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The Rural Livelihood of South Arcot District with Special Reference to Industrial Potentiality

**C. B. Muvendhan, M.B.A., R. Murugesan., M.Sc., M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.,
and M. Marikkani, M.Sc., M.A., M.Phil.**

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1. LOCATION

South Arcot District lies on the central plains of Tamil Nadu, between Palar and Cauvery flood plains. On the west it is bounded by the group of Shevaroy, Chitoni and Kalrayan Hills. Roughly the district has an extension of 110 Kilometer from east and west and 115 kilometers from north to south. The total geographical area is 10,890 square kilometers. It is located between 115 N – 12.30 latitudes and 78°37'E – 80°0E longitudes.

1.1. LAND SCAPE

The district can be divided into three regions, on the basis of the natural terrain, namely, (a) the coastal plains, (b) the central plant region and (c) the hilly tract (west).

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 7 July 2012

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1.1.1. THE COASTAL PLAIN

The coastal plain covers Thindivanam, Villupuram, Cuddalore, Chidambaram and Kattumannarkoil taluks. The average temperature is 23 degrees C and the rainfall is 1429 ms. Black and aranaeous soils, both loany and sandy type are common. Anaicut, lower Coloroon anacicut system, the Veeranam tank, the Perumal tank and the Kuliveli tank are the major sources of irrigation.

1.1.2. THE CENTRAL PLATEAU REGION

It includes major parts of Villupuram, Thirukoilur, Ulundurpet, Vriddhachalam and Tittagudi taluks. The entire region is flat topped low plateau. Red soils are common.

The climate is generally dry and the average rainfall in 957mm. The share of dry land is more than the wet lands in the district. The rivers Gadilam, Pennar and Vellar are the important rivers which traverse the region.

1.1.3. THE HILLY TRACT

Taluks of Gingee, Kallakuruchi and some parts of Thirukoilur comprise the hill tract on the west. The hills are collectively called Gingee Hills on the North West and Kalrayan Hills along the West and South West. Kalrayan serves as a divide from Salem district. The height of the hills ranges from 300 meters to 1200 meters from the mean sea level. Rivers such as Gonuki, Manimukta, Mayuranathi and number of streams originate from the hills. Gingee hills differ widely in appearance. The range consists of a series of detached hills covered by reserved forests.

1.1.4. THE RIVER BASINS

The major river basins of the district are Varahanadi. Panngiyar-Gadilam and Manimukta-Vellar rivers. Ponnaiyar basin is the largest and fertile among all the basins. Gadilam starts from the central plateau region and is equally fertile; Basin Vellar forms the Southern part of the district. However all basins are dry. Only seasonal floods inundate lower parts of the basins. Basin sub soil water is used to irrigate the lands.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 7 July 2012

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2. ADMINISTRATION

Administratively South Arcot has been divided into two development districts, ie., South Development district and North Development district. Further each development district has been divided into two revenue divisions. There are 2333 revenue villages and 17 towns in the district.

2.1 BASIC ADMINISTRATION

Each revenue division has been divided into taluks. The taluks are further sub-divided into revenue firkas and this is again further divided into revenue villages. Thus the South Development District has seven taluks and 1141 revenue villages in the North Development district. Besides the above, there are 32 town panchyats and one town-ships.

2.2. DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

For the purpose of panchayat administration the district has been divided into four development divisions. The development divisions comprise of panchayat unions and it is further divided into village panchayats. Altogether there are 34 panchayat unions and 1744 villages' panchayats. The purpose of this division is for implementing developmental programme from grass root.

3. POPULATION IN CHARACTERISTICS

South Arcot is one of the most populous districts of Tamil Nadu, ranking third. The population of the district is 4.5 million (1991) of which 84.25% are rural and 15.75% urban. The density of population is 386 and the decimal growth rate works out 16.09%, 35.79% are literates.

3.1 RURAL POPULATION

The rural population is distributed among the 2333 villages. The size of rural population (villages) varies between 200 ml 10000. About 37 per cent of the villages

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 7 July 2012

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The Rural Livelihood of South Arcot District with Special Reference to Industrial
Potentiality

have a population size of 2000-5000, 35 percent of the size of 1000-2000, 20 per cent of 200-1000 and the remaining 8 percent of the villages are large size villages having a population of more than 5000.

3.2 URBAN POPULATION

The total urban population of the district is 6600000 which account for 15.73 percent of the total population. An analysis of the variation of urban population from 1901 onwards shows that the percentage of variation continued to remain high.

3.3 PATTERN OF EMPLOYMENT AND POVERTY

Since it is an agricultural region, the people get only seasonal employment. As per the assistant director of employment register, the number of the unemployed has shown an increase in unemployment over the decade. Every year an average of 2000 person are added to the employed list. During 1981 the total employed in the district were 7705.

