CHAPTER – VII

ECONOMIC TRENDS OF KALKULAM TALUK

The economy of every country is based on land and its people. The distribution of land as it exists in Kalkulam taluk is chiefly the result of social customs, the laws of inheritance and the legislative enactments made from time to time. Economy of the people of Kalkulam taluk mainly depends on agriculture. However all avenues of activity had been pursued by people to derive their income.

They earned their living by engaging themselves in cottage industries such as weaving, mat weaving, mulch animals rearing, coir making etc. They reared poultry, maintained beehives, worked as casual labourers or artisans. They also engaged themselves in works such as collections of monazite from the beaches of Kalkulam taluk followed by refining of the mineral contents of the sands. It led to the establishment of the Indian Rare Earths Limited at Manavalakurichy of Kalkulam taluk under the control of the Atomic Power Board of the Government of India.\(^1\) The mineral plant had been a source of employment for the youth of this area. Further it was a source of income for the Manavalakurichy village panchayat as the company regularly paid royalty to the latter.\(^2\)

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2. Indiavin Chirantha Gramam, Manavalakurichi, Kurunthencode Panchayat Union Office, (n.d.), p. 3.
Land Ownership

As in other parts of Travancore, private ownership of land existed in Kalkulam long before the Sangam age. In course of time, powerful chieftains took control of the lands and came to be called as Naduvazhis and Desavazhis. With the arrival of Aryans during the 7th and 8th centuries temples became the centre of learning and cultural activities. Since large tracts of land were required for the maintenance of the temples, the primitive tribes of this area donated their lands voluntarily.³ As Brahmins were considered to be superior to others, the kings entrusted the entire administration of lands with them. Thus temples along with its lands came under the control of Brahmins.⁴

During the Chola-Chera War, as the Chera kings imposed land tax on non-temple lands, the primitive tribes, in order to get tax exemptions handed over their lands to temples for a nominal price and continued their cultivation. In course of time, Brahmins reduced the legal owners to the position of Kudiyans or tenants. Thus a substantial portion of land came into the hands of the Devaswoms.⁵ By the 12th century, the Namboodiri Jenmis⁶ had become powerful and the temple lands were gradually converted into Brahmin lands. The Jenmi landlords (Brahmins) being owners of land, never cultivated their

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6. The term Jenmam derived from Jemindar. At first the temple trustee was appointed for a fixed term to hold the temple land. Then it became the rule for a trustee to hold that post for life time or Jenmam. It was called Jenmam right. Those who enjoyed the Jenmam rights came to be known as Jenmis. (D.K.V. Eapan, op. cit., p. 154).
lands. They used their tenants to do the job. Due to several disputes and litigations between the landlord and the tenant, the relationship between them strained. Consequently the government interfered and set things on equitable basis.

During that time Kalkulam possessed Jenmivaka lands and Pandaravaka lands. The cultivators of Pandaravaka held the lands on pattom and had no right to sell them. The government had the right to evict them at any time. To avoid this eviction, the then Travancore king Ayilliam Tirunal issued a proclamation known as Pandarapattom Proclamation of 21st Edavam 1040 M.E., (2nd June 1855). By that all Sircar pattom lands became private property of the holders. Two years later another proclamation was issued which gave security of tenure to the ryot and encouraged improvement of the land.

In Jenmivaka lands, as the Jenmis evicted the tenants or Kudiyans without sufficient compensation, the then Maharaja issued the Jemi Kudiyan Proclamation of 1042 M.E., 1867 for sufficient compensation. As per the

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8. Jenmivaka lands belonged to Nambudiri Brahmans. They were absolute owners of the land. [Collectors Standing Orders 1977, Kaniyakumari District, Government of Tamilnadu, 1978, p. 221].
10. Pandaravaka lands belonged to the Sircar or the government.
12. N. Parameswaran Pillai, A Concise History of Travancore, Trivandrum, 1943, p. 89.
Proclamation, the Kudiyans could inherit the land, improve it or even sell it as if he had perfect ownership.

As Jenmis and Kudiyans faced various difficulties they made repeated representations to the King. Hence a Commission was appointed during 1884 A.D. – 1885 A.D. to improve the Jenmi-Kudiyan relationship. The outcome of the Commission was the passing of Jenmi-Kudiyan Regulation of 1071 M.E., 1896 A.D. As per the Regulation, Kudyians were conferred the fixity of tenure, his right was made heritable and transferable. However eviction of the tenants was allowed in case of non-payment of rent for twelve years. In 1915, a committee was again appointed and on its recommendations a Bill was published in 1924. Due to the opposition of the landlords the recommendations were modified.

