CONCLUSION

South Travancore, the present Kanyakumari District, consisting of the taluks of Thovalai, Agasthiswaram, Kalkulam, and Vilavancode, occupied an important place in the history of South India. The present study “The History of South Travancore 1858——1956” portrays the political, social, economic and religious life of the people of South Travancore.

Travancore followed a monarchical form of government. The period of study starts from the closing years of Marthanda Varma Uthram Thirunal and ends with Sri Chithirai Thirunal. The people of South Travancore participated actively in the freedom struggle. The patriots of South Travancore participated in the Salt Satyagraha, Civil Disobedience Movement and the Quit India Movement. The period between 1945 and 1956 bears much significance as far as the history of South Travancore is concerned. The Tamil speaking people of South Travancore felt alienated from the mainstream life of Malayalee dominated Travancore and preferred to join Tamil Nadu. It is language and culture which led to the annexation of South Travancore with Tamil Nadu. The Tamilians, under the leadership of A. Nesamony; Kunjan Nadar, Chidambaranathan Nadar, and P. Ramaswamy Pillai fought against the Malayali dominated Travancore Government and this struggle came to be known as the Tamil Merger Movement. The Deliverance Day was observed on 11 August, 1954. At
Marthandam, Thoduvetty and Pudukkadai police opened fire by which seven persons lost their lives, several others wounded and eleven M.L.As were arrested. Marshall A. Nesamony, the leader of the Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress submitted a memorandum before the States Reorganisation Commission for the transfer of the Tamil speaking taluks of Thovalai, Agasthiswaram, Kalkulam, Vilavancode, Shekottah, Neyyattinkara, Devikulam, and Peermedu and Chittoor with the then Madras State. According to the recommendations of the States Reorganisation Commission the four southern taluks of South Travancore merged with Tamil Nadu. On November 1, 1956 the four taluks of Agasthiswaram, Thovalai, Kalkulam, and Vilavancode formed a new district called “Kanyakumari district”. Nagercoil became the headquarters of the new district. The formation of Kanyakumari district is a great landmark in the history of South Travancore.

The social condition of South Travancore before independence initially presented a gloomy picture. The society was caste-ridden and the high castes like the Brahmans and Nairs dominated the society, and low caste people were ill-treated. In order to get satisfactory remedies from the social evils the low castes were willing to accept the guidance and protection of any authority or organization. Under these circumstances, the Christian missionaries came forward to help the poor and the downtrodden.
They created social awareness among the people and requested the Government to improve the living conditions of the people. Seizing the opportunities created by the missionaries, low castes asserted their rights to live a dignified life with self respect. The missionaries opened the gates of education to the lower castes. The educated lower castes became empowered to cast away their poverty by seeking remunerative employments. It must be also said, to the credit of the Travancore rulers, that they generously stood behind the missionaries by supporting them financially with government grants.

Consequently the Royal Proclamation of 1855 abolished slavery. Followed by another proclamation on 26 July 1859, the Maharaja Uthram Thirunal gave the right to the Shanar women of South Travancore to wear upper garments. Put an end to the barbarous attempts of the high castes to force the Nadar women not to wear upper garments. In 1865, the same right was granted to all the lower castes by another legislation. Like this in those days the Ezhavas and the low castes were not allowed to enter the temples. In order to get the right to enter the temples, in 1924, the Temple Entry Movement was organized. In 1926, a satyagraha was conducted at Vaikom and a similar satyagraha was conducted at Suchindram in South Travancore. Consequently, on 12 November 1936 Sri Chithrai Thirunal Balarama Varma issued his famous Temple Entry Proclamation which was a
message of hope and cheer for the poor and the downtrodden Harijans-Dalits and other backward classes.

