CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL SETTINGS OF

KANYAKUMARI DISTRICT

The history of Kanyakumari District goes back to its old name of South Travancore. The name Travancore is an anglicized form of Srivazhum kodu, which later became Thiruvithamcode and finally it developed into Travancore. It means the abode of prosperity or place where Goddess of Prosperity dwells.\(^1\) Travancore was known by different names at different times, namely Parasuram kshethram, Karma Bhumi, Cheram, Keralam, Malanadu, Malavaram, Malabar, Venadu, Vanchi Desam and Thiru Adi Desam.\(^2\)

The ancient kingdom of Travancore formed the southern most part of the west-coast of India, the country extending from Gokarnam to Cape Comorin.\(^3\) Between latitude 8\(^0\) and 8\(^0\)20' north and between longitude 77\(^0\) and 77\(^0\)40' east is the present District of Kanyakumari which in earlier times was the Padmanabhapuram division of the erstwhile princely state of Travancore. It comprises of four taluks viz, Thovalai, Agasteeswaram, Kalkulam and Vilavancode.\(^4\)

South Travancore is gifted with rivers such as Paralayar or the Kuzhithurai river, the Kodhayar and Palayar. These rivers generally take a capricious course and are of varying length and depth. Abundant rainfall provided with good quality water. The hilly region of Travancore is very extensive and is a marked feature of the state. The hills are of at different elevation, climate and vegetation.

The prevalent soil of Kanyakumari District is red varying in the content of ferroginous element. True alluvial soil occurs very rarely. The region consists of sub-fossils, cytherea, pottomids, melania etc. Kanyakumari District gets the benefit of both the south-west and north-east monsoons. Therefore, for eight to nine months the fields are under one crop or others there is a long spell of dry season for three months from the abatement of the north-east Monsoon to the bursting out of the south-west Monsoon. A warm humidity, is one of the special features of the climate of Kanyakumari District. Its high mountain ranges, valleys, plains and its coastlines greatly influence the atmosphere conditions. The temperature varies according to the height above the level of the sea.

Tucked neatly at the southern end of the Indian peninsula between the Western Ghats and Arabian Sea lies Kanyakumari District and its rich flora and

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6 Nagam Aiya, V., *op.cit.*, p.16.
fauna has been a tourist attraction. Teak, black wood, sandal wood, thempavu, etti etc grow in the forests largely. Paddy fields, coconut and plantain grove present a pleasing sight. Besides paddy, arecanut, rubber plantation, tapioca, pineapple and other crops are cultivated.

The animals such as elephants, tigers, bears, horned antelopes, porcupines and monkeys of varied specious are common. Cattle, dogs and cats are some of the domestic animals. The stork, bitter pelican, peacock, parrot, hen, sparrow, crow, eagle, duck etc. are important birds. The Brahmins constituted the uppermost stratum of the caste hierarchy. Being a priestly class, they held a key position in the society. They integrated the rest of the community into a conveniently graded network of caste, graded one below the other with diminishing social status.

Nairs are the community next to the Brahmins who formed the ruling class. Traditionally they were a military class in the society. Nair women are faithful to their neighbours. The southern Nairs are divided into twelve pidakai or sects. Moreover, they were the principal slave-holders of the

16 Ramanatha Iyer., *op.cit.*., p.71
17 Agur, CM., *Church History of Travancore*, Madras, 1903, p. 569
country. There was much in common between the Brahmins and the Nairs regarding their social status. They joined together in the notorious act of oppressing the lower classes represented by poor cultivators, labourers and slaves.

Next to the Nairs were the two majority communities called the Nadars and Ezhavas. The former community was found in the South and later in the North of Kanyakumari District. The Nadars migrated from Thirunelveli District into the Kanyakumari District. Their chief occupation was toddy-tapping. Some of them laboured on land and aristocratic Nadars in the eastern part of Kanyakumari District worked on the lands of the powerful Nair land lords. Nadars were considered to be inferior to the Brahmin but superior to the Parayas. Another group of people lived in the region was Vellalas. They were also working under the Brahmins. Along with the Vellalar, the Ambattars, the Vannan, the Nayakkars and the Parayas claimed that they belonged to the right hand caste. The Parayas were of two types, Pooram Parayas and Nonnay Parayars. The vast majority of Parayas were landless agricultural labourers.

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18 Samuel Mateer., *op. cit.*, p.302
19 *Report of the Travancore District Committee for 1864*, Santhapuram Mission District, p.4
20 Edgar Thurston., *Caste and Tribes of South India*, Vol.VI, Delhi, 1975, p.368
25 Ward and Corner, *Geographical and Statistical Memories of the Survey of Travancore and Cochin*
The society was divided by customs caste-prejudice and religious beliefs. The life of the lower class people was miserable. The higher class exploited their services and even their products. If a high caste man touched a Paraya by accident, the former was obliged to purify himself by taking a bath. For selling their products, chiefly bamboo-work, they had to shout out their price to the passerby from a certain distance and the prospective purchaser would place the money on a stone. They could purchase articles from the high caste merchants by placing their money on the stone.

Because of the tax burden, the people lived in a miserable condition. Economically the people were very poor. Muslims also live in Kanyakumari District. The lone Naupulay or Lubbais were of an inferior class of Mohammadans who constituted important and larger part of the population. They were the emigrants from Pandy. They were much disposed to traffic but not adverse to agriculture and they were intelligent, indefatigable, unscrupulous boss.

The earliest Jesuit who came and propagated Christianity in Kanyakumari District was Francis Xavier. He reached India in May 1542 and settled in Goa. Francis Xavier understood that Kanyakumari District was a

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27 Sehurhammer, G., *Francis Xavier, His Life His Times in India*, Vol.II, Rome, 1877, p.4
28 Samuel Mateer., *op.cit.*, p.47
29 Sehurhammer, G., *op.cit.*, p.415
fertile land for missionary work and so he established the Cape Comorin Mission.\textsuperscript{31} The principal religions professed by the people of Kanyakumari District are Hinduism, Christianity and Islam.\textsuperscript{32} The most famous Vaishnava temple of great repute in Kanyakumari District is at Thiruvattar, north-east of Marthandam. The most famous Siva temple in this area is at Suchindrum, about 12 km from Cape Comorin.\textsuperscript{33}

Kanyakumari District occupies a prominent place both historically and culturally. Its capital Nagercoil situated around 15 km from Cape Comorin is the seat of the ruling family. It is a beautiful place with a fine temple named Nagaraja temple. It is a town of growing importance. The famous places of Hindu pilgrimage are Cape Comorin, Suchindrum, Thiruvattar, Padmanabhapuram, Mondaikadu and Kollemcode. Cape Comorin, the land's end of India is famous in song and story.\textsuperscript{34}

The old capital of Kanyakumari District is Padmanabhapuram. Kulasekara Perumal was properly the King of Travancore who lived in the Eraniel palace situated in Kanyakumari district and to this day he was known as Kulasekara Perumal.\textsuperscript{35} The Brahmins assembled at Tirunavoy, resolved to appoint a king. They empowered the four selected villagers to choose a king. The first choice fell on a Perumal of Keyapuram in the Country east of the

\textsuperscript{31} George Mar Moreas., \textit{St. Francis Xavier, Apposle Nuncio} (1542-1552) Bombay, 1952, p. 120.
\textsuperscript{32} Ramanatha Aiyer., \textit{op.cit.}, p. 108.
\textsuperscript{34} Velu Pillai, T.K., \textit{op.cit.}, p.1.
\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Ibid.}, p.221.
Ghats. He was brought to Travancore and installed as the first of the Perumals in 216 AD.\textsuperscript{36}

The Ays ruled over an extensive area stretching from Nagercoil in the south to Tiruvalla in the north including Sahyadri ranges. The Sangam works refer to the three important Ay kings namely Ay Andiran, Titiyan and Adiyan.\textsuperscript{37} Sadayan, Karunandhan, Kaunan, Dhadakkan, Vikramadithya, and Varaguna were the kings who ruled from 778 AD to 925 AD.\textsuperscript{38} The important Chera rulers like Kulasekhara Alvar, Ravi Raja Sekhana and Varma and Indukotha Varma ruled from 800 AD to 972 AD.\textsuperscript{39} Baskara Ravi Varma III, Ravi Varma and Rama Varma Kulashekarar were other later Chera rulers.\textsuperscript{40} Udayan Cheralathan, Palyanai Chelkalukuttuvan, Narmudi Cheral Velkelukuttuvan, Adukotpattu Cheralathan, Selvakadungo Valityathan Peruncheral Irumporai and Ilancheral Irumporai\textsuperscript{41} belonged to the early Cheras.

The Chola rulers, Raja Raja I, Rajendra I, Rajathiraja, Rajendra Deva, Vira Rajendra and Kulottunga I ruled from 985 AD to 1122 AD.\textsuperscript{42} The Pandya rulers Maranjadayan, Srimara, Srivallaba, Varaguna, Varman II, Parantaka Vira Narayana, Maravarman, Rajasimha II were the important rulers who ruled

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., p.228
\textsuperscript{37} Sreedhara Menon, A., \textit{A Survey of Kerala History}, Kottayam, 1967, p.62
\textsuperscript{39} Tamilvanan., \textit{Kanyakumari Mavattam}, Madras, 1986, p. 96.
\textsuperscript{40} Nagamayya, V., \textit{op.cit.}, New Delhi, vol. I, p.41.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., p.65
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., p.65.
from 765 AD to 920 AD. The year 1623 AD witnessed the advent of Tirumala Nayak. He came with his forces to Nanchil Nadu. In 1655 AD Kalkulam or Padmanabhapuram was the seat of the Travancore Kings. The other Nayak rulers were Chokkanatha Nayak and Thammappa Nayak. During the latter half of the 17th century certain places of Nanchil Nadu were under the sway of Madurai Nayaks.

Anwarudin was the first Carnatic Nawab who invaded Kanyakumari District. His successors were Maphuskhan, Yusufkhan, Hyder Ali, Tippu Sultan and others. As per the alliance with the Nawab of the Carnatic in 1766 AD, the Travancore government had been paying an annual tribute of Rs. 6000/- and a quinquennial tribute of five elephants. Sri Veera Kerala Varma, Sri Veera Udaya Martanda Varma, Sri Devadhanam Kerala Varma, Sri Veera Rama Kerala Varma, Sri Veera Ravi Kerala Varma, Sri Vira Keralatiruvadi, Sri Vira Rama Marthanda Varma, Unni Kerala Varma, Aditya Varma, Sri Veera Udaya Martanda Varma II, Sri Veera Unni Kerala Varma II, Umayamma Rani, Unni Kerala Varma, Gowri Lakshmi Bai, Gowri Parvathi Bai, Marthanda Varma II, Visakam Thirunal, Sri Mulam Tirunal, Sri Chitra Tirunal, Bala Rama Varma etc. were the important rulers who ruled Kanyakumari District from 1125 AD to 1956 AD.

43 Sreedara Menon, A., op.cit., p.111.
44 Nagam Aiya, V., op.cit., p.303.
46 Nagam Aiya, V., op.cit., 252
In the princely State of Travancore, there languished a large Tamil population. They constituted linguistic minority in the Malayalee dominated area. Tamils had no rights either to enter the temples or to learn Malayalam in the schools or to serve in the administration. Added to these, the princely administration promoted Malayalee migration to the Tamil speaking area threatened with extinction. So the Tamils clamored for the integration of their territory with Tamilnadu. It led to series of agitations between Malayalees and Tamilian. On 1st November 1956 South Travancore was integrated with Tamil Country. The South Travancore after its merger with Tamilnadu in 1956 has been called as Kanyakumari District. Kanyakumari District has commercial relation with various people and Malayalees never hesitated to borrow words and assimilated them in their language. Hundreds of words belonging to the Arabian, Persian, Dutch, Hindustani and Urdu are in current use in the language.

It is now over a century and a half since the English language and literature have been exercising its beneficial influence. It is sometimes said that Malayalam prose had its origin in very recent times as a consequence of the acquaintance of the Malayalees with English. It is true that the development of the British connection has been marvelous. There were from the very early

48 Ibid., p.398.
51 Ibid., p.48.
times two distinct types of prose composition. The one used by Chakyarsin narrating puranic stories in temples marked by Sanskrit influence and the other use for keeping accounts and historical facts.

An account of the early development of prose is given in the sanction on literature. Most of the names of things or institution are newly introduced from the west. Many expressions relating to the government law, politics and related subjects have been freely borrowed from English. Each department of the government has popularized several English terms relating to the particular branch of knowledge or activity in which it is interested. There is a strong section among scholars who favour the free borrowing of the necessary terms from English without effecting any cardinal change.\textsuperscript{52}

By seeing the people of the district one can get the idea of the place, their culture, religion, aptitude, habits, beliefs, talents, etc which had its bearing on the district. Tamil and Malayalam are the main spoken languages of this district. Hindus and Christians form a sizeable percentage of the population of the district and there are also a number of Muslims dominated belts in the district. But all the people live here in a friendly manner.\textsuperscript{53}

Kanyakumari got its name from the Kumari Amman or the Kanyakumari temple situated at the shore on the confluence of the Bay of Bengal, Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea. According to the local lore, Kanya

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., p.49.
\textsuperscript{53} Gopalakrishnan, M., \textit{op.cit.}, p. 123.
Devi, an avatar of Parvati, was to marry Shiva, but he failed to show up to the wedding. The rice and other grains meant for the wedding feast remained uncooked. Today tourists can buy tiny stones which look like rice, in remembrance of the marriage that was never solemnized. The princess Kannya Devi is a virgin goddess who blesses pilgrims and tourists.  

According to another local myth, Lord Hanuman dropped a piece of earth as he was carrying the mount with the life-saving herb, Mrita Sanjivani from the Himalayas to Lanka during the Rama-Ravana war. This chunk of earth is called Marunthuvazh Malai, which is literally translated to “medicine-residing hills”. This is said to be the reason for the abundance of unique native plants in the area. The district is home to many practitioners of various branches of ancient India’s health tradition, including Siddha, Ayurvedha, Varma kalai.  

The district has been a great centre for art and religion for centuries. It was also an area of heavy commerce and trade. It was ruled by the Cholas, the Cheras, the Pandyas and the Nayaks. The architectural beauty of the temples is the work of these rulers. Later Kanyakumari became part of the Venad kingdom with its capital at Padmanabhapuram. The king of Venad, Anizham Thirunal Marthanda Varma established Travancore by extending his domain further north up to Aluva, during his region from 1729 to 1758. By this, the

54 Ramanatha Iyer, S., op.cit., p.67.
55 Pillai, K.K., Suchindrum Temple, Madras, 1990, p. 16.
present Kanyakumari District came to be known as Southern Travancore.\textsuperscript{56} King Marthanda Varma defeated the Dutch East India Company at the famous battle of Colachel in 1741.

