CHAPTER – III
PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA

The area selected for the present study is Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu state. This chapter is intended to offer a profile of the study area, helping to understand the details of the study area and to carry out the research work with a sound background support. Data was collected regarding history, location, rainfall and climate, administrative set up, population, religion, festivals, employment status, education and economic development of the district are presented here. This chapter deals with two sections, one is a general profile of Kanyakumari district and the other is profile of the Panchayati Raj System in the district.

3.1.1 Description of the Study Area

Kanyakumari district is the southernmost district in Tamil Nadu state and mainland India. It is the second largest district in the state in terms of population density and the second most urbanised, next to Chennai district. The district stands first in terms of literacy rate in the state. It is the only place in the world where the beauty of sunrise and sunset could be seen. One can witness the rare scene of the setting of sun and the rising of moon simultaneously on the full moon day at the cape in Kanyakumari. It is also considered as the foot of Bharatha Matha. Enjoying comparatively high rates of rainfall and fertile soils the district is also called Nanjil Nadu legendary for agricultural productivity. Historically, Nanjilnadu and Edanadu which comprise the present
Kanyakumari district were ruled by various Tamil and Malayalam dynasties: the Venad Kingdom, Pandyans, the Cheras, the Cholas and the Nayaks. It was part of the princely state of Travancore during the colonial times prior to India’s independence. Four of the eight tensile of Thiruvananthapuram district were separated to form the new district of Kanyakumari during the formation of the new state of Kerala and they were made a part of the Madras presidency under recommendations from the States Reorganisation Commission in 1956. The presidency was later renamed as Tamil Nadu. Kanyakumari, today is one of the 32 districts of Tamil Nadu state. The district is also the birthplace of Ayyavazhi.²

3.1.2 History of Kanyakumari District

The Kanyakumari district was a part of the old Ay Kingdom of the first and second sangham ages. Following the decline of the Ay Kingdom, the area become Venad, with its capital Padmanabhapuram located north of Nagercoil. The wealth of the Nanjilnadu beckoned many invaders including the Nayaks and later an Islamist army during the reign of Umayamma Rani. The Venad region was in anarchy before Marthanda Varma ascended the throne in 1729 AD. Before his reign the Samanthan Nairs ruled the province. Under their rule anarchy was dominant in Kanyakumari region. However, Marthanda Varma brought a sense of disorder under control by annexing the nearby territories, putting down the feudal lords and establishing the strong state of Travancore. He had also got some portions of Kanyakumari from the then viceroy making it the southern boundary. Under his rule the district improved in its social
context and economic levels. The famous battle of Colachel took place in the
district. In the year 1949, the area became a part of the re-established
Travancore Cochin state. The people of Agasteeswaram, Thovalai, Kalkulam
and Vilavancode taluks, which formed the southern divisions of the former
district of Trivandrum were predominantly Tamil speaking people. However,
under the rule of Marshal Nesamony an extreme agitation by Tamil speaking
residents took place for including Kanyakumari with Tamil Nadu. Eventually
the merger happened in 1956 based on language reorganization of states.³

3.1.3 Location

The district of Kanyakumari is the second smallest of the 32 districts of
Tamil Nadu, named after the virgin goddess ‘KANYAKUMARI’ lies at the
southernmost tip of the Indian peninsular where three seas, namely, Indian
Ocean, Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal confluence. It lies between 8.03° and
8.35° northern latitude and between 77.05° and 77.36° of eastern longitude. It
has an area of 1672 sq.kms. It is bounded by Tirunelveli district in the North-
East, Kerala state in the North-West, Indian Ocean in the South, the Bay of
Bengal in the East and Arabian Sea in the West.⁴

3.1.4 Rainfall and Climate

This is the only district in Tamil Nadu which is benefited by both South
West (June to September) and North-East (October to December) monsoons.
The rainfall is generally high in the northern part of the district. The average
rainfall of the district is 1400 mm per year. This district is having a favourable
agro-climatic condition to grow crops such as paddy, banana, tapioca and plantations of rubber, coconut and cloves. The district has a typical tropical climate. The temperature ranges between 22.6° and 32.1° celsius. May and June are the hottest months. The district has a varied topography with sea on three sides and lush green mountains on the Western Ghats bordering the northern side.5

3.1.5 Administrative Set Up

Kanyakumari district is divided into two revenue divisions, viz Padmanabhapuram and Nagercoil. Nagercoil is the district headquarter. Total areas of four taluks are illustrated in table 3.1.

