were that both the states should built their own reservoirs and that the reservoirs at Mettur should be limited to a capacity of not exceeding 93,000 million cubic feet so that it should irrigate over 301,000 acres. Based on the conditions, Mettur reservoir or the Stanley Reservoir was constructed.

Mettur Dam is the biggest dam in the State, with length measuring over 5300’ and height 214’ above the deepest foundations. The project has been designed to ensure steady supply of water for irrigation to over a million acres
already supported by the Cauvery delta system and to irrigate an additional area of about 300,000 acres in nearby districts.

During the last decade the agriculturists of the district suffered a heavy damage to crops to want of timely and sufficient supply of water from Cauvery. Due to pressure from the Government of Tamilnadu, Union Government has constituted a tribunal on the issue of sharing of Cauvery water between Karnataka and Tamilnadu.

**Industries**

Thanjavur continues to be predominantly an agricultural district and no wonder that it has been identified as an industrially backward district on the basis of Annual Survey of Industry conducted during 87-88.

There are four small scale industrial estates in the district, two in Thanjavur taluk and two in Kumbakonam taluk. It is reported that 37 units in Thanjavur.

Thanjavur has been from early days a flourishing centre of cottage industries and handicrafts like Handloom silk and cotton sarees which are renowned and still cherished. Next to handlooms comes mat industry. Mats made of korai, srewpine palm and coconut leaves are in demand. The mat
weaving is spread over a number of places but the superior varieties of mats are made in Chakkarapalli and Madukkur. Ornamental fans are made out Palmyra leaves; they are artificially painted and decorated with gold foils and silk threads. The district is also famous for a wide range of utility and decorative articles like Thanjavur bell metal plates, bronze images, bowls, napkins and powder boxes etc., made of copper and bronze with inlaying and engraving work of motifs drawn from Hindu mythology done in silver etc., known as ‘Thanjavur swamy works”. Chief centers of metal work are in Kumbakonam and Natchiarkoil. The district is equally well known for its pith articles consisting of beautiful models and Hindu idols, temples, mosques, flower garlands, bouquets, parrots and peacocks. The flower garlands and bouquets are much in demand during Christmas days. Pith is growing on the river beds in Thanjavur taluk. The making of musical instruments from jack wood like, the veena, tambura, violin, mridhangam, tabala and Kanjira exhibit excellent taste, knowledge and workmanship. The jack wood has a special quality for producing musical sounds. Thanjavur and Kumbakonam are well known places for the manufacture of musical instruments.

Handloom industry occupies an important place in the economy of Thanjavur as it provides livelihood for more than 75,000 people in the district. It is reported that the number of looms in Thanjavur stood 15979 of which 5413 looms come under co-operative sector. The district stands foremost in the
varieties of the handloom fabrics woven in silk, cotton and lace in the designs of the pattern and the artistic workmanship exhibited. Silk weaving is mainly carried on in Thanjavur and Kumbakonam. The well-known pure silk sarees is known as Kottadi sarees with decorative lace borders and squares in the body. Cheap varieties of such sarees are also manufactured out of a mixture of cotton and silk fabrics.

Silk sarees produced by Thirubuvanam co-operative society with gold laces cost from Rs.2000/- to Rs.50,000/- and these sarees are very popular all over the country.

Rainfall and Climate

The climate of Thanjavur can be termed as a fairly healthy one like other coastal areas. November, January and February are the pleasant months in a year with climate full of warm days and cool nights. From March onwards, the climate rather becomes sultry and the mercury shoots and reaches its peak by the end of May and June depending up on the set of summer rains. The north-east monsoon in October brings complete relief. The south-west monsoon sets in June and continues till September. The rainfall during this period is much lower than that of north-east monsoon which sets in October and continues more or less till January. However, Thanjavur district is benefited more by north-east monsoon because of its heavy rainfall and the Western Ghats
invariably feeds the Cauvery and helps greatly the vast cultivation of the deltaic area.

**Education**

In Thanjavur district, according to 2001 Census, the district literacy rate is 75.45% (aged 7 and above) which is higher than the State literacy rate. The literacy among males and females are 84.47% and 66.70% respectively. Thanjavur district stands eighth among the districts of Tamilnadu in literacy rate.

**Places of Tourist Importance**

There are a number of ancient temples in the district and most of them are located on the banks of river Cauvery and its tributaries. The existence of about 162 ancient temples in the district have been recorded in the ‘Thevaram’ sung by Nayanmar and were discovered from Chidambaram temple by the Chola King Raja Raja-I and only a part of it could be traced out. The Prahadeeswarar temple at Thanjavur and the Siva temple at Darasuram and Thirubhuvanam are typical landmarks of Chola architecture. “Rajarajeswaram” temple at Thanjavur built at Thanjavur by Raja Raja – I show the expertise and skill of Tamil architecture. This temple is remarkable for its stupendous proportions and bold simplicity of designs and continuing a historical movement of glory and spiritual solace. During 1987 the temple was
inscribed on the world heritage list concerning the protection of world cultural and natural heritage.

The shrines of various religious interests are situated all over the district and in order to understand the significance of the places of tourist importance, a taluk wise description is provided below.

**Thiruvidaimaruthur Taluk**

Sri Mahalingaswamy temple at Thiruvidaimarudur is a very big temple and it is believed that Brahmahathi Dosham was removed from King Varagunapandian in this temple.

Thirubhuvanam temple was built by Kulothunga on the model of Thanjavur Brahadeeswarar temple. The stately stone gopuram of rare workmanship from the pedestal to the stripe is a standing monument of the architectural glory. A stone inscription in the temple discloses the existence of a university here for teaching advanced courses in Miamsa and Tamil.

