

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH SETTING AND PROFILE

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Coimbatore City is similar to any other colonial city with a cultural history, transitional through alien colonial rule. It is typical of South Asian cities, characterised by an old nucleus, dormant through several decades of traditional influence and sudden expansion all around once the colonial industrial impetus had taken shape. The name Coimbatore has originated from the earlier place name "Kovanpatti". In Tamil, 'patti' refers to a small hamlet. Early hamlets in this area were occupied by 'Irula tribes' and 'Kovanpatti' was among such hamlets. This particular hamlet received its name from the Irula Chieftain, 'Kovan', i.e., Kovanpatti. When the Chola kings colonized this village, they renovated the old temple, rebuilt the town, added a fort and named the whole settlement 'Kovanputhur' (puthur = new town). Gradually the Tamil name 'Koyamputtur' a corrupted form of the old word 'Kovanputhur' came to be used. During the British period, it was officially recorded as 'Coimbatore' owing to their difficulty in pronunciation and transliteration from Tamil into English script.

This new village was located at the zone of contact of cultivated land along the valley of the Noyyal river and the forest area along the foothills of Western Ghats. Historical records suggest that the main growth of Coimbatore was due to extensive paddy cultivation and coconut growing on the fertile flood plain of the river Noyyal and on other land irrigated from anicuts and tanks around the town. The ancient Chola Kings built a fort just outside the forest village and constructed a temple and a Pettai (market town) to the northeast of the tribal hamlet. This area is square in nature, with temple as the nucleus, corresponds with the present square formed by Raja Street, Oppanakara Street, Vaisiyal Street and Karuppanna Gowder Street. Hoysalas succeeded Cholas from Mysore at the end of the thirteenth century that paved the way for Kannada speaking people to settle down in the open space to the north and east of the old Pettai. Later, the fort appears to have come under the control of the Vijayanagar Empire. When Vijayanagar Empire changed its official language from Kannada to Telugu, groups of Telugu people flooded Coimbatore.

Prominent present day groups such as Devangas, Telugu Brahmins, Naickers and Naidus trace their origin in the city to this event and settled in this area as small traders or weavers. The Muslim invasion during the period of Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan resulted in the settlement of Muslims in Kattoor and adjoining areas. Big mosques were built in the open space between the fort and Pettai. In the Carnatic wars, Coimbatore was devastated, deserted and reduced to the condition of a small village. It came under British control at the end of the fourth Mysore war in 1799 A.D.

The city which had been reduced to little more than a village, witnessed a remarkable revival after the entry of the British, especially with its designation as district headquarters (1808 A.D.). Office buildings, courts, hospital and other buildings were constructed in the fort area to serve the needs of the district headquarters. Besides opening up the new offices like the Collector's office, courts, hospital and other buildings, the area came to be settled by the British officers and other office staff. The Race Course was laid in 1810 and bungalows were constructed for the British officers and planters owning estates in the Nilgiris and Anaimalais. Churches and Missionary establishments and schools were set up during this period. Some of the important buildings put up during this period are Union High School - 1813, Collector's Office - 1862, Hospital - 1850, Central Jail - 1862 and Municipal Office - 1865. This led to expansion of the city to the east and north and filling up of the open space around the old fort. The fort lost its importance. Coimbatore became an administrative centre for the district.

The railway line from Podanur to Mettupalayam passed through Coimbatore town in 1872 and a railway station was built on the western side of the railway track. On the eastern side there were few large bungalows around the Race Course. The railway line provided ease of access to the industries and the first cotton mill was set up in 1881 close to the railway line. The development of industries and the increase in population of the town led to the preparation of plans for extensions of the town. Rathna Sabhapathy Puram (R.S.Puram), Ramnagar and Gandhipuram were planned during this period. These areas have well laid out streets with large plots having bungalow type houses.

