

Socio-Economic conditions if Tirunelveli District with Special Reference to Tamil Muslims -A Study

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Abstract

The main aim of this paper is to execute the socio religious and economic conditions of Tirunelveli district since 1947. Tirunelveli district is unique compared with other districts in Tamilnadu it is located at the southern most side of Tamilnadu. It is located 46 km from Thoothukudi, 624 km from Chennai and 153 km from Trivandrum, the capital of Kerala state. Tirunelveli district has five types of lands like kurinji, mullai, marutham, neithal and palai. The district consists of all the five geographical divisions referred to in Tamil literature. The historical background of Tirunelveli is important in the history of Tamil nadu. ¹ The social structure and social conditions of Tirunelveli district differs from other districts. The economic conditions and the cultural conditions of Tirunelveli is different comparing with other districts in Tamilnadu. Tirunelveli has lot of tourist centres. The district have well established educational structure in Tamilnadu. Hence this paper has attempted to evaluate the socio-economic conditions of Tirunelveli

Keywords: kurinji, mullai, marutham, neithal palai, Nellai, Ramzan, Tamirabarani, Maraicar, Maraikkalayar, Kayalpatnam.

Introduction

Tirunelveli district, also known as Nellai, historically as Tinnevely is a district in Tamilnadu state in southern India. Tirunelveli District was formed on 1 September 1790 by the East India Company (on behalf of the British government), and comprised the present Tirunelveli and Thoothukudi districts and parts of Virudhunagar and Ramanathapuram districts. The district is known for paddy cultivation, with an abundance of agricultural lands found in the district. Tirunelveli is the sixth largest corporation in Tamilnadu. The word **Tirunelveli** is derived from three Tamil words: thiru, nel and veli, meaning "sacred paddy hedge".² The Western Ghats form the Kurinji (Mountainous) region; the Kalakkadu and Mundanthurai forests form the Mullai (Forest) region; the lands watered by the Tamiraparani and other rivers fall under Marudham (Paddy fields); the Radhapuram sea coast is its Neithal land (coastal) and the teri land forms the Palai (desert) region. The district is dotted with centres of natural beauty, pilgrimage, architectural eminence and memorials to great warriors of Indian independence.³

Social Structure in Tirunelveli

The social structure and the social condition of the Tirunelveli differ from other parts of the state. People's life style, profession, family system, home, streets, food, dress pattern, marriage and the conditions of the women, etc seem to be different in and around the Tirunelveli.⁴ In Tirunelveli, the majority peoples are from Dravidian race and they follow the tamil culture, Their life style seems to be different comparing with other parts of the area. The people of this region lived peacefully and in prosperity. Paddy was the chief crop

cultivating in the outer part of the Tirunelveli people.⁵ In the *neithal* region, we find the development of river basins and the expansion of rice cultivation which resulted in the emergence of the states with the head as monarch.⁶

The social setting in and around the Tirunelveli areas clearly sketches about the nellai peoples and their customs and culture. Peoples belonging to all the religions are living here, but no problems related with the religion come here. Peoples live here peacefully with unity. Also Tirunelveli has many mosques for the Muslims, churches for Christians and temples for the Hindus. All festivals are celebrated here without any caste and creed. Muslim and Christian peoples in the Tirunelveli give their contribution to celebrate the festivals for the Hindus and vice versa. Hindu and Christian peoples came to celebrate Ramzan with Muslims. This shows the unity.⁷

Economical Conditions

The perennial river Tamirabarani fed water through many channels and rivers irrigated the lands. The economic condition of the people, when compared to other regions was engaged in many professionals.⁸ The people in and around the Tirunelveli do many jobs like agriculture, business, government jobs, etc. Agriculture was the main occupation of the outer part of the people. Agriculture was the main occupation of the outer parts of the people. It was the backbone of rural economy as well as state economy.⁹ People in and around the Tirunelveli lived a simple life. The outer arts consisted of several groups of the people.¹⁰

The agriculture was the main group in the village. It is known from the inscriptions of this region that some of the lands in the villages during the pandyas times were specifically mentioned as common lands used by the village administrative bodies such as sabha or our.¹¹ In order to get the revenue from this land, the administrative body of this village leased them to individuals.¹²

Industries such as Sea food industry, sea weeds cultivation, pearl oyster culture, salt industries, chemical industries, poultry and cattle field, spice based products, readymade garments, mechanical boats/ small ships building units, pulses processing, dhall mills, coconut oil, masala powder, dry flowers, senna leaves Processing, bakery products, poly bags, general engineering, processing and canning of gherkins, Value added products from banana, Palmyra products, Cashew nut processing, extracting oil; From cashew kernels, prawn culture, sea weeds cultivation, salt industries, sea food industries, bakery products, mini modern rice mills, Coconut based products, Palmyra based products, timber sawing, jewelers works, Modern rice mills , readymade garments, value added products from drumstick, fish Processing, activated carbon, etc., are available in and around the Tirunelveli district.¹³

