INTRODUCTION

The South Travancore, the present Kanyakumari District consists of the four southernmost taluks namely Agasthiyamangalam, Thovalai, Kalkulam and Vilavancode. South Travancore is the southern extremity of India and the southern tail end portion of the long fish shaped Travancore state.\(^1\) South Travancore lies between 77°05’ and 77°36’ of the Eastern longitudes and 80°03’ and 80°35’ of the Northern latitude.\(^2\) It is bounded on the north by the Western Ghats, south by Cape Comorin, east by Aramboly Pass and west by Kalakkavilai.

South Travancore lay between the ranges of the Western Ghats and the coast of the Arabian Sea. It had its apex at Kanyakumari. The lofty ranges of the Western Ghats tapering towards the south meet the sea near Cape Comorin. The mountain ranges which overlook the Arabian Sea on the west run more or less parallel to the coast.\(^3\) The coastline extends over forty two kilometers.\(^4\) The sands of the sea coast are not only rich in mineral wealth but also add to the charm of the natural setting.\(^5\) The Arabian Sea provides great opportunity for the development of fishing industry.\(^6\)

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Flora and Fauna

The flora of South Travancore is notable for its diversity, beauty and economic value. The Western Ghats add beauty to South Travancore. Coffee, tea and rubber are cultivated in the hilly and mountainous tracts.7 Teak, black wood, ebony, vengai, rosewood and jack are some of the important timber trees found in the hills.8 At the foot of the hills, rubber plantations, coconut and plantain groves are found presenting a pleasing sight. Kaliyal Ambadi estate, Kanthimathi gardens, Palali estate and Vaikundam estate are some of the important rubber plantations in Vilavancode taluk9 and Othakadai estate, Blackrock estate, Velimalai estate and Veerapuli estate are some of the estates found in South Travancore.10

Garden crops such as coconut, areca nut, tapioca, vegetables and plantation crops as pepper and rubber grow satisfactorily in South Travancore.11 In a few selected areas betel vine is also cultivated.12 A The major portion of the dry land is suitable for tapioca cultivation. Further Besides this fruit bearing trees like jack and mango are found here and

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8 Barker, S.G., Industrial Survey Survey of Travancore, Trivandrum,1921, Pp.434.
10 Gopalakrishnan, M., op. cit., Pp.27.
12 Sivaraman Nair, U., Census of India, 1951, Trivandrum, Pp. 111.
Nanjichilnad of South Travancore is popular for paddy cultivation and it assumed the title of ‘the Granary of Travancore’. Edible roots like chembu, kachil, tapioca, sweet potato, arrowroot, seenakizhangu, cherukizhangu and oilseeds like gingili, castor and laurel are also cultivated in South Travancore.

The hill forests of South Travancore exhibit a large variety of fauna. Elephants abound in the upper reaches of Asambu, Veerapuli and Kamala reserves. But the most frequented place is Mahendragiri. Herds are found in the Muthukuzhi valley. During rainy season they descend to the lower reaches in October – November months. Panthers are more common than tigers in all the forests. Bears are fairly common at elevations of 3000 feet and over. Small herds of bison frequent the sholas and grass areas around Muthukuzhi valley and the higher reaches of Asambu. Muthukuzhi valley and the whole of Asambu are favourite resorts for sambur. A good number of wild dogs are found in Muthukuzhi valley. Black monkey, jackal, fox, mongoose and hare are some of the animals found in South Travancore.

The South West breeze keeps the temperature normal throughout day and night. The South West monsoon and the North East monsoon provide

16 Gopalakrishnan, M., *op. cit.*, *op. cit.*, *op. cit.*, Pp. 27.
A pleasant climate. A warm humidity is the prevailing characteristic of the climate in the low lands and extremes of temperature are seldom experienced.

Importance of the Topic

The present topic, “The History of South Travancore 1858-1956”, is a study of the administration of the rulers who ruled South Travancore, the part played by South Travancore in the freedom struggle, the role of the Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress in the merger of South Travancore with the Madras state, the social life of the people and the steps taken by the government to eradicate social evils like untouchability, unseeability and unapproachability through proper legislations. The economy of South Travancore largely depended upon agriculture and small scale industries. Government took certain steps to improve agriculture and small scale industries were encouraged by the Government through co-operative societies.

