CHAPTER – III

PROFILE OF RAMANATHAPURAM DISTRICT

The ancient history of Ramanathapuram is bound up with the history of Pandyan dynasty which ruled the kingdom comprising Madurai, Ramanathapuram and Tirunelveli districts upto early part of the 16th century. The Pandyan kingdom was very prosperous from 1st century A.D. In 1063 A.D. this country was conquered by Rajendra Chola and was ruled by Cholas for a short period.

But again by 1520, the Pandyan dynasty was subverted by the Nayaks of Vijayanagar. The Nayaks ruled from Madurai and the kingdom of Ramanathapuram and all events were held by them through their PaIiyakars during 16th, 17th and early years of 18th centuries. The Ramanathapuram kingdom which was under Nayaks of Madurai was mostly inhabited by the Maravars, a very fine race of men, active and athletic with a greater degree of manliness than any other race in South India".[1] The Maravar dynasty of Sethupathis who were Lords under the old Pandyan rule reigned over this part.

Ramanathpuram district, being big and backward has been chosen the study area. Although the study has been confined to marine fisheries sector in this district, an idea about the overall position of the district could be drawn by an analysis of various economic profiles in the district.

[1] Director of Information and Public Relation, Ramanathapuram District, ***Tamil Arasu, Madras*****,** Vol.II, No.16, February 1972, pp.11-18

The important profiles like physical feature, demographic feature, soil conditions, climate and rainfall, agriculture and irrigation

MAP
RAMANATHAPURAM DISTRICT

Source.www.tn.gov.in

3.1 PHYSICAL FEATURE

Ramanathapuram district has an area of 4089.57 km^2, it lies between 9.05 and 9.50' N and 78.10 and 79.27 E. This district is bounded on the south by Thoothukudi and Tirunelveli district, on the West by Sivagangai and Virudhunagar district, on the north by Pudukkottai district, on the east by the Bay of Bengal and the Gulf of Mannar. It has a long coast line measuring about 241 kilometres,[3] perhaps the longest coast line for any district in Tamil Nadu. The coastline is almost a sandy tract with no natural growth.

3.2 DEMOGRAPHY FEATURE

According to the 2001 census, the total population of Ramanathapuram district is 11,83,321, males being 5,82,068 females 6,01,253. The district is composed of rural population 8,83,508 as against urban 2,99,813. The district has literacy about 64.43 per cent. The population density is 289 persons per square kilometre.[4]

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[2] District Profile of Ramanathapuram Assistant Director of Statistics, ***Statistical Department***, Ramanathapuram, 2004-05.

[3] A Census of Tamilnadu Marine Fishermen, ***Commissioner of Fisheries***, Chennai, 2001.

[4] District Statistical Handbook, ***Department of Statistics***, Ramanathapuram, 2004.

TABLE 3.1

POPULATION OF BROAD INDUSTRIAL CATEGORIES OF WORKERS IN 2001 CENSUS

Industrial Category		Ramanathapuram District 2001 Census	
		Persons	**Percentage to Total Workers**
Total Main workers	1. Cultivators	179562	39.49
	2. Agricultural Labourers	124483	23.91
	3. Household Industries	24952	4.79
	4. Other Workers	191626	36.80
	Total main workers	520623	
Total Marginal Workers	1. Agricultural Labourers	87803	16.86
	2. Household Industry		
	3. Other Workers		
	Total marginal workers	87803	16.86
	Total Workers	520623	
	Non-Workers	662690	
	Total Population	1183321	

Source : District Statistical Hand Book, Ramanathapuram

The distribution of main workers in different categories has been listed in table 3.1. It shows that other workers constituted (36.80 per cent) a major working force in Ramanathapuram district as per 2001 census.

3.3 CLIMATE AND RAINFALL

Ramanathapuram district is a dry and backward area. Here, the hottest months of a year are May and June. The rainy season begins from the month of August. The annual rainfall of this district from South-West monsoon is 136.1 mm and North-East monsoon is 507.4 mm,[5] the district also gets considerable rainfall during North-East monsoon.[6]

TABLE 3.2

Rainfall in Ramanathapuram District during the Period from 1995-96 to 2004-05

(In M.M)