In 1933, the Government passed a regulation which put an end to the Jenmi and Kudiyan problem. As per the regulation, the landlords were practically reduced to the position of persons entitled to get only certain dues called Jenmikram. The Government of Travancore ordered to maintain a Jenmikaram Register in each pakuthy and Kalkulam taluk was allowed to have eighteen such registers. The Jenmikaran amount demanded from these pakuthis

17. Jenmikaran Payment Abolition Act was passed in 1964, by the Government of Tamil Nadu. By which the payment of Jenmikaram was abolished and the Jenmis received compensation which is recovered from the Kudiyans. [Collectors Standing Orders, Kanniyakumari District, op. cit., p. 220f].
was Rs.4755. 18 But the government assessed the collection of Jenmikaram from seven pakuthis of Kalkulam taluk viz., Valvachagoshtam, Thuckalay, Kothanallur, Mecode, Kadiapattinam, Thiruvithamcode and Kappiyara. Another development was the Travancore Enfranchisement of Sircar Pattom Lands Proclamation of the year 1940 which sought permanent right of occupancy for all holders of Sircar lands.19

The system of Land Tenure was based on the Ryotwari principle, i.e. the principle of direct settlement with individual ryot.20 The first systematic land settlement in Travancore was in 1772 A.D. -1773 A.D. As the assessment was based on Kettuzhuthu or record of what was heard, it had no accuracy. However, in 1802 A.D. -1803 A.D. another settlement was made based on the record of Kandezhuthu or record of what was seen, by which lands were assessed after the actual measurement of the land.21

In 1817 A.D. – 1818 A.D. another settlement took place and it assessed only the garden and dry lands. Yet another settlement took place during 1836 A.D.-1837 A.D. which also assessed only the garden and dry lands. No uniform principle was followed in the assessment. It consisted of various rates for each tree in each taluk. The rate varied from 1/8, 1/6, 1/8, 1/4,
1/2 to 2/5. The more prevalent rates were 1/6 and 1/8.\textsuperscript{22} During the period in Kalkulam taluk taxes were fixed as 4 \textit{chuckrams} for tamarind, 12 \textit{casus} for \textit{punnai} and 12 \textit{casus} for mango.\textsuperscript{23} In order to assess the standard of measure in wet lands the \textit{parah} was introduced, but it was different in different locations. Hence it was fixed that a \textit{parah} was equivalent of 14 cents uniformly. In the assessment of rice lands the cultivators share was fixed as 1/3 of the produce. The remaining 2/3 was further divided in the proportion of 6/10 to the government and 4/10 to the landholder.\textsuperscript{24} As Kalkulam taluk practised double crop system, i.e. \textit{Kanni} and \textit{Kumbhom}, the assessment rate was fixed one and half times more than the assessment mentioned above. The demand of the assessment by the government on wet lands was levied partly in kind and partly by cash.

As in Travancore the chief categories of tenure in Kalkulam taluk were broadly classified into \textit{Jenmom} land tenure and \textit{Sircar} or \textit{Pandaravaka} or Government land tenure. Under \textit{Jenmom} land tenure the chief systems of tenancy were \textit{Verumpattom} or \textit{Venpattom}, \textit{Kanom} or \textit{Kuzhikana}, \textit{otti}, etc.\textsuperscript{25} In the \textit{verumpattom tenure} the tenant took possession of the property and paid an annual rent to the landlord as agreed upon. He was bound to quit the land at

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  \item \textsuperscript{22} R. Krishna Rao, \textit{A Revenue Hand Book of Travancore}, Trivandrum, 1889, p. 127.
  \item \textsuperscript{23} \textit{Regulations and Proclamations of Travancore}, Vol. I, (1010 M.E. - 1070 M.E.), Trivandrum, 1927, p. 27.
  \item \textsuperscript{24} \textit{Proceedings of the Travancore Sri Mulam Assembly}, 19\textsuperscript{th} July,1935, Trivandrum, p. 467.
\end{itemize}
the expiry of his term. From 1892 A.D. onwards the \textit{pattom} on paddy land and garden lands were fixed as \(\frac{1}{4}\) of the gross produce. However, if no trees were found on the assessed lands \textit{pattom} had been assessed and it was equivalent to the \textit{payattupattom} tenure. The \textit{pattom} on buildings were fixed as one half of the rental value.

The \textit{Kuzhikanam} tenure also existed in Kalkulam taluk and the period was fixed as twelve years. \textit{Otti}, another transaction tenure also existed in Kalkulam taluk by which the \textit{Jenmi} borrowed a stipulated amount against the security of his land. The land was left with the \textit{Kudiyan} for enjoyment of its produce as interest for the amount.

The notable tenures practised at Kalkulam taluk for the \textit{Sircar} government lands were \textit{Pandarapattom}, \textit{Inam}, \textit{Viruthi} and \textit{Thiruppuvanam}. \textit{Pandarapattom} was the tenure defined as a lease without any proprietary or transferable rights. But later the tenants became owners of their land if they had paid tax to the government.

