

**REFLECTIONS ON SOCIETY, ECONOMY,  
RELIGION AND CULTURE IN THENI DISTRICT**

**SYNOPSIS**

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## **Synopsis**

This study is mainly focus on “**REFLECTIONS ON SOCIETY, ECONOMY, RELIGION AND CULTURE IN THENI DISTRICT**”. The entire study has the detailed history of Theni district. It provides the historical background and historical significance of Theni district. This topic reflects the socio-economic, religious and cultural conditions of Theni district from ancient times to modern times.

### **Scope of the Study**

The primary aim of this study is to have an estimate of the historical background of Theni district with the multidimensional aspects of the social, economic, religious and cultural prospects through the ages. By that, the importance of the district could be brought to highlight effectively.

### **Objective of the Study**

1. To highlight the historical significance of the early history of Theni.
2. To bring out the establishment of Vijayanagar and Nayak rules in Theni.
3. To point out the British Administration in Theni.
4. To explain the participation of Theni in the Indian freedom struggle.
5. To point out the position of Tourism in this district.
6. To highlight the religious condition of Theni district.
7. To indicate the important Irrigational Projects in the district.
8. To explain the Industrial development of the Theni District.
9. To highlight the socio-economic condition of the people of the district.

### **Hypothesis of the Study**

1. Theni holds an important place in Madurai district.
2. Theni district has multifaceted historical values.
3. Theni helps the people both in agricultural and commercial prospects

4. It is known for various popular temples, churches and mosques.
5. The customs, manners and ceremonies of the people of this district are highly commendable.

### **Area and period of Study**

This study deals with the historical values of Theni district. The geographical features, the early history, Vijayanagar and Nayak rules, British administration, people's involvement in freedom struggle. Religious condition, industrial and irrigational development, tourist location of the Theni district are all described. The reflections of the modern nature in different fields are also taken into account.

### **Methodology and Sources**

The research work entitled **Reflections on Society, Economy, Religion and Culture in Theni District** is the outcome of the historical study undertaken by the adoption of critical, interpretative, analytical and expressive historical research methodology. It is based mainly on the original records preserved in the Tamil Nadu State Archives, Chennai. The source materials for the writing of this thesis are both primary and secondary. The Official records of the Madras Government such as Reports and orders of various government departments, Proceeding of the Board of Revenue and Proceedings of Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council form the primary sources. The published works of some eminent historians and scholars are the secondary sources utilised.

### **Chapterisation**

This study comprises of nine chapters excluding the Introduction and Conclusion. The Introductory chapter narrates a summary of the geographical condition and history of Theni district, Area and Period of study, Objectives of the study and Hypothesis of the study.

The First chapter under the title **Early History of Theni** renders, the historical background of the district. It deals with the pre-history of the use of urns

and burials and involvement of the people in agriculture. This chapter explains the history from **Sangam** period to the invasion of Malikafur in the south.

The Second chapter **Establishment of Madurai Sultanate and Nayak Rule**” deals with the origin of Sultanate of Madurai and the invasion of Vijaynagar over this area. Along with this the Nayak rule, the Poligari system and their administration are discussed.

The Third chapter on **British Administration in Theni** reveals the fact about the rules of Udayars, Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan of Mysore. The final defeat of Tipu Sultan and appointment of British Collectors for revenue administration in the districts are narrated. Apart from this, Zamindari System and important Zamindars of the district are also mentioned in this chapter.

The **Freedom Struggle in Theni** forms the fourth chapter. Since the district participated in the freedom struggle, the freedom fighters and their involvement in the various activities of national movements are highlighted in this chapter.

The fifth chapter on the **Religious Monuments in Theni** deals with the places of religious importance in the district. Since devotion or **Bhakti** is common to all the Indian societies, the religious aspects of the people of this area are rendered due recognition. Theni district is known for numerous temples, churches and mosques. All religions of Theni district have their own forms of worship and respective deities. These aspects are analysed and highlighted in this chapter as a study of the socio, cultural aspect of the people.