A Saivite Mutt called Kasimutt founded by Shri Kumaragurubarar is situated in Thirupanandal 20 km North West of Kumbakonam and has a branch at Varanasi.
Kumbakonam Taluk

Sri Adikumbeswaraswamy temple is an ancient shrine located at Kumbakonam. Kumbakonam was the capital of Cholas during 7th century. The temple was built by Cholas and the presiding deity of the temple is Adikumbeswaraswamy and his consort Mangalambikai. The temple covers an area of more than 4 acres and bears stone inscriptions. Lord Kumbeswara is a swayambu Lingam and Sri Mangalambikai is in standing style. On a single block of stone in the Navarathiri Mandapam, all the twenty seven stars and 12 Rasis have been carved out. Festival is celebrated almost every month of which the “Maham”. Maham festival in the Tamil month Masi (Feb-March) is the most important festival.

Maha Maham festival is celebrated in Kumbakonam once in twelve years. This celebration coincides when Jupiter (Guru) stays in Leo (Shimmam Rasi) and the sun in Aquarius (Mesha Rasi) on the full moon day. Bathing in this tank at this time is considered to be meritorious as the water of the Ganges is supposed to enter the tank. The Mahamaham festival is attended by lakhs of devotees from all over the country and the last Mahamaham was celebrated on 2004.

Sri Naganathaswamy temple (Sri Raghu abode) is an ancient temple dedicated to Lord Shiva is located at Thirunageswaram. Seven km from
Kumbakonam, it is believed that Raghu Bhagavan [one of the nine orbiting planets of sun] absolved his curse by worshipping the lord here. One can see the rare Raghu Bhagavan statue with his two consorts in this temple. Devotees perform milk abishegam to get rid of their Raghu dosham or its evil effects. During the time of the abishegams, when the milk is poured on Raghu statue, the milk looks blue in colour to the eyes of the devotees.

Another important Vaishnava temple located in Thirunageswaram is Sri Uppiliappan temple. The deity is also known as Srinivasan and devotees fulfill their vows here instead of at Thirupathi since the God is considered as the elder brother of Lord Venkatachalapathy. It is believed that the God married his consort Boomidevi, here at very young age. Every month Siravana deepam is taken around the temple and is witnessed by large devotees.

Sri Swaminathaswamy temple is built on an artificial hillock about sixty feet high in Swamimalai, a small town near Kumbakonam. The hill temple is located with a height of sixty steps coinciding with 60 Tamil years. The presiding deities are life images of Muruga and Siva the son imparting the divine message to his father. Sri Swaminatha swamy is represented by six feet high granite icon in a standing posture offering a spectacular view to devotees. This temple is one of the six abodes (Arupadiveedu) of Lord Muruga. On the
way to Swamimalai a famous Vinayaga temple is located in Thriuvalanzushi village where the Vinayagar idol is in white colour.

A famous temple known for architectural skill is located in Darasuram near Kumbakonam and was built by Rajendra Chola – I. Famous icons have been discovered during recent renovation and this temple is a protected monument under the control of Archaeological Survey of India.

**Pattukkottai Taluk**

Manora fort a famous picnic spot located in the village Sarabendrajapuram is an example of architecture of Marathas. It was built in 1814 to commemorate the victory of British over Napoleon Bonaparte in the war of Waterloo. The fort facing Bay of Bengal is an eight storied victory tower and has steps in a circular way which look enchanting and one can have a panoramic views of the green surroundings and the sea from this 30 meter high tower and it is protected monument under Archaeological Department of the Government of Tamilnadu.

There is a famous shrine where Saint Sheik Aladuddin Sahib is entombed, and is located at Adirampattinam, a small port town lying about 13 km south east of Pattukkottai.
**Thiruvayaru Taluk**

Thiruvayaru means five holy rivers and this town derives its name by virtue of the five rivers flow within 5 km of this town. The name of the rivers apart from Cauvery is Vadavar, Vennar, Vettar and Kudamurutti. The town is considered as holy as Varanasi and there is a belief that to die here is an eternal blessing leading to salvation. The temple Panchanathiswara in this town is considered as the first of seven shrines call ‘Sapthasthanams’.

The other six Sapthasathanam are Kandiyur, Thirupanthuruthi, Thirupzhalanam, Thriuvediakudi, Thillaisthanam and Thiruchotruthurai.

The great carnatic music composer and Saint Sri Thiyagaraja lived and died here. A celebration of annual musical festival at his Samadhi on the bank of river Cauvery is a well known and is attended by thousands of musicians from all over the country by considering it, as a honour and privilege of every musician to hymn Pancharathna kirthis of Saint Thiyagaraja on the occasion.