\textit{Inams} were the grants of lands made by ruling princes, chieftains or great \textit{Jenmis} for the service rendered to the state or sovereign. \textit{Inams} were classified into service \textit{Inams} and personal \textit{inams}. During the year 1912 a royal

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\item 26. V. Nagam Aiya, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 320.
\item 27. Waste lands were assessed with \textit{Payattupattom} on no fixed principle.
\item 29. V. Nagam Aiya, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 320.
\item 30. M.H. Oomen, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 22.
\end{itemize}
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proclamation was made and it paved the way for mortgage, to sell or transfer the personal *inams*.\(^{31}\)

Another land tenures existed in Kalkulam taluk was *Viruthi* or the service grants, by which the *Viruthi* holders enjoyed certain lands on assessment for rendering certain services.\(^{32}\) Such services were supply of vegetables and other articles to *Sircar*, *Uttupuras*, *Sircar* temples on ceremonial occasions in the palace during erection of sheds, providing supplies during royal tours etc. The system was found to be good at the time of its inception. But later it became a burden on holders and ultimately this system was abolished in 1084 M.E. 1909 A.D.\(^{33}\)

*Thiruppuvanam*, another land tenure which existed in Kalkulam taluk dealt with the assignment of revenue or rent to any religious, educational or charitable institution or individual. The tax due to the government was being collected by the government from the *Thiruppu* holder. *Thiruppu* holder, in turn, collected the rent from the *Thiruppu* land holder. In Kalkulam taluk such *Thiruppu* lands had existed in many of the villages.\(^{34}\)

The *Kandukrishi* land was another system of *Sircar* tenure found in Kalkulam taluk\(^{35}\) and was defined as the home farm of the sovereign. The *ryot* who tilled the home farm land paid his rent in kind. However the Maharani of

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34. *Collectors Standing Orders, op. cit.*, p. 221.
35. V. Nagam Aiya, *op. cit.*, p. 325.
Travancore abolished the system of paying rent in kind and revoked the payment in cash during 1102 M.E.

*Sreepadam* lands belonged to the female members of the royal family of Travancore. These lands were not assessable under the tax proclamation of 1946. These lands were found in the villages of Manavalakurichy, Eraniel, Kadiapattanam, Thalakulam, Aloor, Colachel, Kalkulam, Ponmanai, Attoor, Kothanallur and Kappiyara of Kalkulam taluk.

After the formation of the Kanniyakumari District, Abolition of Kanniyakumari *Sreepadaramavaka* lands and conversion into *Ryotwari* Act was passed. This Act acquired the rights over these lands and granted *ryotwari pattas* to the tenants after due payment of compensation to the temples. Likewise the Tamilnadu Transferred Territory *Jenmikaram* Payment Abolition Act extinguished the right of collecting compensation from the *Kudiyans*. By the Kanniyakumari *Sreepadam* Lands Abolition and conversion into Ryotwari Act, *Sreepadam* lands had been taken over and *ryotwari* settlement was introduced in the entire area.

After 1956 the Tamilnadu Government ordered a survey of the whole of Kanyakumari District and as the former survey was done some sixty years ago, a new survey officer was appointed. Hence the entire area of

Kanniyakumari District was resurveyed and records had been maintained.  

The Tamil Nadu Land Reforms Fixation of Ceiling of Land Act was passed in 1961. As per the Act ceiling area for a family of five members was fixed at 30 standard acres. This Act also permitted an allowance of five standard acres for each additional member in the family. But the overall ceiling of a family was sixty standard acres.  

Agriculture  

Agriculture was the main occupation of the people. Agricultural situation of Kalkulam taluk has remained almost static in its basic aspects. Due to the peculiar system of inheritance agricultural holdings have been subjected to extreme fragmentation. The average size of an agricultural holding was half an acre to three-fourth of an acre. People cultivated various crops like banana, betel-vine, vegetables, coconut, tapioca, rubber etc.  

Paddy crop received top most priority and 11012.1 acres of land in Kalkulam came under paddy cultivation. Coconut crop stood foremost in the garden cultivation of Kalkulam taluk. It occupied an extensive area in the coastal belt. The area under the cultivation of coconut in Kalkulam taluk was 19.1 square miles. Every house garden possessed at least a few plantains. 

41. M. Gopalakrishnan, op. cit., p. 597.
43. Ibid., p. vi.
44. Census of India, op. cit., p. vii.
45. V. Nagam Aiya, op.cit., p. 53.
Along with coconut, banana, tapioca and rubber, coffee and tea were the important crops in this taluk. During the year 1117 M.E., 1942 A.D. tea occupied an area of 705 acres and coffee 41 acres. Ecalyptus, Alloizzia and Cloves were cultivated in the taluk. Off-season bearing horticulture crops like tamarind and pepper were cultivated. Inter-cropping of areca nut, banana, pine apple were in vogue in Kalkulam taluk. The farmers of Kalkulam also had grown various crops like betel and vegetables. They also cultivated Kanthari and mutti, a highly aromatic and tasty banana, on the hill slopes.

Rubber, one of the principal crops in Kalkulam, occupied an area of 820 acres even in 1105 M.E. 1930 A.D. Due to the cultivation of rubber, Kalkulam became the highest earning taluk of Kanyakumari District. It produced a superior quality of rubber and got premium price in international markets. Rubber cultivation provided employment opportunities for the youth of Kalkulam taluk. Rubber planters contributed to the economic prosperity of the region. To get a large income the farmers as well as the estate owners switched over to rubber planting it in all kinds of lands. Hence rubber crop had effectively occupied the area earlier covered by tapioca, fruit trees, palmyra, coconut etc.

