

Brief History

Traditionally known as “Pearl City” on account of the prevailing Pearl fish in the past in the area, Thoothukudi has a fascinating History. Forming part of the Pandian kingdom between 7th and 9th Century A.D., Thoothukudi remained in the hands of the Cholas during the period between 9th and 12th century. Emergence of Thoothukudi as a maritime port attracted travelers, adventures, and eventually colonizers. The Portuguese were the first to arrive in Thoothukudi in 1523 A.D., followed by the Dutch in 1658 A.D. The English Captured Thoothukudi from the Dutch in 1782 and the East India Company established their control over Thoothukudi in the same year.

On the 20th, October 1986 a new district, carved out of the erstwhile Tirunelveli district was born in Tamil Nadu and named after V.O.Chidambaranar, a great national leader hailing from Ottapidaram who led the Swadeshi Movement in the south. Since 1997 as in the case of other districts of Tamilnadu, this district has also been named after its headquarters town, Thoothukudi.

Thoothukudi became the citadel of freedom struggle in the early of the 20th century. It was in Thoothukudi that the illustrious patriot , V.O.Chidambaram established the first swadesi Stream Navigation Company, sailing the first steamer S.S.Gaelia to Thoothukudi on 1st June 1907.

The minor port of the Thoothukudi anchorage port with lighter age facilities has had flourished traffic for over a century. The first wooden Jetty of this port was commissioned in 1864. This port was being used for export of salt, cotton yarn, senna leaves, palmyrah stalks, palmyrah fibres, dry, dry fish, Country drugs etc. to neighboring countries and for import of coal, cotton, copra, pulses and grains. The minor port of the Thoothukudi hand the distinction of being intermediate port handling the highest traffic tonnage of over 1million per annum.

The salient features of the district include its lengthy,curvy and scenic sea coast which was an international cynosure in the days of yore for its pearl fishery; beautiful coastel villages with their sacred temples, churches and mosques like Tiruchendur, Manappadu and Kayalpattinam respectively, Adhichanallur, one of the cradles of the ancient civilizations, Korkai, an ancient port of the Sangam Pandyas,Kayal, the confluence of the river Tamiraparani with the Bay of Bengal,one of the five illustrious rivers of Tamilnadu, Panchalamkurichi, the capital of Veerapandiya Kattabomman, an early martyr, for the cause of freedom, Ettayapuram, the birth place of the great poet Subramanya Bharathi, Ottapidaram the home town of V.O.Chidambaram Pillai,who dared to sail ships as a measure to combat British imperialism;Maniyachi, where Vanchinathan assassinated Ashe, the British Collector for this high –handedness against the leaders during Swadeshi Movement; Kulasekarapattinam and Kurumbur where patriots showed their anger against alien rule ,temple towns like Srivaikundam, Meignanapuram, one of the cradles of Christianity, Thoothukudi, besides being a major port, the earliest settlement of the Portuguese and the Dutch, the tall and dense palmyra groves and the bushy Odai trees, the Teris and the adjacent coral islands, Idayankudi and Manappadu and the adjacent places which became the headquarters of great missionaries like G.U.Pope, Veeramamunivar, Caldwell and others who, besides their missionary work,contributed a lot for the development of Tamil language and literature and above all the enterprising and hard working people who now constitute a major trading community in the State.