**Progress of Tourism** forms the sixth chapter. The pleasant weather, natural scenic attraction, the availability of numerous, joyous and happy tourist centres which offer mental peace, serenity and happiness to the tourists are available in Theni district. The different aspects of tourist spots such as. The employment opportunities, positive and negative impacts of tourism are discussed detail.

**Irrigational Project of Theni** is the seventh chapter. Theni district, mainly agrarian in nature, produces varieties of food as well as commercial crops. Hence irrigation is essential. Irrigational projects are made sufficiently available in the

district. Periyar dam, Vaigai dam, Sothuparai dam, Manjalar dam and other canals and power projects of the district are highlighted in the chapter.

The eighth chapter, **Industrial Development of Theni District**, deals with the multiple types of industries which help the economic development of the district. The availability of resources and raw materials, infrastructural facilities and market potential, both for raw materials and finished products, are discussed. Along with large and small scale industries the imports and exports and the gradual growth of Industries in the district are specifically brought to light as features of employment opportunities and economic stability.

The ninth chapter on “**Socio-Economic Condition**” speaks about the social life of the people, their customs and traditions are highlighted. It explains the general condition of the social setup and common life of the population of Theni district.

Various agrarian and commercial commodities, distributed to the public through of marketing system, are narrated with utmost details. The multifaceted economic activities prevailing in the Theni district are duly explained.

Thus in nine different chapters the history of the Theni district is narrated . The study of **Reflections on Society, Economy, Religion and Culture in Theni District** will be immensely beneficial for having detailed history of that region in a codified and detailed manner. This regionalistic approach will encourage the future scholars to attempt by similar ventures to concentrate on the history of specific areas of different districts with more and updated facts. Above all it will offer the history of the district in a new dimension.

### **Location of Theni**

Theni District lies in the south western part of Tamil Nadu. It was originally a part of the erstwhile Madurai District and it was separated, as a separate district from Madurai district from 1<sup>st</sup> January 1997 onwards. Now it possesses all the administrative units.

Theni District is located between 9 °3 and 10 ° 30' north latitude and between 77 ° 00 and 78 ° 30 of east longitude. The Theni District is surrounded in the north by Dindigul District, on the east by Madurai District on the south by a part of Virudhunagar district and on the west by the Idukki District of Kerala.

The district, situated in the west is exactly 76 kilometers away from Madurai, the Temple city. The District is divided into two revenue divisions. One is at Uthamapalayam and the other one is at Periyakulam created in the year 1991. Theni is the biggest Municipal town of the district.

The District is situated in the natural hilly surroundings and is covered with forests and trees. The word "Theni" is derived from the Tamil word 'Theriar' river which meets the Vaigai, the principal river of Theni, Madurai, Sivaganga and Ramnad districts.

The word "Theni" is based on a personality called Thenappan. It is also believed that Thenoor was changed into Theni. Anyhow it is a always busy area like a bee.

Theni district is known for its historical value. Burial urns and burial remains and chipped stone implements are unearthed from places like Cumbum, Chinnamanur, Bodinayakannur, Maragayyankottai and the Vaigai river beds in this district. They reveal the historical and cultural values of the people of that area. Theni was significant during the Pandya, Vijayanagar and Nayak periods. The British introduced modern measures in administration, economy, education etc. in this area. Theni district is hailed as the **Manchester of South India**, due to the flourishing cotton industries located prominently in Theni.

## **People**

Theni district is inhabited by Hindus, Muslims, Christians and minorities. The population of the town Uthamapalayam mainly comprises of Muslims and Rayappanpatti is the village where majority people are Christians. The Okkaligas, Vellalas, Gualalar, Primalai Kallars, Nayakars, Nadars and Chettiyars also live

there. The downtrodden communities like Chakkiliyars, Vannars, Parayars and Ambattans form the minority of the total population of the district. Though Tamil is the main language Canerese and Telugu are the other languages spoken in Theni district.

## **Occupation**

The success of agriculture depends on the adequate supply of water to fields. Irrigation by the artificial supply of water to the soil assists the production of crops. Agriculture is still the strongest backbone of this area. The people earn their income through cultivation. Paddy, cultivated in large scale, is the staple food of the people. Cholan, groundnut, sesame, sunhamp and cotton are also grown in the dry areas of the district. Tea is cultivated in the hilly areas. Mango, plantain, pomegranate, groves, grapes are grown in the garden lands.