Due to the availability of a variety of agricultural products in

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47. A very small but exceedingly pungent chilly
Kalkulam taluk many trade centres had been established throughout the taluk and they have been still functioning successfully. Trade centres were located at Monday Market, Kulasekaram, Eraniel, Colachel, Thiruvattar, Meikamandapam, Manavalakurichy, Friday Market, Thuckalay and Thickenamcode.\textsuperscript{51} The only important seaport in the taluk was at Colachel and shipping was being carried on from here. Many important articles were exported from Colachel to Bombay and Tuticorin.\textsuperscript{52} The coffee produced in South Travancore was also exported from Colachel Port.\textsuperscript{53} The other chief items of export included palmyra, aloe plants, mineral sands, fish and salt. The coir yarn was one of the major items exported from Colachel port.\textsuperscript{54}

In order to improve the economy of the agriculturist, the irrigation system was properly organized. It added further to the economy of the people of Kalkulam. In ancient days the wet lands of Kalkulam were chiefly depending on rain-fed tanks. Kalkulam consisted of 464 rain-fed tanks.\textsuperscript{55} They were used for irrigation, bathing and washing purposes. Though the tanks were numerous, in most cases they were \textit{oornis} containing water just enough for cultivating a few acres of land. The chief source of water supply was Paralyar passing through the two taluks of Kalklulam and Vilavancode reaching the sea at Thengapatanam. Paralayar had been used for irrigation in Nanchilnad. The

\textsuperscript{52} S.G. Barker, \textit{A Report of Industrial Survey of Travancore}, Trivandrum, 1921, p. 328.
\textsuperscript{54} Travancore-Cochin News, 1 December, 1950, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{55} M. Gopalakrishnan, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 301.
then Pandya kings, who were ruling the country, found that the supply from the river was inadequate to irrigate the area. Hence the Pandyan King Rajasimha constructed the Pandyan Dam across the Paralayar in Kalkulam taluk. The Dam was considered as the heart of the irrigation system in South Travancore.\(^{56}\) It stood as a monument of engineering skill of the ancient people of our country. The area of land covered for irrigation by the Pandyan dam was 14000 acres.\(^{57}\) Pandyan kal, a channel, was also constructed to take its water into another river called Pazhayar running through Thovalai and Agasteeswaram Taluk. The Pandyan kal was running through forest in deep rock cuttings excavated before the invention of blasting by gun powder.

The success of the Pandyan dam induced the succeeding generation to construct another dam known as Puthen dam about a quarter of a mile lower down the same stream Paralayar. The Puthen dam was designed for the irrigation of the then Eraniel and Kalkulam taluks. The Puthen dam and the Padmanabhapuram Puthanar (PP) Channel were built about 1750 A.D.\(^{58}\)

The Puthen dam and the PP channel form the nucleus of the present system of irrigation in Kalkulam taluk. The Padmanabhapuram Puthanar channel started from the Puthen dam in the Paralayar about ¼ a mile below the Pandyan dam and reached the western and southern slopes of the Velimalai. It had a length of about 20 miles passing through Maycode and Udayagiri.

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annually supplied water for nearly 4000 acres with an assessment of Rs.20,000/-.

The Pandyan and Puthen dams across Paralyar were acting only as diversion weirs. Hence most of the flood waters in the river Paralyar as well as Kodayar ran unutilized. But as the ayacut steadily increased year after year it felt necessary to build another dam in the neighbouring Kodayar River for the steady supply of water. The Kodayar River was a better source than the Paralayar for irrigation purposes. So it was found necessary to supplement the Paralayar waters with the waters of Kodayar and thus the Kodayar Irrigation Project came into existence.

As early as 1012 M.E. (1836 – 1837) Captain Horsley proposed the construction of a dam on the Kodayar River. The dam is now popularly known as Pechipara Dam. The dam was built across the Kodayar River about 1.61 km below the confluence of three tributaries Kallar, Chittar and Kuttiyar at Pechipara, a place 11.27 km north of Kulasekaram. The cost of original construction was Rs.26.1 lakhs. The Pechipara dam was completed in 1906. In Kalkulam, the areas of assessed land benefitted from the Kodayar scheme was 17783.4 acres.

60. Kanniyakumari District Census Hand Book, op. cit., p.38.
63. Report from P.W.D. Office, Nagercoil, (nd.).
64. Census of India 1951, Trivandrum, p.vi.
Besides the Kodayar scheme, two anicuts were constructed in the taluk. One was the Thirparappu Anaicut constructed in 1951 across the river Kodayar at Thirupparappu and the area benefitted was 358.9 Ha. Another one was the Aruvikarai Anaicut constructed in 1953 across the river Paralayar at Aruvikkarai near Thiruvattar. The ayacut area benefitted through these channels was 297.90 Ha.

Due to insufficient supply from the Kodayar system crops met failure repeatedly. Hence it was felt necessary to improve the Kodayar system by tapping every available extra source of water supply in the locality. The Kodayar extension project was therefore formulated. Under this project a dam at Perunchani 1224 feet long across the Paralayar River was constructed and water was being let out for irrigation. It was built during 1948 to 1953 and the catchment area was 61.57 sq. miles.