Kanyakumari was under the rule of the Kings of Travancore under the overall suzerainty of the British till 1947. Travancore joined the independent Indian Union in 1947. Obviously, the royal regime came to an end. In 1949, Kanyakumari became part of the reconstituted Travancore-Cochin State. By this time, the popular agitation for the amalgamation of Kanyakumari District with Tamilnadu by the Tamil majority under the leadership of Thiru M.A. Nesamony intensified. Eventually, in 1956, Kanyakumari was integrated with Tamilnadu (then known as Madras State) as per the language-based recognition of States.\textsuperscript{57}

According to legend, Christianity arrived in South India around AD 52 by St. Thomas, one of the twelve Apostles of Christ. However, European missionaries, who arrived in the 16\textsuperscript{th} century, propagated Christianity in the area. St. Francis Xavier (7\textsuperscript{th} April 1506 - 2th December 1552) was the pioneer in preaching Christianity in the present day Kanyakumari District. Islam is believed to have entered the southern part of India through Kanyakumari during the early part of the eighth century AD through the sea route with

\textsuperscript{57} Sreethara Menon, A., \textit{op.cit}, p. 281.
traders and missionaries.\textsuperscript{58} The district is well connected by roads to its different corners.

The roads in a big way facilitate advancement in the economy of a country and they simultaneously facilitate communication as well. In the matter of surface transport, they are almost equal to the railways, which connect other parts of the country to its large railway network system. These two transports are not equaled parallel but inter-dependent.\textsuperscript{59}

The Chennai-Kanyakumari Highway joins the Kanyakumari-Trivandrum road near Aralvoimozhi, which passes through Nagercoil touching important places. The Kanyakumari District has contributed much in the field of medicine. The district is endowed by nature with several hills and mountains. These are full of rich herbs of medicinal value and minerals. Maruthuvamalai is a hill in the district located near Kanyakumari. This literally means medicinal hill, which is referred to by Therapeutics or Buddha Bikshus who belonged to the period of Emperor Asoka. This basically means as having medical and spiritual heritage. Rare medicinal herbs are available here in abundance.\textsuperscript{60}

Kanyakumari played an important role in the international medical field, even before the Christian era. Even today the district has many hospitals and health centres. Government Kanyakumari Medical College has been

\textsuperscript{58} Velu Pillai, T.K., \textit{op.cit.}, p.634.

\textsuperscript{59} Ramanathan Iyer, S., \textit{op.cit.}, p. 133.

\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Ibid.}, p.134
functioning since 20-03-2007 at Asaripallam. A new government Ayurveda Medical College has been announced to be started at Kottar shortly by the State government as well. Based on the agro-climate and topographic conditions, the district can be divided into three regions. These can be mentioned as follows:

The upland is comprising of hills and hill bases suitable for growing crops like rubber, cloves, nuts, pepper and pineapple. The middle comprising of plains and valleys fit for growing crops like paddy, tapioca, banana and coconut. and the third one is the low lands comprising the coastal belt ideal for growing coconut and cashew. The district produces paddy, tapioca and oilseeds such as groundnut and coconut besides commercial crops like cashew, rubber, fruits and spices as well. The important feature of this district is the production of off-season mangoes.

Paddy is the main crop of this district. It is grown in two seasons. First crop is sown in the month of April-June (kannipoo) and second crop is raised in the month of September-October (kumbu poo). One of the most interesting institutions in this district is the weekly or twice-weekly market, those primitive institutions, most picturesque interesting from both a sociological and economic point of view. As many as five thousand people come to a rural market-place on market days, each person to barter or sell what he has for what he wants more. This trading day constitutes a large share of the social life of the villagers. Here along with his bartering he meets practically every one of

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61 Thinamalar, Nagercoil, 05-03-2011, p. 10.
62 Ibid., dated 13-05-2011, p.12
his near and far neighbours, and there is always much talking and visiting. At nightfall the bustling, noisy, market-place quiets down into just a barren country field, so to remain till next market day.\(^{63}\)

No matter what day the visitor travels down this road, he can find at least one market. The largest one is probably in the newly walled grounds just in front of the big Roman Catholic Church in the little village and confusion, when one looks upon the barren field, perhaps dotted here and there with a few large flat stones which on market days serve as counters for the seller who sites or squats on the ground beside it. And the variety of merchandise and rural products to be found! Usually the goats, cows and buffaloes are in a separate place. In the grounds, for entrance to which those who wish to sell must pay a small tax, may be found old and young. Every person who is not accustomed to such markets, should visit one.

In the vegetable section are all sorts of country vegetables including a wide variety of peculiar roots and tubers, buttermilk mixed with chillies and water ready to drink, is always at hand, the fish section is not so tempting, piles of green leaf manure or seedlings for planting, piles of coconuts and jiggery, cloth merchants display their hand-woven cloths and sarees to tempt the men and women; baskets of several varieties in which the countryman carries his betel and tobacco to the watertight, beautifully made large basket which the climber carries to the top of the palmyra trees to collect the sap in; ingenious

\(^{63}\) Hatch., \textit{UP from Poverty in Rural India}, New Delhi, 1986, p. 66.
combs made of wood, petty notions so brilliantly arranged on a cloth spread on the ground. Very often a group of men, who visiting and rounds the market, would gather under the shade of a big tree to sing and dance some of their most difficult and interesting folk-dances.\(^6^4\)

The road for several miles on either side of the market is thronged with people coming and going to market. Market day is the great social event of the week and is the only community gathering which the countryside as a whole knows. Its value is, therefore, far greater than its economic side alone. The little village of Kuzhithura is just off the main road on the bank of the Tamraparani river. The bridging of this river in 1879 greatly facilitated traffic. To the left there is the old crossway connecting Kuzhithurai with Marthandam. During most of the year the water is low, so that many cars and carts cross the river this way.

About four miles north of Kuzhithurai is an interesting old temple, situated on a huge rock, easily accessible and fortunately one which may be visited by non-Hindus. Chitaral rock temple is an example of a Jain temple remade into a Hindu temple. This particular place was once a centre of Jain religion which is proved by a number of epigraphs in the Tirunelveli District. These inscriptions give the names of many Jain teachers and disciples who were natives of Tirucharanam, which place is Chitaral.\(^6^5\)


The temple is cut into the rock, with its hall built outside the rock. There are a number of images inside. One of a sages having a bald head, clean shaven face and no Brahmanical thread represent a Jain image, as these points are characteristic of their images. The Jain tradition has been so completely forgotten, and the temple has been so completely appropriated by Hindu temple. The image of the sage is taken to be Vishnu. Just in front of the temple is a rock spring which makes a little tank, very clear and cool. The top of the rock commands a splendid view of the sea of palmyra palms and distant jungles covered hills. It is a favourite picnic and excursion place for the youth of the Countryside.\textsuperscript{66}

Just across the bridge below the road on the left is another interesting temple. This is purely Hindu temple dedicated to Vettumani Sastha. The god who dwells in this temple turns a deaf ear and cannot hear prayers spoken before him in the usual way. It is first necessary to get his attention, which is done by making a modest explosion of gunpowder. All day long, and often far into the night, one can hear these explosions which tell the story of a prayer for safety being offered by some passer-by. Practically every car that passes slow down so that the occupant may throw a \textit{chuckrum} out to the little boy waiting at the top of the steps.

A call by the boy, an answer from his companion below, and then the explosion may be heard. Every bus driver has at least one prayer offered a day

to insure himself and his passengers against any untoward accident. One is not surprised that the collections average about twelve to fourteen rupees a day.

The firing of shots is common to all Sastha temples. There are three stories given to account for this custom, though the usual explanation is that the god is deaf. One story tells of Sasthavu, the son of Siva and Maha Vishnu, when Vishnu assumed the form of a woman in order to kill a Rakshasa. Being the son of Siva, Sasthavu became a great hunter.

These shots are fired to signify Sasthavu’s fondness for hunting. A second story tells of people wanting to worship Sasthavu closed his eyes and stood quiet. In desperation one worshipper fired a shot which caused him to open his eyes and bless him. The third story says that Sasthavu does not believe in hoarding wealth but wishes all wealth to go up in smoke, and that the firing of shots stands for this belief.67

Just beyond this busy little temple which typifies much of the ancient culture of India, and next to a large English High School, is the Marthandam Y.M.C.A. Rural Demonstration Centre, which because of its comprehensive programme aimed to improve the lot of the rural class has taken a lead in the particular field of service called Rural Reconstruction and is being widely influential throughout India.68 Visitors are always welcome. This is only the modest headquarters of a large programme in the villages around and in many other villages throughout the State.

67 Padmanabhan, S., op. cit., p. 72.
68 Mark Sundar Rao., The Image of the Y.M.C.A, New Delhi, 1969, p.1
Buildings and methods are kept inexpensive so that the poorest villagers may copy. The system of rural improvement taught from this centre is one of self-help with intimate, expert counsel. Greatest emphasis is put not on the centre but on helping large numbers of village families to take up better ways of life – spiritual, mental, physical, social, and economic. The wide influence of the Marthandam Rural Centre comes partly from its Practical Training Schools, to which leaders come for training from various parts of India, Burma and Ceylon.69

The village of Marthandam is of fairly recent origin. The old village of Thoduvetti centred about the market-place. The land now occupied by the London Missionary Society was acquired by them over a hundred years ago and since then the little church has been regularly conducted. The mission hospital was opened there in 1883. In 1886 the then Maharaja visited the place. The missionary in charge pointed out the possibilities of the place and asked permission to call it after His Highness. The Maharaja readily agreed and from then on the village was known as Marthanda Varma Puram.

When, some years later, a missionary was stationed there and began to develop the place with bungalow, school buildings and hostels with simplified name Marthandam was found more useful. The mission now has a large Girl’s School, a Boy’s School, and a Training School. Probably the finest building in South Travancore is the church just being completed. It has been done entirely

by local workmen under the supervision of the District missionary. Some of the
carving and stone work would rival that done anywhere and would certainly set
a high standard of workmanship for the countryside.\footnote{Keay, P., \textit{A History of Education in India and Pakistan}, London, 1964, p. 197.}

Just after the twenty-fifth milestone, the road leads off to Pechippara,
one of the loveliest places in Travancore. The road passes through several
small villages on its four miles to Tiruvattar. This little village bears an
interesting history. In the days when the insurrectionists were particularly
offensive, Umayamma Ranee was forced to flee from Trivandrum with her
only remaining son, and dared not give much attention to governmental affairs.
Before she could get a relative, Raja Kerala Varma, from Malabar to manage
the State for her, an adventurous Mohammedan, a petty Sirdar under the Mogul
Emperor, swept down upon Travancore and easily possessed the land.

He made his headquarters just outside the Trivandrum Fort. Raja Kerala
Varma was a great warrior who lost no time in attacking the Mogul Sirdar.
When the attack was made, practically all the forces were scattered over the
State, collecting revenue. They retreat immediately, hotly pursued by Kerala
Varma. Being reinforced by his cavalry they made a stand on the hillside at
Tiruvattar.\footnote{Thinamalar, Daily in Tamil, Dated 14-03-2004, p.6.} It was an ill-chosen spot for him. The rocks and jungles
undergrowth made it almost impossible for his mounted force to be of any use,
but they were the greatest protection to the Raja’s archers and slingers. The
conflict was severe and the loss of life great.
The Raja was aided by unforeseen event. When the mounted Sirdar sat under a tree watching the progress of the battle, one of the enemy’s arrows or stones hit a huge wasps nest in the tree. The infuriated insects descended in hundreds on the Mogul commander and his horse, stinging them both most cruelly. The frightened horse threw his master on to a rock, when immediately arrows and stones rained upon him. Their commander dead, the army went into confusion and were easily captured by the Raja. With the three hundred horses and great equipment thus captured, Raja Kerala Varma established a cavalry of his own and brought the feudatory chiefs of the countryside into subjection.\textsuperscript{72}

The temple at Tiruvattar is one of the oldest in the State, and is considered to be as sacred as the Trivandrum temple. Although the exact age is not known, the Alwars, great hymn-singers of the eighteenth century after Christ made reference to Tiruvattar in one of their hymns.\textsuperscript{73} It is dedicated to Adikesava Perumal, the first great God who destroyed the demon Kesi and an incarnation of Vishnu. It is reputed that this great God took rest in this temple after having killed a demon that had caused great misery in the World. Unlike the reclining image of Vishnu in Trivandrum, this image is in a seated position. The temple, one of the largest in Travancore, has some excellent examples of Dravidian sculpturing and stone work. The wood carving is also very intricate and excellent. The Thamaraparani flows about the temple walls. One special feature is its special situation on high ground, so that a flight of

\textsuperscript{72} Ramanatha Iyer, S., \textit{op.cit.}, 238.
\textsuperscript{73} Padmanabhan, S., \textit{op.cit.}, p. 13.
steps is necessary for entrance from any side. Many of the paddy lands about are part of the temple endowments, which yield a handsome income devoted to temple use.\textsuperscript{74} Four or five miles beyond Tiruvattar at Tiruanandikara is a rock temple estimated to be about a thousand years old.\textsuperscript{75}

The Pechipparai dam is the head of a scheme of irrigation which has almost literally made the desert to blossom like a rose, turning the dry land of south Travancore into the fertile plains of Nanchilnad, the granary of the south. Back of the hundreds upon hundreds of acres of flourishing paddy line, lies a history full of romance and marvel. So accustomed are we to the miracles of modern engineering, that we usually pass them by with an appreciative nod. Engineering feasts of the past, however, make us pause, wonder and marvel. The old Pandyan dam and Pandyan Kal constructed about AD 900 create in visitors a deep administration for the foresight and effort put into this undertaking.\textsuperscript{76}

In the words of one historian: Much of the fertility of Nanjanad is due to the labours of the ancient engineers of the Pandyan ruler, who, about a thousand years ago, constructed a dam upwards of twenty feet in height, built of massive squared stones, across the Paralayar and cut a channel chiefly through solid rock for a distance of about two miles through the saddle forming the extreme western watershed of the Pazhayar (another river). Nanjanad

\textsuperscript{74} \textit{South Indian Inscriptions}, Vol. V, p.313.

\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Travancore Archaeological Series}, Vol. II, p. 125.

\textsuperscript{76} Shanthi, V.P., \textit{Tourism Development in India}, New Delhi, 2001, p. 48.
would not have been what it is - one large paddy flat of smiling green, dotted with numerous towns and villages; It would have been a famished district with a poor water supply. So successful was this ancient dam, which was constructed in AD 1750 stretched about a quarter of a mile from it, to irrigate the country around Neyyoor. This was also a stupendous task which required skill, both in planning and in executing. Then ruling Raja, the great Marthanda Varma, was keenly interested in this project which would do so much of the work.

An interesting anecdote is told about this ruler. Often His Highness would come early in the morning and remain until night, taking only one meal during the day. On these occasions he sat on a rock nearby. A servant was asked to hold one of the typical Malabar palm-leaf, non-collapsible, long-handled umbrellas to project his Royal Master. The Raja decided that his servant should be working on the canal, ordered a stonecutter to make a hole in the rock, fixed the umbrella pole in the hole and sent the servant to work. People still point out the rock with the hole in it, where His Highness umbrella was put.

When during the last century the question of further irrigation schemes was mooted, engineers were in many minds about them. One interesting thing, however, may be noted that modern engineers built their work as a continuation of the works already so ably and admirably done in the distant past centuries.