## **History of Theni**

Theni has its own natural divisions. Periyakulam, Uthamapalayam and Aundipatti taluks have thick vegetation. The Cumbum valley is a part of Uthamapalayam taluk. This district is separated from the Kerala state by range of hills which run parallel to the Western Ghats from north to south. So the hill tracts play a significant role. Theni region attained the status of a separate district on 25<sup>th</sup> July 1997.

Theni Municipal town was a firka headquarters. It is a taluk and district headquarter of the newly formed Theni district from 1 January 1997 onwards. In 1940, Theni was a town Panchayat and it became a III grade Municipality from 2 April 1964. This was changed as a II Grade Municipality from 16, February 1970. Finally it was elevated as a I Grade Municipality from the year 1983 onwards.

According to the Census of the year 2011, Uthamapalayam, Periyakulam, Bodianayaknur, Aundipatti and Theni taluks became part and parcel of Theni district. The total area of the district is 32,42.30 sq.km. with the total population of 10,93,950. Among this, there were 5,52,986 male and 5,40,964 female respectively. The maximum temperature in the district is 39°5°C and the minimum is 25°8°C. The average rainfall is 17,369mm. This district consists of two revenue division viz., Uthamapalayam and Theni and five taluks called Uthamalapayam, Periyakulam, Bodinayakanur, Theni and Aundipatti. Besides this there are eight Panchayat Unions, seventeen Firkas, 113 Revenue villages six Municipalities, 23 Town Panchayats and 130 Village Panchayats. There are 1,97,299.00 hectares of wet lands, 1,34,779.88 hectares are dry lands and 98,72,393.5 hectares are **poramboke** waste land.

Among this 1,28,918.95 hectares are cultivable wet lands and 1,00,794.02 hectares are cultivable dry lands. These lands are irrigated by the Ayacuts of the district. Peiryar dam irrigates 811792 hectares, Manjalar dam irrigates 266550 hectares and the P.T.R. Channel irrigates 6994.0 hectares. The total density of population of this district is 357 per sq.kms. There are 4,04,478 male literates and 2,98,117 female literates in the district. Nearly, 3,19,163 male and 2,00,286 female workers are in the district. The total number of cultivators of the district is 53,4954. The agricultural labourers engaged in agricultural field are 2,81,574. Besides agriculture 11,419 household industries are available in Theni district. This district comprises three major natural divisions of distinctive qualities and potentials.

1. Cumbum valley, the fertile region of this district, is known for its scenic beauty, natural vegetations and supply of grains and pulses in plenty along with commercial crops. Sufficient water available from perennial streams of the Western Ghats are beneficial for the maintenance of this district as an economy oriented one. This district



has many tourist centres and is known for its regular floating population.

2. The Periyar water system is beneficial for the irrigation of this area. This has changed the economic prospects of the district.
3. Varahanadhi and Manjalar dams are the other irrigation sources for specific areas throughout the year. They too promote the agrarian status of the district. They promote the economy of the districts.

The availability of all the elements, required for a district have made Theni to be an autonomous district. This paved the way for the attainment of multifaceted developments in various fields such as the availability of natural resources, necessary geographical condition and the hard working nature of the people.

The Vaigai Dam is a centre for providing water for irrigation and also is an entertaining tourist spot and they are contributors to the developed economy of the district. Theni district's economic pursuits centre on agriculture, industrial growth, commercial concerns and trade prospects. Paddy, sugarcane, banana, cotton, coconut, groundnut are the major agricultural products of Theni district. Beyond that large quantity of varieties of fruits and vegetables are also produced. Cotton spinning and weaving mills and sugar mills are functioning in large numbers and they play their role in providing employment opportunities for many to maintain the better standard of living. Andipatty Taluk, known for its prospective handloom industry, contains many hand and power looms. These employment fetching activities and opportunities are essentially significant for the economic affluence of the district. Tea plantation is another significant economic pursuit of Theni district. Tea and other products are transported to other region of India. It has also a profitable foreign market outside India. This too stands for economic prosperity.