The irrigated area covered by the Kodayar project had been treated as Major irrigation work. They came under the control of the Irrigation Boards of Kalkulam taluk. The rain fed minor irrigation sources were under the control of the food production sub-division at Thuckalay. In Kalkulam an ayacut of 436 acres came under Rain-fed minor irrigation sources. The Travancore government received irrigation revenue of Rs.1 per acre as water

66. Ibid.
cess on all ayacut or old wet lands, 21 chs per acre on ayacut irrigated by baling, Rs.7 per acre on all dry lands converted into wet land and Rs.3½ per acre on all dry lands converted into wet and irrigated lands by baling. As per the report of 1899-1900, an average amount of tax payable under a single patta was Rs. 2.26 chs, the highest amount being Rs.437 and the lowest 1 cash.

Fishing

Fishing was the only means of livelihood for the coastal people of Kalkulam taluk. The chief fishing centres of the taluk were Muttom, Colachel and Kadiapattanam. Kurumbanai, Vaniakudi, Kodimunai, Kottilpadu and Puthur were the fishing villages. Fishing in this area was done mostly with catamarans and non-mechanized boats. Those who did not own catamarans usually accompanied the owners of other boats to fish in the deep sea.

Open boat called Vallam was also used for fishing. The largest boat could accommodate a dozen or more men. Fishing with the aid of Vallam's was being locally called as Karamadi. For Karamadi fishing a minimum of 25 members was required. Generally Vallams were hired from their owners who were entitled to get one third of the fish caught as rent. The remaining two

71. Travancore Administrative Report for the year 1899-1900, Trivandrum, p.12.
72. Census of India 1951, Trivandrum, p. viii.
73. Catamaran consist of 3 or 4 even more pieces of the trunk of silk cotton tree tied together firmly and smeared with coatings of fish oil at frequent intervals. (Travancore Information and Listener, Vol. II, September, 1948, p.50)
74. Interview with Susaimarian of Chinnavilai, dated 5th January, 2010.
75. Interview with B. Elias of Chinnavilai, dated 8th January, 2010.
thirds was shared by the catchers.\textsuperscript{76} Mechanized boats were not common. In order to popularize the use of mechanized crafts for fishing, power boats were being supplied to fishermen through co-operative societies at subsidised rates.\textsuperscript{77} But a few persons owned such types of boats. Mrs. Lourdammal Simon, an ex-minister of the Madras State (1957-1962) and a native of Colachel, took certain measures to improve the lot of the fisher folk. During her time nylon nets and twine were being supplied at subsidised rates for better catching of fish.

In the early sixties, the Technical Cooperative Mission (TCM) supplied equipments to the Department of Fisheries for setting up an ice and cold storage plant at Colachel.\textsuperscript{78} The number of gillnetters began to grow rapidly as the banks were ready to issue loans. But loans for purchasing boats were given only against adequate security.\textsuperscript{79} Since the poor fishermen could not afford to provide necessary security they could not really enjoy the loan facility.\textsuperscript{80}

The people of the coast were economically backward and poor. They had the feeling that their jobs were secure as long as the sea would exist. Therefore, they did not care to save for the future from their earnings. They

\textsuperscript{76} Kanniyakumari District Census Hand Book, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 37.
\textsuperscript{77} Vision 2020, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 48.
\textsuperscript{78} J.R. Narchson et.al, Called to Serve – A Profile of the Diocese of Kottar, 1983, p.111.
\textsuperscript{79} Interview with S. Antony, Former President, Fishermen Cooperative Society, Colachel, dated 8\textsuperscript{th} January, 2010.
\textsuperscript{80} \textit{Report on the Administration of Travancore 1913-1914}, Trivandrum, 1915, p.18.
lived on the hope that the next day there would be a miraculous catch which would bring them a fortune.

The night long hard work and struggle in the sea required good nourishment, but a good section of them took to drinking toddy or arrack. Though they had school facilities the fishermen preferred to initiate their children at a very early age into the traditional profession. More hands mean more money. With a low educational standard, often plagued by poverty and ignorance and exploited by money lenders, merchants and middlemen, fishermen continued to be in a state of underdevelopment.

In 1914 an experimental fish curing yard was opened at Muttom, an important fishing village in Kalkulam taluk. The site and temporary buildings were provided by the Travancore government and a few staff were also sanctioned. Salt was sold from the Rajakkamangalam factory at twelve annas per maund, i.e. fourteen annas less than the usual selling price. In 1914 three men had received licenses for fish curing. 383 maunds and sixteen and a half seers of fish were brought in for curing. Another fish curing yard was opened at Colachel beach on the poramboke land lying between the channel and the beach. Since the fish curing yard was situated very near the salt pan many objections were made to the Chief Secretary to the government. They claimed that the location of the fish curing yard was causing inconvenience to the proper working of the salt factory. The officials inspected the site and found

that the objections were not very serious.\textsuperscript{83} Finally the government allowed that the fish curing yard at Colachel to continue in the site.\textsuperscript{84}

