

CHAPTER - II

KANYAKUMARI DISTRICT – A PROFILE

2.1. HISTORY

Kanyakumari District takes its name from the township of Kanyakumari, the southern tip of India. (In many Indian languages the term, *Kumari*, means a virgin). This district is also called Kumari District. Kanyakumari town is named after the Goddess Kanyakumari, a popular deity of the area. The legend has it that Goddess Parvati, in one of her incarnations as Devikanniya, did penance on one of the rocks off this land's end to obtain the hand of Lord Shiva.

Kanyakumari is geographically a cape, and the Englishmen of the Raj called it Cape Comorin. Since ancient times Kanyakumari District has been of two geographical areas known locally as Nanjilnadu and Idainadu. The etymologists interpret the word Nanjilnadu as the country ('nadu') where there were (and still are) several agriculture plantations and fields.

2.2. GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES

2.2.1. Location

Kanyakumari District is the southernmost district of Tamil Nadu. The district lies between $77^{\circ} 15'$ and $77^{\circ} 36'$ of the eastern longitudes and $8^{\circ} 03'$ and $8^{\circ} 35'$ of the northern latitudes.

The district is bounded by Tirunelveli District on the north-east. Its south-eastern boundary is the Gulf of Mannar. On the south and the west, the boundaries are the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea. Thiruvananthapuram District of Kerala is its northern boundary.

2.2.2 Land

Kanyakumari is the smallest district in Tamil Nadu with a land spread of 1,684 km² and has almost all ecosystems - forests, wetlands, fresh water resources, marine areas and the like.

The district, once called '*the Granary of Travancore*,' is fertile, with hundreds of water bodies and an excellent canal irrigation system. Rubber and spice plantations are there on the hilly terrain, whereas paddy fields, plantain (banana) and coconut groves are found on the slopes and plains between the hills and the coast.

The district is generally hilly with plains found near the coast. The land from the coast gradually rises from sea-level to the hills of the Western Ghats in the extreme east of the district. The district has 62 km of coast on the western side (Arabian sea coast) and 6 km of coast on the eastern side (Gulf of Mannar/Bay of Bengal coast).

2.2.3. Language

The main languages spoken by people of the district are Tamil and Malayalam. English is widely understood throughout the district. While the

majority of the people in the district speak Tamil, many in its northern and western areas speak Malayalam.

2.2.4. Climatic Conditions and rain fall seasons

The district has a favourable agro-climatic condition, which is suitable for growing many varieties of crops. Its proximity to the equator, its topography and other climatic factors favour the growth of various crops. The paddy varieties grown in the second crop season in Thovalai and Agasteeswaram taluks are grown during the first crop season in Kalkulam and Vilavancode taluks. This shows that there is distinct variation in the climatic conditions prevailing within the district. Unlike the other districts in Tamil Nadu, it has rainfall during both the South-West and the North-East monsoons. The South-West monsoon period starts in the month of June and ends in September, while the North-East monsoon period starts October and ends in the middle of December. The average rainfall is shown in the table below.

TABLE – 2.1

CLIMATIC CONDITIONS AND RAINFALL SEASONS

Sl.No	Month	Rainfall (in mm)
1.	January	19.7
2.	February	1.8
3.	March	142.7
4.	April	37.8

5.	May	187.6
6.	June	136.2
7.	July	124.00
8.	August	68.2
9.	September	316.00
10.	October	373.3
11.	November	242.4
12.	December	4.98

Source : Asst. Directorate of Statistics

2.2.5. Net cultivated, irrigated, double-crop wetlands, waste land and forests, etc.

Kanyakumari District accounts for more than 95% of the production of natural rubber in the state of Tamil Nadu. Rubber is grown mainly in the hilly areas (on the Western Ghats) in the interior, while paddy fields and other crops are mainly found on the slopes and plains between the hills and the coast.

2.2.6. Major crops under cultivation

The major crops cultivated in this district are :

Paddy 40000 ha, Coconut 21000 ha, Rubber 19400 ha, Tapioca 12300 ha, Banana 5000 ha, Pulses, 3000 ha, Cashew 2000 ha, Mango 1700 ha, Palmyrah 1600 ha, Tamarind 900 ha, Jack Fruit 700 ha and Clove 500 ha.

