CHAPTER - I

PROFILE OF KANYKUMARI DISTRICT

Tourism in Kanyakumari District attracted the world in different aspects. The area is surrounded by majestic hills and plains bordered by colourful sea-shores, fringed with coconut trees and paddy field. Here and there are few elevated patches of the red cliffs with undulating valleys and plains between the mountainous terrain and the sea-coast, so closely interwoven with temples and churches and other edifies the District. Kanyakumari comprises of an area of 1672sq.km. It occupies 1.29% of the total extend of Tamil Nadu. It ranks first in literacy among other Districts in Tamilnadu. Its headquarters is Nagercoil. Total population of this District is 18,70,374. Among them male 9,26,345 and female 9,44,029. Major towns of the District are Nagercoil, Marthandam and Kanyakumari. People speak Tamil, Malayalam and English languages.¹

Kanyakumari District is triangular in shape. It is the southernmost District of Tamilnadu. The District lies between 77°15' and 77°36' of the eastern longitude and 8°35' of the northern latitude.² The District is bounded by Tirunelveli District on the north and the east. The south eastern boundary is the Gulf of Mannar. On the south and the southwest boundaries are the Indian Ocean and the Arabian sea on the west and north-west is bounded by Kerala. It

is bounded by Bay of Bengal on the east, Arabian Sea on the west and Indian Ocean on the south and it served as natural boundaries. This District has four taluks Agasteeswaram, Vilavancode, Thovalai and Kalkulam. The name "Kanyakumari" itself is having some historical background. The District name is spelled as Kanyakumari in official records which are in tune with the spoken name of the District in Tamil language. As this District is established after 1956 and before that this District formed a part of the Travancore-Cochin State, it contains the remnants of Kerala culture like the outdoor houses and building, use of Malayalam language, dress and behavior in the malayalee style. This is the only District in Tamil Nadu having rubber cultivation.³

There is an opinion that during the period before prehistoric, Kanyakumari was a part of a huge continent called Lemuria or Kumarikandam which extended from Burma and South China on the east to South Africa on the west and from Vindhya hill on the north to Australia on the south. Later this Lemuria was submerged by the ocean.⁴

The District has a favourable agro-climatic condition, which is suitable for growing a number of crops. The proximity of equator, its topography and other climate factors favour the growth of various crops such as paddy varieties grown during the first crop season in Kalkulam and Vilavancode taluks.⁵ This shows that there is distinct variation in the climatic conditions prevailing within

⁵ Kanyakumari Statistical Hand Book, Madras (2002-04).
the District. Unlike other Districts in Tamil Nadu, it has a rainfall both during the south-west and the north-east Monsoons. The south-west monsoon period starts from the month of June and ends in September, while the north-east monsoon period starts from October and ends in the middle of December.\(^6\) As this District is situated at the tip, it enjoys both monsoon rain and helps the farmers to cultivate rice twice in a year.\(^7\)

The people are the human resource of the District. Their culture, religion, aptitude, beliefs, talents etc have a bearing on how the District presents itself to others. Tamil and Malayalam are the main languages of this District.\(^8\) Hindus and Christians form a sizeable percentage of the population of the District and there are a number of Muslims dominated belts in the District.\(^9\) The caste system in the society is not as a predominant factor after independence due to education. Some of the communities in the District are Nadars, Nanjil Nad Vellalars, Paravas, Mukthavas, Vilakku Thala Nayar, Kammalar or Asari, Nairs, Chackarevars and Kerala Mudalis.\(^10\) Rice is the staple food of the rich and poor alike in the District. Some among the poorer section also use tapioca. Beverages like tea and coffee are widely spread even into the rural areas of the District.\(^11\)

\(^6\) Nilakam Perumal, R., *The Truth about Travancore*, Madras, 1939, p.4


\(^10\) *Extract of Census of India, Series-23 Tamil Nadu Supplementary*, 1991, p.80.