Salt manufacture was one of the oldest and a government monopolized industry of the Travancore State. Major quantity of salt required for the state was obtained from the local factories.\textsuperscript{85} Colachel in Kalkulam taluk was one among the four sea side stations which manufactured salt. Salt manufactured by using sea water was known as \textit{alloms} and the salt manufactured by using backwater was called as \textit{Padanays}. The salt manufactured in the \textit{alloms} was superior in quality to \textit{Padanays}. Salt manufacturing was carried out by solar evaporation during the two monsoon intervals.\textsuperscript{86}

Manufacture of salt became a government monopoly. In 988 M.E. 1813 A.D. under the orders of Major Munro, the Diwan in order to enhance the revenue of the native state, had taken control of the manufacture. Of the total income, 60 per cent called \textit{Melvaram}, belonged to the government and 40 per cent called \textit{Kudivaram} belonged to the licensee, which was also brought by the government by paying its price called \textit{Kudivila} of the native state.\textsuperscript{87}

By the regulation of 1065 M.E. (1890 A.D.) a system of licenses was introduced to the manufacturers. But the \textit{alloms} at Colachel was temporarily closed in 1067 M.E., 1892 A.D. as the manufacturing expenses

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\textsuperscript{83} File No. D.Dis. No.3790, Development Volume IV, KSA, Trivandrum.
\textsuperscript{84} \textit{Census of India}, 1941, p. 107.
\textsuperscript{86} \textit{Report from P.W.D. Officer,} Nagercoil.
\textsuperscript{87} \textit{Census of India, op. cit.}, p. 358.
\end{flushleft}
exceeded the value of the output. In 1904 a modified excise system was introduced and the old monopolized factories were given legal sanction. In the same year salt manufacturing was again started in the Colachel allom and the distribution of salt was eventually left to private enterprises.

By the Regulation of 1088 M.E. 1913 A.D. powers were granted to the government to supervise the working of the factories and the number of factories rose to fifteen. Colachel with the total acreage of 89.75 and 46.9 acreage of pan, did not come under the modified Excise System and it remained under the monopoly system. The factory at Colachel got its supply of brine direct from the sea. The establishment of the Kothayar Irrigation Project fresh water percolation became a chief impediment for the successful working of the factory. Adverse weather condition also reduced the production of salt. As the salt produced within the state was not sufficient to meet local requirements, the deficit was imported from Bombay and Tuticorin. During 1936 there was no salt manufacturing at Colachel and once again salt production was reestablished during 1117 M.E., 1942. At this time 32906 maunds of salt was produced from 37.31 acre. In course of time, due to the intervention of middlemen, salt manufacturing at Colachel virtually stopped.

89. By which the government had to purchase the whole quantity of salt on payment of a fixed price and salt it to the public. (T.K. Velupillai, Travancore State Manual, Vol. III, pp. 531).
93. The Statistics of Travancore, 1941-42, Trivandrum, p. 58.
94. Varadharajan, Colachel Oru Varalattu Aayvu (Tamil), Colachel, 2005, p. 117.
Indian Rare Earths Ltd.

The greatest boon for the Kalkulam taluk is the availability of monazite bearing mineral deposits, found along the sea coast between Colachel and Kadiapattanam.\(^95\) These deposits which are product of the Western Ghats, contain illuminate, garnet, zircon, sillimanite, etc. said to have been formed by the decomposition of certain extremely old pegmatite and granite rocks, which had been subjected to erosion for ages.

Weathering agents of nature like heat, cold, wind and percolating water break crush and leach the rocks. Rains, streams and rivers wash down the unacted fragments into the sea. The ocean waves and sea currents in their turn sort them out and re-deposit the minerals on particular stretches of the beach.\(^97\) It was a German Scientist who discovered the occurrence of monazite in the beach sands of Manavalakurichi which he found accumulated in the coir yarn store-house in Germany.\(^98\) In 1908 he discovered that the sand contained monazite. In 1909 Mr. Schomberg visited Manavalakurichi to assess the quantum of the mineral deposit.\(^99\) Though the crimson coloured garnet sand was collected and exported on a small scale to Bombay even before 1909,\(^100\) large quantities of monazite sands came to be mined from Manavalakurichi in Kalkulam taluk and exported to western countries by the Germans between

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1909 and 1917.\textsuperscript{101} During the First World War the British took control of the German company exporting mineral sands from Manavalakurichi and formed the Travancore Minerals Company.\textsuperscript{102} Soon another company by name Hopkin and Williams was established at Manavalakurichi.\textsuperscript{103} It separated monazite on pneumatic vibrating tables mechanically.\textsuperscript{104}

In 1945 the Travancore-Cochin state assumed control of the sand deposits and the two mineral concerns continued to work as agents of the state.\textsuperscript{105} In the subsequent year Hopkin and Williams Company was closed down on the expiry of the lease taken from the Travancore-Cochin government. Subsequently in the year 1947 fresh lease was availed of from the Travancore-Cochin government and the company commenced its production. But it was again closed down in 1949. Three years later the Hopkin and Williams Company again started producing illmenite.\textsuperscript{106}