**Papanasam Taluk**

There is a famous granary of Naik Dynasty which can store about 1500 bags of paddy and is a protected monument of Archaeological Department and is situated in Sri Palaivananathaswamy temple in Thirupalathurai village, 15 km south west of Kumbakonam. It was built by stone and lime.
Thanjavur Taluk

Thanjavur town was the capital of Mutharayars and Cholas. Sri Brahadeeswarar temple is the most ambitious of the archaeological enterprise of the Cholas and is a fitting symbol of the magnificent achievements of Raja Raja–I. The temple has been constructed by large blocks of granite. The pyramidal structure of Vimana, 14 storeys rising to a height of 216 feet is visible from all sides in the small pillars pretty balcony, windows and beautiful images carved thereon; it enchants the minds and eyes of all spectators. It was a colossal task; the plinth of a central shrine is 45.72 Sq. m. and the shrine proper is 30.48 Sq.m. The most striking feature of this shrine is its imposing Vimanam which rises perpendicularly from a square base to a height of 60.96m. The stone carrying the huge ‘sikra’ is said to weight 81.28 tonnes and was raised to its present height by being dragged on an inclined plane of 6.44 km length. The height of the Kalasa placed on this stupa is about 4 meters. The Kalasam is made of 3083 palam and 9149 tolas of copper and covered with gold plates. The Big Bull (Nandhi) opposite to sanctum sanctorum, made up of a single stone is about 2m high, 6m in length and 2.5m in width and weighs roughly 20 tonnes.

The presiding deity, the Sivalinga is 7 m high. The priests have to use a ladder for abhishegams. There is a separate sannadhi for consort Brahannayaki, Vinayagar, Murugar and for Karuvarai Siddhar. The structural decoration of
the tower is very pleasing to look at. There are beautiful paintings in the first floor of the vimanam. The highest achievements in classic art in the Chola period is revealed in the fine series of the 108 dance poses carved all around the walls of the first floor of the temple and these form an invaluable document in the history of Indian art.

There is a beautiful palace built by the Sarafoji Maharaja in this town. It is a vast building of architectural grandeur built partly by the Nayakas around 1550 AD and partly by the Marathas. This fort comprises of an area of 530 acres and is surrounded by 15 feet height wall and 15 feet deep. Due to expansion of the township in course of time, the moat was filled and the wall demolished in several places. Only a portion of ram port to a length of 21 feet is still preserved on the eastern side with a cannon inscribed with Rajagopal. Arsenal tower is a structure with 190 feet high and eight storeys and attracts large number of tourists. According to Fergusson, the mode of the structure with uncontrived ornamentation is a synthesis of Italian and Indian architectural styles. The Sadar Mahal also known as Sarjah Madi is part of the palace of Maratha period. Although it is a seven storied building, only six storeys remain at present.

Bell tower is situated to a little north of Arsenal Tower. According to hearsay account Vijayaragunatha naicker is said to have offered worship
towards Srirangam from the top terrace of the tower. The tower is fashioned in
the style of Sergomaualas. The Darbar hall of Marathas is a place abounding in
inquisitive paintings to the east of Saraswathy Mahal library with an open
courtyard. There is a verandah with wooden posts along the front of the
pavilion. Portraits of several Maratha rulers including Sherfoji are painted here
in the centre of Darbar Hall the portrait of Shivaji with his minister and Dalavai
attending on him is found painted. The open yard in front might perhaps have
been put to use as a gymnasium of sports for practicing marital arts like
wrestling, fencing etc., as is popularly believed at that time.

Saraswathy Mahal Library is housed in the palace. It is a very famous
library which has a rare collection of ancient books and manuscripts on a
variety of subjects in Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi and other European
languages. Among other things, library is famous for 10000 priceless rare
collections of palm leaf and paper manuscripts. In all there are more than
30000 manuscripts in the library.

There is an art gallery which was inaugurated in 1951. It contains a
good collection of granite and bronze images and stone sculptures which
provide and insight into the rich cultural and historical heritage of Thanjavur
especially of Chola period. In the palace, another worth seeing place is
Sangeetha Mahal and acoustically perfect musical hall. It is a striking example of the engineering skill of its ancient builders.

**Pudukkottai District**

Pudukkottai is one of the new districts formed after the 1971 census on 14th January 1974. It is one of the small districts of Tamilnadu with an area of 4651 Sq. kms. The district lies between 78.25 degree to 79.15 degree of the eastern longitude and 9.50 degree to 10.40 degree of the northern latitude. This district is bounded by Tiruchirapalli a major industrial district in the north, the district of Thanjavur the granary of Tamilnadu in the northeast Bay of Bengal in the east and Ramanathapuram in the South. It has a population of 1,459,601 as per 2001 Census.

It bears the imprint of the reigns of the great Chola, Pallava and Pandya dynasties which shaped the destiny of the South during the early and medieval periods. It has a coastline of about 39 Kms.

**Etymology of the Name**

Pudu is derived from, a word in the Tamil meaning “new” while Kottai is “fort”. Pudukkottai, therefore, means new fort. The name is suggestive of dynastic change and the founding of new Kingdom on the remains of old ones.
Political, Historical Origin

Pudukkottai was formerly one of the princely states of India with all sovereign powers it was resigned by the Maharajah of Pudukkottai. Pudukkottai State comprised of three Taluks viz., Alangudi, Thirumayam and Kulattur with its headquarters at Pudukkottai. The Vellar River, 8 Kms from Pudukkottai towards the south was the southern natural boundary of Chola Kingdom and the northern boundary of Pandian Kingdom with glorious memories of valour, chivalry and beauty. Some places in Pudukkottai found place in the ancient Tamil sangam literature like “Agananooru” and “Purananooru”, Kodambalur Oliamamangalam and Edayuthur are a few villages of the former Pudukkottai state referred in the sangam literatures “Agananooru” and “Purananooru”. Before the rule of Pudukkottai state by Thondaiman Kings, Pudukkottai was under the control of the Muslims during the first half of the 15th century and the Naickers in the middle of the 15th century and till the 17th century the Marathas of Thanajvur ruled Pudukkottai area along with their territory in Thanjavur district. When the Naicker kings lost their importance, Pudukkottai came under the suzerainty of the Thondaiman kings. The Thondaiman kings ruled Pudukkottai state till 1984 i.e., before it was merged with the union of the Government of India on 3rd March 1948. The ancient inhabitants of Pudukkottai state are considered to be Kurumbers their descendants are still living in the village of Sellukudy in Pudukkottai taluk, Avanipatti, Vaishinkoil and Thennangudi and Kulattur.
Taluk. The Roman coins of the 1st century BC detected at Karukkakurichi village in Alangudi taluk leads to an impressive record of flourishing trade with foreign countries even at an early date, of which about 1500 inscriptions and monuments are still available at places like Thirugokarnam, Thirumayam, Kudumiyanmalai, Malayakoil, Sittanavasal and Northamalai. These inscriptions deal with religion, literature, philosophy and ancient Indian medicines.