Festivals are held in all the taluks in connection with various celebrations in the temples, mosques and churches. The car festival at Suchindram attracts large number of crowds in the month of January.\textsuperscript{12} The Kodai festival of the Mondaikadu temple in Kalkulam taluk in the month of March-April is observed as an important festival.\textsuperscript{13} Pongal in January and Deepavali in November are also important occasions for festivity and rejoicing of the Hindu communities. The Malayalees celebrate Onam in August-September with feast and sports.\textsuperscript{14} Muslims in all the taluks observe Muharam and Ramzan.\textsuperscript{15} Christmas is an important festival in the month of December is usually celebrated on a very grand scale and attracts Catholic people from all over South India.\textsuperscript{16}

Many folk arts and dances are popular in this District. They are played during the time of festivals in temples and celebrations in schools. Bow song (\textit{Villu Pattu}) is an ancient form of musical story telling art of southern Tamil Nadu.\textsuperscript{17} The bow is held in the left hand and played by the fingers of the right hand. This may be seen in the pictures and statues of Lord Nataraja the cosmic dancer, adoring his left hand.\textsuperscript{18} Sometimes the \textit{Villu Pattu} team divides itself into two groups, each trying to prove opposite view points of a subject by

\textsuperscript{13} Subramanian, K., \textit{Traditional Festivals of South Travancore}, Trivandrum, 2000 p.1.
\textsuperscript{14} Sugumarang, M., \textit{Festivals of Travancore}, Trivandrum, 2001, p.32.
\textsuperscript{15} Stanely Lane Poole., \textit{Mohammedan India}, Delhi, 1952, p.83.
\textsuperscript{17} Jaya Bala Krishnan, P., \textit{History of South Travancore from Tamil Folk Tradition}, Madurai, p.130.
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Ibid.}, p.132.
conducting the exchange of questions and answers. This is called *Lavani Pattu*. The songs used by the *Villu-Pattu* artists are mostly traditional folk songs.\(^{19}\)

*Thiruvathirai Kali* occupies the pride of place among the folk dances. It resembles *kummi* and is played especially during Onam festival. The players are young girls. The necessary number of girls is 8, 10, 12 or 16 for each dance. They move round and sing in chorus. Each girl strikes the stick (*kole*) which makes rhythmical to the tune.\(^{20}\)

*Kalial* is a folk dance played by group of men or boys in the countryside. A group leader sings songs and keeps time with symbols. The players stand in a circle with sticks in their hand and dance round a lighted lamp repeating the song sung by the leader. They turn, twist, lean forward and backward, squat and move round singing to the tune. At the beginning the steps are elaborated and at times they are also very quick, when invited to perform in a function, the players generally begin with a torch-dance using lighted torches. This folk dance exhibits the artistic and recreative life of the countryside.

*Kathakali* is a unique form of drama, which has its origin in Travancore. *Kathakali* (story dance) is a relatively recent (fifteenth or sixteenth century) development of earlier dances, arose out of religious expression through symbolical action. In this art-form, the characters express their ideas not by words, but by significant gestures. The movements are adopted from the Bharatha Natya with suitable modification. The conversations between the


characters, as well as the narrative portion of the story, invariably in verse, are recited in a loud voice by the Bhavathar to the accompaniment of musical instrument. The action is promoted by his words. The costume and makeup of the actor are also important aspects in *Kathakali*. There are standard make up for the different types of actors, but red, yellow, green, black and white are the colours used. The head dresses are made up of light weight wood and are decorated with pieces of mirror, spongles, and coloured stones. Usually, the number of *kathakali* performance extends from eight to ten hours. With the advent of the cinema, the popularity of this art has declined. It is now played in the temples at Thiruvattar, Thirparappu, Ponmanai, Kuzhithurai, Neyyoor and Munchirai in the Kanyakumari District twice in a year during the time of festivals.

*Ottam Thullal* is a form of story telling. It is a popular form of amusement, staged in the temple premises and Malayalam is the language commonly used. It combines dance, song and action. The story teller is aided by two musicians, one who leads the song and plays on an instrument, and the other, who keeps time by beating symbol. The actor wears a simple costume consisting of a skirt, some arm and chest decorations and an elaborate head dress. *Ottam Thullal* is now played in the temples of Thiruvattar, Thirparrapu, Ponmana and Thiunanthikara in the District during the time of festivals.