Year	Total Monsoon		Deviation
	Normal	Actual	
1995-96	6687.6	6722.6	35.0
1996-97	6687.6	8122.2	1434.6
1997-98	6687.6	8478.4	1790.8
1998-99	6687.6	8546.5	1858.9
1999-00	6687.6	8697.3	2009.7
2000-01	6687.6	14038.5	7840.9
2001- 02	6687.6	13764.8	7077.2
2002-03	6687.6	11423.8	4763.2
2003-04	821.2	723.2	-11.9
2004-05	821.2	1313.9	60.0
Average	5514.32	8183.12	

Source : Department of Economics and Statistics, Chennai

Table 3.2 reveals that the Ramanathapuram district received an average rainfall for ten years (1995-96 to 2004-05) was 8183.12 mm which was higher than the average normal rainfall of 5514.32 mm. It

[5] Ibid, p.3
[6] G.W.B. Zakarias, "Madras Agriculture", ***University of Madras***, 1950, pp.3-4.

concluded that this district had received good rainfall during the period from 1995-96 to 2004-05.

3.4 SOIL CONDITIONS

While the entire area of this district consists of Red loam, Laterite soil Black soil and Sandy soil.[7] This area is dry and backward and known as East Ramanathapuram, comprising the taluks Thiruvadanai, Ramanathapuram, Kadaladi and Rameswaram. This region is called coastal region of Ramanathapuram district. It has all the depressing features such as poor soil, frequent droughts, absence of irrigation systems, precarious farming etc. This area is much more backward and underdeveloped than any other districts. Mainly a coastal area, the terrain is completely a sandy tract with very little scope for agriculture. The coast is lined with brown and brackis swamp, diversified only by palmyrah palms and some shrubs. The coastal region of north Mandapam, sea is known as Palk Bay and the South Mandapam sea known as Gulf of Mannar. The sea coast in Ramanathapuram district is covered by white sand on which nothing grows. So, all the people of coastal region of Ramanathapuram are engaging themselves intensively in the fishing occupation.

3.5 LAND UTILISATION

The land use pattern and its percentage terms of Ramanathapuram district for the Period 2004-05 are presented in Table 3.3. The total geographical area of the district was 408957 hectares. The net area sown was at the maximum level, accounting for 46.91 percent of the total area. Area which was sown more than once accounted for nil. The land put in other categories like non-agricultural uses (20.66 per cent), barren and

[7] Statistical Hand Book, ***Department of Statistics***, Madras, 1981, p.94

uncultivable lands forest, permanent pastures and other grazing lands, showed a meagre percentage of land used to total geographical area of this district.

TABLE 3.3

Land Utilization in Ramanathapuram District for the Year 2004-05

(Area in Hectares)

Sl.No.	Classification	Area	Percentage
1	Forest	4488	1.09
2	Barren and uncultivable uses	4591	1.12
3	Land put to non-agricultural uses	84483	20.66
4	Cultivable waste	4245	1.03
5	Permanent pastures and other grazing land	154	0.04
6	Land under miscellaneous tree crops and groves not included in net area sown	41116	10.05
7	Current fallows land	21618	5.27
8	Other fallows land	56439	13.80
9	Net area sown	191823	46.91
10	Geographical area according to village papers	408957	100.00
11	Total cropped area	191823	46.91
12	Area sown more than once	-	-

Source: ***District Statistical Handbook***, Ramanathapuram, 2004 – 05.

3.6 AGRICULTURE

The important food crops grown were paddy, millets like *Cholam*, Cumbu, Chillies, ragi and *Varagu*, groundnut and sugarcane. Details with regard to area and production under different principal crops for the year 2004-05 are given in table 3.4. As could be seen from this table, the area under paddy cultivation was 121.031 thousand hectares and it covered 63.61 per cent of the total cultivated area. The area under groundnut occupied second place by cultivating 9.151 thousand hectares.

It is known that the pulses occupied first place by producing 28.261 thousand tonnes and thereby covering 47.98 per cent of the districts total principal crops in production. The highest yield in the principal crop is 9.31 per hectare which was secured by pulses. It is inferred from the result that the farmers preferred dry crops (Pulses) for earning more money because of shortage of rain water.