Education made tremendous improvement due to the grant-in-aid system followed by the Government and the contributions made by both Protestant and Catholic missionaries for the cause of education. Hinduism, Christianity and Islam were the important religions followed by the people.

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of South Travancore and all these religions influenced the socio-economic and cultural life of the people.

Though South Travancore was under the rulers of Travancore, through various Acts and Proclamations, Village Panchayats and Municipalities functioned well and the local needs of the people were looked after by them. A study of this kind is of major interest to historians, sociologists, anthropologists, economists and other scholars today. The present topic is selected for a systematic study of the history of South Travancore.

**Area of Study**

Certain reforms were brought about by the Maharajas of Travancore from 1858 to 1956 for Travancore which were applicable to South Travancore too. Accordingly the area of study is confined to South Travancore. The Acts and Proclamations introduced by the kings of Travancore improved the socio-economic prosperity of South Travancore. The area of study is confined to South Travancore.

**Period of Study**

The reign of Marthanda Varma Uthram Thirunal (1847-1860) was notable for many-sided developments and in South Travancore the Upper Cloth Controversy came to an end by the Royal Proclamation of 26 June
1859. Hence the period of study starts from 1858. The study ends with the year 1956 which is the year of the merger of Kanyakumari district with the four southern taluks of South Travancore namely Agasthiyarswaram, Thovalai, Kalkulam and Vilavancode and merged with the present Tamil Nadu as Kanyakumari District.

Scope of the Study

The study has certain minor limitations from the point of view of the sources. One limitation is the lack of literature on the different aspects of the history of South Travancore. South Travancore had no independent political history of its own. Its political, economic and social developments largely depended upon the history of Travancore. Yet an attempt has been made to set right the limitations by collecting sufficient data through archival evidences that provide a comprehensive account of the history of South Travancore.

Hypotheses

1. The proclamations connected with the social issues introduced by the Maharajas improved the social conditions of the people.

2. The study of the history of South Travancore reflects the negligence on the part of the Travancore-Cochin government towards the welfare
of the Tamils of South Travancore—thatspite of the good works
done by the Travancore rulers in providing good facilities for
education and irrigation, the Tamil speaking people of South
Travancore felt alienated from the main stream 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.

3. After the British left India, democracy was the system of
Government—government came into being in South
Travancore, which was a blessing in disguise for the people of South
Travancore.

Flora and Fauna

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economic value. The Western Ghats add beauty to South Travancore.
Coffee, tea and rubber are cultivated in the hilly and mountainous tracts.²
Teak, black wood, ebony, vengai, rosewood and jack are some of the
important timber trees found in the hills.³—At the foot of the hills, rubber
plantations, coconut and plantain groves are found presenting a pleasing

sight. Kaliyal Ambadi estate, Kanthimathi gardens, Palali estate and Vaikundam estate are some of the important rubber plantations in Vilavancode taluk and Othakadai estate. Blackrock estate and Veerapuli estate are some of the estates found in South Travancore. Garden crops as coconut, areca nut, tapioca, vegetables and plantain crops as pepper and rubber grow satisfactorily in South Travancore. In a few selected areas betel vine is also cultivated. The major portion of the dry land is suitable for tapioca cultivation. Besides this fruit bearing trees like jack and mango are found here and there. Nanjilnad of South Travancore is popular for paddy cultivation and it assumed the title of ‘the Granary of Travancore’. Edible roots like chena, chembu, kachil, tapioca, sweet potato, arrowroot, seenakizhangu, cherukizhangu and oilseeds like gingili, castor and laurel are also cultivated in South Travancore.