The Periyar, Suruliyar and Vaigai projects are the three major Hydro Power Projects available in this district and they generate electricity, to assist the industrial growth, agrarian pursuits and common welfare of Theni and surrounding

areas. Thus Theni district is known for its developed social, political, economic, religious and cultural pursuits.

### **Urn-burials, Lithic monuments**

The Madura country appears to be rich in materials belonging to the pre-historic period. Many traces of paleolithic or neolithic men are found at Madurai district. From Theni district paleolithic remains were collected by Bruce Foote on the southern bank of the river Vaigai. Paleolithic remains too are collected from Ariyur located 12 miles south of Madurai. Neolithic materials were collected by Bruce Foote at Vellatankula, where a ring stone or mace head was found. Burial urn sites are available in several places near Madurai. The Pyri form eastern jars were unearthed in the village of Anuppanadi two miles south east of Madurai city. They all testify to the archaic nature of the area.

Theni was under the control of the Pandya rulers of the first Pandyan empire and Madurai Sulatanate.

### **Rebellion of Poligars**

While the poligars of several **palayams** withheld the payment of tribute the Collector assumed power over the defaulted **palayams** to recover the balance of rent. The arrear of the revenue was collected with the help of the Company's sepoys. The Collector frequently had to request the government to provide Company's sepoys to collect the arrears from the poligars. It aggravated the schisms between poligars and the government. The poligar of Bodinayakanur prevented the entry of the Collector to assess the **palayam** by employing his armed peons. But the Company's sepoys acted swiftly and opened fire as a defensive measure. The poligar of Vadagarai sent 400 armed men to assist the Bodinayakanur Poligar to wage a war against the British. But it did not succeed.

### **Bodinayakanur Zamindari**

Bodinayakanur, one of the ancient zamindaries in the Madurai District, covered an area of 302 square kilometers. It was bounded on the north by the

Palani Hills, on the west by the Travancore state Hills and on the other two sides by government villages in the erstwhile Periyakulam taluk. The name of the original founder was Chakku Nayak.

### **Erasakkanayakkanur Zamindari**

The Zamindari of Erasakkanayakkanur was on the south-eastern part of the Periyakulam Taluk bounded on both sides by Cumbum Valley and Gantamanayakkanur Zamindari.

### **Gantamanayakkanur Zamindari**

Gantamanayakkanur Zamindari, situated to the east of Cumbum Valley in the Periyakulam taluk, covered an area of 291 square kilometers. It was bounded on the north and west by government villages and on the south and on the greater portion of the east bay hills which separated it from the Tinnevely district, It was one of the palayams in Dindigul having a large area of barren lands. Number of inhabitants were employed as military peons of the poligars.

### **Thevaram Zamindari**

Thevaram, one of the principal villages of the Zamindari was located eighty-five kilometers south-west of Dindigul. It comprised of thirty-eight square kilometers in extent which Tipu Sultan had sequestered from Bomma Nayak, the poligar of the **palayam**.

### **Dodappanayakkanur Zamindari**

As one of the **palayams** of Madurai district, Dodappanayakkanur was at the entrance of Andipatty pass. This small Zamindari covered only 15 sq.kms. In the year 1849, Dodappanayakkanur became the Zamindari and the Zamindar died in 1877.

### **Madurai in Indian Nationalism**

Theni, a part of Madurai region, played a vital role in the Indian freedom struggle. The political life of the people of the Theni was an enhanced one due to

their participation in the freedom struggle. Their political nature too favoured their involvement in political activities.

## **Temple**

The temple is essentially a religious vehicle built for the fulfillment of the spiritual desires of the people. Although primarily the temple was centre of worship, it had wider socio-cultural dimension in India particularly in Tamil Nadu. It was the centre of art and architecture and played a remarkable role in the socio-economic life of the people. As a sacred and pious centre it inculcates piety and devotion in the minds of the devotees.