In regard to intensity of incidence of poverty, South Arcot district ranks fifth in Tamilnadu with 77.9 percent below poverty line as against the state average. Thus, taken as a whole, majority of the population is considered to be poor. The problem of unemployment and under-employment perhaps leads to frequent occurrence of crimes in the rural areas. Most of the agricultural laborers are all out without jobs and therefore they are compelled to resort to petty crimes such as theft and house-breaking for living.

4. INFRASTRUCTURE RESOURCES

4.1 ADMINISTRATIVE AND ADVISORY STAFF

Each of the 34 panchayat unions has an extension officer and supporting staff to look after the different activities such as agriculture, animal husbandry, education, communication and industries.

4.2 PROMOTIONAL AGENTS

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12 : 7 July 2012

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The Rural Livelihood of South Arcot District with Special Reference to Industrial
Potentiality

There are financial institutions, cooperative societies, veterinary hospitals, seed farms, experimental stations and former's training centers which are functioning in the district to promote various sectoral activities.

4.3 THE SUPPORT SYSTEM

There are transport networks and rural markets. The district has a length of 5589 kms. The share of the District and other roads is 19 percent followed by panchayat union roads with 33 percent and panchayat roads 43 percent. Totally the share of rural roads works out to be 81 per cent.

There are 50 periodic markets. On an average 4 markets are found in each taluk. For every 20 kms radius there is one periodic market.

4.4. SOCIAL FACILITIES

Social facilities such as schools, training institutions and hospitals, serve the persons engaged in various activities. In the sphere of education, there are 187 high schools and 49 higher secondary schools.

5. RURAL RESOURCE

Owing to its large size, the district has vast reserves of primary reserves. Centuries of agricultural practices brought vast tracts of land under agriculture. As a complement to agriculture, animal husbandry has also spread over all parts of the district. The district is one of the richest regions in mineral concentration in Tamilnadu. The varied landscape also aids to the diversity of resources.

5.1 RESOURCE REGIONS

On the basis of crop distinction the villages of the district may be distinguished as to the resources they have. Crops like paddy, pulses, cereals, millets, oil seeds, sugar cane and cotton have a well marked spatial pattern of resource region. The miscellaneous

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 7 July 2012

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The Rural Livelihood of South Arcot District with Special Reference to Industrial Potentiality

crops like cashew, jackfruit, chillies, coconuts and tamarind have their own areas of concentration.

Crop paddy has three district regions: 1. the fertile Cauvery valley and its surrounding regions; 2. the Ponnaiyar basin of the western regions and 3. the Varaganthi regions of the North West. And the regions have continuous spread of over 50-100 kms in radius. In the fertile Cauvery valley region the number of villages involved are 320 with an average area of more than 20 hectares per village. In the Western region there are about 449 villages involved with an average area of 200-240 hectares. The North Western region comprises 605 villages with an average area of 160-200 hectares per village.

Cereal crops have four distinct regions with more than 100 kms radius. Among the four regions, the central plateau region has an average of more than 120 hectare/village and the region has more than 380 villages. The concentration goes on decreasing from the central to the periphery of the district. The northern, southern and ... **eastern regions** involve more than 1385 villages, with an average of less than 40 hectares/villages, with an average of less than 40 hectares/village. The western regions involve about 560 villages with an average area of 40-30 hectares/village. Pulses are dominant in the place wherever paddy is concentrated. Millet crop is found in the central region.

Broadly speaking, **? seeds** have two regions, viz. Northern and Southern regions with 70 and 100 kilometers radius respectively. The sugarcane region coincides with the central region. It is concentrated totally in two control plates region, where red alluvial soil decreases from the centre.

The crop cashew is concentrated in the blocks of Panruti, Kammapuram, Vriddhachalam, Annagiramam, and Kurunjipadi involving some 267 villages with an average of 20 hectares/villages with 50 kms radius. Like cashew, tapioca is concentrated in Chinna Salem, Mangalore, Annagiramam and Cuddalore blocks involving 226 villages with an average of 20-40 hectares/villages with a radius of 25-50 kms. Jack and tamarind are concentrated in Panruti and Markkanam blocks respectively where more than 62 villages are involved with an average of 80 hectares/ villages.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 7 July 2012

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The Rural Livelihood of South Arcot District with Special Reference to Industrial Potentiality

Fruit crops are concentrated in Thirunavalur, Kallakuruchi and Bhuvanagiri blocks. Coconut is more concentrated along the coastal areas of the district where it is found in more than 345 villages with an average of 10 hectares/village.