Table 3.1
Taluk Profile of Kanyakumari District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Taluk</th>
<th>Headquarter</th>
<th>Area (in Sq. km)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Agasteeswaram</td>
<td>Nagercoil</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Thovalai</td>
<td>Boothapandi</td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kalkulam</td>
<td>Thuckalay</td>
<td>606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Vilavancode</td>
<td>Kuzhithurai</td>
<td>431</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 3.1 shows that Kalkulam has the maximum of 606 sq.km area and Agastheeswaram has least 276 sq.km area. From this it is clear that taluks are unequally distributed by the size.
Kanyakumari district consists of nine blocks, four Municipalities, six assembly constituencies and one parliamentary constituency. It also consists of 18 revenue firkas, 81 revenue villages, 151 panchayats (56 town panchayats and 95 village panchayats), one township and 1207 hamlets. Following table 3.2 shows the Municipal profile of the Kanyakumari district.

**Table 3.2**  
**Municipal Profile of Kanyakumari District**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Municipalities</th>
<th>Headquarters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nagercoil</td>
<td>Nagercoil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Colachel</td>
<td>Colachel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Padmanabhapuram</td>
<td>Thuckalay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kuzhirurai</td>
<td>Kuzhirurai</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 3.2 shows Municipalities of Kanyakumari district. Nagercoil municipality has Nagercoil itself as its headquarter, Colachel also has Colachel itself as its headquarter, Padmanabhapuram has Thuckalay and Kuzhirurai has Kuzhirurai itself as its headquarter.

On April 1, 1962, nine union blocks were inaugurated in the district. They are Agasteeswaram, Thovalai, Rajakkamangalam, Kurunthencode, Thuckalay, Thiruvattar, Killiyoor, Munchirai and Melpuram. Six blocks Kurunthencode, Thuckalay, Thiruvattar, Killiyoor, Munchirai and Melpuram form a part of Padmanabhapuram development division and the remaining three Agasteeswaram, Thovalai and Rajakkamangalam come under Nagercoil development division. There are 56 town panchayats in this district whereas there are only 631 town panchayats throughout the state.6
### Table 3.3
Number of Union Blocks in Kanyakumari District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Particulars</th>
<th>Agasteeswaram</th>
<th>Killyoor</th>
<th>Kurunthencode</th>
<th>Melpuram</th>
<th>Munchirai</th>
<th>Rajakkamangalam</th>
<th>Thiruvattar</th>
<th>Thuckalay</th>
<th>Thovalai</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Revenue Village</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village Panchayats</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Town Panchayats</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Municipalities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographical Net Area (ha)</td>
<td>8167</td>
<td>6720</td>
<td>7722</td>
<td>14624</td>
<td>5937</td>
<td>9264</td>
<td>74462</td>
<td>9620</td>
<td>9954</td>
<td>86410</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: District Statistical Hand Book, 2015, Nagercoil, p. 10.

The above table shows that there are 81 revenue villages in Kanyakumari district of which Thovalai has maximum of 13 revenue villages. Out of 95 village panchayats Thovalai has maximum of 16. Out of 56 town panchayats in Kanyakumari district, Agasteeswaram has maximum of 10 and there are only four Municipalities.

#### 3.1.6 Demography

According to 2011 census, Kanyakumari district had a population of 1870374 with a sex ratio of 1091 females for every 1000 males, much above the national average of 929. A total of 182350 were under the age of six constituting 92835 males and 89515 females. Both Tamil and Malayalam still
exist as educational medium in most of the schools in Kanyakumari district. 30 per cent of the people in the district still have Malayalam as their mother tongue. The language spoken here comprises both a mixture of Tamil and Malayalam. More Malayalam speaking communities can be seen in Vilavancode and Kalkulam taluks. Culture and food here is predominantly of Travancore style.

Table 3.4
Population in Kanyakumari District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Population</td>
<td>926345</td>
<td>944029</td>
<td>1870374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Literates</td>
<td>780541</td>
<td>768197</td>
<td>1548738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Average Literacy Rate</td>
<td>93.65</td>
<td>89.9</td>
<td>91.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Children (0-6)</td>
<td>92835</td>
<td>89515</td>
<td>182350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sex Ratio</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1091</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census Report 2011
* Figures in parantheses indicate percentages to the total population

The above table shows that the average literacy rate of Kanyakumari district in 2011 was 91.75 compared to 87.55 of 2001. If things are looked out at gender wise, male and female literacy rate were 93.65 and 89.90 respectively. For 2001 census, same figures stood at 90.37 and 84.79 in Kanyakumari district. Thus literacy rate shows an increase of male and female respectively. Total literates in Kanyakumari district were 1548738 of which male and female were 780541 and 768197 respectively.
3.1.6.1 Urban Population

Out of the total population of Kanyakumari district as per 2011 census, 82.33 per cent lives in urban regions of the district. In total 1539802 people living in urban areas which include 761407 male and 778395 female. As per 2011 census data sex ratio in urban region of Kanyakumari district is 1022. Child population of years 0-6 in urban region was 148570 of which males and females are 75573 and 72997 respectively. This child population figure of Kanyakumari district is 9.9 per cent of total urban population. The child sex ratio in urban areas of Kanyakumari district was 966 as per 2011 census. Average literacy rate in the urban area of Kanyakumari district as per census 2011 is 91.96 per cent of which males and females are 93.92 per cent and 90.06 per cent respectively. In actual number 1,279,358 people are literates in urban region of which males and females are 644109 and 635249 respectively.