TABLE 3.4

Area under Principal Crops in Ramanathapuram District

In 2004-05

Sl.No.	Name of the Principal Crop	Area under cultivation in '000 Hectares	Production in '000 Tonnes	Per Hectare Productivity
1	Paddy	121.031 (63.61)	20.771	0.17
2	Millets and cereals	-	-	-
3	Pulses	3.037 (1.60)	28.261	9.31
4	Sugarcane	0.451 (0.24)	4.119	9.13
5	Groundnut	9.151 (4.81)	3.587	0.39
6	Gingelly	5.466 (2.87)	1.757	0.32
7	Cotton	3.330 (1.75)	0.403	0.12
8	Others	47.802 (25.12)	-	-
	Total	190.268 (100)	58.898	-

Source : Statistical Handbook, Ramanathapuram, 2004-05

Note : Figures in brackets are percentages

3.7 RIVERS

The rivers of the district were only jungle streams that remained dry for the greatest portion of the year. However, mention may be made of Vaigai River which starts in Theni district in Tamil Nadu and ends with the Ramanathapuram big tank to the west of the Ramanathapuram town. There are seasonal smaller rivers like Malataru, Gundaru, and Sarugani river.

3.8 IRRIGATION

The major source of irrigation in the district was tank fed by rains. Details with regard to net area irrigated by sources of tanks, tubewells and other wells revealed the erratic pattern in area irrigated. The net area irrigated by the three different sources during the year 2004-05 was very high and dependence on well had been relied upon in the event of tank water shortage. The net area irrigated in Ramanathapuram district is shown in table 3.5.

TABLE 3.5

Net Area Irrigated In Ramanathapuram District in 2004-05

(Hectares)

Source	Number of Hectares
Tanks	61382
Tubewells	443
Other wells	10893
Total	72718

Source : Assistant Director Statistics, Ramanathapuram

3.9 ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

The cattle wealth of this district was important to improve its agricultural resources. The important subsidiary activities carried on by the cultivators and agricultural labourers were dairying, sheep rearing and poultry. The livestock population of this district in 2004-05 comprised of 340220 cattle, 123165 buffaloes, 302642 sheep, 212183 goats, the total livestock population being 978210. Poultry accounted for 394685. Besides the veterinary dispensaries, key village centres and veterinary sub-centres catered to the veterinary health of the livestock population in the district.

Dairying was one of the major subsidiary occupations which offered immense scope for development in the district. Ramanathapuram, Thiruvadanai, Kadaladi and Kamuthy taluks were important potential areas for development. The grazing of land available in many blocks offered good scope for this activity. 84 milk co-operative societies affiliated to Ramanathapuram milk supply cooperative union catered to the milk requirements of the population. The milk production in the district had been significantly stepped up to 91.54 lakhs liters in 2004-05. Dairy farming had vast potential for expansion to meet the existing and rapidly increasing demand for milk.

Sheep rearing in the district was another important subsidiary activity for a large number of small farmers. The cost of maintaining sheep was comparatively low. Intensive sheep farming was done in Kadaladi, Thiruvadanai, R.S.Mangalam, Kamuthy and Paramakkudi blocks, Keelkarisal and Ramanathapuram. The availability of pastures and dry lands in Kamuthy, R.S. Mangalam and Kadaladi taluks enhanced the potential for developing sheep rearing activities. Although the district

had a fairly large number of sheep, population, scientific sheep farming was not being practised.

3.10 FORESTRY

The total area under forests in this district was 4488 hectares in 2004-05. The forests were mostly found in Kamuthy and R.S. Mangalam blocks of the district. The Tamil Nadu Forest Plantation Corporation Ltd., had raised timber, eucalyptus, pulpwood, fuel wood and bamboo to a considerable extent in the forest area in this district and they supplied pulpwood and fuel wood to forest based industries in the state.

3.11 MINERALS AND MINING

Ramanathapuram district was not gifted with mineral wealth. There were no mineral deposits worthmentioning in the entire area of the district. However, the grade of gypsum deposit available around Kokkadai, Peraiyoor, Thiruvai and Valinokkam is suitable for the manufacture of cement. Reserves of clay available in large quantities in the area of Athangari are of good quality and are suitable for making potteries.

3.12 INFRASTRUCTURE

Ramanathapuram district was one of the few districts in the state where all the villages and towns had been electrified. Paramakkudi, Kamuthy Kadaladi taluk had been declared by the State Government as industrially backward areas entitling new industries to be set up to avail a 20 per cent reduction in the power tariff. The district drew its power from the Mettur power house and Thoothukudi thermal power station.

There is a national highway from Madurai to Rameswaram passing through the district. The total length of roads in this district is 4992.55 kms comprising 187.80 kms of national highways, 201.239 kms of state

highways, 139.20 kms of corporation and municipalty roads, 3322.31 kms of panchayat roads, 1142 kms of town panchayat and townships roads.