Realising the situation of the backward class people, the government came out with many legislations and community development programmes to improve the living conditions of the lower caste people. Steps were also taken to eradicate untouchability. The Untouchability Prohibition Act of 1951 was issued to protect the rights of the untouchables. According to it all ill treatment of the low castes was punishable. The government introduced many welfare schemes like public works, public health, sanitation, economic improvement, educational concession, adult education and propaganda and housing scheme and the welfare of the low castes were safeguarded.

The economic condition of South Travancore was based on land. Agriculture was the main occupation of the people. Paddy was cultivated throughout South Travancore but in plenty in Nanchinad Nanchilnad comprising the two taluks of Thovalai and Agastiswaran Agasthiswaram. In 1907, The Kothayar-Kodayar Irrigation Project was completed and it provided irrigation facilities for many acres of large areas of land. Irrigation facilities saw tremendous improvements in Nanchinad due to the efforts of the Travancore rulers.
Except the two ilmenite factories of Manavalakurichi run by the Germans in South Travancore, there was hardly any large scale industry in existence. The sugar factory at Thackalayi named Travancore Sugars Ltd, the only sugar refinery in the state and the arrack distillery at Nagercoil were transferred to Travancore, shifted elsewhere, because of the step motherly attitude of the Government to the discomfort of the people of South Travancore. Only small scale industries like cotton weaving, silk weaving, palmyrah palmgur industry, palmyra fibre industry, palmyra leaf articles, coir industry, lace and embroidery, fishing, co-operative dairying, bee-keeping, poultry keeping, metal work, brass casting, village pottery, korai grass industry, mat making, basket making, manufacture of tiles and bricks developed in South Travancore.

Even though the Government of Travancore had not taken much interest for the establishment of major industries, the village and cottage industries made greater progress. Both Protestant and Catholic missionaries contributed much to the development of certain industries like palmyra palmgur industry, tiles, bricks, lace and embroidery. The voluntary social service organizations like the Y.M.C.A. also did valuable services for the economic development of the people of South Travancore. The government schemes that were introduced now and then also added flesh and blood to these small scale industries. Moreover, the government established training
schools and implemented training programmes which were highly beneficial to those who were earning their bread by from these small scale industries.

In the field of education South Travancore was initially very backward before independence. Education became was the monopoly of the high caste people and both men and women of the lower communities were immersed in poverty and ignorance. Through the efforts of the missionaries and the various Acts promulgated by the Government, the people began to realize the importance of education and broke the chain of darkness and began to get the flames of education. Travancore rulers solidly stood behind the missionaries in imparting education by giving financial support to them. From the year 1947-1948, Compulsory Primary Education was brought into effect in South Travancore. Through this the Government encouraged the people to give at least basic education to their children.

The Government followed the system of grant-in-aid which produced admirable result in the vernacular education. From 1950 under the control of the Director of Public Instruction, Adult Education was imparted. Three R’s were taught in these classes. Facilities were provided for the backward communities in the form of grants, stipends, scholarships, half fee concessions, clothes and text books. Both the Catholic and Protestant missionaries backed by the government contributed much to the growth of education in South Travancore. The Protestant Missionaries were
the pioneers in introducing Western education and female education. Scott Christian College was the only higher educational institution in South Travancore. It was run by the London Mission Society. The Catholics also contributed much to the growth of education. At the time of the starting of the Diocese of Kottar in 1930 there were seventy five primary schools, six middle schools and one high school under the Catholic managements. As a result of all these efforts education flourished in South Travancore, which became one of the highly educated centres of the country and it has led to the achievement of hundred percentage literacy in Kanyakumari district today.

The Hindu society was caste ridden and the low castes were not allowed to enter into temples. As a result of Temple Entry Movement all the people without any distinction of caste, creed or colour were allowed to worship God in all the temples. The Hindu temples were managed by the Devaswoms. Next to Hinduism, Christianity was followed by the people of South Travancore. Both the Catholics and the Protestants have gained a lot through missionary activities. Since Catholic religion was established earlier the Catholic population was the majority first in South Travancore. Though The London Missionary Society which started its missionary work in 1806 that is at a later period their achievements has done a lot in the field of education and medicine were laudable. The Catholics had a late
beginning in the field of higher education. They established higher educational institutions only in after 1950s.