3.1.6.2 Rural Population

As per 2011 census, 17.67 per cent of the population of Kanyakumari district live in rural areas. The total population living in rural areas of Kanyakumari district is 330572 of which males and females are 164938 and 165634 respectively. In rural areas of Kanyakumari district, sex ratio is 1004 females per 1000 males. Child population in the age 0-6 years is 33780 in rural areas of which males are 17262 and females are 16518. The child population comprises 10.47 per cent of total rural population of Kanyakumari district. Literacy rate in rural areas of Kanyakumari district is 90.76 per cent as per
census data 2011. Gender wise, male and female literacy stood at 92.39 and 89.16 per cent respectively. In total, 269380 people were literates of which males and females were 136432 and 132948 respectively.\(^7\)

### 3.1.7 Religion

People of Kanyakumari district have the freedom to choose the religion according to their preference. The population of different religion as per 2011 census is given in table 3.5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>No. of People</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>909872</td>
<td>48.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>876299</td>
<td>46.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>78590</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Buddhists</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>0.023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sikhs</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>0.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Jains</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>0.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>4849</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1870374</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census Report 2011

According to census 2011, total population of the district is 1870374, among them 909872 (48.64 per cent) are Hindus, 876299 (46.85 per cent) are Christians, 78590 (4.20 per cent) are Muslims, 438 (0.023 per cent) are
Buddhists, 160 (0.009 per cent) are Sikhs, 156 (0.008 per cent) are Jains, 10 (0.001 per cent) are others and 4849 (0.26 per cent) are none of the above.³

3.1.8 Festivals

A brief summary of the various festivals celebrated in Kanyakumari district are presented here.

The Mandaikadu festival is celebrated in March by people of the district and by those in Kerala. Traditionally, participants would chant while walking and other people would provide them with butter, milk, water, jaggery and coffee. The festival, which is celebrated for ten days, later became a social function. During Navarathri Pooja, Annai Adi Parasakthi (the divine mother of Lord Muruga) leave Suchindrum temple situated in Nagercoil and perform a yatra in Pallakku to Trivandrum, the headquarters of the Kerala State, to participate in the Navarathiri Pooja celebrations at the Devi Koil in the vicinity of the Trivandrum Palace. Lord Muruga from Kumarakoil also accompanies Annai in a procession, riding a horse. This practice has been in vogue since 1840 when the rulers of the erstwhile Travancore Samasthanam (province) changed their headquarters from Padmanabhapuram in Thuckalay to Trivandrum. This practice exemplifies the strong connection between the erstwhile Malai Nattu (Kerala) rulers and Kumarakoil.⁹ The Kootalumoodu festival is celebrated for ten days. On the 10th day festival ends with grand fireworks “Vana Vedikai” which starts in mid-night and ends at early morning.
The great Shivarathiri festival is famous in this district. The devotees will run to 12 Shiva temple situated in all round the district. The Ayya Vaikunda Avataram, is widely celebrated throughout the district. The Kodiyettru Thirunal is celebrated in the religious headquarters of Swamithope pathi and attracts large crowds from Tamil Nadu and across India. Deepavali, Christmas and New Year are also celebrated in Kanyakumari district as there are large numbers of Hindus and Christians.\textsuperscript{10}

### 3.1.9 Food

The main food of people of Kanyakumari district is rice and rice products. These are used to make dosa, idily, appam, puttu etc. Rice is the staple food of the people, although for some people in the hilly areas, tapioca is the main food. Though there are some vegetarians among the populace, a majority of the people use agro based meat and fish products. Fish caught in the seas around the district during the night or morning hours reach the markets in the interior towns and villages in the early morning. Also they prepare a coffee made by Karuppatti during the winter season. The food (for example Chakkoli) is spicy and the people in the district tend to use more grated coconut in their curries and food-preparations.\textsuperscript{11}