21 Subramanian, K., *op.cit.*, p.5
22 Personal interview with Mr. Malayan, Tourist Office, Kanyakumari, aged 53 dated 3.5.2012.
Karagam dance is a kind of dance common in the countryside. It is played by both men and women during the time of festivals and marriages. Kalari, also known as Adimurai in Kanyakumari District, is an ancient martial art, still preserved in the villages of this District and also in Kerala. It is believed that the kalari founded by Parasurama is known as Vadakkan Kalari. Agasthiar laid emphasis on striking at vital points of the body and not on weapons, even through sword, knife, urumi (rolling sword), mankombu (horns of a deer). Kandakkodali (a kind of axe) and Mazhu (a kind of axe) are used.  

The District's beach contains heavy minerals of industrial use such as ratile, illuminate, monozite, Titanium and silican. The beach sand contains 5% ratile and 8% illuminate and carnet sand silican found in the coastal areas between Mandaikadu to Kadiapatnam. Apart from these minerals, like calcareous stone, limestone and graphite were also scattered between Eraviputhoor and Marungoor.  

The roads facilitate advancement in the economy of a country and they simultaneously facilitate communication. Roads play a vital part in economic development, opening up remote areas, stimulating the growth of agriculture as tourism industry, besides facilitating communication. The road network in Kanyakumari District consists of National Highways, State Highways, District roads and rural roads. 

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24 Ibid., p.172.
26 http://www.kanyakumari.tn.nic.in/roadways.html.
Chinamuttam, Leepuram and Colachel on the west coast might have served as seaport for the purpose of commerce during the early days. Among these ports, Colachel is the major and important one which is located between the Tuticorin port and Cochin port. Colachel port is a natural port.\(^{27}\)

Rivers provide the important source of irrigation in Kanyakumari District. The major river in the District is Tamaraparani locally known as Kuzhithurai. This river has got two major tributaries namely Kodyar and Paralyar. There are many tributaries for Kodayar River, Chittar-I and Chittar-II are major ones. The origin of Tamaraparani River is from the Western Ghats and the river confluence with Arabian Sea near Tengapattanam, at a distance of about 56 km west of Cape Comorin, the southernmost tip of India.\(^{28}\)

The location of this District is bounded by sea on one side and mountains on other side and good rain fall help to store waters well. There are many channels dams at the end of hills, which helps to store water which are very cheap to construct. There is also a power project at Lower Kodayar. This is due to heavy rainfall and availability of water storage facilities this District is also called a dam city.\(^{29}\)

The Kodayar project is located at about 3kms from Villukuri, which is in the Nagarcoil. Trivandrum National Highway and is situated at east longitude 77°230 and at north latitude 8°140 near Anaikidangu in Villukuri village. The

\(^{27}\) *Report of the Executive Engineer*, PWD, Nagercoil, dated 15\(^{th}\) October 2012.

\(^{28}\) Sivaraman Nair, V., *Census of India* 1951, TVM, 1952, p. 31

\(^{29}\) Gopalakrishnan, M., *op.cit.*, p.73.
dam was constructed with the effective of 44.45 at across Mambazhathuraiyar River in Kalkulam taluk of Kanyakumari District.\textsuperscript{30} The river originates from Maruthathoor forest an altitude of 2750 ft and reaches the plains at an elevation of 250ft and flows for about 4km in the same name after which is known as Thiruvalar. It flows for about 2.40km and then it joins with Valliyar River near Thuckalay which originated from Velimalai Hills and then flows towards south and falls into Arabian Sea at Kadiapattanam with a total length of 19.20km from its origin.\textsuperscript{31}

The European Engineer, Minchin, constructed Pechiparai dam during the period 1897-1906. This was built across Kodayar river about a mile below the confluence of the tributaries Kallar, Kittar and Kuttiyar at Pechiparai, a place 11 km. north of Kulasekaram and is 45 km from Nagercoil. The cost of original construction was Rs. 26/-lakhs. The dam is a straight gravity type masonry dam of 425.5 metre long and 120.760 metre high above the deepest foundation. Perunchani dam was built during the period 1948-1953 by the erstwhile Travancore Cochin State. This was built across the river Paralayar at Perunchani, a place about 10km east of Kulasekaram and about 42km north-west of Nagercoil. It is across a picturesque valley between 2 hillocks forming an ideal site.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{30} Incription in Mampazhathuraiyar Dam, Villukuri in Kanyakumari District, dated 4\textsuperscript{th} October 2010.