The supply of electricity to Coimbatore from the Pykara hydel power station in Nilgiris in 1932 resulted in the growth of a large number of textile mills and other industries. It also led to the dispersal of industries to the suburbs and rural areas. The Siruvani water supply scheme was completed in 1934 and this provided a dependable source of good potable water to the residents of the town. Even landlords from the neighbouring villages migrated to the town and settled down in view of the better water supply, electricity, education, medical and other facilities in the town. With the introduction of city bus service, the lateral spread of the town along the major roads speeded up. New suburbs came into existence along the roads radiating from the town such as Mettupalayam Road and Sathyamangalam Road to the north and Avanashi Road and Tiruchi Road to the east. The town developed a star like pattern. The earlier extensions like R.S.Puram, Ramnagar and Gandhipuram were fully built up during this period. New educational institutions, hospitals and other public services were established in these extensions to meet the growing needs of the people.

The Coimbatore town witnessed vertical expansion both for residential and non-residential purposes. Old bungalow type houses were demolished and multistoried structures were built. The relative importance of the old shopping centers in the core of the town declined. This led to building activity in the old core resulting in the demolition of the old buildings and the construction of new buildings with better facilities. There was intense building activity leading to the construction of hotels, offices, shops and other establishments in the town. The old residential areas like R.S.Puram, Ramnagar and Gandhipuram become commercial shopping centres. This led to the development of new residential areas such as Saibaba Colony, Ramalinga nagar, Sivannandha Colony. The new colonies thus developed were provided with adequate bus transport facilities and roads were improved. The town was upgraded into a Corporation and some of the extended areas were incorporated in it.

Demographic Changes

The census of the Coimbatore urban agglomeration crossed the one million mark during the last decade. It had emerged as the third largest in the state after Chennai and Madurai. However, until the early part of the present century, Coimbatore was not among the major cities of the state. It has received very little mention in ancient, medieval, or early modern history. In 1872, Coimbatore was lowly placed, being eleventh among the cities of the state and had a population of only a little over thirty five thousand. This situation continued with only minor changes up to 1911. Most of the cities experienced moderate gains up to 1901, but the 1911 and 1921 census showed decline in the population of some cities, mainly due to high mortality caused by epidemics and evacuations from plague affected cities. A steady population increase can be said to have begun in 1921, a time by which Coimbatore had risen to the fourth rank, below Chennai, Madurai and Tiruchi. This position was generally held and by 1961 it had acquired the third rank, pushing Tiruchi to the fourth place. In absolute terms, the population of Coimbatore in 1991 was more than 15 times of what it was at the beginning of the century. None of the other major cities has experienced growth anywhere near it.

There was some decline in population size during 1901-11, for reasons given above but subsequently this was made up, and the growth during the next two decades was very rapid. The growth of textile industry was contributed in part by the boycott of foreign goods and convenient location. During 1961-71 the population increase was relatively low. This was followed by a decade of very high growth. In the urban agglomeration area, population growth has been rapid until 1971, but slow since then. In some of the decades, 1931-41 and 1961-71, population growth in the agglomeration was much higher than that in the city, indicating that surrounding towns and villages grew much rapidly. This is presumably because some of the industrial units were located outside the city limits, and became the foci of growth.

The census figures give an impression of an extremely rapid population growth in Coimbatore during 1971-81. Coimbatore had a municipality, which was upgraded to a municipal corporation by 1981. In the process, the industrial city of Singanallur as well as some smaller towns and villages were merged with Coimbatore. The 1971 census figures of 356368 do not include populations of these areas, but the 1981 population (704514) naturally does. The areas merged with Coimbatore had a population of 208925 in 1971, thus the 1971 population total corresponding to 1981 corporation was 565293 (356368 + 208925). Increase in population during 1971-81 then works out to 24.56 per cent and during 1981-91 to 21.12 per cent.