Maraicar in the history of Kayalpatnam

The name Maraicar/Marikar/Maraicar/Maraikar is a corruption of the Tamil word “Maraikkalayar” meaning people engaging in shipping trade. The community of the maraicars found amongst settlements along the Tamilnadu, kerala and srilankan coast was engaged in international trade in gems, pearls, horses and commodities for centuries. They were the pioneers in this field.¹⁴

Maraicars hail from Kayalpatnam seashore town in southern Tamilnadu, which is steeped in history. Arab traders (Maraicars) had a flourishing business in south India with the pandya kingdoms. The rulers of Malabar (Kerala) and Ceylon (Srilanka).Kayalpatnam were a major international port with trade relations with the Arabs, Europeans and Chinese. The great international traveler of Yore, Marco polo had visited in the middle ages and described it as a thriving international port.¹⁵ With the advent of Islam, these Arab traders introduced the new

faith in the religion. They married amongst the local population and their descendents are the present day population of Kayalpatnam (Maraicar palli street), keelakarai, kulasekarapatinam, maraicarpatinam, A diramapatinam, Thondi, Karaikkal ,etc along the Tamilnadu sea coast. Many settlements on the Malabar Coast (Kerala) and the southern sea coast of Ceylon like Galle and Batticola. The main products of trade of Arabs were natural pearls fished in the Gulf of Mannar, Palk Strait. These pearls were exchanged with horses brought from Arabia.¹⁶ Muslim merchants prepared and sold palm jaggery in udankudi. In udankudi, lot of palm trees available in this area, so here lot of palm jaggery prepared in small scale and large scale industry. Udankudi is famous for natural palm jaggery cultivation. Nearly 60% of the Muslim traders occupied the palm jaggery trade.

Religious Background

Caste system in Tamil Nadu is one kind of stratification, based on inequality among human beings in matters of social interaction. The word 'caste' means breed, race or colour in Latin and it was first used by the Portuguese in India.¹⁷ The Sanskrit term equivalent for 'caste' in ancient Indian literature is varna. It denotes two or three meanings. The generally accepted meaning is 'colour'. In 1938, When C.Rajagopalachari was the Chief Minister in Tamil Nadu, he ordered Scheduled caste people also take bath in Kuttralam.¹⁸

Tirunelveli Srivaikuntam is famous for the temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu known as Sri Vaikuntapathi Swami with a lofty gopuram. Nellayappar Gandhimathi Temple is situated in the heart of the city.¹⁹ This is a twin temple dedicated to Parvathi (Kanthimathi) and Siva (Nellaiyappar),Salaikumaran Temple, Tenkasi-Kasi Vishwanathar Temple, Thiruvaidaimarudur : Athalanathar temple and Narumponathar temple on the banks of river Tamiraparani river, Lord Thivengadanathar, Vaanamaamalai Perumal (Vishnu), Kutralanathar temple (Vishnu) , Vishwanatha temple (Shiva), Papavinasar temple (Shiva)²⁰

In Tirunelveli, all peoples lived peacefully by practicing the different religions here. Muslims, Hindus, Christians and Jainism people are living.²¹ Here Tirunelveli is noted for many religious places in an around the Tirunelveli district. Here many temples, old churches and historical important mosques are available here.²²

Educational Conditions

Education in every sense is one of the fundamental factors of development. No Country can achieve sustainable economic development without substantial investment in human capital. Education provides one with the best opportunities of becoming successful in the modern society. In terms of knowledge, qualities, skills, attitudes, and capacities, education enables individual's to become conscious subjects of their growth and active responsible participants in a systematic process of building a new world order.²³ As per the National Policy on Education (1968), the aim of education is "to promote national progress, a sense of common citizenship and culture and to strengthen national integration". It laid stress on "the need for a radical reconstruction of the educational system to improve its quality at all stages, and give much greater attention to science and technology, the cultivation of moral values and a closer relationship between education and the life of the people."²⁴

Tirunelveli district has a rich tradition and there are several educational institutions which are more than hundred years old. Education in Tirunelveli district is highly advanced and for this reason the district is also known as the 'Oxford of South India'.²⁵ In Tirunelveli Christian missionaries started many schools and colleges at 18th century. Now Tirunelveli city has nearly 24 schools and 12 colleges and nearly 73 schools and 32 colleges in and outside of the Tirunelveli district. Many madarsha system educational institutions are also

there. Through formal education, tirunelveli district produced lot of genius peoples in different field.²⁶

End notes

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