The total length of broad gauge railway line in the district is about 98.37 kms with 9 railway stations connecting Rameswaram and Paramakkudi as also Karaikkudi and Manamadurai in the adjacent Sivagangai district. The broad gauge railway line from Chennai to Rameswaram passes through this district. The transport handled by the railways in the district is meagre on account of the low route length and limited potential for transportation.

3.13 INDUSTRIES

This district is industrially backward and the three taIuks, Paramakkudi, Kadaladi and Kamuthy had been declared by the State Government as backward areas entitling industrial units to be set up there for a central subsidy of 20 per cent on fixed capital investment. There are only six large scale industries in the district out of which one is located in Ramanathapuram town itself. There were 436 small scale units in 2004-05. The main industries in which they were engaged were wood based industries, tinkering, fabricating of metal products, printing and binding, manufacture of agricultural implements and cement tiles, automobiles servicing and repair and safety matches. In addition to the small scale units, there were a number of villages and 320 cottage industries prominent among them were pottery, blacksmith, carpentry, basket making, rope making and synthetic gem-cutting.

3.14 FISHERIES

The length of coastal line of Ramanathapuram District is big when compared to other coastal districts of Tamil Nadu. There are about 184 fishing villages situated along the coastline in Ramanathapuram district. About 31225 fishermen are actively engaged in fishing. Fishing operation is mostly carried out by mechanised boat, motorised boat, non-mechanised boat and shore seine. However in recent years shore seine had been reduced due to its high cost. There are about 6 fish landing centre 5 freezing plants and 18 ice, cold storage plants. Inland fishing is mainly confined to seasonal tanks only.

Among three types of fisheries (marine, inland and brackish water), the marine fishery operation is very dominant in this district. This district had the natural advantage of having its fishing ground in Palk Bay and the Gulf of Manner. The coastal area is not influenced by dynamic changes of the sea like tsunami waves, monsoon winds and currents. Therefore, it is offered wide scope for spawning activities of fishes. These favourable natural conditions facilitated the conduct of marine fishery operations throughout the year. But the inland fisheries are also ineffectively carried on in this district.

The above district profile reveals that the Ramanathapuram district is a dry and most backward area which has more sandy soil on which nothing grows. Among the cultivation of major important crops, the productions of pulses are more than other crops. The major areas of the district are irrigated by tanks. It has no minerals and mining. It was poor infrastructure and the lack of the development of industries.

3.15 RESEARCH STATIONS

The Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute was established at Mandapam in 1947. Researchers are conducted on various disciplines of fisheries such as Seaweeds culture, Chanks, Pearl culture, Sea Cucumber and new technologies are transferred to fishermen. Kurusadai Marine Biological Research Station at Mandapam, under the control of State Fisheries Department conducts useful research on fauna and flora of the island.

3.16 PEARL FISHERY

Ramanathapuram coast is well known for pearl fishing. The Pandyan kings who ruled over this district exploited the pearl fisheries of the East Coast. The Cholas who succeeded Pandyas not only patronised pearl fishing but also developed it with great care in the Palk and Gulf of Mannar. Marco Polo (1260-1300) who travelled in India during this period says in his account that the pearl fishing was monopolised by Pandyas. The large quantity of pearls collected from the pearl beds were exported to Mediterranean countries

The Regional centre of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute Mandapam which was established in 1947 has developed proven technology for the culture of pearls, edible oyster calm mussel and seaweed. Commercial pearl farming has come up near Kurusadai Island and the Tamil Nadu Fisheries Development Corporation Limited maintains it.

3.17 CHANK FISHERY

Ramanathapuram District has distinct chank fishery. Jadhi Chanks are in abundant in the Palk Bay strait and Gulf of Mannar. More than 2000 fishermen are engaged in active chank diving and sacred chank

collected by divers are marketed to West Bengal for making ornaments. This contributes significantly to the development of fisheries.

3.18 PRAWN FARMING

About 160 Prawn farms are operating in the district which follows intensive type of prawn culture. Prawns harvested from these farms are exported to Japan, USA and European countries, which earns sizable foreign exchange for the country.

3.19 FISHERIES INDUSTRIES

In Ramanathapuram district 7 fish processing factories are functioning in Tondi and Mandapam. Prawn, Squids, Cuttle fish, Crabs and fish are processed by fishing and exported to foreign countries. Many small entrepreneurs are involved in fish drying and dried fish is used in poultry and cattle feed manufacturing.