Urban Morphology

The Coimbatore city is typical of South Asian cities, characterised by an old nucleus, dormant through several decades of traditional influence and sudden expansion all around once the colonial industrial impetus had taken shape. Coimbatore too has the mixed morphology of the traditional and modern. The traditional set up that probably existed till 1799 had to give way to the colonial set up after the advent of the British. The 2000 houses with a population of 20000 in the early 19th century town had its core only in the present southwestern part of the city. This core gradually spread towards north, north-east, west and south-east to form a greater CBA (Central Business Area). One can generally say that the south and south-western part of the city - consisting the present CBA and its fringe areas - formed the old Coimbatore town during the 18th and 19th centuries. As mentioned earlier, an old fort (built during the 8th century) existed near the main intersection of north-south and east-west highways in the southern part of the city. The old town is situated north-west of the fort. Irrigation tanks are found to the south and west of the old town. It has a rectangular pattern of streets with narrow lanes branching from the main street. The first cotton mill steamed off in 1888, north of the old town and adjacent to the railway line. Soon many more mills were established in this area called Kattoor. It is a predominantly

low-income residential area. Rapid commercialization has now overtaken this area and at present this area lies between the main Central Business Area and the Secondary Business Area called Gandhipuram.

As the population increased in response to the development of industries and trade; new residential colonies were developed in R.S.Puram, Ram Nagar, Gandhipuram and Tatabad/Sivanandha colony - all lying to the north of the Agricultural University, Sugarcane Research Institute, Forest College and Government College of Technology. But after 1960, new residential areas like Sai Baba Colony and Ramalinganagar have sprung up towards the north-west of the old town, west of Mettupalayam Road. The new residential areas of the last 20 years have well laid out roads, streets and houses surrounded by open space. Other residential colonies have been established along Avanishi Road, Trichy Road, Mysore Road, Thadagam Road, Perur Road and Maruthamalai Road.

The residential land use of the city is along the pattern common to most towns in Tamil Nadu - high densities in the older parts and low densities in the many planned developing areas. In Coimbatore the new areas include Ram Nagar, R.S.Puram, Race Course and Sai Baba Colony.

The average residential density in the Coimbatore city is 68.52 per cent. This is more than the average urban residential density of Tamil Nadu which is 55 to 65 per cent. The core of the city has a density of 250 houses per hectare, against the general city average of 25 houses per hectare in residential areas. According to the 1985 land use break up, 68.5 per cent of the built up area is under residential land use against 54.9 per cent in 1961 (Corporation of Coimbatore 1990). The residential spread of the city overlaps the fringe areas. The vertical housing (apartments), has begun to replace the horizontal housing scheme, and well planned residential areas like R.S.Puram, Sai Baba Colony and Race Course have multi-storeyed apartments for the upper middle and middle class population.

The south, south-west, south-east, north-eastern parts of the city comprise of the poor and working class; whereas the west north-west and old European areas in the central eastern parts of the city account for the upper middle class and affluent sections of population.

There was a clear spurt in the industrial growth during 1941-51 and 1956-60. The textile industry, which formed the backbone of Coimbatore's economy, was replaced by light and medium engineering industries. The pump set industry, despite ups and downs, is still a force to reckon with. Changes are obvious in pattern of industrialisation from the early forties to the late seventies and eighties. Despite the energy constraints caused particularly by shortage of coke, the industry has moved ahead. The large industries like textile mills, textile machinery, transport equipment, foundry, manufacturing/engineering industries produce finished goods in the medium and small-scale sector. In 1961, the proportion of industrial land use to the total development land was 5.5 per cent. This increased to 7.87 per cent during 1981.

Textile mills are generally located within the city limits, and three of them are found very close to the CBD, adjacent to the flyover on Avinashi Road. The other textile mills and factories are located along Trichy Road and major industrial areas found in the eastern parts of the city like Uppilipalayam and Peelamedu. The south-eastern parts of the city like Singanallur, Ramanathapuram and Ondipudhur also account for a number of textile mills and factories. The northern parts of the city like Ganapathy, Maniakaranpalayam; north-eastern parts like Avarampalayam; and interior northern parts like Pappanaickenplayam and Sidhapudur have number of medium and light industries specialising in monoblock, jet and submersible pump sets. The engineering units both light and heavy are located along Mettupalayam Road, Sathy Road and Trichy Road. The urban region includes a number of industrial estates on Madurai Road and Palghat Road.