Pudukkottai and its neighborhood were first inhabited by hunters and sheep rearers and then followed by the agricultural class of Vellalars and Kallars.

Its earliest and most common language spoken by the people was Tamil. Besides are domiciled languages like Kannada spoken by Kurumbars and Sowrashtra by silk weaving Patnuls or Sowrashtras.

Pudukkottai is known for its architecture. This is found pervasive in all religious monuments of Hindu, Jain, Islam and Christian religion.

Pudukkottai thus with its ornate temples, has become the matrix of music art and culture.
Pudukkottai has for several centuries been a seat of music and dance. A number of rulers of the Thondaiman dynasty were connoisseurs of the fine arts. Vijayaraghunatha Raja Thondaiman was himself an accomplished musician and composer. Even Saint Thiyagaraja is believed to have come to the court during his boyhood with his guru Sonti Venkataramanayya, and to have sung there.

Pudukkottai District can boast of a large number of ancient temples with antique marvels. One of the items situated seven Kms. of Pudukkottai on the Alangudi Road is the Ardhanareeswarar temple that is supposed to have appeared on its own – Swambu is found in the temple.

The goddess here is Periyanayaki (Brahathambal) and the temple has the biggest gopuram in Pudukkottai District. The sanctum Sanctorum with the Vimanam was constructed by the later Cholas. The Dakshinamoorthy idol in the southern prakaram holds an arrow in the hand and hence the lord is considered as Tirupuranthakamoorthy.

On the north there is the Brahma idol and on it west, the Lingothsavamurthy idol. The sanctum sanctorum, arthamandapam and Mahamandapam were all built during the same period. The inscriptions around the sanctum sanctorum speak about the regime of Kulothung Chola –III.
There is a 100 pillar hall inside the temple adjoining the mahamandapam and on the southern wall of this 100 pillar hall, are chiseled the figures of the 63 Nayanmars. The shrines of Ganesh, Lakshmi, Subramaniyar, Bairavar and Suriya can be seen inside the 100 pillar hall.

A long Mandapam links the rajaopuram and a second gopuram behind it. The later was built by Gangai Arayargal.

In this mandapam called Nakashatra Mandapam there the Sabamandapam used for performance of dance during the temple festival and hence referred as Natyamandapam too. The Amman shrine is believed to have been built by Kavundayaperumal wife of the Piranmalal chieftain Nijatharaja.

The rajagopuram of the temple was built by a Pandya king. A Telugu inscription on the wall of the Rajagopuram refers to the Kumbabhisekham performed by the Raja Ramachandra Thondaiman. The temple has as many as 65 inscriptions and these inscriptions tell us about the periods of Kuluthounga Semappillayar. The names of the Pandya Dynasty the Vijayanagaram kings Nayak Jayapalayathevar, Aranthangi Thondaiman chieftains, Valthur Perunagalur Pallavarayars and Pudukkottai rulers are also found in them. These inscriptions contain all information about the lands owned by the temple, the jewels donated to the temple and festivals conducted here.
One inscription dating back to 13th century speaks about the village panchayats and the grama sabha of Thiruvarankulam meeting inside the temple to dispose of several village disputes.

An inscription states that iron ore was melted in Thiruvarankulam to make weapons.

The Sthalapuranam traces the events that led to construction of the temples. A saint in penance, and a hunter’s wife stranded in the inner, thick of the forest. He took pity on her and led her back to her husband. Reciprocating the gesture of the saint and show his deep sense of gratitude the hunter showered nuts and fruits to the saint daily for his work. In appreciation of the religious faith the hunter showered to him, the saint, with his occult lovers created a Palmyra tree en-route. The hunter’s habitat and made the tree yield a golden palm to the hunter every day.

But to their surprise and awe they saw a boy carrying milk limp against stone like object in the forest and accidentally douse the lingam below the earth, with the milk. The milkman out of curiosity removed the earth and found to his dismay a beautiful lingam below, with blood oozing out from it. When this information reached the king he decided to construct a temple on the place where the lingam was discovered. Meanwhile facing retribution at the hands of
God the trader himself offered to construct the temple and did so from the gold palm fruits he got from the hunter.

These thousand golden fruits still remained and the trader buried them. An ancient book on theatre, Natyasastra written by Bharatha, lists out 108 karnams, under the title Tandava Lakshana. Among these Lalita occupies the 33rd place.

Here Siva is seen performing the Karana standing over the Mayalaka in Mandala Sthana. His right foot is planted firmly on the back of the crushed dwarf in Parsva and this left foot is in Kattita. The hands behind carry the Damamaram and the fire pan, whereas the hands in front are in Althanga in Gajahasta. The neatly arranged Jata Makunta and the jewelry adorning his neck, arms, wrists and the feet and show this beauty. The ears have a Mahara Kundala on the right side and Patra Kundala on the left side. His slender figure with the half turned face and reams eyes presents an elegant posture. They speak about the age of this State to that of Buddha i.e. 200 B.C. Thus it will go to show that Pudukottai state is an ancient kingdom in Tamilnadu.