\textsuperscript{31} Sri Kumaran Nair, S., \textit{Irrigation Sources in Kanyakumari District}, Nagercoil. 987, p.18.

The dam is a straight masonry dam of 373.10 metre long consisting of 275.28 metre of bulk head section. A drainage gallery of 1.52x2.29 metre has been provided in the middle river section for a length of 45.70 metre which serves a longitudinal inspection chamber as well as outlet for the seepages from the foundation.\textsuperscript{33}

The Chittar dam I is constructed across river Chittar I which has its source in the mountains in Kalimalai reserve forest, near Ettukani and Vandiplavukani at over 2000 feet above M.S.L and it is about 2.00 km upstream of the confluence of the river with Kodayar.\textsuperscript{34} The Chittar dam II is constructed across river Chittar II which has its source in Kalimalai reserve forest at the elevation of about 2300 feet and is about 2.00km upstream on the southern and eastern slopes of Kurinchimalai and after running for 10.00km merge at Sivologam estate to Chittar II and then flows for 4.8km and joins with Kodayar.\textsuperscript{35}

Neyyar dam situated in Kerala State is the source of supply for Kanyakumari branch channel. It takes off from the left bank channel of Neyyar at km 38.616. Normally 152cs to be available at Kollemcodu head works for the ayacut in Tamilnadu.\textsuperscript{36} There are six channels in the District. They are Pandiyan Kal, Thovalai channel, Regulatory channel, Anandanar channel, Padmanabapuram Puthanar channel and Chittar pattanam channel.

\textsuperscript{33} Thinamalar, Nagercoil, 13.04.2009, p.82..0
\textsuperscript{34} www.Wkipedea.com | Kanyakumari District.
\textsuperscript{35} Record of P.W.D, Nagercoi, 1984-1990, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{36} Gopalakrishnan, M., op.cit., p.27.
The forests in Kanyakumari District are virgin. Forests are said to be of 75 million years old of the total District area of 167130 hectares. Government forests occupy an area of 50486 hectares which comes about 30.2% the total District geographic area. This is the only District in Tamil Nadu, where rubber and clove plantations have been raised in reserve forests in an area of 4785.70 hectares and 110 hectares respectively. The District is rich in wildlife with at least 25 types of mammals, about 60 species of birds including 14 species of migratory birds and many species of fishes, reptiles and amphibians listed. In short these forests are a veritable prove of biological diversion.

From tourism angle, the forests are highly enchanting with pleasant shoals hill top forests, beautiful grass lands, panoramic valleys, top hillocks, singing streams, vast stretches of rubber plantations, valuable teak plantations and excellent climate. Nobody should miss seeing Mahendragiri, Maramalai sea field and Balamore estate area, Ecology farm, Kalikesam falls, Pechiparai dam, Peruchani dam, Upper Kodayar, Maruthamparai and Mukkadal areas for their scenic beauty. All areas in forests are worth a seeing in Kanyakumari District only. The reserve forest and their areas are Therkumalai east and west.

Hinduism, Christianity and Islam are the important religions of this region. Among the three, Hinduism is the religion of the majority. Next Christianity claims a fairly high percentage of population which are higher than state average, Muslims also found in this District especially in the coastal

areas. There are also various castes like Nadar, Chettiyar, Krishnavaka, and Nair in Hindu religion. Nadars are in both Hindu and Christian religion. Even though Christians play a second role, hospitals and educational institutions are mainly owned by them. Important industries are the Indian race earth at Manavalakurichi, Nagammal Spinning Mill at Nagercoil, Kanya Spin Mill at Aralvaimozhi, Wind Mill at Muppandthal and Rope factory at Chemponkarai. Anyhow this District is not having any sufficient industries. The government is planning to construct one rubber Industry. This District is 100% literal due to this, the members from this District are working all over as teachers and other technical fields. This is due to the lack of employment in this District.

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