### 3.1.10 Rivers

The major river in the district is Thamirabarani locally known as Kuzhithuraiair. This river has two major tributaries, Kodayar and Paralayar,
with the Pechiparai Dam and Perunchani Dam respectively, built across them. There are many tributaries for the Kodayar River of which Chittar-I and Chittar-II, with their dams, are the major ones. The origin of Tambaraparani River is in the Western Ghats and the river confluences with Laccadive Sea near Thengapattanam, about 56 kilometres (35 miles) west of Kanyakumari town. Valliar, another small river, along with its tributary Thoovalar, originates from the Velimalai Hills, collects drainage from P.P. Channel and its branches, ayacuts (irrigated area under a tank) and confluences with the Laccadive Sea in Kadiapttinanam. The Pazhayar River, another small river, starts at shorlacode, about 18 kilometres north-west of Nagercoil. This is polluted as it collects drainage of Thovalai, Ananthanar and Nanjilnadu puthanar channel passing through Thazhakudi and Vellamadam villages. The Pahrali river also flows through the district. The Mathur Hanging Trough, the highest and longest aqueduct in Asia, was built over it near Mathur. View from the Mathur Hanging Trough bridge with the Pahrali river flowing below is a thriving experience to the viewers.  

3.1.11 Transport and Highways

There are two major National Highway (NH) roads emanating from Kanyakumari town. One is the NH 7 that starts from the town and runs through Madurai and the other is the NH 47 that runs to Salem through Kerala, touching some important cities like Trivandrum, Kochi and Coimbatore. The state owned Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation (TNSTC) is the major
operator of bus services in the district, though licences are issued for specific routes to private operators. Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) also operates frequent services to Nagercoil and Kanyakumari from Trivandrum. Today, there are 3495.80 km of surfaced roads in the district. Indian Railway operates train from Kanyakumari district to many important places of India. There is a proposal to build an airport in Nagercoil by Airports Authority of India.

Table 3.6
Transport Facilities in Kanyakumari District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Particulars</th>
<th>Length (in Kms)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td><strong>Roadways</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a) National Highways</td>
<td>62.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) State Highways</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Corporation and Municipalities</td>
<td>975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) Panchayat and others</td>
<td>778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td><strong>Railways</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a) Railway Length (Broad Gauge)</td>
<td>70.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) No. of Railway Stations</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Above table clearly indicates that the total length of roads in the district is 1863 kms, which include 62.4 kms of National Highways, 48 kms of state Highways and 975 kms maintained by Municipalities, District Authorities and Public Works Department. The remaining roads are maintained by Panchayats and Panchayat Unions. The length of the roads in the district per 100 sq.kms of area is 110 kms as against the state average of 30 kms. The length of broad gauge railway line in the district is about 70.41 kms. There are no airports and seaports in this district. Kanyakumari district is neglected with regard to airways and they have to depend on other district. This hinders the trade and commerce at national and international levels.

3.1.12 Forests

The district comprises of a sizeable area of lush forests. The forests in Kanyakumari district are about 75 million years old. Of the total district area of 1671.3 km, government forests occupy an area of 504.86 Km which comes to about 30.2 per cent of the geographical area of the district. The forests of the district are administered through the Kanyakumari Forest Division, with headquarters at Nagercoil, the capital of Kanyakumari district. There are 14 types of forests from luxuriant tropical wet evergreen to tropical thorn forests. This variety occurs in the district because of diverse locality factors. Rainfall varies from 103 cm to 310 cm. The district has an elevation from sea level to 1829 m. The forest area is 30.2 per cent of the total district geographical area which is next to Nilgiris district with 59 per cent and Dharmapurai district with
38 per cent in Tamil Nadu State. 52 per cent of the district’s forests are classified as dense forests, which is second only to Dharmapuri district with 58 per cent.

The forests contain species such as Mesus ferrea, Bischofia Javanica, Vitex altissima to smaller trees of Dillini a species festooning climber, shrubs, valuable herbs, variety of orchids, two types of canes, many indigenous palms and cycas. The important timers are teak, rosewoods, vengai and Aini. Various types of forest products like bamboos, reeds, canes, softwood, tamarind, lemon grass, rubber, coconut, arecanut, terminalia chebula, cinnamon bark nelli, cardamom, mango and many medicinal plants are harvested in this district. The Maruthuvalmalai, a hill located among green paddy fields and coconut palms, 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 47.857 Km and 1.1 Km respectively. The district is rich in wildlife with atleast 25 types of mammals, about 60 species of birds including 14 species of migratory birds and many species of fishes, reptiles and amphibians listed. The following are the reserve forests in Kanyakumari Forest Division Therkumalai East and West–17.4 Km, Thadagaimalai–7.9 Km, Poigaimalai–12.4 Km, Mahendragiri–43.6 KM, Veerapuli–281.9 Km, Velimalai–11.2 Km, Old Kulasekaram 6.9 KM, Kilamalai – 81.06 KM, Asambu – 43.10 Km.14
3.1.13 Education