2.2.7. Forests

1. The forests in the district are verdant and virgin and are said to be of 75 million years old. Of the total district area of 167130 ha. Government Forests occupy an area of 50486 Hectares which comes to about 30.2 % the total geographic area of the district.
2. After the formation of Kalakad-Mundanthurai Wildlife Sanctuary, Kanyakumari Division was formed on April 1, 1977 as per [G.O.Ms.No. 261](#) dated 26.03.1977 exclusively to manage the forests of this district with Nagercoil as its headquarters.
3. In Kanyakumari Division, 14 types of forests from luxuriant tropical wet evergreen to tropical thorn forests occur because of diverse locality factors, (according to Champion and Seths classification). Rainfall varies from 103 cm to 310 cm and elevation from sea level ranges to 1829 m. The forest area is 30.2 % of total district geographical area, which is next to Nilgiris District.
4. Many medicinal plants of high value are harvested in this District. The Marunthuvalmalai located among the green paddy fields and fluttering coconut palms in the district is famous for valuable medicinal plants. 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 ha and 110 ha respectively. The District is rich in wildlife with at least 25 types of

mammals, about 60 species of fishes, reptiles and amphibians. In short, these forests are a veritable trove of biological diversion.

5. From tourism angle, the forests are highly enchanting with pleasant sholas, hill top forests, beautiful grasslands, panoramic valleys, high hillocks, singing streams, vast stretches of rubber plantations, extensive teak plantations and excellent climate. Nobody should miss seeing Mahendragiri, Maramalai, Sea field and Balamore estate area, Ecology farm, Kalikesam, Pechiparai Dam, Perunchani Dam, Upper Kodayar, Maruthamparai and Mukkudal areas for their scenic beauty. Kanyakumari District alone in Tamil Nadu stands apart with its distinction of having its entire forest area as a never-satiating picture to the tourist's eyes.

2.2.8 . Reserve Forests

The following are the Reserve Forests in this Division:

TABLE – 2.2

RESERVE FORESTS

Sl.No	Reserve Forests	Area in ha
1	Therkumalai East and West	1741
2	Thadagaimalai	797
3	Poigaimalai	1243
4	Mehendragiri	4360
5	Veerapuli	28109

6	Velimalai	1126
7	Old Kulasekaram	694
8	Kilamalai	8106
9	Asambu	4310
	Total	50486

Source: Department of Forests

2.2.9. Medicinal Plants

Medicinal Plants Conservation Area Scheme is being implemented in this Division with the assistance of Foundation for Revitalization of Local Health Traditions, Bangalore (FRLHT), from the year 1993 – 94 onwards.

2.2.10. Kani Settlements

Kanis are a tribe of people, basically agriculturists, who have been inhabiting forests of Kanyakumari District and adjoining Kerala since time immemorial. There are now 47 *Kani* settlements in Kanyakumari Division with an extent of 1257.38 ha of forest land. These lands have been allotted to 927 families under Tribal Development Scheme as detailed below :

TABLE – 2.3

KANI SETTLEMENT

Sl.No	Name of Reserve Forests	Settlements	No. of Families	Total Population	Total area in which settlement is made
1	Kilamalai	15	415	1812	475.15
2	Veerapuli	31	466	2240	734.33
3	Asambu & Veerapuli	1	46	176	40.57
	Total	47	927	4228	1250.05

Source : Computed data

2.3. BASIC INFRASTRUCTURE

i) Roads, Railways

1. National Highways : 22.600 km.(doubtful)
2. State Highways : 216.552 km
3. District Roads :
 - a) Main District Roads : 155.400 km.
 - b) Other District Roads : 817.817 km.

The road network in Kanyakumari District consists of National Highways, State Highways, District roads and rural roads. The Madras to Nagercoil trunk road joins the Kanyakumari-Thiruvananthapuram Road by

taking a short diversion) near Aralvoimozhi. The latter passes through important places over a distance of 87 km. and finally reaches the city of Thiruvananthapuram. The erstwhile State of Travancore had adopted a policy of nationalization of transport services, and following this the Transport Department was formed in the state in 1938. Routes between Thiruvananthapuram and Kanyakumari (Via) Nagercoil and between Thiruvananthapuram and Colachel were the first to be taken up for nationalization. After the reorganization of States in 1956, the bus transport service in Kanyakumari District was taken over by the State Transport Department of the then Madras State.