Temples assist the religious life of the people. The temples of Theni district reveal the cultural development of its people for the past 700 years. Kalatheeswara-Gnanamman Temple in Uthamapalayam, Veerapandi Goumariamman temple, Kuchanur Saneesvarar temple, Chiannamanur Sivakami Amman temple, Kannagi Temple, Gudalur, Kudalalagiya Perumal Temple, Nandagopal Swamy temple, Kamaraya Perumal and the Kasi Viswanatha Temple in Cumbum, Suruli Vellappar Temple are the renowned temples of Theni district. They are known for their historic as well as cultural significance.

Theni district has numerous Siva and Vaishnu temples along with the abodes of numerous minor, local and folk deities. The temples are the standing monuments of art and architecture as well as the revelations of the religious sentiments and toleration of the devotees. They stand as illustrations for estimating the conditions of Saivism, Vaishnavism as well as folk worship. They are attractive captivating features due to their architectural and sculptural values. Every temple in this region has its own sanctity, rituals, festivals in attracting the devotees to visit them and to witness the daily rituals and **poojas** and monthly and annual festivals arranged on the basis of asterisms.

The Avinasiyappar Siva temple is a suitable example for the spread of Saivism in this region. This old temple testifies to the unity between Saivism and Vaishnavism because in this Siva temple there are sculptures of Venugopalan,

Narasimha and panel of Vali vs Sugreevan war. An inscription available at the entrance of the temple refers to the donation offered by one Jaggayya Nayaka for the regular and uninterrupted conduct of daily rituals. Such aspects throw light on the religious bent of mind of the people of Theni district who adopt an unison between Siva and Vishnu.

### **Kaumariamman Temple : Vira Pandi**

The renowned Kaumariamman Temple at Virapandi largely captivates the attention of the devotees of different regions. Jatavarman Vira Pandya (1478 A.D. – 1506 A.D.) constructed this temple.

### **Mavoothu Velappar Temple : Theppampatti**

At Theppampatti near Theni, there is the Murugan shrine in the name of **Mavoothu Velappar**. This temple was constructed by the tribal people of the nearby western ghats.

### **Moongilanai Kamatchi Amman : Devadanapatti**

Mungilanai Kamatchi Amman temple at Devadanapatti is yet another popular and significant temple equal to that of Kamatchi Amman temple of Kanchipuram. The place located in the north of Devadanapatti is called as **Kanchana Aranyampatti**.

### **Kanniswara mudayar Temple : Virapandi**

The Kanniswaramudayar temple is located at Virapandi on the southern banks of the river Mullai. This non-agamic temple was constructed by Vira Pandya (1473 and 1506 A.D.) Since Vira Pandya got back his lost eye sight due to the grace of the deity of the place he built this temple. So the primary deity is called **Kan Eswarmudayar**.

### **Tourism in Theni District**

Tamil Nadu has all opportunities for tourism. Tourism helps an all round development for the state. The scenario of tourism in Tamil Nadu after

independence is clear, even official records on it are a few and scanty. Theni district historically important and naturally endowed with pleasing tourist spots is one of the prominent centre of Tourism in Tamil Nadu. Rustic ambience, hospitality of the local people and their pastoral way of life make the destinations in Theni district a Tourism dream. It is a tourist paradise because of its historic and cultural importance.

The district is abundant in natural beauty. It is the home of several historical towns viz., Periyakulam, Bodinayakanur, Cumbum, Uthamapalayam, Kombai, Gudalur, Chinnamanur and Thevaram. Theni district is diversified by several range of hills which run parallel to western ghats from north to south and separate it from the neighbouring Kerala state.

Theni is well connected with almost major neighbouring cities. It is situated on the main route for the tourist bound from Madurai to Cochin via Bodinayakanur and Munnar and Madurai to Thekkadai wild life sanctuary. Theni is situated 498 km from Chennai 87 km from the hill station, Kodaikanal, 90 km from Munnar in Kerala and 76 km from the historical city Madurai. The district is well connected by roads with major cities in the state and neighbouring state Kerala. The charming tourist destination Theni is well connected to Chennai by Roadways, Airways, Railways. The trip to Theni is so easy and effortless. The nearest airport to reach in Theni is situated just 86 km away from Theni city centre.