During the year 1951, the Travancore Minerals Ltd. was taken over by the State Government.\textsuperscript{107} After the reorganization of states in 1956, the Travancore Minerals Company Ltd. was handed over to the Madras State.\textsuperscript{108} But the Hopkin and Williams Company continued under private ownership till the year 1959. It fell into arrears of royalty payable to the Travancore-Cochin

\textsuperscript{101} T. Velayuthan, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 29.
\textsuperscript{102} \textit{Ibid.},
\textsuperscript{103} \textit{Ibid.},
\textsuperscript{104} S.G. Barker, \textit{op. cit.}, p.10.
\textsuperscript{105} \textit{Techno Economic Survey of Kerala}, New Delhi, 1962, p. 98.
\textsuperscript{106} Interview with M. George, Formerly the Worker of I.R.E., Manavalakurichi, dated 1st August, 2009.
\textsuperscript{107} \textit{Techno Economic Survey of Kerala, op. cit.}, p. 98.
State to the tune of Rs. 28 lakhs. Added to this there was serious labour problem. Hence the management decided to close down the unit.  

On 1st January 1959, the plant at Manavalakurichi was taken over by the Travancore Minerals Private Ltd. Out of the registered capital of Rupees One crore the paid up capital of Rs.50 lakhs was equally shared by the Central Government and the Kerala Government. The Madras Government took up 5% share in the capital out of the holdings of the Kerala Government.

In view of the growing importance of the mineral sands of Manavalakurichi, the Department of Atomic Energy of India decided to take over the assets and liabilities of the Travancore Minerals Ltd. and to operate it on modern and more efficient lines. Subsequently the company went into voluntary liquidation. Hence the assets and liabilities were taken over by the Indian Rare Earths Ltd.

Henceforth considerable attention was given to the mechanization and modernization of the factory at Manavalakurichi with the object of establishing a Titanium Complex. As a diversification, a Zirconium Plant and a Ziroconium Oxide Plant were also set up in Manavalakurichi. With the commissioning of the new plants at Manavalakurichi, the Indian Rare Earths Ltd., decided to undertake the exploitation of the beach sand in the South-West

111. Ibid.,
112. A. Bennan, loc. cit.
113. Ibid.,
Coast. Further the mineral sand separation plant at Manavalakurichi was also modernized.114

For securing and preserving harmony and cordial relationship between the management and the employees, The Mineral Works Committee was formed in accordance with the provisions of Section C of the Industrial Dispute Act 1947.115 In order to safeguard the interest of the workers and promote their welfare a Consumer’s Co-operative Stores Ltd. was formed and it was registered as a Co-operative Society under the Travancore-Cochin Cooperative Societies Act X of 1952, with the main objective of arranging for the purchase and sale to its members and other consumers at reasonable rates of all articles of consumption and other domestic requirements.116

Another scheme viz. Indian Rare Earths Workers Welfare Fund was also launched with the aim of improving the standard of living of the workers by lending loans to the workers during times of need and illness.117 The minerals produced by the mineral plants at Manavalakurichi were Monazite, Ilmenite, Zircon, Rutil, Brown Illmenite or Leucoxene and Garnet.118 Monazite had a good world market but with the advent of electricity there was

114. Col. Rajagopal Menon, Rare Earths Industry in India, Souvenir, Indian Rare Earths Ltd., Manavalakurichi, 1972, p. 11.
a setback. However after the 1930s the monazite market had gone up.\textsuperscript{119} Illmenite is the main constituent of the mineral deposits of Manavalakurichi. It is mainly used for the production of Titanium Dioxide.\textsuperscript{120}

Ilmenite served as a valuable raw material for various industries such as paint, paper, rubber, leather, linoleum, plastics, ceramics, cosmetics, printing ink etc.\textsuperscript{121} Between the years 1922 and 1925 the total production was only a few hundred tons per year. But of late the increase in the use of ilmenite for producing Titanium Dioxide, had given a boost to the illmenite industry.\textsuperscript{122} The beach washings of Manavalakurichi contain about 5 to 10 per cent of Zircon. It is used for the preparation of Zirconium Oxide. The Zirconium Oxide Plant at Manavalakurichi is the only one in India producing pure Zirconium Oxide.\textsuperscript{123} The products of the factory at Manavalakurichi had a good export market.\textsuperscript{124} The modernized mineral plants at Manavalakurichi are a boon to the people of Kalkulam taluk as well as the nation. The successful operation of these plants, and their functioning under the aegis of the Department of Atomic Energy had not only added prominence to the Manavalakurichi Village in Kalkulam but also made known to the world the whole Kanyakumari District.