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The present Pechippara dam was completed only in 1907. The 141 miles of main channels and 184 miles of branch channels supply 55,612 acres, once dry and aride, with water and bringing them under intensive cultivation. It is difficult to appreciate how much this means for the prosperity, comfort and sufficiency of a needy people. The government camp shed over shed the lake of 3,230 acres which is surrounded by forest-covered hills. Visitors have often reported seeing wild animals come to the edge of the water to drink. In the midst of such quiet and beauty, there is the reminder that such great works too often take their toll: a simple cobblestone monument marks the last resting-place of one of the engineers who was supervising the construction of the dam.\(^78\)

Pechippara is such a beautifull place, it is regrettable that the great majority of visitors to the State do not drive the few extra miles off the main road to see it. Those visitors who wish to spend some time there should go well armed with mosquito curtains.\(^79\) Following the Tiruvattar road and going miles beyond, one comes to a planting section on the Western Ghats and to the famous mountain of Maha Indra or Mahendragiri. The peak is the highest in the south, ranging about 5,500 feet. The Hanuman river rises in these mountains, flowing down through the southernmost part of the State. Mahendragiri, according to the *Ramayana*, is the mountain from which Hanuman jumped when he went to Ceylon in search of Sita, Rama’s wife. It is said that

\(^{78}\) Agriculture Statistic, *Kanyakumari District Report*, 2005, p. 1

\(^{79}\) Personal Interview with Appadurai, Engineer PWD Office, Nagercoil, aged 50, dated 04-06-2011.
Parasurama, the warrior god who reclaimed Travancore from the sea, lived for a number of years in Mahendragiri. The Ashamboo plateau, once the scene of large coffee plantations, is now cultivated sparsely in tea. Near here is a famous waterfall, Ulakkayaruvı.  

It is a most interesting thing to note the sudden change in the countryside about twenty miles south of Trivandrum. Rocky, more undulating, dry ground is usually cultivated with tapioca, one of the staple foods of the poorer people. The coconuts all change to palmyras, a tall, scrubby-topped palm, when compared with the graceful long leaves of the coconut. But like the coconut, the palmyra palm is a most useful tree, contributing in no small way to the livelihood of the people. One of the sights not to be missed is to see a climber go up and down a tree. To those persons who are new to the country, it is no less than amazing to see how simply and how quickly a man climbs to the top of a very tall tree.

His only help is a tough thong which holds his feet together. The feat is not as simple as it looks. Palmyra smashes are quite common the climber slips or loses his hold for a second and comes crashing to the ground. To see a man lose hold, slip, slide down the tree at a great speed for twenty or thirty feet before he is able to catch himself gives one a decidedly uncomfortable feeling. It is not to be wondered at that when each climber safely reaches the

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82 Ibid., p.9.
ground he stands facing the tree, touches it, and then places both hands together in front of him in an attitude of prayer to signify his gratitude to the kind providence that is watching over him. One man usually takes care of forty trees, which he must climb both morning and evening - a heavy task which begins very early and continues until late into the night. The chief produce from the palmyra is the sap which is either sold as toddy (an indigenous drink somewhat analogous to beer) or boiled down into sugar. Trees tapped for toddy are licensed and pay a large annual revenue to Government.  

The sap very quickly ferments and becomes highly alcoholic. There are government regulations concerning the sale of toddy to ensure it is fresh. When the sap is drawn for sugar making, the dripping pots are rubbed inside with lime in order to prevent fermentation. The juice is boiled down until thick, then poured into moulds, usually a half coconut shell, to harden. The sugar is analogous to the famous maple sugar of America in consistency and although the taste is different, is considered by many as delectable. The best quality is of a light brown colour. Tons and tons of this sugar are made annually in South Travancore, constituting one of the largest cottage industries. The sugar is sold to refining factories where it is demineralized to make white sugar. Such a factory is marking sugar in Travancore now, at a place soon to be reached on this main road.

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The housewives make many interesting delicacies with the sugar – puddings, sweets, coated nuts. One particularly appetizing sweet is made by adding spices to the boiling syrup before it is poured into the moulds. Re-boiled to make a thick syrup, resident foreigners use it in ways similar to treacle or molasses.\textsuperscript{84} During the tapping seasons, great quantities of the fresh sweet sap is drunk as a substantial part of the diet. Chunks of the sugar, followed by a drink of water are eaten by coolies as their mid-day meal when they go out into the fields for daily hire. School children often carry this sugar for their lunch.

Tons of the brown sugar are distilled to make a sort of indigenous whisky, about 65 percent and 75 percent alcohol. These two drinks-toddy and arrack are widely used in Travancore and the tax thereon constitutes a large part of the excise revenue.\textsuperscript{85} The fruit of the palmyra, a delicacy to the people of the country, is not very attractive to strangers. The only edible portion is a small jelly-like substance found in three small pockets in each fruit. The fruit furnishes another more hearty food, which may usually be seen at the bus stops where women sell it to the passengers. The planted fruit sends down a root which is pulled when about three months old. The root, then about a foot long, is boiled until somewhat tender. It is still hard but edible, has a strong flavour, and is mealy in consistency. This food is very sustaining, which is probably one reason why it is eaten so much.\textsuperscript{86}

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., p.10.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., p.11
The leaves are ingeniously used in a number of ways: thatching, basketry and mat-making. It is a common sight to see a few mats and baskets, sometimes brightly coloured, hanging outside a gateway waiting for a buyer. The water buckets that the road workers, children and housewives may be seen using are made of these folded leaves. They are most artistic but perishable. Palmyra fans are a great boon on a hot day - and one might well ask when is it not hot! Palmyra fibre is used in making brushes.

The development of tapioca cultivation in Kanyakumari District clearly shows two important things the possibility of furthering land production by introducing new crops the need for foodstuffs. It was introduced into Travancore less than fifty years ago. Within a few years it has increased greatly in popularity. There are now 498,379 acres under cultivation. The area under paddy, an old crop, is 658,522 acres. This is a remarkable growth which may be accounted for in several ways tapioca grows on high ground in the poor soil Moist climate does not require irrigation grows easily without very much labour and yields abundantly and mature in nine to eleven months the district people like its taste. For these same reasons tapioca is very cheap. It now constitutes a major portion of the diet among the poorer people of South Travancore, many of whom cannot afford to eat rice. It has the additional advantages that when cut in slices and thoroughly dried, it will keep in perfect condition for months.87

There are several varieties of tapioca. Several of them require parboiling to rid the root of the poison in it. Tapioca contains a cyanogenetic glucoside associated with an enzyme which has the property of causing the splitting up of the glucoside and the consequent formation of prussic acid. When the first water is thrown away the tapioca is again boiled and becomes an easily digested starchy food. Since this root constitutes such a major part of the diet of thousands of people, it is regrettable that it is not more nourishing. A pure diet of tapioca is not as nourishing as a pure diet of Irish potatoes. The leaves of the plant, which grows from five to eight feet in height, are used as a green manure around banana trees. The plant may be seen growing profusely all along the way from Trivandrum to Cape Comorin and the roots may be seen by basketsful on the tops of the heads of marketers.

Behind the great high wall, which shuts out the World of the high road, is Mulagumoodu, an important Roman Catholic centre founded by Father Victor, St. Antony. He began work in Thiruvithancode, the old capital of Travancore, in 1860. Only two years later he started an orphanage for boys and girls at this Mulagumoodu. Although funds were limited, the work grew the barren country was cultivated and at last a new convent was started. Many of the orphans who had been trained in carpentry, masonry and smithy helped in building. Again pressed for money, he started a title factory.

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88 Report of the Administration of Travancore, Trivandrum, 1944, p.89.
89 Inscription at Mulagumoodu Convent, Near Thuckalay in Kanyakumari District, dated 18th July 1897.
In 1897 Mother Louisa and Mother Ursula arrived from Belgium to take charge of the convent and the work for the women and girls. Mother Louisa was a most remarkable woman who worked fearlessly and tirelessly trusting in divine providence to provide her with ways and means of carrying on her work. The famous Mulagumoodu lace and embroidery work was started by her and has been the means of financing a large part of their orphanage work. Mother Louisa, over forty when she came to India, died in Louvain only in 1928. The work at Mulagumoodu is for women and girls only—except for a few small boys. The boy’s work and the industries connected with that such as carpentry and tiles, have been abolished.  

A mile beyond Mulagumoodu a signboard points to Monday Market. This road leads through the little villages of Thiruvithankodu, Neyyoor, Eraniel to Colachel. The peaceful region is its fragmented with tradition and history as rich and romantic as one could desire. This country was part of the original principality or kingdom of Travancore.  

The little village was the original capital of the principality which took its name from the town. The name of this small, unimportant village is said to be a corruption of Sri Vazhum-Kodu, a place where the Goddess of Prosperity dwells. At present it is almost entirely a Mohammedan village, but when it became so is not known, Probaly some of the Mohammedans who invaded and even for a short time possessed the southern part of Travancore remained

91 Immanuel, M., op.cit., p.81.
behind when their leaders were driven out. There is a mosque, of course, and a very old Siva temple here. There is a small Christian church here which is attended by the one remaining family of Dhariyakals. These people claim to be the descendents of the true St. Thomas Christians who were converted to Christianity by St. Thomas in Mylapore (Madras) and who were driven away by the persecutions of Hindu kings.\textsuperscript{92} Whatever may be their history they have sedulously clung to their tradition and still refuse to classify themselves with other St. Thomas Christians, and have kept their worship and customs quite distinct.

On a side road near Thiruvithankodu stands a tall four-faced pillar, with writing on all four sides. It is a most curious document relating to an old social practice. This pillar is a royal edict prohibiting these practices called \textit{pulappedi} (fear from Pulayas) and \textit{mannappedi} (capture by Pulayas). The pillars dated Kollam 871(1696-97) when the practices must have been current.\textsuperscript{93} Pulayas are a very low caste people, and Mannars are the washerman who washed for the Pulayas and are thus outcasted. During certain times of the year, any high caste women, if touched by a Pulaya or hit by a stone thrown by a Pulaya, was so contaminated that she was excommunicated and forced to follow the particular Pulaya who polluted her.

The Pulayas were allowed certain privileges of walking on the roads and mingling somewhat with high caste people during these special days, so it was


\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., p.62.
possible for them to touch high caste people. This pollution was so dreaded that women almost never went out. If a woman were accompanied by a male child over three years of age she could not be polluted. If the child were a female the women became the property of the Pulaya, but if the child were a male the woman was free to return to her high caste husband.\footnote{Golden Jubilee Magazine, Thiruvithancode, dated 18-05-2008, p. 5.}

The edict proclaims that the practice shall no longer exist, that any Pulaya attempting it shall be killed immediately, that any women so polluted may purify herself by bathing in a tank. The custom must have died out very soon. The only reminder of it at present is the expression \textit{Pulappedi Kalam}, which is sometimes used to mean ‘the age of lawlessness’.\footnote{Ibid., p.2.}

Beyond, about a mile, following the irrigation canal which has been so beneficial to cultivators in this district, is the village of Neyyoor known widely all over India as what is said to be the headquarters of the largest medical mission in the World. The medical mission was started in 1838 in Nagercoil. In 1852 the Neyyoor Hospital was founded and since then it has become the headquarters of the medical work of the London Mission. The hospital equipped with 173 beds, has accommodation for 132 surgical patients. In 1932 the mission treated 2,17,000 patients. It was at this hospital several years ago that Dr. Pugh made the first discovery in India that the chronic indigestion which is such a scourge in many the parts of Malabar was due to an ulcer of the stomach and that a surgical operation offered the only chance of cure. About three
hundred of these operations are performed every year. Neyyoor is one of the important and oldest of the London Mission stations in Travancore.\textsuperscript{96} The most noticeable buildings are the mission institutions, hospital, leper homes, church and schools. A recent addition to the hospital is the European Nursing Home with hospital equipment and European nurse in charge. This home has proved a great boon to the residents of Travancore and the rooms are usually booked well in advance. A laboratory for preparing vaccines was opened recently.

Eraniel, of which Neyyoor is really a superb, is a very old village which has been conspicuous in Travancore history. In ancient days before the rulers moved to palaces within Padmanabhapuram Fort, they lived in Eraniel. The name of the village is said to be a form taken from Ransinganallur, the town of Ranasinha. Since this word means the lion king or the lion in battle, historians conjecture that the town may have been named after some ruler who lived there. The old place has a stone couch of great interest. It is said that while sleeping on this couch one of the old ruling princes suddenly disappeared from sight. In some miraculous fashion he became invisible and was never heard of thereafter. In commemoration a lamp has been kept burning by the side of the couch through the centuries.\textsuperscript{97}

A few miles beyond Eraniel is the port town of Colachel, well known and used by the merchants who visited India in the early centuries of this era. Although it has declined greatly in this respect, a certain amount of shipping

\textsuperscript{96} \textit{L.M.S.Report}, 1864, p.94.
\textsuperscript{97} Letter from Frederic to Dr.Tidman, Neyyoor, 2\textsuperscript{nd} July 1860, p.281.
fibre and mineral sands were exported this port. Fibre from the palmyra palms and other plants forms exported by one foreign company Aspinwall. A resident European is in charge of this company. Alone fibre is used for rope making and produces a very fine strong rope not unlike manilla.98 Only about forty-five years ago was the fibre from the palmyra palm made commercially valuable. After the rainy season, the leaf stem called the pattel, is collected from each tree.

The fibre obtained by beating the stem, is sold in the local markets to the collectors and taken to the Colachel factory. Here the brown and black fibre is separated, cut to required size and dyed. After drying and cleaning, it is bundled in to hanks and baled. The fibre is exported to various parts of the United Kingdom and the United States. It is used in the manufacture of brushes. The quality of the fibre depends on the age of the tree; the younger the tree the greater quantity of black fibre. Each stem has black and brown fibre, but the black is stiffer and more desirable. One tree yields about one and a half pounds of fibre a year. About five hundred tons are exported annually.99

Not far from Colachel on the sea coast are two unique factories-the largest ilmenite factories in the World. At present ilmenite is being mined in Travancore, Norway and Senegal, the volume of production being in this order. It has been mined previously and still occurs in Brazill, New Zealand and Quebec. The ‘Travancore Minerals’ factory was started in 1907 originally to

99 Ibid., p.7.
mine monazite, a yellow sand which contains thorium, the oxide of which has the property of becoming incandescent when heated and is thus valuable for gas mantles, Very light and pyrotechnic in general. Monazite is usually found with a much larger quantity of black sand or ilmenite. Before 1907, Brazil supplied the World with monazite. In this year Karl Schemberg, a former engineer in Brazil, heard that black sand beaches existed in Travancore. A visit to these revealed the facts that both sand minerals occurred and that there was sufficient monazite to be worked. Later investigation proved that Travancore monazite contained a higher percentage of thorium than Brazil monazite.

With the decline in the use of gas mantles for illuminating purposes after the war, the demand for monazite decreased and for some time the factory did no mining. The demand for ilmenite was soon very heavy and now the factories are working full shifts. The larger factory exports about 30,000 tons annually mostly to the United States. The principal use for ilmenite is in the ground up and mixed with an adhesive material and applied as black paint, but this process is now obsolete.