TABLE – 2.4

LENGTH OF ROAD (IN KILOMETRES) YEAR 2001-2002

Surfaced Roads				Unsurfaced Roads	Grand Total
Cement Concrete	Bituminous	Water Bound Macadam	Total		
1	2	3	4	5	6
239.264	2444.948	811.587	3495.799	812.953	4308.752

Source: All Panchayat Unions & Municipalities, and Town Panchayats, Nagercoil. DFO, Nagercoil, EE, PWD State Highways, Nagercoil, EE, PWD National Highways, Nagercoil.

TABLE – 2.5

RAILWAY LINES AND STATIONS YEAR: 2005-2006

Item	Broad Gauge	Meter Gauge	Broad Gauge & Meter Gauge	Total
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1. Route Length (in km.)	78	-	-	78
2. Tract Length (in km.)	78	-	-	78
Number of Railway Stations	11	-	-	11

Source: Station Master, Railway Station, Nagercoil.

ii. Irrigation (Canal, tube wells, wells, tanks, etc)

Rivers

Rivers provide the important source of irrigation in Kanyakumari District. There are five of them, as shown below

TABLE 2.6

RIVERS

1	The Tambaraparani
2	The Pazhayar
3	The Valliar
4	The Ponnivaikal
5	The Paraliyar

Source: Computed data

TABLE – 2.7

DAMS: THERE ARE SIX DAMS CONSTRUCTED ACROSS THESE RIVERS.

1	Pandiyan Dam
2	Puthen Dam
3	Pechipparai Dam
4	Perunchani Dam
5	Chittar Dam-I
6	Chittar Dam-II

Source: Computed data

TABLE – 2.8

CHANNELS : THERE ARE 6 CHANNELS IN THE DISTRICT.

1	Pandiyan kal
2	Thovalai Channel
3	Regulatory Kal
4	Anandanar Channel
5	Nanchinad Puthanar Channel
6	Padmanabhapuram Puthannar Channel
7	Chittar Pattanam Channel

Source: Computed data

The major river in the district is the Tambaraparani locally known as the Kuzhithuraiar. This river has got two major tributaries namely the Kodayar and the Paraliyar. There are many tributaries to the Kodayar river of which the Chittar is the major one. The origin of Tambaraparani River is Western Ghats and the river confluences with the Arabian Sea near Thengapattanam after running a distance of 56 km.

The Valliar, another small river and its tributary, the Thoovalar, originate from the Velimalai Hills. It collects the drainage from P.P. Channel and its branches and confluences with the Arabian Sea near Manavalakurichi.

The Pazhayar, another small river, starts at Shorlacode, about 18 km north-west of Nagercoil. This is mainly a drainage river mostly collecting the drainage of Thoivalai, Ananthanar and N.P. Channels.

Pechiparai Dam

The Travancore Government presided over by Srimoolam Thirunaal Maharaja got the Pechiparai Dam constructed during the period of 1897-1906 by the British Engineer, Mr. Alexander Humphrey Minchin. This was built across the Kodayar River about a mile below the confluence of its tributaries, the Kallar, the Sittar and the Kuttiyar, at Pechiparai, 11 km north of Kulasekaram and 45 km from Nagercoil. The cost of original construction was Rs. 26.1 lakh. The dam is a straight gravity type masonry dam of 425.5 metres

long and 120.70 metres high above the deepest foundation. It does not have an inspection gallery.

Perunchani Dam

This dam was built during the period of 1948 – 1953 by the erstwhile Travancore-Cochin State. This was built across the Paraliyar river at Perunchani, about 10 km east of Kulasekaram and 42 km north-west of Nagercoil. It is across a picturesque valley between two hillocks forming an ideal site. The dam is a straight gravity masonry one of 373.10 metres long consisting of 275.28 metres of bulk head section. A drainage gallery of 1.52x2.29 m has been provided in the middle river section for a length of 45.70 m which serves a longitudinal inspection chamber as well as outlet for the seepages from the foundation.