Theni district welcomes the tourists throughout the year and offers feast to their eyes. In the plain the temperature ranges from 13°C to 39.5°C. In the hills the temperature varies from 4.5°C to 25°C. The district is known for its salubrious climate, hills and lakes. Theni has tropical hot and humid climate almost throughout the year. The south west monsoon reduces the temperature of the Cumbum valley and makes the place pleasant. At that time cool breeze from the western ghats blows and gives a soothing sensation to the mind and body. It has a pleasant climate during the period of the south-west monsoon.

The development of Periyar sanctuary in different periods.

- 1933 - SCH Robinson made the first Game Wander
- 1934 - Formation of Nellikkampatti Game sanctuary
- 1950 - Consolidation of Periyar as a Wild life sanctuary
- 1978 - Declaration of Periyar as a 'Tiger'.
- 1982 - Preliminary notification of the Core area as a National Parks.
- 1991 - The sanctuary brought under 'Periyar Elephant'.
- 1996 - India Eco-Development Project Launched
- 2001 - Reorganized as two divisions Periyar East and Periyar West

### **Hill Adventure Tourism in Theni**

According to the US based Adventure Travels Trade Association, adventure travel has three components i.e., a physical activity, a cultural exchanges or interaction and engagement with nature. Adventure tourism aims at young adults and students and a regular traveller who makes variety and adventure as routine tours may not generate interest any more for some time. This type of trips taken by people with a view to playing golf, skating in the mountains of hiking fall within this category. The Theni district is thus noted for hilly and adventure tourism.

### **Eco Tourism in Theni District**

Eco Tourism is entirely a new approach in Tourism. The international Ecotourism Society (TIES) in the year 1990 defined ecotourism as "Responsible travel to nature areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people is named as **Eco-Tourism**. The term Eco-tourism is derived from two words '**Eco system and Tourism**'

### **Source of Irrigation**

The various sources of irrigation are rivers, reservoirs, tanks and canals. The great perennial rivers that flow across the peninsula from the Western ghats are of use, especially in the Deltas. The flood water of the rivers were hardly utilised till

the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Dam was constructed across the river and the water led off to the adjacent country. In Madurai and Dindigul, the chief sources of water supply were the numerous channels from rivers and streams. Where irrigation by rivers was not feasible, tanks and reservoirs constituted the mainstay of the ryot. In Madura there were two large tanks, i.e., the Rasingamangalam tanks which was nine miles long and one to two miles broad and the Periyakulam tank, seven miles in length. The least important means of irrigation were wells, by which more than one fourth of the total irrigation areas depended.

In December 1843 extraordinary flood occurred in the Vaigai and breached many tanks. In December flood ran to Kamudi, washed away the wall of temple and a thousand yards of the big embankment there and breached almost every tank in that area. In the year 1804 an unusually high flood in the Vaigai topped the road to west of Madurai and flowed into the Anupanadi Channel.

Under such circumstances, the people had no other outlet except to look for substantial help from the government. Hence, the British Government in order to control famine and flood and to improve the economic condition of the people, undertook new irrigation projects in the district. So, the Government decided to build the Periyar Dam in the area. After the completion of the Periyar project, it was found that 8500 million Cubic feet of water was wasted into the Arabian sea every year. For utilising the surplus water, number of new projects were launched in the district. One such minor project investigated was the Vaigai project. Sothuparai Dam and Manjalar Dam are other some minor projects. Apart from various Tanks canals, tube wells are utilised for agricultural purpose in the district.

### **Industry:**

Cotton is extensively grown in Uthamapalayam, Bodi and Aundipatty taluks. Aundipatty, T.Subbulapuram and Theni are main centers for handloom and power loom industries in this district. A few spinning mills and many power loom industries are available in this district. Cardamom is grown in an area of 2300 h.a. in the Cumbum belt. Cardamom oil is widely used in the preparation of



beverages, confectionary bakery, soap powders, saucers etc. oleoresins present in cardamom could be suitably contracted and there is good internal as well as external demand.