Ilmenite is composed of the oxides of iron and titanium. Titanium oxide is white and when separated from the contaminating iron is used as a basis for white paint in the same way as white lead. Paint made with titanium oxide has great covering properties and does not darken in course of time. It has the

100 Kanyakumari Tourism Booklet, Beaches of Kanyakumari District, 2004, p.5.
101 Ibid., p.6.
additional advantage of being non-poisonous, so there is reason to believe it will displace the use of lead paint in the not-too-distant future. These beach sands contain other minerals such as zircon, garnet and rutile. Zircon is being mined and is used for lining high-temperature furnaces. Practically all of the sand is shipped from the Colachel port, a mile or two north of the factory.  

Weaving is a great cottage industry in these parts. The co-operative society here has several branches and the membership includes 2,000 families; 2,400 looms are kept busy making cloth which finds a ready market. Weaving is an old industry which is being revived through the present vogue for hand-women cloth. During the early years of the eighteenth century the Danes had a small factory at Colachel and although contemporaneous writers assure that trade could have been vigorous, the Danes seemed indolent and indifferent and their enterprise unsuccessful.

Such cannot be said of the Dutch, when the Dutch realized that the Raja of Travancore was involving on conquering the principalities in which they had trade interests, they wished to stop the advance of the Raja of Travancore and to this end decided to make an attack on him simultaneously in the north and in the south. They sent to Cochin and Ceylon for help. Before any help came, they were defeated and the victorious Raja pressed on to further victories in the north. Meanwhile delayed help from Ceylon landed at Colachel. There was

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103 Ibid., p. 19.
nothing to prevent them, so they possessed the land, established headquarters and proceeded to march southward toward Nagercoil.

With Travancore leaders and army all in the north it was a simple matter to intimidate the country, which completely surrendered as far south as Kottar. The Raja, surprised at this unexpected attack, immediately returned to his capital at Padmanabhapuram to make preparations to drive out the enemy. The enemy were also making preparations to proceed against Padmanabhapuram.\textsuperscript{104} When the old forces arrived from the north they were joined to the newly-raised army.

The accounts in the Tiruvattar temple show that before he began the attack on the Dutch, the Raja visited the temple, placed his sword in front of the God, worshipped, received back his sword from the priest and then gave a donation of five hundred \textit{Panams} (about Rs.170) to the temple.\textsuperscript{105} From the temple he went straight to his army and began the great battle of Colachel. The Dutch stationed their garrison outside a newly-built fort in Colachel. The battle was one of the most severe in the history of the State. For two months war was waged. The Dutch ships were surrounded by small Travancore boats which watched all their movements.

When the garrison retreated inside the fort, siege was laid. The Dutch were at last forced to admit defeat, as many as possible fled to the ships and

\textsuperscript{104} Nagam Aiya, V., \textit{op.cit.}, p.219.

\textsuperscript{105} Pillai, K.K., \textit{op.cit.}, p.26.
escaped. The dead and wounded were left behind. Twenty-four prisoners were taken alive, and 389 muskets, cannon and swords were added to the equipment of the Raja’s forces.\textsuperscript{106}

This battle was of great importance in Travancore, it marked the decline of Dutch power and interference in the State, one of the prisoners taken became a competent and trusted military officer under the Raja’s regime. All the prisoners were treated with such kindness and consideration by His highness, that all were glad to serve in the State army. M. Eustace de Lannoy was so successful in training a few companies of sepoys, that His Highness placed him in charge of the garrison at Padmanabhapuram. He proceeded to build Udayagiri Fort and to manufacture cannon balls. Many of the victories later won in the north were largely due to the discipline and training given to the Travancore army by De Lannoy.\textsuperscript{107}

Beyond Colachel, several miles along the coast, is Muttam, a delightful place often visited by those who want a seaside holiday. The place has been known and dreaded by mariners for centuries, because of the treacherous Crocodile Rock rearing its head a few miles out in the sea. A lighthouse was built here to help the ships and has proved a great benefit.\textsuperscript{108}

Many years ago the London Mission acquired property and built a church. The congregation however reverted to the Roman Catholic faith and a

\textsuperscript{106} Ibrahim Kunju, A.P., \textit{The Battle of Colachel (1741) and the Deback of Dutch on the Malabar Coast}, Trivandrum, 1975, p.75.


\textsuperscript{108} \textit{Thina Thanthi}., Nagercoil, 2009, p.30.
holiday home for the missionaries and many others who use it. The Roman Catholics have built a large church in the little village. The churchyard has some old graves in it—perhaps of persons who were shipwrecked on Crocodile Rock. Muttam may be reached via Colachel, Mandakad or Nagercoil.\footnote{Ibid., p.37.}

The important place in the tiny fishing village of Mandaikadu is the Bhadrakali temple. Thousands of pilgrims visit this temple during the annual festival in March. The deity here is in the form of a large ant-heap. Tradition says that some plough boys made a heap of mud from their fields and worshipped it. Before long, the mud became divine and around this divinity the temple and festival have grown. Animal sacrifice used to be an important part of the festival, but this has been abolished.\footnote{Baskara Tondaiman, T.M., *Venkadam to Kumari*, Tirunelveli, 1970, p.71.} Back on the main road, which the narrative left at the Monday Market turning, the road continues a few miles through the village of Thackkalai to Udayagiri Fort, one of the historical centres of Travancore. A traveler’s bungalow,\footnote{This is a second class bungalow: bedding and food must be taken by the traveler.} has been built for a few hours or the night.

The safety stone wall around the fort was built by De Lannoy, one of the prisoners captured during the battle of Colachel (AD1741) and who eventually became the head of the Travancore army.\footnote{RajaThangam, A., *Captain Delonoy and Travancore*, Nagercoil, 2005, p.41.} Strong granite stone walls, fifteen feet thick and eighteen feet high, enclose about eighty-five acres of land, in the
centre of which is a hill 260 feet high. The view from the top of this hill commands the whole of the countryside. De Lannoy lived in this fort for many years. He manufactured ammunition here and trained the Raja’s army. The ruins of a small church are still preserved within the fort. Here De Lannoy, his wife and son were buried. Their tombstones may be seen, along with several others. The epitaphs give historical information. The translations run as follows:

‘Through this sign do souls soar heavenwards’.
Stop and rest here, pious Christian and wayfarer!

Here lieth an intrepid and brave soldier, Captain of the soldiers of the kingdom of Travancore, John Eustace Benedict de Lannoy, born in the year of Our Lord 1745, a Wednesday, the 5th of the month of August. Fataly wounded at the storming of the Fort of Kalakkad in the kingdom of Madurai, he died of his wound in the year of Our Lord 1765, Saturday, the 14th of the month of September, comforted with all the sacraments of the Holy Roman Church.

In this tomb lies lady Margaret de Lannoy, the faithful wife of the far-famed, unconquered Eustace de Lannoy, (who), for her incessant large alms, was fitly called by all the mother of the poor and is on that account and because of her other virtues, worthy of everlasting remembrance. She died on 11th September 1782. May she rest in peace. Amen.

114 Dutch Record No.1. on the Malabar Coast by I. V. Stein Van Gollenesse.
Across the road from the old fort is a sugar factory which makes white sugar from the jaggery produced in such quantities from the palmyra palms. Within a mile of Udayagiri Fort is the famous old Padmanabhapuram Fort, the old capital of Travancore. Padmanabhapuram came into great prominence during the reign of Marthanda Varma, the Great, who had his residence there. There is a shrine within the palace, which only caste Hindus are allowed to visit. The place has an underground passage leading beneath the fort walls out into one of the surrounding paddy lands. This was used as an escape in the days when attacks from feudatory chiefs or foreigners were more or less common.

The Padmanabhapuram Palace is one of the most historical palaces in Travancore. As the seat of government, it was used by various Rajas. Momentous events took place there. The most often recounted story is the one which tells of the attack on Raja Marthanda Varma by the Ettuvittil Pillamars and their two leaders Pappu Tampy and Raman Thampy. The two Thampys were sons of the late Raja and the eldest did his utmost to gain the throne, even to making representations before the Nawab at Trichinopoly. After investigation, the claims were found to be groundless and worthless. The rising popularity of Marthanda Varma infuriated the Tampys and the Pillamars. For nearly two centuries they had held the balance of power in the State in their hands, they wished now to further their dreams of possession. Marthanda Varma, when Elaya Raja, had spent his life escaping from the designs and traps of the succeeding Rajas.

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116 Immanuel, M., op.cit., p.76.
of the Pillamars. He had a number of trusted spies throughout the country, who kept careful watch on the movements of these men and informed him of everything.\footnote{Nagam Aiya.V., \textit{op.cit.}, p.219.}

At last the time came when His Highness could no longer tolerate these rebels. He was as determined to end their days, as they were his. He gave define instructions to his horsemen, whom he placed at stated intervals along the Trivandrum-Nagercoil road, and in strategic places elsewhere. When these men received a certain spot they arrest all the Pillaimars and their confederates and bring them all to the palace at Padmanabhapuram for trail.\footnote{Cousins, J.H., \textit{Padmanabhapuram Palace- A Treasure House of Art}, Trivandrum, 1941, p.1.}

His Highness knew that the Tampy’s were intent upon murdering him. He stationed guards with drawn swords about his house, and gave orders that if anyone attempted to come up the stairs to see him they should be stopped; if they resisted, they should be cut down. The two Tampy’s arrived. Being sons of Ruler they had the privilege of coming into His Highness presence without being announced. The elder Tampy therefore, giving no heed to the guards, started up the stairs. He was stopped.

Annoyed at this insult he drew his sword, but before he could strike, he was attacked by the other guards and killed. The younger brother saw this, and vowing he would take vengeance on the Raja, drew his sword and rushed up the stairs nonchalantly on a swinging cot. Tampy rushed at the Raja and raised
his sword to strike. The sword struck against the heavy beam of the low ceiling. This gave the quick-witted, strong Raja a fraction of a second to recover. He rushed at Tampy, wrested the sword from him, threw him to the ground, sat upon him, and plunged his dagger into his heart. The Raja then went to the window and gave the pre-arranged signal and ordered the men to expedite their work.119

By morning all the rebels had been arrested. They were arranged before the Raja and the trial proceeded. The four Brahman confederates were out-casted by having the figure of a dog branded on their foreheads, and were driven out of the land. The eight Pillamars and certain of their helpers were condemned to be hung. The execution took place in Padmanabhapuram at the same period. The wives and children of the Pillamars were given in slavery to the fishermen on the coast. The lands and properties of the Pillamars were confiscated the lands were added to Sircar lands and the buildings torn down, the materials being used to build parts of the Trivandrum temple. One historian closes the incident “Thus ended a race of chiefs who had been guilty of rebellion against the royal house for many hundreds of years and at whose hands the royal family had suffered injuries and wrongs of the most inhuman and atrocious character. Perfect order and peace now prevailed in the Country”.120

119 Ibid., p.2.
120 Shuugoomy Menon., op.cit., p.125.
In this southern taluk is the small temple where once a scene of great loyalty and heroine was enacted. Marthanda Varma, the Great lived in a most precarious life in the days when the Ettuvittil Pillamars were so powerful. His life was constantly sought and some of his escape were little short of miraculous. One day when the Raja was in this little temple, he suddenly discovered the place was surrounded by his enemies. There seemed little hope of escape. The priest, a loyal and heroic men, quickly changed clothing with the prince, gave him a pot of buttermilk and whispered some mantrams to him. He told the prince to go out through the crowd muttering these mantram and giving heed to no one, but to tell someone that the prince was hiding inside. The prince did as he was told and escaped. The threatening crowd rushed into the temple, saw someone in the dress of the prince, rushed at him and killed him. Only afterwards did they discover their mistake.121

The drive from Udayagiri to Nagercoil is one of particular beauty. The road winds through upon thousands of acres of paddy land. The country has well earned its name of 'the granary of the South'. These are the most extensive paddy fields in the State. There is a proverb which states that the paddy produced in Kuttanad, the paddy country in central Travancore, would severe only as seed for Nanchilnadu. All this vast acreage of paddy land is made available by the irrigation works headed by the Kodayar Lake and the Pechippa Dam, which has already been described. Irrigated land ensures two

121 Ibid., p.126.
crops a year. Parts of the road are bordered by narrow tanks covered with lotus. During certain seasons thousands of pink lotus with the vivid green of the paddy field in beauty. It is a sight one cannot soon forget. The road passes continually nearer the rocky mountain range which extends to the Cape. The variety of scenery is most pleasing.\textsuperscript{122}

Nanchilnad has had an eventful history. In the days when the Pandyas of Madura were at the zenith of their power, the whole of Southern Travancore was under their sway. It is evident from the architecture, the different type of people and from a study of their manners and customs that Tamil influence was uppermost.

About the close of the thirteenth century, the warrior king of Quilon, Jayasimha, conquered part of Nanchilnad. His son, Ravi Varma, brought the whole district under his sway. After his death, it is traditionally thought that a hunter, Konangi Koravan, rose to the position of ruler. His is a romantic story. One day when he was out with his two wives and one son, on Tadagai Malai, near Boothapandi, gathering fibre to make baskets, he struck the stem of a date palm with his knife and was amazed to see it turn into gold. Seeing a well nearby, they dipped all their implements into it, and watched them turn magically into gold.

They did the well from sight and kept their secret. In course of time Konangi became very wealthy and his influence grew more and more powerful.

\textsuperscript{122} Tourist Guide to Trivandrum, Dept of Kerala Tourism, Trivandrum, 2003, p.3.
Gradually the whole Country including Cape Comorin came under his sway. He ruled with kindness and was beloved by the people. The only tribute he asked was iron implements. The people and the country prospered. His son succeeded him, their rule extending over sixty-seven years. When his grandson came to the throne, he was greatly worried because he had no son.

At last the seventh wife bore him a son and the rejoicing was unbounded. All the people were invited to the first giving-of-rice ceremony. The Vellalas, a higher caste - were asked to stay behind when the other guests left. They were horrified when Nanji Koravan asked for one of their daughters to marry his son. At last one promised. The Vellalas conspired to kill their ruler. When the boy was five years old the marriage was arranged. To suit their designs, the Vellalas told the ruler of various customs the marriage must take place in an elaborately built stone mandapam.