Institutions of higher education are found throughout the district, mainly Arts and Science and Engineering colleges. The state runs the Kanyakumari Government Medical College at Asaripallam, a Government Engineering College, a Government Polytechnic at Konam near Nagercoil and a Government Arts and Science College (2016-17). Many private Engineering Colleges including a private University started functioning in the recent past. More than 30 engineering colleges are functioning in the district which is currently affiliated to the Anna University, Chennai and Arts and Science Colleges are affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli. The Manonmaniam Sundaranar University runs a research unit centre for Marine Sciences and Technology at Rajakamangalam, Kanyakumari district. Noorul Islam University is the only private university functioning at Thuckalay in this district. Education changed the cultural, economic and social scenario of the district and dramatically differentiates it from other districts. People of Kanyakumari district occupy top level state and central government postings and earned good reputations among colleagues. The standard of living of present and future generations depends mainly on the level and type of education they get. People in Kanyakumari district are highly educated than the people in the other districts of Tamil Nadu.
Table 3.7

Educational Institutions in Kanyakumari District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Category of Institutions</th>
<th>No. of Institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pre-primary Schools</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Primary Schools</td>
<td>413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Middle Schools</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>High Schools</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Higher Secondary Schools</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Arts and Science Colleges</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Teachers Training Institutions</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Teachers Training Colleges</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Polytechniques</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Engineering Colleges</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Homeopathy Medical Colleges</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Indian Medicine</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Medical Colleges</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Allopathy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Industrial Training Institutions</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Dental Medical College</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Colleges for Special Educations</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Catering Colleges</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>998</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: District Statistical Hand Book, 2015, Nagercoil, p. 15.

Table 3.7 clearly indicates that the district has 83 pre-primary schools, 413 primary schools, 147 middle schools, 135 high schools, 138 higher secondary schools, 82 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). But the number of higher educational institutions are comparatively low than that of other districts. The students in this district go to other districts for higher education.\textsuperscript{15}
3.1.14 Employment Status

Agriculture and allied sector offer employment opportunities to the people in the rural areas. Ploughing, sowing and harvesting are the main avenues of agricultural employment. The rate of wages paid to the agricultural labourers is not based on the wages fixed by the government, but it depends on the demand and supply of labour force. There is also employment opportunities in animal husbandry such as cattle rearing and farm work. Sheep and milk animal rearing is the main income oriented employment among the rural people. This yields short-term income to the people below poverty line. The Animal Husbandry Department has employed many people under the daily wages scheme in the district. The district has vast seashore area. Marine fishing and small boat fishing also has its own contribution towards the district’s economy. Thousands of people are engaged in fishing as a means of livelihood. It is ascertained that nearly 4000 workers are being engaged in quarry activities and nearly 15000 workers are being engaged in rubber plantation in forest area. Rural employment in Kanyakumari district is based on small scale institutions like rubber plantations, construction and so on. Village industries such as coir, handloom and brick also offer employment opportunities. In Kanyakumari district, religious and private service organizations have established educational institutions, medical and other industries. These service organizations have provided employment opportunities to thousands of people.16
3.1.15 Agriculture and Economic Development

Agriculture is the chief occupation of the people in the district. Paddy, tapioca, coconut, banana, rubber, cashew, mango, pineapple and groundnut are the important crops raised. Except paddy, all the other crops are raised under rain fed conditions. Tapioca is a subsidiary food for the middle class and the working class and it is cultivated in 1065 hectare. Crops like tea, coffee, rubber, coconut, cocoa, pineapple and pepper are cultivated in highlands. Coconut, arecanut, paddy, banana, groundnut and vegetables are cultivated in the middle lands. Mango, citrus and jack are important fruit trees raised in orchards. Coconut groves are concentrated in Agasteeswaram, Rajakkamangalam, Thiruvattar, Munchirai, Killiyoor and Kurunthencode. Rubber is cultivated in about 1,28,000 hectares mostly in Kalkulam and Vilavancode taluks.¹⁷

3.2 Panchayati Raj Profile of Kanyakumari District

The society creates, streamlines and modifies various political, social, economic and educational institutions in pace with the rapidly changing requirements and growing constrains. Such a significant administrative system for rural areas is Panchayat Raj System. This system has bridged the boundaries of consistent time frames, which imparted a significant number of additions, modifications and deletions at various junctures to its structure. It has always been a powerful instrument for rural uplift throughout. This study starts its journey with the evolution of panchayats on historical basis covering
from the ancient period to contemporary frame of Panchayat Raj Systems, which has come into existence after 73rd amendment of the constitution.

Any local institution constitutes the strength of a free nation. It is considered to be an important organ of the government from the early period. India had primarily been a land of villages. The village is the basic administration unit of India. During the early period most of the Indian rulers respected and encouraged the local administration. This system helped to link every village with the national welfare of the people. In later period the panchayat union did a commendable job in implementing various socio-economic schemes of the Central and State governments for the development and welfare of the people.