Chittar Dam-I

The Chittar Dam I is constructed across River Chittar I which has its source in the mountains in Klamala Reserve Forest, near Ettukani and Vandiplavukani at an elevation of over 2000 ft. above M.S.L. and is about 2.00 km up-stream of the confluence of the river with the Kodayar.

Chittar Dam-II

It is constructed across the Chittar II which has its source in Klamala Reserve Forest at an elevation of about 2300 ft. above M.S.L. and is at about 2.00 km. up steam of the confluence of the Chittar I with the Kodayar.

Neyyar Dam

Neyyar Dam, situated in Kerala State, is the source of supply for Kanyakumari Branch Channel. It takes off from the Left Bank Channel of the Neyyar Dam at Km 38.616. However, the Irrigation Department of the Kerala Government has been lukewarm in releasing water in this channel since the merger of Kanyakumari District with Tamil Nadu.

2.4. DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

(i) Features of population

TABLE – 2.9

POPULATION AS PER 2001 CENSUS

1	Male	288475	49.7
2	Female	291546	50.3
Total		580021	

Source: Computed data

(ii) Urban – Rural Population

TABLE – 2.10

URBAN – RURAL POPULATION

1	Rural Population	580021
2	Urban population	1093927

Source: Computed data

(iii) SC/ST

TABLE – 2.11

SC/ST

1	Scheduled caste	26587
2	Scheduled Tribes	3191

Source: Computed data

(iv) Work Force

TABLE – 2.12

WORK FORCE

1	Main workers	23560
2	Marginal workers	12780
3	Non workers	0
Total workers		36340

Source: Computed data

(v) Total workers classification

TABLE – 2.13

TOTAL WORKERS CLASSIFICATION

1	Cultivators	7170
2	Agricultural Labourers	22300
3	Workers in Household Industry	21240
4	Other workers	4730

Source: Computed dat

(vi) Area Under Principal Crops Cultivated

The cropping pattern in hectares are

TABLE – 2.14

AREA UNDER PRINCIPAL CROPS CULTIVATED

Paddy	33073
Mangos	1721
Bananas	2685
Other fruits and vegetables including root crops	15449
Groundnut	683
Coconut	17200
Rubber	12800
Oil Seeds	350

Source: Computed data

Horticulture (Area In Hectares) :

(vii) Area under horticultural crops

TABLE - 2.15

AREA UNDER HORTICULTURAL CROPS

Fruits	6245 ha.
Vegetables	4093 ha.
Spices	2040 ha.
Flowers	110 ha.

Source: Computed data

(viii) The revenue in fisheries (2005-06)

TABLE - 2.16

THE REVENUE IN FISHERIES (2005-06)

SL.NO	Name of the Reservoir	Target MT	Actual output	Revenue Collection
1	Pechiparai	23 MT	5.606 MT	70,202
2	Perunchani	9.50 MT	2.650 MT	29,155
3	Chittrar I & II	15 MT	3.696 MT	55,966

Source: Computed data

(xi) *Animal husbandry*

In Kanyakumari District the annual income from the animal husbandry sector is as follows for the year 2006

TABLE - 2.17

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

Sl.No	Classification	Income received
1	Milk Production	303.25 lakh
2	Cattle	211.11 lakh

Source: Computed data

(x) Mining and Forestry-based activities

In Kanyakumari District quarry leases are being granted for mining out granite from patta lands and rough stone and earth quarry leases are being granted in Government and patta lands under Tamil Nadu Minor Minerals Concession Rules 1950. Public Works Department (WRO wing) is operating sand quarries in riverbeds. A State-owned corporation called Tamil Nadu Minerals Ltd. is also managing quarries/mines in Government lands.

In Manavalakurichi seashore, Indian Rare Earth company, owned by Government of India, . This company is identified and classified the Minerals like Uranium, etc. works were engaged in this company.

Timber, honey collection, rubber production, tea, fruits, pepper, cashew are the forestry-based products produced in the north-west areas of the district. These activities have generated employment opportunities for thousands of rural people in these areas.