The father of the bridge superintended the building and arranged some way so that it would collapse whenever he wished. During the ceremony, the Vellalas made the whole family of the Koravans sit inside the mandapam while the bride's party walked around the outside singing. At the right moment the building collapsed and the Koravan family were crushed to death. Another period of history was closed. Nanchilnad eventually came under the rule of the Raja of Travancore, and although from time to time foreigners attacked or

\[\text{Ibid.}, \ p.4\]
invaded the land, it remained fairly constantly under Travancore.\textsuperscript{124} About ten miles north of Nagercoil on the road which leads to the famous Mahendragiri hills, an ancient rock temple, estimated to be well over 1,2000 years old. It has in it an image of Avvaiyyar and an old image of Vishnu. The inscription was made during the time when the Chola kings were in possession of South Travancore.\textsuperscript{125}

The largest town in the south is Nagercoil. It has a population of 42,945. It comprises several small places, Vadaveswara and Kottar being the most important.\textsuperscript{126} The temple at Nagercoil is thought to have been originally a Jain temple. It was assumed by the Hindus and made into a Hindu temple. It has a shrine dedicated to Ananta, the serpent God. It is said that many serpents live about the temple, but anyone bitten by a serpent within a mile circuit will suffer no ill effects as the God is being worshipped so devoutly. Every year Pambumakad Nambudiri of North Travancore, a famous Nambudiri who has special powers over cobras visited this temple and performed certain ceremonies. Nagercoil is the headquarters of the L.M.S. in Travancore and has a large Christian population. Many ‘firsts’, such as the first English school, the first printing press, the first newspaper, have been due to the influence of the missionaries.\textsuperscript{127}

\textsuperscript{124} Nagam Aiya, V., \textit{op.cit.}, p. 220.
\textsuperscript{125} \textit{Ibid.}, p.221.
The starting of the L.M.S. work in Travancore leads almost like a legend of great antiquity. Maharasan, a villager who lived in the tiny village of Myladi, set out on a pilgrimage to seek for that enlightenment and spiritual peace which he could not find in the demon-worship practiced in his village. His purpose was to visit shrine after shrine in South India and at last reach Chidambaram. He did this, and when he reached Chidambaram he laid down in the temple court to sleep; and it is said that in a vision he saw someone in white bending over him, rebuking him for coming thus far, binding him to return to his own village, there to find his heart’s desire. The next day Maharasan and the nephew who accompanied him set out on their return journey.\textsuperscript{128} They stayed for a while with some Christian friends in Tanjore and it was there he embraced Christianity and was baptized with the name Vethamanikam. When the two travelers were asked, on reaching home, for the sacred rice and ashes supposedly brought from Chidambaram, Vethamanikam held out a copy of the Tamil New Testament saying ‘Here is the holy gift of the Lord of all Worlds’.\textsuperscript{129}

From then on Vethamanikam worked for the cause of Christianity. In 1805 he visited Tranquebar, the cradle of Protestantism in South India, and made the acquaintance of Mr. Ringletaub, a Prussian by birth, a Lutheran by religion, who had come to India on a Danish ship and who already made progress in the study of Tamil. At the request of Vethamanikam, Mr.

\textsuperscript{128} Velu Pillai, T.K., \textit{Velu Thampi Dalava} (Malayalam), p.65.
\textsuperscript{129} Narayana Panicker., \textit{History of Travancore} (Malayalam) Trivandrum, 1986, p.257
Ringletaub came to Travancore as the first Protestant missionary. His history is one of the great perseverance against almost superhuman odds, but also one of conquest. The first church was built in March 1809 at Myladi, very near to Cape Comorin.\textsuperscript{130}

The move to new headquarters was made by the second missionary in 1818, when Mr. Mead settled in Colonel Munro’s circuit bungalow at Nagercoil. The Colonel was most helpful and encouraging. Government also helped their work by granting them the land on which their present church, college, and mission buildings stand. The Nagercoil church is an outstanding example of the unswerving faith of those early missionaries. Much criticism and ridicule was offered because such a huge building was erected although this church still remains one of the largest in South India, with a seating capacity of two thousand, it is very often not large enough.\textsuperscript{131}

The first English school in Travancore was established by the L.M.S. in 1819, when the mission seminary was begun. The teaching of English had been regular since 1814. This seminary developed steadily until today it is a reputable second grade college. The first girl’s school was also started in Nagercoil in 1819 by Mrs. Mead.\textsuperscript{132} It was in this boarding school that embroidery and pillow lace making were first introduced. The lace industry grew to large proportions and continues to this day, making available most

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., p.258.
\textsuperscript{132} Hacker, I.H., \textit{op.cit.}, 1806-1906, p.504.
beautiful hand-made lace, that will rival any made in the World. In the days before the abolition of slavery the mission taught little slave girls to make lace and purchase their freedom.

With machinery and workmen from Tranquebar, the first printing press ever introduced into Travancore was set up (1819). The paper for this press was sent from England. It is interesting to note that it was with workman from this press that the Government Press in Trivandrum was started. At this time there was a great mass movement, when over 3,000 Shanars joined the church. All of this work was in the Tamil area. The mission desired to start work in the Malayalam area, which they did in Quilon in 1821. Several approaches were made towards starting work in Trivandrum, but Hindu prejudice against any Christian work so near the sacred pagoda was too strong and permission was not granted until 1838. Six years later the Neyyoor District was separately established and in 1838 the Parasala District was started.

At present, one of the best known and most outstanding features of the work of the L.M.S. is the medical work which heads up in the hospital at Neyyoor. This work was first started in 1840 by one of the first two medical missions ever sent out by the society. Due to various circumstances the work was not continually carried on until the hospital was built in 1861. Classes for medical evangelists were also started and offered new openings for young

\[134\] Ibid., p.55.
\[135\] Shungoonny Menon, P., op.cit., 1878, p.504.
men of the district. The hospital has now many branch hospitals under qualified men and many more dispensaries. Neyyoor hospital has an enviable reputation throughout India.\textsuperscript{136}

Any history, however brief, of this mission would be incomplete without mentioning the three severe and horrible persecutions to which the missionaries and their followers were subjected. The first was in connection with the insurrection headed by Dalawa Velu Thampi, when the Christians of Mylaudy had to flee to the hills and hide in caves. The second, in 1828-30, and the third in 1856 were really caste wars, provoked because the low caste women who became Christians wore cloths over the upper parts of their bodies - a custom allowed only to high caste women. There was much bloodshed, burning and pillaging of Christian homes and churches. The persecution was severe and horrible, yet instead of weakening, it strengthened the cause, and literally thousands of Shanars placed themselves under the guidance of the missionaries.

Whole villages destroyed their shrines, erected bamboo and palm leaf meeting-places and studied the Bible.\textsuperscript{137} Many of these temporary meeting-places later became permanent buildings to be used for schools on week days, and worship on Sunday. The days of persecution are long past and the mission is recognized both by government in their grants, the people in their attendance,

\textsuperscript{136} London Missionary Society, Nagercoil, 1818, p.54.
\textsuperscript{137} Agur, C.M., \textit{op.cit.}, 1906, p.701.
as contributing much to the growth and prosperity of the State.\footnote{Ibid., p. 702.} Although a few of the traveling officers of the Salvation Army visited the country Nagercoil during the few years following 1887, it was not until 1892 that this organization was definitely settled in Travancore.

Their first effort at permanent work was made at the request of Rev. Cox who invited the Army to work among the coolies on his coffee and tea estate in the Mahendragiri Hills. A group of workers had started work, about this time, in the district just beyond the Travancore lines. The response to their work here was not encouraging and the Army gradually withdrew to Nagercoil where they established their headquarters. They began to work among the depressed classes, where their message of faith and hope was heard. Village after village accepted Christianity. From then on their work went from success.\footnote{Sathianathan, S., National Church of India, Madras, Vol. XIV Jan, 1888, p.293.}

Life was not without trials, however, the path to success was not beaten smooth. When the leaders of the Army substituted Sunday a day of rest and worship, for the Sunday of continued labour, the caste people for whom the depressed classes worked, rose in indignation and wrath. The officers were cruelly beaten and all manner of obstacles were put in their way. The undaunted spirit with which the salvations continued their work speaks volumes for the conviction and trust which underlay their faith.
Schools were opened and teachers trained to carry on the work, special work for women was begun and industries were taught and practiced. The lay public knows perhaps best the work of the Catherine Booth hospital at Nagercoil. From a humble beginning to its present State, the hospital has been a source of immense benefit to the countryside. The hospital was commenced in 1897 by Dr. H. Andrews, who was killed afterwards on the western frontier of India, and posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for recusing wounded under fire.\textsuperscript{140} The hospital has 125 beds, while the seven branch hospitals have 102 beds. In-patients admitted to the parent hospitals and branches during 1932 numbered 3,316.

Outpatients numbered 29,032 and those who made more than two calls 63,319. A large number of eye cases are dealt with, many people coming from long distances. Every bed in this section is constantly filled. A good work is carried on among women and children, for whom a separate self-contained hospital is maintained, comprising maternity, surgical, medical and children’s blocks. The hospital is equipped throughout with electric power and piped water. It also has a well furnished and equipped X-ray and Diathermy Department and up-to-date operating theatres. A motor ambulance is also maintained.\textsuperscript{141}

Most of the branch Hospitals are in out-of-the way places and carry on a great work among the very poor people of Travancore. Negotiations are

\textsuperscript{140} South India Limited Church General Assembly, Madras, 1907, p.7.
\textsuperscript{141} Agur, C.M., \textit{op.cit.}, p. 168.
proceeding with regard to the opening of a Leper Asylum in Northern Travancore with forty beds. The Senior Medical Officer in addition of being physician to His Highness the Maharaja of Travancore, has been appointed a Deputy Durbar Physician. 142

The work of the Salvation Army missionaries also includes a Lace and Needlework Industrial Department at Nagercoil, which provides training and employment for young women an endeavour is also being made to establish an Industrial Department in Trivandrum, where boys attached to the boarding school may have an opportunity of learning bookbinding. There are two boarding schools in Nagercoil and one in Trivandrum, providing accommodation for 200 boys and girls. Membership in the Salvation Army at the close of 1932 was nearly 65,000. The Army managed many schools, mostly village Primary standard. There are 1,251 centres of work in Travancore.

With such numbers coming into practically daily touch with the high principles of the Army, it is obvious that the Salvation Army is of considerable influence in the State. 143 This ancient city is a part of Nagercoil, but forms the oldest part. ‘This town was a flourishing centre of commerce from a very early past and Ptolemy (AD150) mentions Kottiara as a metropolis with considerable trade, while Pliny calls the town Kottara, which is nearer approximation to its correct present-day designation. 144

142 Ibid., p.169
143 Church of South India the Movement towards Union 1900-47, p. 30.
The city is still a centre of trade and industry. The floral garlands and decorative pieces made here adorn all the grandest wedding halls. Weaving is one of the most notable industries. India have long been known as the home of the most excellent weaving and Travancore has had her share in this reputation. Most probably, the weavers were brought into Travancore from the Pandyan country. Having come to teach, they remained to live and work. The Saliyans, a weaver caste, live primarily around Kottar and Eraniel. They trace their original home to Gujarat, from which place they fled during the Muslim invasions.

They settled in Tanjore, Madura and Thirunelveli, finally coming to South Travancore. The heritage established has continued and now the weavers around Eraniel and Colachel produce thousands of yards of cloth annually. They spun their own yarn from locally raised cotton. The advent of spinning machinery practically annihilated this part of the industry. The handloom weaving was all done with mill-made yarn. The vogue for spinning has revived this industry to a certain extent, so that a part of the yardage now produced is pure khadi. Weaving vies with the palmyra is popular in this part of the Country.\(^{145}\)

The name of St. Francis Xavier is always connected with Kottar and indeed with the whole of South Travancore. There are many stories told and retold about this great saint, but like the legendary tale, they have gathered

\(^{145}\) *Letters to the Board of Directors of Foreign Missions in Europe and America*, Madras, 1900, p. 348.
colour through the generations. In reality St. Francis spent only about three months in Travancore in 1544, traveling from Cape Comorin to Quilon.\textsuperscript{146} He paid a few other short visits to Travancore. Popular belief says that the little St. Francis chapel in Kottar was built by the saint. It was built in commemoration of St. Francis who lived for a while in a little hut on the same spot. Tradition relates that it was here he was miraculously saved from fire, with which his enemies had surrounded him.

The invasion of Travancore by the Badagas is closely connected with fact and story in the life of St. Francis. These maravaes, as they were called, bore down on the villages on the fishery coast and at Cape Comorin, plundering and massacring mostly the Christian villages. The letters written by St. Francis during the time are full of concern and anxiety for the poor Christians who were so mercilessly treated. It is believed by historians that these Badagas were a tribe settled in the northern part of the Madurai and allowed by him to collect tribute due him from neighbouring States in his territory. The raids on the Christians extended over some months and the people lived in constant fear.\textsuperscript{147}

A more formidable invasion of Travancore by these men headed by the Naick action of the saint was at this time. It is said that the Raja was not prepared for this attack and the army which he managed so hastily to collect was in no way competent to withstand the attack. St. Francis allied himself,

\textsuperscript{146} Report of the South India Missionary Conference held at Madras, Jan, 2-5, 1900, p.26.
\textsuperscript{147} Thinamalar, Thagaval Kalangiam, Nagercoil, dated 13-04-2011, p.12.
with the Raja of Travancore. St. Francis then, taking his crucifix walked alone
towards the enemy.\textsuperscript{148} Placing himself before the foremost rank he said in a
loud voice, “In the name of God the terrible, I command you to halt”. They
halted. The others who were marching behind pressed them to go forwards but
they said they could not advance, a giant of enormous size was barring the way
he was dressed in black and his face was so resplendent that his countenance
blinded them. The higher officers ran up to see what had happened, the whole
army was seized with an indescribable terror and they fled in disorder.\textsuperscript{149}

The saint went barefooted, in ragged clothing, giving no thought to
himself, from village to village, preaching and teaching. The vast number of
conversions and the many miracles he performed left an indelible imprint on
the life of Travancore, especially in the coastal villages. An extract from one of
his many letters gives a picture of this great man at work. In this kingdom of
Travancore, where I am now, God has led many pagans to Jesus Christ His
Son. In the space of a month I have baptized more than ten thousand.

The method which I follow is this I arrive at a pagan village and call all
the inhabitants, men and women to assemble together. I then explain to them
the elements of Christian doctrines, teaches them that there is but one God,
Father, Son, and Holy spirit and after having invoked the three persons of the
one God I get them to make the sign of the Cross three times I next pass to the

\textsuperscript{148} Venacius, S., \textit{Thiruthalam Kottar} (Tamil), Nagercoil, 1998, p.27.
Confiteor, the Credo, the Paternoster and the Ave Maria which I recite aloud in Tamil, and which all, great and small, repeat after me. I afterwards explain to them in Tamil the Credo and the Decalogue.\(^{150}\) “When they are sufficiently prepared for Baptism, I tell them publicly to ask pardon of God for their past life. They do it in a loud voice so as to make impression on those who refuse to become Christians, to inspire them with the sanctity of Laws of God and make them despise their idolatrous worship. These heathens listen willingly when I explain to them the mysterious of our Faith. Even the wicked show me favour. But many are obstinate and deliberately reject the truth which they have acknowledged”.

“After a sermon suitable for the occasion, I ask each one of those who are waiting to be baptized, if he believes, without the least doubt, all the articles of the Faith. They all affirm that they believe, holding their hands crossed upon their breast. Then I baptize them and give to each his name written on a slip of paper. Once baptized, they bring me their wives and their children.\(^{151}\) After I have baptized them, I send them to demolish their temple and break the idols. I cannot describe the joy which this spectacle affords to me, when I see the idols broken by those who have worshipped them”.

“I leave in each village a copy of the catechism written in Tamil and I order it to be taught in the schools in the morning and in the afternoon. When I


\(^{151}\) Zaleski., *op.cit.*, p.104.
have finished in one village, I betake myself to another, visiting the Country in this manner, I gather its inhabitants into the fold of Christ. And the happiness which I experience, cannot express it either on paper or in words”.