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10 Gopalakrishnan, M., op. cit., P.27.
12 Sivaraman Nair, U., Census of Indian, 1951, Trivandrum, P. 111.
15 The Travancore Almanac and Directory for 1928, Trivandrum, 1927, P.4.
tigers in all the forests. Bears are fairly common at elevations of 3000 feet and over. Small herds of bison frequent the sholas and grass areas around Muthukuzhi valley and the higher reaches of Asambu. Muthukuzhi valley and the whole of Asambu are favourite resorts for sambur. A good number of wild dogs are found in Muthukuzhi valley. Black monkey, jackal, fox, mongoose and hare are some of the animals found in South Travancore.\textsuperscript{16}

——— The South West breeze keeps the temperature normal through out day and night.\textsuperscript{17} — The South West monsoon and the North East monsoon provide a pleasant climate.\textsuperscript{18} — A warm humidity is the prevailing characteristic of the climate in the low lands and extremes of temperature are seldom experienced.\textsuperscript{19}

Source of Informations

The entire narrative of the thesis is written from materials available in the Tamil Nadu and Kerala Archives, Kerala Secretariat Library, Trivandrum, Public Library, Trivandrum, Kanyakumari District Central Library, Nagercoil, Kanyakumari Collectorate, Nagercoil, Scott Christian College Library and Holy Cross College Library, Nagercoil. The Acts and Proclamations of Travancore, Letters, The Travancore State Manuals, Travancore Administrative Reports, Travancore

\textsuperscript{16} Gopalakrishnan, M., \textit{op.cit.}, P.27.
\textsuperscript{17} Somervel, T.K., \textit{Knife and Life in India, London}, 1940, P.147.
\textsuperscript{18} The South West monsoon sets in June and lasts till August. The North East monsoon strikes in October. Sivaraman Nair, U., \textit{op.cit.}, P.iii.
\textsuperscript{19} Velu Pillai, T.K., \textit{op.cit.}, P. 591.

Linguistic Reorganisation of Madras Presidency by B. Maria John, Travancore Tamils-Struggle for Identity 1938-1956 by D. Daniel, Church History of Travancore by C.M. Agur, Native Life in Travancore by Samuel Mateer, Progressive Travancore by Ramnath Aiyar, A People’s Revolt in Travancore by R.N. Yesu Dhas, The Land of Charity by

**Chapterisation**

The thesis is organized into six chapters excluding introduction and conclusion. The introductory chapter deals with the physical features of South Travancore and its boundary, the climatic conditions and its exuberant vegetation and animal life.
The first chapter deals with the history of the rulers who ruled South Travancore namely Marthanda Varma Uthram Thirunal (1847-1860) Ayilyam Thirunal, Ramavarma Visakam Thirunal, Sri Mulam Thirunal, Regency of Sethu Lakshmi Bai and Sri Chithirai Thirunal the last ruler of Travancore. An attempt is made to narrate the part played by South Travancore in the freedom struggle and Aikya Kerala agitation and its effects on the Travancore Tamilians. The formation of the Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress and the efforts and sacrifices made by the people and the leaders of South Travancore for the merger of South Travancore with the Madras State and the inception of Kanyakumari District on 1 November 1956 are dealt in this chapter.

A brief survey of the social conditions of the people of South Travancore, the steps taken by the Government for the upliftment of unprivileged classes, and the social reform movements like the abolition of slavery and its effects on South Travancore, Upper Cloth Controversy and the Temple Entry Movement are given in the second chapter.

An effort is made to describe the economic life of the people of South Travancore in the third chapter. Agriculture was the main occupation of the people. Only small scale industries flourished in South Travancore and the
Government had not taken steps for the introduction of large scale industries in South Travancore.

The fourth chapter concentrates on the growth of education of the people of South Travancore. The introduction of compulsory primary education in 1947-1948 in South Travancore, the contributions made by both the Protestant and Catholic missionaries for the introduction of English education and the system of grant-in-aid followed by the Government are highlighted in this chapter.

Chapter V explains the existence of the important religions such as Hinduism, Christianity and Islam and their impact on the life and culture of the people of South Travancore. The Protestant Missionaries brought about tremendous changes in the socio-economic life of the people of South Travancore. Small scale industries like lace and embroidery were developed by them. The Catholic missionaries also changed the lives of the people of South Travancore through various institutions under Kottar Diocese.

The people of South Travancore lived in small villages. The village constituted the smallest unit of administration. The people of the village were more or less left to themselves in administrative matters and local self government functioned well. The importance of Village Panchayats and the role of the Municipalities in South
Travancore through the Acts and Proclamations of Travancore are emphasized in Chapter VI. The thesis concludes with a chapter which is the resume of all the chapters analyses the various causes which led to the merger of South Travancore with Tamil Nadu.