There were so many dynasties of people who lived in this State under Kalla community which is the predominant community of this place; they were in 7 groups under various sects with their own group leaders called
1. Sammattiar
2. Kadambarayar
3. Malavarayar
4. Kongurayar
5. Kalingarayar
6. Achutharayar
7. Kummuttarayar

The area ruled by these people was called ‘Kanadu’ and the other area ruled by ‘Vanathirayar’ was called ‘Konadu’. There existed rivalries and squabbles between one group and another between the Kallars and Maravars. Lastly the Kallars seized the suzerainty of Pudukkottai state from 1426 A.D. Pudukkottai state was called ‘THONDAIMAN PUDUKKOTTAI’ to differentiate this place from another Pudukkottai called ‘Maravan Pudukkottai’ or ‘Thennamarayan Pudukkottai’ which formed part in between Manamadurai and Kalayarkoil. One Kilavan Sethupathy, a Marava king was ruling a vast area comprising places like Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Thirunelveli, Pudukkottai etc. The Kilavan Sethupathi gave his daughter in marriage to one Thondaiman of Pudukkottai and gave this Pudukkottai state to his daughter as ‘Seethanam’.

Pudukkottai was also known as ‘Kalasa Mangalam’. Pudukkottai was under the continuous reign of Thondaiman kings from 1686 AD to 1948 AD.
During the rule of Marthanda Bairava Thondaiman (1866 to 1894 AD) Pudukkottai attained all its suzerainty as a separate kingdom. During 18th century when the English and the French Government were fighting hard to establish their suzerainty in India, the Moghuls and the Marathas were fighting on the other. This Thondaiman supported the Moghuls and English. The Moghuls and English helped the Thondaiman kings and allowed them to rule their territory as tax free region. Some parts of Thanjavur viz., Kilanilakottai in Thirumayam Taluk was given to the Thondaiman kings as gift from Thanjavur rulers. The Thondaiman kings helped the English during the war at Madras and Chengalpattu.

Kattabomman and his brother Umai Thurai were against the English rule in 1799 AD. The Thondaiman king captured five persons including these two were against the imperialism.

As a reward for this venture the Thondaiman kings were praised and presented with rewards by the English. There were certain disturbances for the smooth ruling by the Thondaiman kings at the places like Virachilai and Kudumiyanmalai. The English officers interfered and settled the issue.

Major Black Burn has been a guide and adviser to the Thondaiman kings for some more years. There was a devastating inferno in 1812 AD in
Pudukkottai town. Consequently Pudukkottai town was newly formed with Regular Street crossing each other and with intersections and with all conveniences and beautifications. In 1822 itself some inspection bungalows were constructed for the stay of the administrators at places like Adanakottai and Viralimalai. In 1884 AD the Emperor of India and the King of England presents an important reward with dignity “His Highness” to the Rajah of Pudukkottai. Pudukkottai was very ably administered by the kings of Pudukkottai, last of who is H.H.Raja Rajagopala Thondaiman.

Pudukkottai is renowned for its able and clean administration though it was a small district. In 1883 AD a High School exclusively for girls was established at Pudukkottai. Weekly shandai is also an important one sprung up in 1884. People from all walks of life would flock for this shandai.

The post of “Dewan” was also sanctioned in 1885 AD with a view to assist, the administrator and the Rajah. Thiru Seshayah Sastri took charge as Dewan of Pudukkottai in 1878 AD, who was instrumental for the formation of Pudukkottai town as model town.

A “Representative Assemble” consisting of 30 members was established in 1902 to hear the grievances from public. Irrigational facilities agricultural
improvements, revenue administration, educational reformation and Jamabhandhi are the salient features of the administration of Pudukottai.

A museum was established in Pudukkottai town in 1909 AD. In the year 1913 AD during the silver jubilee of the Rajah Marthanda Bairava Thondaiman, a hospital and a municipality were established in Pudukkottai town. Free education was also introduced in all elementary schools. Thiru Vijaya Raghunatha Durai Raja is known for his able administration.

Kallar community was dominating in Kulathur taluk, Udayars in Alangudi taluk and Nattukottai chettiars in Thirumayam taluk.

There are small mountains and hillock in Pudukkottai. There are jungle rivers viz., Vellar, Kundar, Pambaru, Anganana Vimochaniaru, Uyyakondanaru, Ambuliaru, Koraiaaru, Soorallyaru, Manimutharu. All the 5843 tanks in the State would get filled up during rainy season through the Kalingula systems, so as to have perennial water supply for cultivation.

Sir Alexander Tottenham was the administrator of Pudukkottai from 1934 – 1946, who was well known for his able administration “District Office Manual” is an excellent compilation by him being followed throughout Tamilnadu.
Soil

The soil of the district can be classified into three main groups’ viz. 1. Regar, 2. Red ferruginous, 3. Arena or sandy. Regar is found in the wet fields of Thirumayam and Kulattur taluks and at scattered places in Alangudi taluk. Red soils are as fertile as regar. Alangudi, Pudukkottai and Aranthangi taluks have red soils in which un-irrigated groundnut, varagu, ragi etc could be raised. Irrigation has made it possible to raise some paddy also.