When the matter of canonization of this saint was being considered, the stories of his miracles were retold, they were questioned. Eyewitness were found who gave incontrovertible evidence as to the validity of many of them. One of his greatest miracles was performed at Muttam, the little fishing village already mentioned.

One day St. Francis met a funeral procession, carrying the body of a youth who had died of a malignant fever ….led by the prayers of the parents and pitying their bereavement, he knelt down, raising his eyes to heaven, prayed to God for the life of the lad then he sprinkled the body with the holy water and bade them cut open the funeral should and when the body was seen, he made the sign of the Cross over it, and taking him by the hand, bade him in the name of Jesus to live, at once the youth rose up alive, an d he gave him sound and in good health to his parents.

It was no doubt that almost unbelievably vast amount of work of St. Francis did in Travancore, that has warranted popular belief in thinking that he was in Travancore over a number of years. Visitors always stop a few moments at the little chapel erected to his memory. It is easily accessible from the main road.

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152 Ibid., p.105.

Of great architectural beauty and antiquity are the stately gopurams which crown the temple of Suchindram. Second importance and wealth is from the Trivandrum temple, Suchindram is visited by thousands of pilgrims throughout the year. The temple is rich in tradition and Puranic lore. The story of its origin is about the sage Attri and his wife Anasuya, renowned for her chastity, which were doing penance in a hermitage at this place. Brahma, Vishnu and Siva wanted to test her chastity, distinguishing themselves as three Brahmans, went to the hermitage and begged alms.\textsuperscript{154}

A guest must be treated as a divine person, so in the absence of her husband, Anasuya set about to serve them. When they were seated for their food they told her they had each taken a vow that they would never eat food served by a person who wore any clothing. Confident of her own purity, Anasuya sprinkled holy water on them as she uttered a prayer. Immediately the three Brahmans were turned into suckling babes and Anasuya nursed them. Saraswati, Lakshmi and Parvati, the wives of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva came in search of their lords and finding them in the form of babes gave themselves up to serve penance to God Mahadeva. The babes were then changed back to Gods and Anasuya was amazed to find the three Gods before her. She fell at their feet and begged forgiveness. Her prayer was that she should be granted three children like them was answered when her son Dattareya was born, as in this child were all the essential virtues of the three Gods. In commemoration of

\textsuperscript{154} Sreedhana Menon, A., \textit{op.cit.}, p.157.
this event the temple at Suchindrum was erected and all three Gods are worshipped here.\textsuperscript{155}

Suchindrum takes its name from God Indra and means the place where Indra’s sins were forgiven’ or ‘Indra’s purified’. It seems that Indra could not free himself from a curse inflicted on him by Sage Gautama until he came to the temple at this place and worshipped. When he did, the effects of the curse were felt no more. Because of the special benefit received from this temple, Indra comes every night to worship before the Kailasa shrine. The inhabitants often tell how they hear the tinkle of the bells from Indra’s car as it stops at a place now called Therur, named from ther, or car.\textsuperscript{156}

Parasurama constructed towers, \textit{mandapams, corridors} and instituted several annual festivals, chief of which is the car festival celebrated annually in December.\textsuperscript{157} The temple has a large number of inscriptions which contain historical information about the temple, various gifts various rulers and important people, with dates. The stone carving is excellent some of the sculpture rank with the best to be found anywhere. The collections of jewels and images are very fine.\textsuperscript{158}

Cape Comorin, the Land’s end of India, is one of the famous places in this great Country. A curious point of land, world where one may stand on the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{155} http://en.wikipedia.org/wikiSuchindrum.
\textsuperscript{156} Gopalakrishnan M, \textit{op.cit.}, p.206.
\end{flushleft}
shore and watch the sun rise and set in the same ocean. It is rocky and somewhat barren. Were it otherwise, erosion would centuries ago have worn away the point and Cape Comorin would not exist. It is thought that land did extend a mile or more out, but the huge rocks and the rocky mountain range which extend to the Cape seem to prevent further encroachment.

Thus Cape, with the temple which stands there, is one of the seven sacred places of India. Pilgrims are always in attendance. The anglicized form Cape Comorin is taken from Kanyakumari - the virgin Goddess Kumari. She lives in the temple which was built almost at the water’s edge. This Goddess is still waiting for her bridegroom. It seems once upon a time marriage was arranged between Kumari and Lord Siva.

Gods and Goddesses visit the earth only during the night. All the preparations for the wedding were ready at the Cape, but the bridegroom delayed. Kumari, feeling anxious started out in search of Siva. She went as far as Vazhukkanpara, about half-way between the Cape and Suchindrum and fearing daylight would come she turned and fled back. The imprint of her foot on a rock at Vazhukkanpara is still to be seen. Siva was delayed and was able to reach only Suchindrum when the day dawned.

He was therefore forced to take refuge in the temple at Suchindrum where he still lives. The disappointed Goddess returned to the Cape temple without her bridegroom. All the various food prepared for the wedding feast were turned into sands. That is why small pebbles quiet like rice are found
abundantly on the coast and there are so many varieties of coloured sand in evidence.\(^{159}\)

The eastern gate of the temple is opened only twice in a year during certain festivals. Two stories about this are current. When the gates are opened the Goddess looks directly out into the sea. Once centuries ago some mariners were so attracted by the brilliant light from the jewels in the head-dress of the Goddess, that they mistook their course and crashed against the rocks and were all drowned.\(^{160}\) The other story tells how some men in small craft at sea, saw the flashes from the brilliant gems, came ashore and robbed the Goddess of her beautiful jewels. Whatever value the stories may have the fact remains that the gates are always closed, except at two festival times.\(^{161}\)

The Maharaja has a palace near the temple. The Residency and two first class traveller’s bungalows look out over the ocean. The latter are frequented by many visitors. There are several satroms and choultries where pilgrims used to stay. Bathing on the open beach is dangerous but just at the point masonry walls break the strength of the waves and bathing is safe. In the early morning there are always pilgrims bathing and worshipping there.\(^{162}\)

On the eastern coast is the village of Comorin, inhabited mostly by Roman Catholic fishermen. Often they are seen pulling their heavy nets. It was


\(^{160}\) Shungoonhy Menon, P., *op.cit.*, p.11.


in this little village that St. Francis Xavier worked to relieve the suffering caused by the raids of the merciless Badagas. The huge church seats a thousand worshippers.

Less than three miles up this eastern coast is an old fort, Vattacotta. This was part of the defence plan perfected by De Lannoy, during the reign of Marthanda Varma the Great. The South Travancore lines extend from this fort across the country to Aramboly, the mountain pass. Some earthwork defense lines were in existence before his reign (1729-1758) but these were strengthened and extended. Bastions were built at regular intervals and a fort gate at the pass. When Colonel St. Leger brought his forces through this part in 1801, a part of the lines was demolished.\textsuperscript{163} The Vattacotta Fort was left intact, as it stands today, a silent witness to the life and labours of bygone years. The only purpose the fort fulfils now is as camping ground for Boy Scouts and picnic parties and a sight for visitors. The buildings inside the fort once housed the garrison. The well and tank are practically useless now. The fort was well built and offers tribute to the efficiency and thoroughness of De Lannoy.\textsuperscript{164}

The way out of Travancore lies back through Nagercoil to Aramboly. Customs books must be signed before the visitor is allowed to leave. It has already been noted that the mountainous range which separates Travancore from the rest of South India rendered the State almost impregnable. Such natural protection against conquest-loving kings or ambitious plunderers made

\textsuperscript{163} Bassein, M., \textit{All India Travel Guide}, Madras, 1932, p.45.
\textsuperscript{164} \textit{Ibid.}, p.46
possible the continuance of Hindu culture on this part of the coast. The few mountain passes, nevertheless, offered temptation to the most courageous adventurers. The definite break in the chain of hills at Aramboly made possible the various attacks on South Travancore. The gap in the mountains is nearly three miles in width. Through this pass came the Pandyas, the Cholas, the Vijayanagar generals and the Nayak kings. The wealthy town of Kottar was a great attraction. But sooner or later all foreigners were driven away and the land left under the Raja of Travancore.  

Aramboly is eight miles from Nagercoil, and the Travancore frontier fifty-three and a half miles from Trivandrum. The main road through the pass continues on forty miles to Tinnevelly. When visitors leave Travancore, they leave the tropical greenery which was so beautiful and restful. The other side of the mountains is without the abundant rains of the West Coast, and is comparatively dry and barren. Visitors also leave the undulating Country and the mountains to make their way over flat level country. There is much to interest in Travancore, but not the least is the beautiful country with which nature has so generously endowed her.

From Tirunelveli the journey is continued in several directions. Both train lines and motor roads lead to Shencottai and Quilion to Madura and Madras or to Tuticorin. From Tuticorin an essay passage to Colombo may be established in the sea. Many visitors landed at Colombo and take the boat to

\[165\] Shungoony Menon, P., *op.cit.*, 506.
Tuticorin. The passage is for one night only and it is a direct way to Travancore. Train connections to Tirunelveli and car to Cape Comorin put this delightful place at the convenience of the public.\textsuperscript{166}

Sage Agasthiya, the first grammarian of good old Tamil was also the foremost of the Siddhars, the practitioners of herbal medicines. This sage is believed to have lived in this land’s end and there is also a village by name Agasteeswaram near Maruthuvamalai which owes its name to the dwarf sage. In this village, there is a temple dedicated to Agasteeswaramudaiyar which is believed to have been consecrated by Agasthiya himself.

Besides medicine and grammar, Agasthiya was also adept in Varma Sastra. General palm leaf records like “Varmani” and Varma Sastra were written by Agasthiya. Even today, this healing art of varmam treatment is also done by elders who are quite conversant with this method of treatment by applying Tamil medicines in required proportion. This method of treatment has proved successful in several cases.

The culture followed by the people of this district is mixed and it bears maximum influence from Travancore.\textsuperscript{167} Kathakali is a unique form of drama having its origin in Travancore. Kathakali, the story-dance is a relativity recent development of earlier dances, which arose out of religious expression through symbolical action. It is now played in the temples at Kuzhithurai, Thiruvattar,

\textsuperscript{166} Ibid., p. 6.
\textsuperscript{167} Velu Pillai, T.K., op.cit, Vol III, Trivandram, 1940, p.3.
Ponmana, Thirparappu, Neyvoor and Munchira in the Kanyakumari district twice a year during the festival seasons.\textsuperscript{168}

A fair is a gathering of people to display the products, to parade or display animals and often to enjoy associated carnival or funfair entertainment. 'Fayre' is an archaic spelling of fair, used mostly from the 15th to the 17th century.\textsuperscript{169} This spelling is now confusingly used for both fair and fare, the latter in the sense of food and drink. The word means a gathering of stalls and amusements for public entertainment.\textsuperscript{170} Activities at fairs vary widely. Some trade fairs are important regular business events where either product are traded between business people, as the Frankfurt Book Fair, where publishers sell book rights in other markets to other publishers or where products are showcased to largely consumer attendees, as for example in agricultural districts where they present opportunities to display and demonstrate the latest machinery in the market to farmers.\textsuperscript{171}

Fairs are also known by many different names around the World, such as agricultural show, exhibition and shows. Kanyakumari District has a number of fairs. Some are familiar and some are not. Kumari fairs are boosting the cultural strength of this District.\textsuperscript{172} \textit{Vavubali} is one of the important fair celebrated every year by the people of Kanyakumari district. It is celebrated on

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\textsuperscript{168} Ramanatha Ayyar, A.S., \textit{op.cit}, Vol. VI. Part II. P.4
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\textsuperscript{169} http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/fair.
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\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid., p.7.
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\textsuperscript{171} Personal Interview, K. Ismail, Maathavalayam Mosque, aged 49, dated 18-04-2009.
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\textsuperscript{172} Ramanatha Iyer, S., \textit{op.cit.}, 1983, p.54.
\end{flushright}
the day of Adi Amavasi (July). It is celebrated in a grand manner on the side of the Kuzhithurai Thamaraparani river in Vilavancode taluk of Kanyakumari district. This festival is also very popular in Kerala.

On the day of Vavubali a kind of food is prepared in ghee containing raw-rice, green-gram, jaggery, plantain and kurappalam etc. This pudding is then kept on a plantain leaf. In the middle of the plantain leaf a nilavilakku is kept. On its left the food prepared in ghee is placed and a puja is conducted by using saffron and plantain fruit. After this puja is over, the newly prepared food is served to the people who attend this festival. A portion of it is thrown to the crows, food which is untouched by the crows is mixed in water which are eaten by fish in the water. Thus the festival Vavubali is celebrated. In those days when this festival was conducted, there was a large crowd on both sides of the Kuzhithurai river and variety of plants were sold by the agriculturists to the people who assembled there. On seeing this, the former Kuzhithurai Municipal Chairman T.C. Kesava Pillai thought of conducting an exhibition during Vavubali on behalf of the Municipality and it is being conducted by the Municipality every year at Kuzhithurai.

On the day of Vavubali the agriculturists from different parts of the district with their different varieties of products like coconut, tapioca and ladies

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173 Personal Interview with Mr. Ravi, Seller, Kulizhithurai, aged 38, dated 10-07-2009,
174 Precept of Vavubali, Issued by Kuzhithurai Muncipality, 26-06-2010, pp, 1-5.
-finger bring to the exhibition halls. They also bring different kinds of vegetables and plants for selling. Those who come to see the exhibition, purchase these products and plants from the agriculturists. Kumari Carnival is organised for five days in Kanyakumari during the month of December or January. It is conducted under the banner of Kanyakumari to Kashmir, to stress the need for maintaining communal harmony and national integration. On the first day, 1,330 school students would take out a procession to highlight the importance of the 1,330 Thirukkural couplets.

Cultural programs are held by dancers from Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Assam and West Bengal. They would be held on the five days to attract foreign and domestic tourists. Light music programmes are conducted on all days in the premises of Poompuhar Shipping Corporation. Quiz and elocution competitions for college students are held at Scott Christian College, Nagercoil and at Women's Christian College and fashion show are arranged at Holy Cross College, Nagercoil.

The Collector convenes the meeting of principals. He releases the carnival. The Collector requires the cooperation of principals and people for the carnival's success. Five-day Kumari Carnival begins with a procession by the college students carrying placards of the 133 Tirukkural

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181 Personal Interview with Mr. Danabal Singh, Professor, Marthandam, aged 48, dated 05-01-2011.
couplets from the sunset point at Kanyakumari. The procession was flagged off by Collector. The carnival would be conducted every year. This would definitely attract tourists, students and the general public. The district administration and the Department of tourism would organize this festival in a grand manner. Programs such as sports events, folk arts, elocution contests and debates had been lined up for five days. The cultural programs would be conducted from first day to last day.

A festival is an event, usually and ordinarily staged by a local community, which centers on and celebrates some unique aspects of that community and the festival. Among many religions, a feast is a set of celebrations in honour of Gods. A feast and a festival are historically interchangeable. However, the term feast has also entered common secular parlance as a synonym for any large or elaborate meal. When used as in the meaning of a festival, most refers to a religious festival rather than a film or art festival.