The Panchayat Raj System was introduced in Tamil Nadu in accordance with the provisions of the Tamil Nadu Panchayat Act 1958. It introduced two-tier system of village panchayat and panchayat unions. The two tier system operated very well till 1975 and elections were held regularly. Subsequently, the tenures of the panchayat unions and village panchayats were extended up to 1st February 1977 and 12th September 1979 respectively. There after special officers (Block Development Officers for all the Village Panchayat in a Block and Divisional Development Officer for all the Panchayat Unions in a division) managed the rural local bodies till the next election in 1986 and the special officers managed the local bodies. The elected rural local bodies continued in
office till March 1991. Again no elections were held till October 1996. And the special officers managed the rural local bodies. Though the Tamil Nadu Panchayat Act was enacted in April 1994, only after the change of government in May 1996 the first ordinary elections held to all the rural and urban local bodies in October 1996. Thereafter there is three tier system of Panchayati Raj Institutions.

3.2.1 Local Self Government

A great progress was achieved in the field of local self government during the region of Lord Ripon. Therefore, he is rightly called “The Father of the Local Self Government”. The “Ripon resolution” (1882) which focused on towns, provided local bodies consisting of a large majority of elected non-official members and presided over by a non-official chairperson. The resolution met with resistance of colonial administrators. The progress of local self government was tardy and half-hearted steps taken in setting up municipal bodies. Rural decentralization remained a neglected area of administrative reform.

Article 243 G of the Indian constitution enshrines the basic principle for devolution of power to the rural local bodies. As per this article, subject to the provisions of this constitution, the legislature of a state made by law, endow the panchayats with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government and such law may contain
provisions for the devolution of powers and responsibilities upon panchayats at the appropriate level, subject to such conditions as may be specified there in, with respect to the preparations of plans for economic development and social justice; the implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice as may be antrusted to them including those in relation to the twenty nine matters listed in the eleventh schedule.

The 74th amendment of the constitution made provision for municipality which meant for the development of urban areas. Article 243U provides the provision of the constitution, that the state legislature can endow the municipalities with powers and authority as necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government. Every municipality shall continue for five years from the date approved for its first meeting. The 74th amendment also ensured reservation of not less than one third seats of members and offices of chairpersons for women. After these amendments, article 243D and 243 T were added to the constitution to provide that not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved of women belonging to the scheduled caste and scheduled tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by the direct election in the local bodies (Panchayats and Municipalities) would be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in the local bodies.
Local government is the best way to realize one important principle of democracy, namely Local - Self - Government. Local government means the management of local affairs by the representatives of the locality itself it deals with the problems, chiefly of local concern. It plays an important role in solving the local problems of the people. Rural local government is popularly known by the name Panchayat Raj. In India, rural local government covers the rural population. It is created, sustained, regulated and even abolished by the state government. The constitution of India directs the central and State governments to set up a Panchayat Raj System namely the three -tier system of Panchayat Raj. It works at three levels, the gram panchayat at the village level, the Block Samiti (Panchayat Union) at the block level and the Zilaparishad (District Panchayat) at the district level.19

3.2.2 Village Panchayat

The Travancore government was keen to involve rural people in Local Self-Government. In 1935, the Travancore Village Panchayat Act was passed. According to this Act, the government had powers to declare any village or cluster of villages as village panchayat. The village panchayat, thus declared will have members not less than five and not more than eleven. The first panchayat was formed in Bhoothapandi. The obligatory and discretionary powers of the panchayats were identical to that of the municipalities. The government extended matching grants to the village panchayats. Grants from the government together with the local taxes levied and collected from the
people were to be spent by the village panchayat itself for the benefit of the village.

In 1947, India attained independence and subsequently provisions were made in the Indian constitution for the establishment of village panchayats in the villages. India remains a rural agricultural country since the bulk of the population (80 per cent) is in the 6,00,000 villages scattered all over India. The rate of urban growth is 4 per cent a year, which is approximately twice the rate of growth of population and 50 per cent growth being natural and the rest due to immigration of people from rural areas.

Panchayati Raj is an important feature of the Indian political system which ensures the direct participation of people at the grass root level. According to Tocqueville “local institutions constitute the strength of the nation” Mahatma Gandhi preached the idea of Grama Swaraj or Village Republic. According to Rabindranath Tagore the problem of rural reconstruction required not only the removal of poverty but also providing jobs to the villagers. After India’s Independence the framers of the constitution gave importance to creation of village panchayats.