The CBD (Central Business District) covers a large area in big cities with sub-areas in the form of core, inner belt and outer belt. According to this pattern the Vysial Street, Rangai Gowder Street, Raja Street and Thomas Street form the core with Oppanakara Street, Big Bazaar Street, Variety Hall Road and N.H.Road forming the inner belt; and Sukrawarpet, Mettupalayam Road, Mill Road, State Bank Road and Jail Road form the outer belt. The core of the old town, near the fort has the Central Business District of Coimbatore. The old houses here have been converted into retail commercial outlets, as the communities of these areas had been wholesale and retail traders for generations. This part of the city (south and south-west) has narrow streets with closely built tiled houses - Rangai Gowder Street, Raja Street, Karupa Gowder Street, Vysial Street, Oppanakara Street, Thomas Street, Big Bazaar Street and Edayar Street. These areas specialize in wholesale and retail trade and forwarding and clearing business. Today most of the rich formal retailers have shifted their residences out of these congested streets to high and middle income residential areas like R.S.Puram, Sai Baba Colony and Sivanandha Colony. But the lower middle class retailers and the poor still remain in Central Business Area of Coimbatore city.

The CBD is surrounded by the transitional zone comprising godowns, printing press and low class residential houses. This pattern is also found on Vysial Street corner, Gandhipark and the eastern end of the Big Bazaar Street. On the northern fringe in Sukrawarpet wholesale handlooms cloth shops are well established. During 1961-91, the CBD of the city extended from Sukrawarpet to the Mettupalayam Road in the north, to Gandhipark in the west, to the railway underbridge in the east and to Ukkadam in the south. The flyover in the north-east separates it from the predominantly labour area of Kattoor. Well developed new residential areas - R.S. Puram, Sai Baba Colony in the west; and Gandhipuram, Tatabad/Sivanandha Colony in the north have developed their own secondary business areas. The Cross Cut Road in Gandhipuram, D.B.Road in R.S.Puram and Mettupalayam Road in North Coimbatore are some of the arterials with a high level of

commercial land use. Banks and commercial ventures of the CBA have opened branches in these secondary business areas. Unlike the CBA these have services shops - grocery, saloon, laundry, cycle repairs etc. People from the urban fringe prefer these areas to the crowded CBA.

Profile of the Respondents

In the earlier section special, physical and social structural features of the research setting have been highlighted. As specified earlier, the specialties and commonalties of the residential areas will help in analysing the housing pattern and neighbourhood relationships as the function of its structural correlates. While the earlier section has drawn its support from the secondary data, this section is largely based upon the primary data collected through interview schedule. A description of the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents facilitates understanding the housing pattern and neighbourhood relationships. This section outlines the social background and personal characteristics of the respondents in the study.

The age of the respondents in the present study ranges between 25 years and 72 years. For the analytical purpose the age is categorised into four groups namely up to 30 years, 31-40, 41-50 and above 50 years. The table depicts that one fifth (21.25 per cent) of the respondents are in the age group up to 30 years, one fourth (24.75 per cent) are in the age group of 31-40 years, another one fourth (25.25 per cent) are in the age group of 41-50 years and the remaining 28.750 per cent of the respondents are in the age group of above 50 years. The mean age of the respondents is 42.51 years. In the study 55.50 per cent of the respondents are males and the remaining 44.50 per cent are females. Among them majority (90.50 per cent) of the respondents are married while 8.50 per cent are widow/widower and only 1.00 per cent is separated.