As the raw materials are available in plenty in this district various types of industries have originated. Textile industries, spinning mills, sugar industry, ginning factories oil and chamber brick units and number of small scale industries are originated in the area. The Industrial development rapidly grew from the year 1964 onwards.

### **Ist Stage ( 1965-1966)**

There were 83 factories within municipal limits during the year 1965-66 in the district.

1	Rice Mills	17
2	Oil mills	25
3	Ginning Factories	7
4	Flour Mills	2
5	Saw Mills	2
6	Others	30
	Total	83

### **IInd Stage (1997-1998)**

As per the year 1997-1998 there are 124 factories in Theni District.

1	Rice Mills and Oil mills	53
2	Cotton Mills	20
3	Flour Factories	12
4	Saw Mills	3
5	Spinning Mills	2
6	Others	34
	Total	124

### **III<sup>rd</sup> stage (2001-2008)**

At the present stage, there are a number of large, small and medium scale industries in Theni district. Due to this reason the industries were mentioned in

the form . As per 2001 annual report of Theni district the following were the statistical data of industries.

1	No. of working factories ( Registered )	301
2	Large Scale Industries	18
3	Small Scale Industries	582
4	Medium Scale Industries	12
5	Coffee Industries	265

As per the Annual report of 2015-2016 the present industrial scenario of Theni district is mentioned in following table.

### **Family**

The people of Theni area acknowledge that the rise and fall and ups and downs in the society mostly centered on the qualities, attitudes and outlooks of the family.

### **Customs and Traditions**

The families call the eldest male child of the family by the names of either the paternal grandfather or great grandfather. This common traditional form emerged on account of the patriarchal family system. The leadership of the family is maintained by the father and in his absence by the eldest male member. Rarely matrilineal descendency is adopted.

All the married members are treated as a separate **thalaikkattu**, are given proper recognition and respect in the community. Every **talaikkattu** is a part and parcel of the **kulam** or **kuttam** (clan). The members of the same group are known as **Pangaligal**. To maintain unity and solidarity and to achieve a facilitated life the above mentioned approved facts are utilised. This common feature is applicable to all the communities of the Theni district. There are differences among them on the basis of birth, place of living, their associations, customs, traditions, occupations,

trade and commerce. In the same way there are 24 divisions among Chettiyars and they call themselves as people of **24 manai Telugu Chettiyars**. So the social life, in general, in the Theni district is a traditional one.

## **Education**

With regard to education, as an essential feature for the all round development of body, mind and the soul, Theni district devotes much attention to impart sound knowledge of high calibre to its youths. As an illustrative measure the educational condition during the period between 2004-2005 could be taken into account. In the literacy ratio of 71.88% educated males form 81.88% and female 61.99%. The list of schools of different categories functioning in Theni district is given below with the details about the staff as obtained from the D.E.O's office, on 12, July 2014 Theni.

## **Self-Help Groups in Theni District**

The Non Government Organizations (NGOs) are the institutions started for the welfare or as a service to the society. They are formed by individuals or a group of individuals or by some institutions. They generally get registered themselves under the Indian Trust Act, 1886 or Societies Registration Act, 1975.

The NGOs are familiar with an area in which they render service to the poor people. They choose the poorest of the poor and the most needy for their economic upliftment. NGOs role in the promotion, nurturing, stabilizing and ultimately in facilitating the selfhelp groups in their linkage with the formal banking system which is crucial. A good number of NGOs have been catalysts for self help groups.

## **Conclusion:**

The study **Reflection on Society Culture, Economy and Religion in Theni District**, reveals that it has many historic values. From the ancient period to till date it has witnessed many transitions and transformations. The Pandyas, the Nayaks and the Europeans have contributed their best in promoting the region. The

Geographical setting has assisted its materialistic standard, social welfare and economic pursuits. The prosperous soil and the flow of rivers have enriched its economic standards. Its population comprises Hindus, Muslims, Christians and other minority groups. So, they have caused the availability of multiple types of occupations in varieties such as agriculture and trade and commerce. They, in turn, have expanded their contacts with the other parts of Tamil Nadu as well as the Indian sub-continent.