The word feast derives from the Middle English, from Middle French word ‘festivus’, from the Latin word ‘festivus’. Festival was first recorded as a noun in 1589. Before it had been used as an adjective from the fourteenth century, meaning to celebrate a church holiday. The etymology of feast is very similar to that festival. A festival is a special occasion of feasting or

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183 Personal Interview with Mr. Malayan, Tourist Office, Kanyakumari, aged 52, dated 03-01-2011.
185 Ibid.
celebration, which is usually religious. There can be many different types of festivals, like Halloween and Christmas.

Kanyakumari festivals are integral parts of the culture of Kanyakumari, reflecting the religious beliefs and practices of the native population. Throughout the year, the district experiences a series of colorful, festive events, offering insight into the diverse cultural activities of the land. In fact, different types of Kanyakumari festivals infuse new life and hope into the minds of the natives, who are almost exhausted, struggling with the daily drudgeries of life.\textsuperscript{186}

Some of the most important festivals that are held here include Chitra Purnima festival, Cape festival, Navratri and Holy. Chitra Purnima festival in Kanyakumari is usually being celebrated in the first week of the month of May, whereas Navratri takes place in the last week of October. The mixed culture of this district enables its people to celebrate with equal ease and comfort various festivals temples, churches and mosques.\textsuperscript{187}

Chitra Poomima is a unique Tamil festival observed on the full moon day in the Tamil month of Chitirai (April-May). The day is dedicated to Chitragupta. He is the official keeper of deeds in the abode of Yama. It is believed that bathing in holy rivers and temple ponds on the day would wash away the sins committed. So a number of people come to Kanyakumari and

\textsuperscript{186} Subramaniam, K., \textit{Traditional Festivals of South Travancore}, Trivandram, 2000, p.1
\textsuperscript{187} Ibid., p. 2.
take bath in meeting place of the three Oceans.\textsuperscript{188} The Cape Comorin festival is celebrated in the month of October. The festival is celebrated in a grand manner, and it stretches for three days. Various colourful cultural programmes are organized for the entertainment of the people.\textsuperscript{189}

Artists from the fields of music and dance add more colour to the festive spirits of their heart warming performance. During this time, tourists visit in large numbers to enjoy the festive spirits. Graceful movements, rhythmic dance steps, hypnotizing, sunrise and sunsets create indescribably beautiful moments.\textsuperscript{190}

*Navratri* is a Hindu festival. The word '*Navratri*' literally means nine nights in Sanskrit, *nava* meaning nine and *ratri* meaning nights.\textsuperscript{191} During these nine nights and ten days, nine forms of Shakti /Devi are worshipped. The 10th day is commonly referred to as Vijayadashami or Dussehra. Navaratri festival is familiar in Kanyakumari District. In earlier times, *Navaratri puja* was a State ceremony at Padmanabhapuram Navaratri Mandapam situated on the Padmanabhapuram Palace premises, the then capital of erstwhile Travancore.\textsuperscript{192} The worship of the *Panchaloha idol* (an amalgam of five metels) of Goddess Saraswati in the temple at the Padmanabhapuram Palace was a grand ceremony.

\textsuperscript{188} Subramaniam, K., \textit{op.cit.}, p.7.
\textsuperscript{189} Personal Interview with Mr. Malayan, Tourist Office, Kanyakumari, aged 52, dated 03-01-2011.
\textsuperscript{190} http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cape_Comorin_festival.
\textsuperscript{191} http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cape_Comorin_festival.
\textsuperscript{192} Subramaniam, K., \textit{op.cit.}, p. 66.
However, with the shifting of the capital from Padmanabhapuram to Thiruvananthapuram in the 18th century during of Karthika Tirunal Rama Varma (famous as Dharma Raja), the venue of the Navratri festivities got relocated to 'Navratri Mandapam' in Valiakottaram. A unique feature is that the idol of Aswati is not an 'Utsava vigraha' but it takes on the nature of 'Moola Vigraha'. When the idol is taken out of the temple, a lamp is lit in its place and regular puja is referred there. Till today the royal family of erstwhile Travancore has honoured the promise given by the ruling Chera king in the ninth century AD to the ailing Tamil Kambar to conduct the Navaratri festival wherever the family resided. Since then every year in the Malayalam month of Kanni the Navaratri festival is conducted, says the administrator, Parmeshwar Nair. Every year, on the first day of the festival, the idol of Goddess Saraswati is brought on a caparisoned elephant by the pujari from the Padmanabhapuram Thevarakettu in a grand procession. The deities of Velayuda Perumal from Velimala and Munnutu Nagama from Suchindram is brought to the city on a silver horse.

The grand procession ends at the Navaratri Mandapam, which is situated on the right side of the east Gopuram of the Padmanabha Swamy temple in Thiruvananthapuram. When the procession reaches the Navaratri Mandapam, it is received by the head of the royal family of erstwhile

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195 Subramaniam, K., op.cit., p. 67.
196 Personal Interview with Mr.Arul, Professor, Marthandam, aged 35, dated 03-10-2011
Travancore. The Saraswati Amman is then taken inside the *nalukettu* from where she is moved to the sanctum in the Chokita *Mandapam* the next morning. Velayuda Perumal proceeds to the Aryasala temple and Munnutu Nagamma to Chenthitha temple.\(^{197}\)

A special music concert by renowned Carnatic musicians is held every evening for nine days at *Navaratri Mandapam (Chokita Mandapam)* in Thiruvananthapuram, between 6 pm and 8.30 pm in praise of Saraswati. There is an applause at the end of each song making the atmosphere very serene and devotional.\(^{198}\)

In the earlier days, the Navaratri festival devotionals, dance recitals, chanting of the *Vedas, Grantha puja, Ayudha puja*, scholarly discussions and debates on the *Puranas*. The concerts are preceded by the rendition of “Thodayam Mangalam” sung by the Mullamoodu Bhagavatara and a song in praise of Lord Ganesha “Paripahi Ganadhipa” in Raga Saveri, composed by Swati Tirunal himself.\(^{199}\) The music concerts, known as “Navaratri Prabhandam” are compositions of Swati Tirunal. He himself confided the nine *kirtis* in chaste Sanskrit in varying strengths and set them to some of the finest *ragas* in Carnatic music so that they could be sung as a main piece on each day. The order in which the songs are to be sung had been stipulated by Swati Tirunal and are sung in the same sequence, one on each day of the festival of

198 Personal Interview with Mr. Thampi, Professor, Marthandam, aged 34, dated 03-10-2011.
199 *Dina Thanthi*, Thahaval Kalangiyam, Nagercoil, 05-03-2009, p.8
nine nights. During the first three days, Devi is worshipped as Saraswati, the next three days as Lakshmi, and as Durga on the last three days.  

Finally, after vidyarambham, Saraswati Amman is taken to the nalukettu from the sanctum for nallirupu, where it is believed that the Goddess is resting for two days. On the third day, Velayutha Perumal and Munnutu Nagamma are taken to the Poojapura mandapam for celebrations where they await the arrival of Saraswati Amman. On the morning of the 12th day, Saraswati Amman is escorted back on caparisoned elephants to the Poojapura mandapam and together with Velayutha Perumal and Munnutu Nagamma they are taken in a procession to their respective temples.

The Navaratri festival is celebrated in Kanyakumari Bhagavathi Amman temple in the months of September and October. This celebration is also conducted for ten days. On these days the Amman appears in a meditative position in Kolu Mahal. Special anointments, benevolent offering, melodious orchestras, spiritual speeches, nathaswaram orchestras, vehicle procession, rallies will be conducted every day. The 10th day is the special day, on that day Bhagavathi Amman appears with her ornamented silver horse. The believers of Kanyakumari district participate in the function in order to get Amman’s blessings. A number of foreign tourists also participate in this

\[200\] Ibid.,
\[202\] Navaratri Programme list of Bhagavathi Amman Temple, Kanyakumari, 2011.
\[203\] Subramanian, K., op.cit., p.15.
festival. Afternoon food is arranged to the people as a benevolent offering. The Amman wears the lemon garland and prepares to initiate the procession towards Mahathanapuram.

In the front of the rally Darmakarthas appear with their and arrow. The cultural arts such as Jandi melam, Pomalattam, Singari melam, Nathaswaram and vernacular dances are accompanying this procession. The procession begins from Kanyakumari Bhagavathi Amman temple and passes through Sannathi theru, Therku Rathaveethi, Melarathaveethi, Vadakurathaveeti, main road, Railway corner, Vivekananda puram, fourway path and ends in Parivatipuram. In this event Giant Panasuran was killed by Bhagavathi Amman.

Thousands of followers attend this festival and offer lemon garlands and coconut plantain to the Amman as a sacrifice. After this program Amman returns to Kanyakumari Kaariyakaara Mahal on her silver horse vehicle. In the 10 o’clock Aaratu programme also conduct in Triveni sangamam. After this event Bhagavathi Amman enters the temple through eastern gate and it is continued by fire crackers programme.

Thus the festival is conducted every year. This programme is also organized by Kanyakumari Temple Commanders, Nagercoil Devaswam Board

205 Personal interview with Mr. Raju, Carpenter, Mahathanapuram, aged 39, dated 07.10.2011.
Association and Kanyakumari Amman temple Pakthargal Seva Sugam.\textsuperscript{207} In the Nagaraja Temple at Nagercoil, the annual festival is celebrated for ten days during the Tamil month of “Thai” (January - February). Thousands of people from different parts of the district took part in the car festival of the Nagaraja temple. Special \textit{pujas} and \textit{abhishekams} were performed to the presiding deities. Later the idols were mounted in decorated cars and pulled by the devotees through four car streets here.\textsuperscript{208}

The Thanumalayan Temple is of importance to both Shaivaites and Vaishnavite Sects of Hinduism. The festival of the Suchindram temple is mainly in a Tamil month of \textit{Margazhi} (December-January) for ten days.\textsuperscript{209}

On the festival days, the deity is taken in procession on the streets. On the ninth day car festival takes place. The devotees every year drew the three cars of Lord Ganesa Swamy and Amman. Lakhs of people join and take part in dragging the thick rope of the chariot on the procession route. It presents a festive look. On the tenth day, the float festival is celebrated and thousands of people throng to witness this.\textsuperscript{210}

Bright colourful lights and flowers adore the decorated float on the water tank and the deity along with Goddess Uma Devi is beautifully decorated and in the middle of the float. The float comes round the mandapam to the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[207] \textit{Ibid.}, p. 14.
\item[208] \textit{Thinakaran} (Tamil daily), Nagercoil, dated 09.02.1999, p.8.
\item[210] Gopalakrishnan, M., \textit{op.cit.}, p.207.
\end{footnotes}
great voice of the huge crowd gathered there. In the months of *Avani* and *Masi* also, the celebrations take place in this temple.\textsuperscript{211}

The car festival at Suchindram Thanumalayan temple attracts large number of people from Kanyakumari District and different parts of India. The Suchindram temple is very famous and popular among the devotees. Prayers of devotees for marriage and progeny are fulfilled by the Lord. Devotees who visit this temple and sincerely worship the deities and are sure to be blessed by the grace of the Almighty.\textsuperscript{212}

In the Bhagavathi temple at Mandaikad, the annual festival lasts for ten days being the month of *Kumbham* (March). It is celebrated by the board and the Krishnapuram Haindava Seva Sangam. This is one of the biggest festivals in Kanyakumari District. The *Kodai* festival conducted on the tenth day. It falls on the last Tuesday of the month. On every Friday, a ceremony called *Valia Padukkai* is conducted. On Tuesday night another ceremony called *Odukku Puja* is conducted. Religious discourses are arranged during the annual festival and they are attended by people from different parts of Kerala.\textsuperscript{213}

Sri Boothalingaswamy temple is located in Boothapondai. Lord Siva is the God of this temple. The place is renowned for its Car festival during the Tamil month of *Thai* (January-February). The ‘Car’\textsuperscript{214} is the heaviest in

\textsuperscript{211} Sreedhara Menon, A., *op.cit.*, p.159.
\textsuperscript{213} Subramaniam, K., *op.cit.*, p.45.
\textsuperscript{214} Subramaniam, K., *op.cit.*, p.74.
Kanyakumari district whereas the biggest is the one at Suchindram. On the festival days, the deity is taken in procession on the streets. The devotees draw the car every year. Thousands of people join and participate in dragging the thick rope of the chariot on the procession route.\textsuperscript{215} It presents a festive look. Bright colorful lights and flowers adore the decorated float on the water tank.

The boat comes round the mandapam to the great rejoice of the huge crowd gathered there. The car festival at Boothapondai Boothalinga swamy temple attracts large number of crowds of Kanyakumari District and different parts of Tamilnadu. The Boothalinga swamy temple is famous and popular among the devotees.\textsuperscript{216} Prayers of devotees for important events are fulfilled by the Lord. Devotees to visit this temple and sincerely worship the deities are sure to be blessed by the grace of the Almighty.

The \textit{Ayya Vaikunda Avataram} is a festival celebrated by the followers of \textit{Ayya vazhi} on the 20\textsuperscript{th} day of the Tamil Month of \textit{Masi}, the date on which the \textit{Ayya vazhi} followers believe that Lord Vaikundar arose from the sea at Tiruchendur as the son of Mummorthies to destroy the evil spirit of Kali and change the \textit{Kaliyukam} into \textit{Dharma Yukam}.\textsuperscript{217} This is the only Ayyacazhi festival is celebrated at a time in all worship centres of Ayyavazhi on 19\textsuperscript{th} \textit{Masi}, before the date of incarnation of Vaikundar.

\textsuperscript{215} In Tamil the Car is known as \textit{Thiruther}.

\textsuperscript{216} \textit{Thina Malar}, Thahaval Kalangiyam, Bhoothalingaswamy Therotam, Nagercoil, 2009.

A grand procession originates from Thiruchendur to Nagercoil on the 19th Masi and another procession starts from Thiruvananthapuram to Nagercoil, on the date representing the release of Lord Vaikundar from the jail of the Travancore government.  

Both the Thiruchendur and Thiruvananthapuram processions unifies at the ‘Vaikunda Jyothi’ and is lighted on the top of a hillock Vaikunda Malaivilai. Then the procession proceeds to Nagercoil. A religious conference is there in Nagercoil. Eminent persons participate in the conference. It is followed by religious programs. All Ayyavazhi devotees stay there. This is one of the largest festivals of the district which attracts a large crowd.

On the next day the 20th of Masi, ‘The great Masi Procession’ begins early in morning from Nagercoil. The ‘Payyan’ would lead the procession. A procession in which the Akilattirattu Ammanai (leaf version) is sacredly placed. This is a foot procession and people walk flowing the vahana, chanting Ayya ‘Siva-siva Siva-siva Ara-kara Ara-kara’. The participants will hold a saffron flag in their hands. Decorated elephants and horses participated in this procession.

The procession goes through Edalakudi, Suchindrum, Vazukamparai and north Thamaraikulam. As a sign of religious harmony, people of different

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220 He is the present Pattathu Ayya of Swamithoppu pathi.
faiths, Christians at Kottar, Muslims at Edalakkudi and Hindu at Suchindram; welcome the procession by offering garlands on the way. The procession reaches Swamithoppe at 12 noon and goes to the Muthirikkinaru first and through the four car streets (Ratha veethi) of Swamithoppen pathi. Then it goes round the Santhana veeti, the inner-circumambulating route of pathi. Before entering the Pathi the people handed over the flags at the pathi.  