The religious break-up of the sample shows that a majority (83.50 per cent) of the respondents are Hindus while the remaining 16.50 per cent are Muslims and Christians. The distribution of respondents in terms of different caste groupings shows that above half (56.00 per cent) of the respondents belong to Backward Community, one third (33.50 per cent) belong to Forward Community and a small proportion (7.25 per cent) belong to Schedule Caste Community. Among the total respondents 3.25 per cent of them were not interested to spell out their caste groupings. The mother tongue of the respondents depicts that 70.50 per cent of the respondents' mother tongue is Tamil, 19.25 per cent mother tongue is Telugu, 4.75 per cent Malayalam, 1.75 per cent Kannadam and the rest 3.75 per cent of the respondents belong to Hindi, Urudhu and Marathi lingual groups.

Educational status of the respondents is measured by years of schooling. The distribution depicts that 36.50 per cent of the respondents have completed 15 years of schooling, 28.25 per cent have completed 16 to 22 years, 16.25 per cent have completed 10 years, 13.25 per cent have completed 11 to 14 years and the remaining 5.75 per cent of the respondents have less than 10 years of schooling. The mean years of schooling is 14.07. The occupational categories of the sample distribution shows that 8.00 per cent of the respondents are professionals, 36.50 per cent are administrative officials, 28.75 per cent are clerks and office assistants, 15.50 per cent are traders and businessmen and 6.50 per cent of respondents are skilled or unskilled workers. It also depicts that 19 respondents in the study sample are unemployed. The income distribution shows that more than half (55.75 per cent) of the respondent's household income ranges between Rs.5001 and Rs.10000 per month, 18.00 per cent have income between Rs.10001 and Rs.15000, 15.00 per cent of them have income up to Rs.5000, 7.75 per cent have income between Rs.15001 and Rs.20000 and only 3.50 per cent of the respondents have income of more than Rs.20000 per month. The average household income of the respondents is 9807.50 per month. The sample distribution shows that nearly three fourths (73.00 per cent) of the respondents live in nuclear families and a little above one fourth (27.00 per cent) live in joint family.

Housing has emerged as one of the most important felt needs of the country, perhaps next only to food. With increase in population and extension of urban areas, the number of occupied residential houses increased and the number of households increased. Nature of house shows that two third (60.75 per cent) of the respondents live in their own house while the remaining one third (39.25 per cent) live in rented house. The distribution of the sample by the size of family depicts that urban families irrespective of their location in the class structure tend to limit themselves to 4 or 5 members, consisting of the husband, wife and 2 to 3 children generally. The average family size is 3.84. The table (4.1) shows that 226 (56.50 per cent) respondents are having children below 18 years. Among them a majority of the respondents have one or two children (96.02 per cent) and the average number of children below 18 years is 1.41. Similarly 169 (42.25 per cent) respondents are having children above 18 years and majority (81.07 per cent) of them have one or two children. The average number of children above 18 years is 1.94.

It is evident from the table (4.1) that a greater proportion (66.25 per cent) of the respondents are natives while 33.75 per cent of the respondents are in-migrants. The distribution of the sample population of the neighbourhoods by the length of stay in the present residence shows that 46.00 per cent residents have been living in the residence for up to 10 years, nearly one fourth (24.75 per cent) are living for 11 to 20 years, 18.00 per cent for 21 to 30 years and the remaining 11.25 per cent of the respondents are living for more than 30 years. The respondents' mean years of stay in the present residence is 16.26.

Table No. 4.1. Personal Profile of the Respondents

Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Age: (in years)		
Up to 30	85	21.25
30-40	99	24.75
40-50	101	25.25
above 50	115	28.75
Mean	42.51	
S.D.	12.25	
Sex:		
Male	222	55.50
Female	178	44.50
Marital Status:		
Married	362	90.50
Widow/Widower	34	8.50
Separated	4	1.00
Religion:		
Hindu	334	83.50
Non-Hindu	66	16.50
Caste:		
OC	134	33.50
BC	224	56.00
SC/ST	29	7.25
Not Available	13	3.25
Mother tongue:		
Tamil	282	70.50
Telugu	77	19.25
Malayalam	19	4.75
Kannadam	7	1.75
Others	15	3.75
Educational Status: (in years)		