The first tier in the three tiers Panchayat Raj System is the village panchayat. In Kanyakumari district, there are 88 village panchayats. 11 town panchayats were converted into village panchayats in 1999 leading to 99 village panchayats. There are many wards in each panchayat and ward
members and presidents are directly elected by the people. Village means a village specified by the Governor by public notification to be a village for the purposes of this part and includes a group of villages so specified. Panchayat village means any local area over which a village panchayat has jurisdiction.

The panchayat system at the village level consists of two main bodies. There are gram sabha and the gram panchayat. These two bodies have different function to perform. The gram sabha is the gross root level democratic unit of rural administration in the state. It embraces people living in each village panchayat. It is considered as the foundation, on which stands the edifice of the Panchayat Raj stands. The gram sabha is an organization where people themselves participate in the affairs of the public and not the representatives, thereby proving that it is the only unit where direct democracy prevails. It is one of the salient features of the Tamil Nadu Panchayat Raj Act of 1994. Grama sabha means a body consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls relating to a village which come within the area of grama panchayat. Grama sabha is not a tier of Panchayat Raj. It is the general body consists of all the voters, people of the age of 18 years and above residing in the jurisdiction of a grama panchayat. The president of the grama panchayat has the responsibility to convene the meeting of the grama sabha. The grama sabha elects representative to the grama panchayat.
Grama sabha approves the village plan, village budget for the year, and review the progress of implementation of all the schemes. It has right to check the accounts of grama panchayat, annual statement of account and audit report of the panchayat. It selects beneficiaries under various schemes of the Central government and the State government. It approves the works to be undertaken for rural development. The government have ordered to conduct the grama sabha meeting a minimum of four or five times, a year on 26th January, 1st May, 15th August and 2nd October and 1st of November every year which are “Local Bodies Day”.

The gram panchayat is the primary unit of the Panchayat Raj System. The gram panchayat is the executive committee of the gram sabha. It is constituted for one village or group of villages with minimum population of 500. The village is divided into wards. Each ward elects one to three members. One third of the total number of seats is reserved for women. A president, who heads the gram panchayat, heads the village panchayat. The president of the gram panchayat is elected directly. The members of the gram sabha elect the president of the gram panchayat. All adult citizens of above 18 years are entitled to vote.22

The grama panchayat levies taxes on persons, property, and business. They receive income from various sources like taxes on houses, shops and fairs, registration fees on purchase and sale of sale, cattle of public property, fines on account of violation of panchayat laws and grants from the state.
government. The receipts of these funds are credited to village panchayat fund and then it is spent to meet various expenditure in the village panchayat. The state governments on the recommendations of the State Finance Commission also release funds.

The village panchayat takes care of all the welfare activities of the village under their jurisdiction.

**The functions of the Village Panchayat are,**

- Construction works, repair and maintenance of village roads, bridges and dams.
- Construction of drains, cleaning of drains and disposal of drainage water.
- Cleaning of streets and improve in a sanitary conditions of the village.
- Construction and maintenance of public latrines, sinking and repairing of wells, maintenance of ponds or tanks and the construction and maintenance of water works for the supply of water.
- The main emphasis is on developmental activities such as agriculture, primary education, cottage industries, health and sanitation.
- It has to maintain public wells and tanks. It is supposed to ensure proper supply of drinking water to the village.
- The planting and preservation of trees on the sides of public roads in village, the opening and maintenance of reading rooms and setting up of playgrounds parks and sports clubs.
- Opening of libraries in villages to enhance general knowledge
- To create awareness of the popular schemes such as Indra Awaas Yojana and National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme implemented by the government.
- Construction and maintenance of minor irrigation works.

### 3.2.4 Panchayat Union

At the block level, the Block Samiti or panchayat union forms the middle tier in the Panchayat Raj System. It is called an intermediate tier and Panchayat Union Council in Tamil Nadu. It works as an essential link between the Gram Panchayats and Zila Parishad. The members of the Block Samiti elect a Chairperson and a Vice-Chairperson. The Chairperson of the Samiti is known as the ‘President’ in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and West Bengal, while he is called Chairman in Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Orissa and Punjab. The Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson are generally elected for a term of five years. The Panchayat Raj Act of 1976 has evolved the methods of direct election for the posts of the President and Vice-President of Block Samiti by all the voters of the Samiti area. The general body of the Block Samiti consisting of all its members, meets once in three months. The Chairperson presides over the meeting of the Block Samiti and conducts its proceedings. The block development officer and extension officers explain about the work being done in the block. They are also answerable to the general body.