(xi) Industries and other manufacturing ventures

Rural industrial growth in Kanyakumari District is helped by the availability of resources and infrastructural facilities like good transport system. The economy of the district is also agriculture-based. However, the economy of this district gets fillip from rural industries like, fibre-extraction from coconut husks, rubber plantation and handicraft industry.

These rural industries produce varieties of export quality handloom products, palm products, rubber products and coir products. These industries have generated employment opportunities for thousands of rural people.

(xii) Service and other activities

The District Administration implements the Government's welfare measures appreciably in this district. Many a voluntary social service organization and religion-based organizations also contribute their mite in boosting up the economy, education and cultural development of the people in this district. Religion-based organizations in this district have engaged thousands of people in their educational, industrial, medical institutions.

(xiii) Banking service

The district has a well-organized a structure of private sector, public sector and co-operative banks. At present 16 public sector and 12 private sector banks are functioning with their branches and extension counters

2.5. EMPLOYMENT STATUS

(i) Employment in agriculture

Kanyakumari district's economy is an agriculture-based one. Agriculture and allied sectors offer employment opportunities in the rural areas. Ploughing, sowing and harvesting are the main avenues of agricultural employment. The rate of wages paid to the agricultural labour is not based on

the wages fixed by the Government. But at present high wages are paid to the agriculture labour in rural areas.

(ii) Employment in animal husbandry and fisheries

Employment in animal husbandry is based on cattle-rearing and farm work. Rearing sheep and milch animals is the main income-oriented work among the rural people. This yields a short-term high income to the people below poverty line.

The Animal Husbandry Department has engaged so many people under daily wages in this district.

This district has a vast seashore area. As such, marine fishing and small boat fishing have also their own contributions to make towards the district's economy. Thousands of people have taken to fishing for their livelihood.

(iii) Employment in mining and forestry-based activities

It is ascertained that nearly 4000 workers are being engaged in quarry activities and nearly 15,000/- of workers are engaged in rubber plantations in forest areas.

(iv) Employment in rural industries and other manufactures

Rural employment in Kanyakumari District is based on small scale industries like rubber plantations, construction and brick works. The economy

in rural employment is low. Village entrepreneurs are engaged in making coir products, weaving handloom cloth and making bricks.

(v) Employment in Services and other activities

In Kanyakumari District, Christian denominations and private service organizations have been running educational, medical and industrial institutions. These service organizations have generated employment opportunities to thousands of people.

(vi) Employment / unemployment scenario, seasonality and related issues

In Kanyakumari District most of the people are educated and they are capable of taking up any kind of work or self-employment for their daily bread. So, employment problems have not arisen in this district.

2.6. MIGRATION PATTERN

i) Migration pattern

Migration is a common phenomenon in Kanyakumari District. Migration that occurs among the public is classified as follows.

- a) Migration from the rural areas to a nearby industrial town or city seeking employment opportunities.

ii) Seasons of migration

Thousands of people, predominantly construction labour, migrate to neighboring State, Kerala, and migration of this class takes place all through the year.

iii) Rural to urban migration

This type of migration occurs in search of medical service, educational and job opportunities. Since the rate of migration varies from time to time, rate of migration of this class cannot be accurately estimated.

iv) Urban to rural areas migration

The rate of migration from urban to rural areas is very low in this district.

v) Migration within the district

This type of migration is felt among the people in Government services and the small-scale businessmen and fishermen. The rate is very low.

vi) Migration outside district

Migration from the district to places outside and abroad occurs quite often. Young people in large numbers seek better pastures in the Gulf countries. Highly educated and skilled professionals like doctors and engineers migrate to the United States and select European countries.

vii) Migration outside the State, its pattern

The landless labourers migrate to Kerala seeking work opportunities. These people are usually engaged in road works, building construction works etc. This migration takes place all through the year. From Kerala State, the students migrate to this district for their higher education. This migration also

takes place throughout the year. But the rate of migration from the other states to Kanyakumari is very low.

7. Relevance of banking to all these sectors

The people who had been in these sectors in the past had relied on their families, well-wishers and private financiers for meeting their capital needs. With the setting up of new branches of private, public and co-operative banks all over the district, the entrepreneurs and others of the present generation have turned to the banks.

REFERENCES

1. Hand Book on Kanyakumari District – 2006 – p.21- 26
2. Ibid, p.41