The other denominations of Christianity like Salvation Army, the Malankara Catholic Church and the Lutheran Church also did a lot towards the socio-economic development of the people of South Travancore. Islam was also followed by certain sections of people in South Travancore. They constructed many mosques in South Travancore at various places like Thengapatanam, Colachel, Thuckalay, Kottar and Edalakudy and some other places. Though different religious people were found in South Travancore they lived in harmony. The Christians, Hindus and Muslims participated in the festivals of others religions and shared eatables at festivals without any distinction.

Local Self government functioned well in South Travancore under the guidance of the Travancore Government. Village Panchayats and Municipalities looked after the local needs of the people and solved the problems locally. The Panchayats concentrated on cleaning of streets, construction, maintenance and improvement of wells, tanks, opening of burial and burning grounds, control and management of cattle pounds and sanitation. Boothapandi Panchayat of Thovalai taluk was the first Panchayat established in South Travancore. After that, Panchayats were established in almost all the villages of South Travancore. The establishment of Village Panchayat Courts and Village Unions through legislation was a great help to
the government since all the problems were settled amicably. After the Panchayat election of 1953 the Panchayat week was celebrated and clean up campaign, widening of roads, construction of new roads, processions, sports and poor feeding were conducted in villages.

Just like the villages, the Towns were administered by Municipalities. As per the Act of 1894, Town Improvement Committees were established. In 1920 the Municipal Act of Travancore State was passed by which arrangements were made for providing better education, public health and other facilities to the public. The Travancore District Municipalities Act 1941 reconstituted the former Town Improvement Committees as Municipalities. Accordingly, the four Municipalities of Nagercoil, Padmanabhapuram, Kuzhithurai and Colachel were constituted. In 1946 Commissioners were appointed as the heads of the Municipalities. The main obligatory functions of the Municipal Administration continued to be the care of sanitation and public health, lighting of public streets, vaccination, registration of births and deaths, conducting markets, leper clinics, maternity and child welfare centres, maintaining parks, running of libraries and reading rooms and subsidizing Vaidyasalas.

Nagercoil Municipality formed in 1920 was the biggest in South Travancore. The office of the Padmanabhapuram Municipality was located at Thuckalay. Kuzhithurai Municipality continued to remain as third grade
municipality since its constitution. The revenue in the form of rates and taxes was the highest in Kuzhithurai Municipality and the lowest in Colachel Municipality which also remained as a third grade Municipality. Thus the Village Panchayats and Municipalities functioned well in South Travancore which reduced the burden of the State Government in administering the villages and towns.

Though there were many improvements in the social, political and educational conditions of the people of South Travancore still much had to be improved. When it was under the jurisdiction of the Government of Travancore it was a neglected area of the Government. At present, though there are improvements in all walks of life in Kanyakumari District, it remains as a neglected area of the Government of Tamil Nadu. So far no large scale industry has been established in this part of the land. Even though, Kanyakumari District is the best rubber producing area of Tamil Nadu so far no rubber industry has been established. There is no Government run Arts and Science College or any Engineering College or Law College or B.Ed College functioning in Kanyakumari district. Since most of the new educational institutions are private owned institutions only the wealthy people are getting chance for higher education while the poor youngsters are becoming coolies and earning their livelihood with much ordeal. Only At last in 2005, the Government has established a Government Medical College at Asaripallam.
Only in 1979 railway was introduced in Kanyakumari district. Cape Comorin is an important tourist centre attracting many foreigners and Indians, but till today there is no provision for an airport. Comparing with other important parts of India the people of South Travancore have greater political, social and economic awareness. However, the total upliftment of Kanyakumari district is yet to be achieved.