In Thirumayam taluk especially the sedimentary rocks are covered by a capping of hard laterite. This hard laterite forms a poor soil and hence large tracts are left barren unfit for cultivation. Near Gandharavakottai one the Pudukkottai border are found Cuddalore sand stones, hard heavy sand stones, overlaid by gritty varieties of the same rock having different colours like mottled pale purple yellow and rusty red.

Rainfall and Climate

The climate of the district is hot and dry except in the coastal area where the heat is contained to some extent by sea breeze. January and February form a pleasant period with warm days and cool nights. But by the close of February, the climate becomes rather swathe mercury is on the upward trend reaching its peak by the end of May or early June.
Occasional rainfall during is scanty compared to copious rainfall in the adjoining districts. It gets heavy rain from North East Monsoon. The rainy season falls in four groups.

1. Winter from January to February
2. Summer from March to May
3. South west Monsoon from June to September
4. North East Monsoon from October to December

**Rivers**

The rivers of the district are only jungle streams that remain dry throughout the year. However, mention may be made of Vellar River which arises in the Velamalai in the Marungapuri tract to the west of the district and falls into the Bay of Bengal to the north of Manalmelkudi in the Aranthangi taluk. Other rivers which are Pambar River which passes through Tirumayam taluk and Koraiyar River, to the west of Rajagiri and the east of Kattalur in the Kulattur taluk. There are smaller rivers like Agniyar, Uyyakondan, Ambulliyar, Sariyar and Manimuthtar.

**Minerals and Mining**

There are no mineral deposits worth mentioning in the entire area of the district. However, a narrow belt of good grade feldspar and quartz is reported to be available in Kulattur taluk. Pink granite deposit is reported to be
available in Poonamaravathi area of Thirumayam taluk. Reserves of limestone are also available plenty in Adhanakottai area of Alangudi taluk.

Agriculture

Pudukkottai’s hard earth has called for deep ploughing. The scarcity of water has necessitated broadcast sowing.

Agriculture is the chief occupation of the people in the district. The important food crops grown in the district are paddy, varagu, ragi, maize and Cholam. The important commercial crops grown are groundnut and sugarcane. Jackfruits are grown extensively in Karambakudi and Thiruvarankulam blocks, and mangoes in Arimalam block. Palmyrah palms grow plenty in the district, particularly in Aranthangi taluk.

Fishery

The length of coastal line of Pudukkottai district is small when compared to the other coastal districts of Tamilnadu. There are about 16 major fishing villages situated along its 45 Kms, long coastline in Arantangi taluk. About 2000 fishermen are actively engaged in fishing. Fishing operation is mostly carried out by country boats numbering about 720. However, in recent years mechanized boats have been introduced and at present about 45 mechanized fishing boats are used by fishermen.
The important fish landing centres are Kottaipattinam, Adirampattinam, Pudupattinam, Muttukadu, Gopalapatinam, Krishnajipatnam and Kattumavadi. The annual fish catch is estimated to be 6500 tonnes. There are 10 marine fisherman’s co-operative societies with 2200 members. Inland fishing is mainly confined to tanks and ponds in Alanudi, Thirumayam and Kulattur taluks. The tanks in Pudukkottai District though numerous are connected with one another mostly depend on rain and partly on seasonal streams.

Transport

There are no national highways passing through the district. The total length of roads in this district is 3243 kms comparing 78.10 kilometers of state highways. The roads has to be classified that 434.30 kms of major district roads and 2730.60 kms of Panchayat roads.

Industries

The only industrial tradition in Pudukkotai has been handicrafts. Silk weaving, dyeing, zari, perfumery, manufacture of musical instruments, bangles, earth stone work and wood carving. Palm bag handiwork, blanket weaving has been practiced in the area since decades.

The district is industrially backward and the three taluks viz., Alangudi, Thirumayam and Kulattur had already been declared by the State Government
as individually backward area entitling industrial units to be set up there for a Central subsidy of 15% on fixed capita investment.

The main small scale industries in are wood based industries, tinkering, fabrication of metal products, printing and binding, manufacture of agricultural implements, manufacture of cement tiles and other cement products, automobile servicing and repairing and safety matches. A few oil and rice mills are concentrated in Alangudi taluk.

**Places of Religious, Historical and Archaeological Importance including places of Tourist interest.**

**Government Museum**

The rare collections are the sections of Geology, Zoology, and Painting. Anthropology, Epigraphy and Historical records etc., are very interesting and informatics. The beautiful bronze sculptures of various periods are really attractive pieces of this museum.

**Sithanavasal**

The ancient abode of Jains dating back to the 2nd century B.C. is about 16 kilometers from Pudukkottai. It is the oldest uninhabited site in the District. The rock-cut cave temple with its beautiful frescoes and paintings in natural colours as in Ajantha in Maharashtra and stone beds known as Eladipattam, a
cave in which the Jain monks were said to have sought refuge in those days are the main attractions. There are few sculptures of Jain Thirthankarars in the Ardhamandapam and the inner shrine of the cave temple. The ceiling of the Ardhamandapam contains fresco paintings of the 7th century AD. Inscriptions of 9th-10th century AD., are also found in the cave. The cave temple is said to have been excavated in the 7th century A.D. by the Pallava king Mahendira varman. In the area around Sithanavasal, there are many historical burial sites consisting of Kuruangpattarai calms, burial urns and cists etc.,

Kudimianmalai.