The president exercises control over the Block Development Officer [B.D.O] and his staff regarding the implementation of the decisions and
resolutions of the Block Samiti and its standing committees. He or she encourages the panchayats and guides them in making plans and carrying out production programmes. He has full access to all the records of the Block Samiti. All official correspondence between the union council and government must be conducted only through the Chairperson. He can issue orders for the immediate execution of any important work stating reasons for doing so. He is the ex-officio Chairman of the Standing Committee if he happens to be its member. In the case of emergency, he may direct the execution of any work in Samiti area. The Vice-Chairperson looks after the functioning of the Samiti in the absence of the Chairperson. Seats are reserved for the SCs and STs. One-third of the total number of seats are reserved for women.

**The functions of the Panchayat Union are,**

1. Construction, repair and maintenance of all panchayat union roads.

2. Construction of water works for the supply of water for drinking, washing and bathing purposes.

3. Construction and maintenance of Elementary and Middle Schools

4. Control of fairs and festivals under the control of the panchayat union.

5. Opening and maintenance of panchayat union public markets.

6. Implementing various centrally sponsored state schemes.

7. Establishment of libraries.

8. Establishment of Youth Organizations, Farmers Clubs etc.
9. Encouragement to cultural activities

10. The Samiti take steps for the advancement of health, primary education, sanitation and communication within their area

Sources of Income for Panchayat Samiti

- Proceeds of taxes and fees which a Panchayat Samiti may levy.
- Share of local cess and land revenue received from the Zila Parishad or the District Panchayat.
- Grants from the state government
- Loans from the state government
- Income from leases granted by the Panchayat Samiti to public ferries, fairs, etc.
- Donations and contributions.
- Funds from schemes transferred by the government to the Panchayat Samiti as an agency for execution.

3.2.6 Present Scenario in Kanyakumri District

In Kanyakumari district, there are nine panchayat union with 95 village panchayats. The panchayat union wise details of ward members and number of women members in each union is presented in table 3.8.
Table 3.8
Constitution of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Kanyakumari District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of the Panchayat Union</th>
<th>No. of Village Panchayat</th>
<th>Total Village Panchayat Ward Members (Women members)</th>
<th>Category of Women Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MBC (W)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Agasteeswaram</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>115 (46)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Thovalai</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>156(53)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Rajakkamangalam</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>139(50)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kurunthencode</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>109(45)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Thuckalay</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>88(36)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Thiruvattar</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>119(38)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Killiyoor</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>98 (35)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Munchirai</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>146(56)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Melpuram</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>127(43)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>1097 (402)</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary data

Table 3.8 clearly indicates that out of the nine panchayat unions, Thovalai has the maximum number of village panchayats (16) and Killiyoor union has only 8 village panchayats. There are 1097 ward members out of which 402 are women members. Out of the 402 seats for women 26 seats are allotted for MBC category, 10 seats for SC category and the remaining 366 comes under general category. Munchirai panchayat union has the maximum number of women members (56) followed by Thovalai (53 members) and Rajakkamangalam (50 members). Regarding Rajakkamangalam has 10 women members from MBC category as this union covers coastal villages. Out of the women members in the general category both Thovalai and Munchirai have the maximum seats (49) followed by Melpuram union (43) and Kurunthancode (42).
3.2.7 District Panchayat

At the district level the Zilla Parishad is the third and the highest tier in the Panchayati Raj system and the apex body. As the name signifies, the Zilla Parishad is a body at the district level in most of the states. A district was an important unit in the administrative set up even during British rule. The Zilla Parishad is responsible for the development of the rural areas of a whole district. It is known as district panchayat in Tamil Nadu. The elected head of Zilla Parishad is Chairman if Tamil Nadu. The Collector is the head of the District Development Council. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Zilla Parishad are elected by the elected members from among themselves. They remain in power for five years. The Chairman convenes and presides over the meeting of the Zilla Parishad and conducts its proceeding. The Zilla Parishad consists of the representative of the Panchayat Samiti and some representatives of weaker sections. It is an elected body. Chairpersons of Block Samiti are also represented in a Zilla Parished. The members of the State Legislature and Members of Parliament are also members of the Zilla Parishad. In addition, seats are reserved for representatives of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. One third of the total number of seats are reserved for women.
The functions of District Panchayat are,

1. Preparation of development plan for the district

2. Compilation of administration reports of village panchayats and panchayat union councils of the district and preparation of annual report for the district.

3. Planning and review of agriculture, land development, animal husbandry, fisheries and rural industries etc.

4. Planning and review of rural housing programmes particularly housing for SC/STs.

The administrative set up of Kanyakumari district varies from other regions in India. In Kanyakumari district we have district panchayat, block level panchayat union and village level village panchayat. Under each one woman ward member is included as most backward, backward and general class.
References


3. www.history of kanyakumari.com


6. Ibid., p. 9.


16. www.loc.org.in/about


22. Anlet Sobitha Bai (2009), Panchayat Raj, Martandam, p.61.