Up to 9	23	5.75
10	65	16.25
11-14	53	13.25
15	146	36.50
above 15	113	28.25
Mean	14.07	
S.D.	3.13	
Occupation:		
Professionals	32	8.00
Administrative Officials	146	36.50
Business	62	15.50
Clerk	115	28.75
Skilled or unskilled workers	26	6.50
Housewife	19	4.75
Family Income:		
Up to 5000	60	15.00
5001-10000	223	55.75
10001-15000	72	18.00
15001-20000	31	7.75
above 20000	14	3.50
Mean	9807.50	
S.D.	4600.64	
Type of family:		
Nuclear	292	73.00
Joint	108	27.00
Family Size:		
Up to 3	150	37.50
4 to 5	229	57.25
above 5	21	5.25
Mean	3.84	
S.D.	0.96	

Presence of children below 18 years: (N=226)		
One	143	63.27
Two	74	32.75
Three	9	3.98
Mean	1.41	
S.D.	0.57	
Presence of children above 18 years: (N=169)		
One	68	40.24
Two	69	40.83
Three	14	8.28
Four	11	6.51
Five	7	4.14
Mean	1.94	
S.D.	1.06	
Nature of House:		
Own	243	60.75
Rented	157	39.25
Migratory Status:		
Natives	265	66.25
Migrants	135	33.75
Length of Residence: (in years)		
Up to 10	184	46.00
11 – 20	99	24.75
21 – 30	72	18.00
above 30	45	11.25
Mean	16.26	
S.D.	13.17	
Savings:(in rupees) (N = 224)		
Up to 50000	167	74.55
50001 to 100000	48	21.43
Above 100000	9	4.02
Mean	59129.46	
S.D.	69995.31	

Debts:(in rupees) (N = 102)		
Up to 50000	63	61.76
50001 to 100000	13	12.75
Above 100000	26	25.49
Mean	149843.14	
S.D.	249277.99	

The table (4.1) depicts that in the sample distribution more than half of the respondents (56.00 per cent) have savings in Banks, Chit Funds, Post Offices, Private Institutions, etc. Among them nearly three-fourths (74.55 per cent) have up to Rs. 50,000, a little over one fifth (21.43 per cent) have Rs. 50,001 to Rs. 100,000 while a small proportion (4.02 per cent) of the respondents have more than Rs. 100,000 as savings. The mean amount of saving is Rs. 59129.46. The purpose of savings varies among respondents for future child related expenses, maintenance of the family, need in case of emergency, general savings, personal expenditure, etc. With regard to debts, only one fourth (25.50 per cent) of the respondents have debts to Banks, chit funds, friends, neighbours, siblings, etc. Among them nearly one fourth (25.49 per cent) of the respondents have debts more than Rs. 100,000, 61.76 per cent have up to Rs. 50,000 while the remaining 12.75 per cent have Rs. 50,001 to Rs. 100,000. The mean amount of debts of the respondents is Rs. 149843.14. The reason for debts varies from construction, maintenance and purchasing of house, medical expenses, starting business, education and marriage of children and to clear earlier debts.

To sum up, the respondents in the study sample are wide spread in all age groups ranging between 25 years and 72 years and the mean age of the respondents is 42.51. More than half of them are males and almost all respondents are married. Majority of them are Hindus and over half of them belong to Backward community. A greater proportion of respondents have Tamil as their mother tongue and nearly two thirds are graduates with atleast fifteen years of education. Considerable proportions are

Administrative Officials, clerks and businessmen. About one half have monthly family income ranging between Rs. 5001 to Rs. 10,000 and the mean family income is Rs. 9807.50 per month. Nearly three fifths live in nuclear families and the average family size is 3.84. Above half of the respondents have children below 18 years while two fifths have children above 18 years. Six out of ten respondents live in own houses and a similar proportion are migrants to the city. More than two third of the respondents dwell in the same place for less than 20 years. A little over one half have some form of savings whereas one fourth are debtd.