It is 20 kilometers from Pudukkottai. There are beautiful sculptures and thousand pillar hall in the temple. Its importance can be gleaned from the sheer memory as many as 120 inscriptions in the temple complex. The presiding deity is Sikhagiriswarar. The temple is noted for numerous inscriptions, remarkable among them is the one relating to a musical treatise of the Mahendravarma Pallavan who experiences the Sapthaswara in a veena called Parivardini with 8 stings. There is also a rock cut temple called melakkoil which was excavated during the time of Mahendira varma Pallavan.

Kodumbalur

This place also known as Muvarkoil is 36 kms, from Pudukkottai and 42 kms, from Tiruchy. It was formerly the seat of Irukkuvellers who were related to Cholas. Out of the three shrines of Muvarkoil, only two exist now.
Viralimalai

This town lies northwest of Pudukkottai about 40 kms. Through the district and even outside, this place is well known for the Subramaniyar temple on the hill here and is said to exist before 15th Century.

Narthamalai

This is a place of historical importance and the headquarters of the Muthariya chieftains. The earliest structural stone temple circular in shape, built by the Muthuraiyar and the Vijalaya chola, the first king of the later cholas are located here. The prehistoric burial grounds and the Kadambarmalai temple of the place are also of tourist importance.

Thirumayam

This place, a taluk headquarters is 19 kms away from Pudukkottai which is the district headquarters. It is one of the 108 Divyadeshams sung in the Vaishnavite hymns, Divya Prabandham. It is also one of the 28th Vaishnava pilgrims’ centres. The Sengirai forest near this palace is significant, for it is believed that this forest was the abode of the demoness Thadagai who was killed by Sri Ram.

Avadaiyarkoil

This place, a taluk headquarters is 48 kilometers from Pudukkottai. This place is noted for sculptures. It is famous for its Siva temple which is
dedicated to God Athmantha and associated with the Tamil Saint Manickavasagar.

This town was said to have been built by chola king Muchkunda who had his capital at Thirumanur. To the west of Kalasamangalam was Singamangalam. Parts of these two manalams became the eastern and western halves of modern Pudukkottai.

In 1812 the town was burnt down and rebuilt by Raja Vijaya Raghunatha Thondaiman.

In the centre is a fort with thick and high ramparts. Within it stands the old palace now no longer used as a place of residence; now it is houses and business establishment. Few portions of this fort now exist. As many parts of it have been demolished and shops have sprung up and the majestic view of the fort has been observed now.

**Pudukkottai**

Sri Brihadamba – Gokaraneswarar temple at Thirukokarnam suburb of Pudukkottai is one of the important temples in this district.
The Goddess was the tutelary deity of the erstwhile Pudukkottai Rajas. Vijayaragunatha Thondaiman who ruled this state from 1789 to 1870 A.D. was installed as the ruler at first in the Kudumiyanmalai temple and afterwards in the temple of Brihadamaba at Thirukokarnam. The co-ordination of Rajamarthanda Bairava Thondaiman and Raja Rajagopala Thondaiman were also held before the sanctum sanctorium of Goddess Brihadamba.

According to the Sthalapuranam the celestial Kamadhenu happened to arrive late one day at Indira’s court. She was banished from heaven and condemned to lead the life of an ordinary cow on earth, until such time as she could expiate her sins by worshipping Gokarneswara. On reaching the earth she was born as “Kabilai” and sought the hermitage of the saint Kapilamuni at Thirukogarnam to worship Gokarneshawara.

Kapilamuni suggested to her that she should bring water daily from the Ganga to perform the holy bath to the lord, Kabilai agreed. Once, while on her way to Thirukokarnam from the Ganga, Lord Siva to test her conviction took the form of a tiger and attacked her. The holy cow which had left her calf at the cave of Kapilamuni promised the tiger that it would soon return after fulfilling two obligations: her performance of Sivapooja, and leaving her calf in the custody of the Siva.
The tiger agreed to this proposal. Kapilai on reaching Thirukogarnam led the calf to the temple and prayed to Lord Siva to protect it. Later after digging the earth with its horn on the northern side and filled it up with a portion of water that it has brought from the Ganga as a permanent arrangement for the holy bath of the lord. The tank which exists now is known as “Kapilathirtham” With the remaining water she performed the bath to Lord Shiva and went back to the tiger.

Shiva and Parvathi manifested themselves and carried Kamadhenu to heaven. The Lord Gokarneswara is also known as Vakullesan, and his consort as Brahanayaki, Periyanayaki and Kalyanasundari. The tanks around the temple are known as Kapila, Mankama, Lakshmi, Brahma and Indrathirthams.

The Darga of Hazarat Syed Shah Parhezi Aulta is held in great veneration by Muslims of the town. Parhezi Aulla, a prince or Chieftain of Yemen in Arabat renounced the world and wondered about the countries in South West Asia and at last came to India to settle in Pudukkottai in the first half of the 18th century. Many miracles were attributed to him. His sanctity attracted the notice of the Thondaiman ruler who hold him in high esteem and had a tomb raised in his honor after his death. The tomb to the north of the Natnar-tank is that of Tatcha Bibi a Muslim woman who led an ascetic life. The church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and of the immaculate Heart Mary an
elegant and spacious edifice east of Marthandapuram is the principal church of the Pudukkottai Catholic Parish. The foundation stone was laid in January 1908 and it became the Parish Church in 1922.

The Protestant Church at the north end of the town belongs to the Swedish Mission. It was built in 1905 and consecrated in 1906.

Adhanakottai

Adhanakottai is a village on the Pudukkottai Thanjavur Road. Those journeying between Pudukkottai and Thanjavur town the years have found in Adhanakottai a convenient resting place enrooted.