Lakhs of Ayyavazhi followers participated in this procession and thousands of vehicles followed. So the transport on Nagercoil-Kanyakumari Highway are halted on that day till noon. This is one of the largest festivals of the State, which attracts a huge crowd beyond the State. Tamilnadu government declared a public holiday from 1993 and for Tirunelveli and Tuticorin from the year 2006.

Murugan and Valli’s marriage is celebrated with great splendor in the Tamil month of Panguni. This Tirukkalyanam is an enactment of the divine wedding and is attended by thousands of pilgrims from all over the State. The seven-day festival begins in the star of Anuradha in the Tamil month of Panguni.

Thookkam is an offering by the devotees to Sree Bhadrakali temple at Kollamcodu. Wedded couples offer thookkam for their children who are one year old or below. They offer thookkam for Sree Bhadrakali when children

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224 Subramaniam, K., *op.cit.*, p.81.
were born healthy by the grace of the Goddess. Every year there would be more than 1200 *thookkams*.225

The duration of the festival is ten days. On the first day the deity would be taken to Venkanji from Kollemcode. The deity resided in Venkanji until the festival is over. The devotees should register their offering on the fourth day of the festival. The 10th day is the final day when the major festival called *thookkam* is conducted. The devotee would hand over the child to a ‘person’226, who is hung by means of a hook at the end of the bow (*villu*) of the cart. There are two bows made up of wood had length of 45 each. Each carries two ‘Thookkakarans’, each Thookkakaran carries a child in his hand. In each cart there would be four children. The cart is pulled by the people around the temple. *Thookkam* has directly performed and it is hard to explain the divine experience that is felt. The devotees offer gifts and money as compliments to the *Thookkakaran*.227

The Devaswom Trust makes all the necessary arrangements. The temple is under the control of Sree Bhadra Kali Devaswom Trust which consists of eleven elected members of eleven Nair families. All the pujas and offerings are made by the blacksmith pujaris who are appointed by the Devaswom Trust. A marathon race of Shivalaya Ottam on Shivaratri day is sacred to Shivalayas in Kanyakumari District. On Shivaratri, devotees wearing saffron robs and

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226 The person is known as Thookkaakaran.
uttering the words ‘Govinda, Govinda’ start from Tirumala and finish their marathon pilgrimage at Tirunattalam, covering nearly fifty miles within twenty four hours.228

There is a story to explain the origin of the marathon race. Yadhishthira required the milk of Purushamirgam, otherwise known as ‘Vyagrapadha’229 to complete certain yoga. The mighty beast was a highly devoted Sivabhaktha and had strong aversion to Vishnu and his devotees. Self-conceited Bhima undertook to bring the milk of the beast. To subdue the haughtiness of Bhima and to teach a lesson to Purushamirgam that shiva and Vishnu are one, Sri Krishna gave twelve stones to Bhima, advising him to drop each stone as and when he needed help. With half mind, Bhima received the stones and started his journey.230

Bhima reached the jungle where the beast was in deep meditation. Uttering the words “Govinda, Govinda” he tried to get milk from the beast. When the beast heard the words “Govinda” its concentration was disturbed and the image of Sivalinga became Vishnu in its eyes. Engaged at this interruption the beast caught hold of Bhima. Unable to escape from its clutches he dropped one of the stones, from which sprang up a Shiva shrine. Being a devotee of Shiva, the beast proceeded to offer worship.231

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228 Report on Twelve Sivalayas (Unpublished handwritten Manuscript) p.15.
229 It is halfman and half beast.
230 Padmanabhan, S., Sivalaya Ottam (Tamil), Nagercoil, 2005, p.38.
231 Personal interview with S. Anish, Lord Siva follower, Vellukuri, aged 57, 26-02-2009.
After some time Bhima again tried to obtain the milk, uttering the words, “Govind, Govinda”\textsuperscript{232}. The beast chased Bhima for a few miles and caught hold of him. Another stone was dropped on the spot, where one more shrine of Siva arose. Thus the twelve stones created twelve sacred Sivalayas. Finally when all the stones were exhausted, Bhima was with one foot within the area of the latter’s control and another outside. Bhima argued that he should be freed for the above season. The beast who would not disturb anybody in the area beyond his control. Presented to an arbitration of the dispute by Yudhishthirar who settled the dispute, saying half of Bhima’s body which was within the jurisdiction of the beast belonged. Deeply touched by the impartial verdict of Yudhishirar, the beast freed Bhima and willingly supplied milk for the fulfillment of the \textit{yaga}.\textsuperscript{233}

The haughtiness of Bhima, was subdued and the false notion of Manushamirgam was also changed by these incidents. It is believed that Bhima and Yagrapadha started their race from Thirumala and finished it at Thirunattalam. Agniswaranpparai near Tirumala temple is said to be the abode of the saint.\textsuperscript{234}

A ten days festival is also conducted in the month of November to December of every year in St. Xavier’s Church at Kottar. Hundreds of people from different parts of Kanyakumari district witness the car festival and offer

\textsuperscript{232} Daily Thanti, Tamil daily, Nagercoil edition, 27-02-2011, p.12.
\textsuperscript{233} Report on Twelve Sivalayas, p.10.
\textsuperscript{234} Padmanabhan, S., \textit{op.cit.}, 2005, p.38.
prayers.\textsuperscript{235} According to tradition St. Francis Xavier an outstanding and dedicated priest visited the coastal areas of Tamilnadu from Goa and he did not miss the opportunity of visiting Kottar in Kanyakumari district, which was a commercial centre at that time. During his way at Kottar, he used to worship St. Mary in the small temple.\textsuperscript{236}

He was popularly known as ‘\textit{Valiya Pandaram}’ among the people of Kottar. While he was in Kottar, he averted the invasion of Padagas on the people of Venad, which was appreciated by the king, who became closer to the priest. In recognition to St. Francis Xavier’s services, the king allotted a land for him for the purpose of constructing a Catholic church at Kottar. In 1942, in commemoration of the fourth centenary of a arrival of St. Francis Xavier in India, a beautiful tower to the saint, a grotto to Our Mother and a small shrine to St. Ignatius, who sent him to India, were constructed in the Catheral premises.\textsuperscript{237} In 1955, the church was further extended and the Chapel of Our Lady was incorporated into the enlarged church. The church St. Francis Xavier enjoys a great fame as a place of miracles from early times.

The annual festival was celebrated for ten days. The procession passed though Xavier street, Asarimar street, Kambolam road, railway road, Cape road and reached the church premises, with traditional fervor and offerings salt and pepper. Thousands joined to celebrate the feast of St.  

\textsuperscript{235} Subramanian, K., \textit{op.cit.}, p.87.  
\textsuperscript{236} Pradmanabhan, S., \textit{op.cit.}, p.10.  
Francis Xavier in Kottar. The district administration also declared a local holiday and police made elaborate security arrangements. The district administration provided infrastructure and the transport operated special buses from various destinations to Kottar.

Skanda Shasti festival like most other Hindu festivals celebrates the victory of virtue over evil. Skanda is also known as Lord Muruga, Subramanya and Kartikeaya. Skanda Puranam narrates the origin and deeds of Lord Muruga. The popular belief is that Lord Muruga killed Soorapadadman with his Vel and this birthday of Lord Ganesa, the God of wisdom. Ganesh Chathurthi falls on the day of the Hindu month of Bhadrapada, which falls around August or September. The occasion becomes very lively and enthusiastic with the devotional songs, dances and drum beats being a part of the procession observed by the devotees of Lord Ganesha, are part of the festivities. Ganesh Chathurti is the only festival that involves and welcomes the participation of general public.

Ganesh Chathurthi festival is celebrated grandly in Kanyakumari District. The preparation starts one month in advance, with great enthusiasm, to celebrate this suspicious occasion. The festival starts with the installation of beautifully decorated idols and show of religious themes. The occasion also sees various cultural events being held every where, in which people participate

240 Subramaniam, K., op.cit., p. 43.
with interest. After celebration, the time of farewell comes and the idol of the beloved God is immersed in water. The celebration ends with the immersion, accompanied by loud shouts of ‘Ganapati Bappa Moraiya’.

Deepavali is celebrated all over the district as the festival of lights. It is mainly celebrated by the Hindus. It falls on the preceeding day of the New Moon in the month of Thulam (October - November). It is supposed to commemorate the distinction of the Demon God, Narakasura, by Srikrishna. It lasts for two days, that is the 13\textsuperscript{th} and 14\textsuperscript{th} of the dark half of Kartika according to some or the 14\textsuperscript{th} and 15\textsuperscript{th} according to others. The day begins with a ritual bath and the devotee himself to keep the “Law of three rights”, eating food without salt and sleeping on the floor. He spends the day in devotion to Krishna. In the evening a lamp is offered to Yama with prayer. In the next day morning an oil bath is obligatory for all those who are afraid of Naraka, the World of the dead.

On this day Lakshmi, the Goddess of prosperity is said to reside in the oil this bath brings the bather in direct contact with the sources of wealth and sanctity. This bath frees man from the World of sorrows. On this day people dress in their best, go about greeting their friends and exchange gifts. The womenfolk wave lights before their family members. The night is spend in virgil, reading of sacred texts and chanting hymns. As such, Deepavali is not merely a thanks giving feast.

\textsuperscript{241} Personal Interview with Mr. Suresh, Local Resident, Kottar, aged 37, dated 12-06-2010.

In order to realize the meaning of Deepavali, we need to understand the significance of three elements that seem to be central to this celebration. It is first of all the commemoration of the good rule of Bali. This commemorations not only dates back to the wonderful time people had when Bali was the king, but also carries a hope that Bali will return and once again people will be happy.\textsuperscript{243} The celebration begins and ends with a remembrance of Yama. Lastly, this is a festival of lights.

There are certain festivals in Kanyakumari district which have an agricultural background, of these the Thai Pongal and Mattu Pongal deserve notice. Thai Pongal falls on the first day of \textit{Makaram} (January-February). It is a harvest festival. The day following Thai Pongal is set apart for treating cows and bulls which have been service to people in the previous agricultural season (Mattu Pangal). They are bathed, decorated and fed. The animals are not made to work on that day. In some villages, the game of letting the cocks fight is common during \textit{Pongal}, which saw large crowds.\textsuperscript{244}

Onam, one of the important festivals of this district. It falls in the month of \textit{Chingam} (August-September). It is a harvest festival.\textsuperscript{245} There are several legends regarding its origin. There are references to Onam in ancient literature and descriptions. Madurai Kanchi refers to the Onam celebrations in Madurai in the month \textit{Chingam}. Some of the inscriptions discovered from Trikkara give

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[\textsuperscript{241}] Pauls, S., \textit{Major Hindu Festivals}, Bangalore, 1998, p.103.
\item[\textsuperscript{244}] Sreethara Menon, A., \textit{Op.cit.}, p.75.
\item[\textsuperscript{245}] Sugumaran, M., \textit{Festivals of Travancore}, Trivandrum, 2001, p.32.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
us details of the important days of the Onam festival are \textit{Utradam} and \textit{Tiruvonam} days. On the day of Thiruvonam a grand feast is held in every home.\textsuperscript{246}

Onam has certain social aspects. It provides an occasion for family get-together. They usually come home to celebrate Onam. It is also an occasion for exchange of gifts. The head of the family presents clothes as gift to the junior members, servants and tenants. It has also been a custom for tenants to give presents to the Land-Lord in the form of vegetables and plantain fruits. Pongal singing is quite popular during Onam. A number of folk songs are sung by the women and children who are on the swing.\textsuperscript{247}

The story of Mahabali is very popular in and non Brahminical adaptation of the story is the fifth incarnation of God Vishnu. In the orthodox vision, which states back to the Rig Veda, long before the cult of Vishnu reached South India. \textit{Vavubali} appears as the demon king Bali of the race of the Asuras, who becomes so powerful in his magic that he gains control over the earth, and even the Gods themselves threatened.\textsuperscript{248} The Lord Vishnu is deputed to save the Brahminical deities from this titanic magician and he assumes the form of an ugly and logical dwarf who one day appears before Bali as a holy beggar and asks a boon-the gift that such land as he can cover in three feet.\textsuperscript{249}

\textsuperscript{246} Shopra and Prabha., Encyclopaedia of India. New Delhi, 1988, p.285.
\textsuperscript{247} Daniel Jeyaraj., \textit{Ganaeology of the South Indian Deities}, Madras 1993, p.179.
\textsuperscript{248} Shungoonny Menon, P., \textit{op.cit.}, p.10.
\textsuperscript{249} Sugumaran, M., \textit{op.cit.}, p.33.
When Bali unsuspiciously agrees, begins to stride, and even as he make the first step he grows gigantic that in boats, the *Chundan Valloms*, with their tall ornamental sterns and their hundred laddlers, whose very name and form look back to the age when the Gods of the Brahmans were still in Kerala and the people worshipped the Nagas, the deities who lived like Mahabali in the underworld.²⁵⁰ The people of Kerala made Onam a unique festival of their own. This celebration of Onam is remarkable. Wherever the people of Kerala found in the World there they celebrate Onam. The celebration of Onam keeps among the people.²⁵¹

Christmas celebration is celebrated by the Christian people of Kanyakumari District. Feast of the nativity of Lord Jesus, which falls on December 25, commemorates the birth of Jesus Christ. It is the most popular commemoration of the Church year. Its observance as the birthday of the Saviour is attended with secular customs often drawn from pagan sources. Christian on December 25th is first down to have been celebrated in Rome in the second quarter of the 4th century. Christmas began to be celebrated at about the same time in Antioch as in Constantinople.²⁵²

The introduction of Christmas to other parts of the east can be passed over quickly. In the Eastern Church Christmas commemorates the birth of Christ together with the visit of the shepherds and the adoration of the Magi. In

²⁵¹ Personal interview with Mr. Sundram, Teacher, Parasalai, aged 46, 23-04-2009.
the Western Church the birth and the shepherds are only remembered, for the
doration of the Magi is attached to Epiphany.\textsuperscript{253}

In the Roman Catholic Church three masses are performed on Christmas day. The first is at midnight and the last at dawn. Churches usually display a crib with plaster or wooden figures of the Holy family, the worshipping shepherds and the animals of the stable in which Christ was born. Such cribs are sometimes set out by families in their homes at Christmas time.

The traditional customs connected with Christmas have been derived from several sources as a result of the coincidence of the feast of the Nativity of Christ and the pagan agricultural and solar observances at midwinter. In the Roman world saturnalia (December 17-24) is a time of merry making and exchange of presents. But, enough Christmas festivities were indirectly influenced by these customs, the fact that Christmas was celebrated on the birthday of the unconquered, sun gave the season a solar background, connected with the Kalends of January. (Jan. 1, the Roman New year). At that time houses were decorated with lights, and presents were given to children and the poor. Special food and good fellowship, cakes, greenery trees, gifts and greetings, all commemorated different aspects of this festive season.\textsuperscript{254}

\textsuperscript{254} Agur, C.M., \textit{op.cit.}, p.120.