Apart from the agricultural resource regions, livestock resources also have distinct regions. They are 1. The region of milch animals; 2. The regions of non-milch animals and 3. The region of sheep and goat.

The milk producing regions coincide with the paddy regions. The hilly west has non-milk producing animals. The regions adjacent to the western areas are concentrated with goat and sheep rearing regions. Particularly it is found in large number over Mangalore, Kanai and Sankarapuram.

The forest, mineral and fish resources also have strong aerial linkages and spatial concentrations. Variable forest regions are found in the Kalrayan range and Pichavaram. The other areas of forest regions are found over Thirukoilur, Ulundurpet, and Rishivandiyur and Sankarapuram blocks. Limestone, white/red clay and sand stone have considerable geographical areas as well as better acre spread and linkages to emerge as resource regions. For example sea-shells are available in plenty in Markkanam block. Adjacent to these, lime stones are spread out over Mailam and Vanur blocks. The same is true in the case of clay. Panruti region has better quality clay and it is well connected and inter-linked to the neighboring resources regions of Neyveli clay. Marakkanam and Gingee blocks have granite concentration.

The coastal areas of Marakkanam, Cuddalore, Parangipettai and Killai also have a linear linkage in terms of fishing sea shell collection and in backwater fishing. Particularly the coastal regions of Cuddalore and Parangipettai have close connections with scope for large scale fishing activity.

The resources regions of the district generally are linked by spatially and areally. Therefore, resources-wise as well as industrial use-wise the resources regions of the district have strong spatial and aerial linkages in terms of complementarity.

5.2 RESOURCE CLUSTER

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 7 July 2012

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and M. Marikkani, M.Sc., M.A., M.Phil.

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Resources regions have been identified in the form of viable micro level cluster with industrial potentials. The clusters of resources were made both for agriculture and livestock resource.

The crop paddy has a total number of 158 viable resource cluster followed by cereals 96 clusters, pulses 93, clusters, millets 85 clusters, oil seeds 145 clusters, cashew 23 clusters, sugarcane 89 clusters, cotton 77 clusters, and tapioca 79 clusters. These clusters have the potential to promote agro-based industrial units.

The livestock resource has also been clustered separately for breeding animals, not fit for breeding and for other animals. The animal in milk has 10 viable clusters and the clusters of the non-breeding animal are 87. The cluster for goat and sheep were 90. When compared to the crops cluster, the clusters for livestock resources have a large cluster area and the distance between the inter-cluster is also more. This is mainly due to the poor availability of fodder.

6. INDUSTRIAL POTENTIAL

The industrial potential of the district can be grouped into two categories. They are 1. Khadi and Village Industries and 2. Small scale Industries.

The Khadi and Villages Industries includes pulses, processing paper board, oil press, palmgur, coir, khadi spinning, rice polishing, paddy dehusking, slaughter unit, hand beaten rice, hand pounding of paddy units and cashew and apple juice units. The total potential for the industry are estimated to be 20,411. Out of which hand pounding of paddy has a potential for 9863 units followed by oil press 2127, slaughter units 1389, Palmgur 1895, Cardboard units 1619, Khadi spinning 964, pulses processing 802, cashew juice unit 710 and coir units 534.

The potential for small scale industries works out to be 3580 units. The types of units which are included in the small scale industries are oil press, cereal processing, pulses processing, sugarcane crushing, rice milling, starch unit, fruit processing, milk chilling slaughter unit, hides and skin unit, tamarind kernel powder unit. Out of the total units, rice milling has a potential for 1176 units, followed by oil press 825, slaughter units

Language in India www.languageinindia.com

12 : 7 July 2012

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362, starch units 352, and powder 235. There are also general processing 226, pulses processing 162, sugarcane crushing 81 and milk chilling centers 17 units. At the micro level the industrial potential varies from block to block. Thus the proposed locations for industries have been broadly brought under resource based and demand based industries. There are about more than 13 types of industries possible related to agriculture, livestock, and minerals.

7. CONCLUSION

The district is well endowed in renewable and non-renewable resources. At the same time the Government of India declared it as an industrially backward district. Even the existing industries are unevenly distributed in the district. There is a nuclear development of industries. All these industries are concentrated in and around the urban centers. So, to spread the industries spatially and to bring integrated rural area development, there is an urgent need to make use of the local resources of the district at micro level.

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C. B. Muvendhan, M.B.A.

R. Murugesan., M.Sc., M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.
mothrmmr@gmail.com

M. Marikkani, M.Sc., M.A., M.Phil.
kani85a@gmail.com

Centre for Rural Development
Annamalai University
Annamalai Nagar – 608 002
Tamilnadu, India

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Potentiality