In 1780-1781 Hyder Ali had overrun the Tamilnadu, his irregular cavalry spelling havoc in the tracts through which it passed. Thanjavur had already suffered grievously when the invading horsemen sought to enter the Thondaiman’s territories at Adhanakottai. So this village’s everlasting credit, it kept the Marauders at bay. It did this in two maneuvers. When the party entered the outskirts of the village an enterprising Brahmin, Gangadhara, who was a linguist having traveled all over India, accosted the Muslim leader in Hindustani and invited him to partake of a feast that the village would prepare in their honor.
The cavalry exhausted and in hungry sat down for the feast. While doing so a host of Kallars and Odayars encircled them. A man concealed himself in the hollow of a tree and shot the commander of Hyder’s force dead with an arrow. Panic gripped the invading force which fled quickly when news of the victory of the Thondaiman’s forces reached Sir Eyreicoote, the commander in chief who wrote to Thondiman that “he was gratified beyond measure to hear of the success”.

**Perungalur**

Perungalur was one of the centres for iron ores melting in early times. Perungalur is a village on the Pudukkottai-Thanjavur road. Perungalur was apparently one the early cellular settlements in the Konadu. It belonged alternately to the Sethupathy and the Rajas of Thanjavur before being finally integrated in the Thondaiman’s country.

Dedicated to Aiyanar, locally called Malayamarungar, this curious temple enjoys a considerable reputation in the area. The deity is believed locally to have come to Perunagalur from Malabar and settled in the village temple. The temple priests are, by tradition, Harijans. After the orators, they distribute prasadam to the pilgrims who consist of men from all castes including significantly Brahmins.
**Pallivasal**

The full name of the village is Kattubava-Pallivasal or the tomb of the “forest father”. The name is explained by the legend that in the 17th century a Muslim saint of the name Sayed Fakhruddin Auliya, a native of Arabia belonging to the title of Quiresh, halted near Thirumayam in the course of his wanderings in South India. One day on seeing a group of girls being assaulted in the adjacent forest by a gang or robbers, he intervened and saved their honor, thus the name “forest father”.

The present shrine which faces south is the gift of Md. Ali Walajah, the Nawab of Carnatiac, and to the right of it is a mosque. All round the dargah are cloistered halls. Over the tomb is a dome surrounded by minarets.

Like the famous Dargah at Nagore, Pallivasal is frequented with by Muslims and Hindus and the annual “URS” is celebrated in the month of Rabhsan.

**Avur**

Avur on the 15th and 16th centuries was a sparsely inhabited spot in the territories of Palayakaras of Perambur –Kattalur.
A=Cow; and Ur=village. The place was known as the village of cows because of the large number of wild bulls and cows that came to drink water in an oorani on the outskirts of a jungle here.

Father Robert De Nobili of the Madurai Mission extended its jurisdiction to Thiruchirapalli as it was then called. Frequent steges and skirmishes between Muslims and the Nayaks of Thiruchinapoly forced Father Emmanuel Martins, the missionary then in charge of Thiruchinapoly to cast about for a quieter place in which to carry on the Mission’s activities. The Perambur-Kattalur Palayakars granted him the site at Avur in 1686.

One of the first missionaries at Avur Father Venations Bouchet who joined the Madurai Mission in 1688 had ambitious plan for the settlement. The father was convinced that Avur should become a Christian centre. He made good use of the waste land found around the place with contributions of money from local Christians as well as associated in France and with very little help from the Madurai Mission itself. Bouchet brought the work to completion in 1697. The Thondaimans at Pudukkottai showed the same consideration to the Avur church which the Kattalur Palayakaras had.

The chapel was rebuilt by Father Homem who worked amidst enormous dangers and difficulties. The work begun by Fr. Homem was concluded in
1747 by his successors. The chapel seen in Avur today is this monument, built in the form of a cross 240 feet in length and 28 feet in width, its eight columns support a dome 56 feet above the pavement.

When in 1732 the Nawab of Arcot sent an expedition wing Shanda Saheb to exact tribute from the kingdoms of the south: the Tanjore, Madurai and Pudukkottai tracts were gripped by a general turmoil. The awaiting troops roamed the country side “setting the towns on fire, driving away the cattle and destroying the crops”.

The celebrated Tamil Scholar Father Constant Joseph Beschi was temporary charge of the Avur church at this time.

Some soldiers of the Thondaiman, having managed to steal some bullocks from the Mughal army not far from Avur, the Mughal soldiers became furious, and coming to the Missionary required him either to return the bullocks immediately or to surrender himself to them as prisoner. The missionary that had to answer the charge was Rev. Fr. Beschi. After getting the bullocks back was not in his power, he quietly submitted to the alternative proposed by the soldiers.
The infuriated soldiers immediately chained him and led him to their camp amidst insults and menaces, and as they found that their prisoner bore all the ill treatment with unruffled equanimity; they became so exasperated that they had him tied, and stripping him of his clothes exposed him to the midday sun. As soon as this however, came to the knowledge of the chief Chanda sahib, he issued immediate orders for the prisoner’s release.

The chief tenderly embraced the missionary and asked him to sit by his side. Then he protested that what had happened to him had been without his knowledge. Having, the honor paid to the missionary the soldiers, who, a short while before, had insulted him, began also to do him honor. As a matter of fact, the danger the father had incurred because the occasion of his safety and that of the village.

Avur today is not the centre that Bouchet dreamed it would be. But it brings to mind the services and dedication of a series of missionaries who came to this village from distant Europe in what they believed was their ordained mission.