**Cottage Industries**

Coir making was one of the cottage industries of Kalkulam taluk. It was the chief occupation of the people of Kothumangalam, Parapattu and a part

\begin{footnotes}
\item[119] A. Padmanabha Iyer, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
\item[120] T. Valayudhan, *op. cit.*, p. 31.
\item[121] *Kanniayakumari District Census Hand Book*, *op. cit.*, p. 48.
\item[123] T. Velayaudhan, *op. cit.*, p. 35.
\item[124] *Kanniayakumari District Census Hand Book*, *op. cit.*, p. 48.
\end{footnotes}
of Pillayarcoil. Formerly raw coconut husks were soaked in brackish water for about six to twelve months. They were then beaten to separate the fibre from the pith. The fibre obtained was made into yarn either by hand or with the help of simple machines. The yarn made by hand was inferior in quality while the yarn made with machines was superior in quality.125

In course of time the traditional method of making coir had been given up and mechanization was introduced. Mechanization reduced the period of soaking from six to twelve months to four months and even less than that. It also became possible to extract fibre from 10,000 husks per day.126 Generally a person could beat about seventy to seventy five husks per day.127 Small middlemen collected a few husks and sold them to large collectors and stockists. Generally small and big capitalists engaged a number of labourers for extraction of fibre and spinning of coir.128 Retail and wholesale coir dealers and middlemen were interfering with the trade at every stage of production.

Due to the interference of middlemen the actual worker, who was the primary producer, got a low wage while the middlemen and the exporters of coir earned enormous profits. Hence to protect the manufactures, a Coir Manufacturers’ Association was formed on 17th April, 1940. It was incorporated under section 28 of the Travancore Companies Act IX of 1114

127. Interview with M.R. Rajendran, Manavalakurichi, dated 11th June 2009.
128. Travancore Information and Listener, May 1948, Trivandrum, p. 35.
Further a coir scheme was evolved and as a result Co-operative Societies were formed. During this time, the number of Co-operative societies existed in Kalkulam taluk was twenty six. The Co-operative Societies enabled the labourers to get better wages, regular work and a due portion of their profits.

The coir produced was usually exported to foreign countries utilized locally and also sent outside the taluk. The exported quantity was in the form of Muppiri yarn and the rest was in the shape of yarn. The coir industry in Kalkulam taluk provided employment to thousands of persons and enhanced the income of the poor workers. It is stated that the State of Travancore-Cochin was the main producer of coir yarn in the world and more than 65% of the whole output was from this state and, no doubt, Kalkulam taluk had also contributed to the remarkable production.

Colachel in Kalkulam taluk was the only place in the State of Travancore where brushes were manufactured on a considerable scale. Palmyra and coconut fibre, available locally, were used for manufacturing brushes. For a long time palmyra fibre was exported to Europe and Japan. In 1912 the

manufactured fibre at a value of Rs.2,54,691 was exported.\textsuperscript{135} It was found that the demand for fibre in foreign countries was mainly for the manufacture of brushes, and thus the question of starting a brush manufacturing unit was investigated. No large capital was necessary to start this industry. Deposits for handles and boards were the tools necessary for the manufacturing of brushes. Whisk brooms, scrubbing brushes, pan brushes, cloth brushes and ordinary brooms were made and sold both locally and abroad. The depots functioned as intermediary agencies with the markets.

Jaggery making was one of the largest cottage industries of Kalkulam taluk. The palmyra tree grown abundantly in Kalkulam taluk contributed a lot to the livelihood of the people. The most important product of the Palmyra is the saccharine sap which flows from the flower stalk. For the extraction of palmyra juice, the palmyra climber usually had to climb each tree in the morning and also in the evening.\textsuperscript{136}

The sweet juice obtained from the tree was boiled for making jaggery. Usually a half coconut shell was used for pouring the hot juice for solidification. The best quality jaggery should be of light brown in colour. Tons and tons of jaggery were produced annually in Kalkulam taluk. The boiling of the sweet toddy was mostly done by women.\textsuperscript{137} Large quantities of jaggery thus obtained in the taluk was sent to the local markets and also sold to refining

\textsuperscript{135} S.G. Barker, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 333.  
\textsuperscript{136} S.G. Barker, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 338-339.  
\textsuperscript{137} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 338.
factories, where it was demineralized to make white sugar. Such a factory in making sugar was situated at Thuckalay.  

The remaining quantity was transported to Nagercoil to be drained for molasses an ingredient for sugar manufacturing. In 1092 M.E. 1917 A.D. the total quantity of jaggery exported from Padmanabhapuram Division remained 1,51,598 cwts and the export duty realized was Rs.26,521. During the taping seasons large quantities of the fresh sweet sap was drunk as a part of the diet of the people of this locality. Chunks of the jaggery followed by a drink of water were used by coolies as their midday meal during their labour on fields. Poor school children often carried the jaggery for their lunch.

Another chief produce from the palmyra was toddy. Trees tapped for toddy were licensed and paid a large annual revenue to the government. During 117 M.E. 1942 A.D. there were twenty six toddy shops in Kalkulam taluk. The number of trees for tapping in this taluk for the first half of the year 1117 M.E. was 3115 and the revenue obtained as palmyra tree tax was Rs.6,539, ch, 4 c. There were government regulations concerning the sale of toddy to ensure it as a fresh beverage. Tons of jaggery was distilled to make arrack a sort of indigenous whisky. These two drinks, toddy and arrack, were widely used in this taluk and the tax thereon constituted a large part of the

140. Emily Gilchriest Hatch, Travancore, Oxford University Press, 1939, p. 194.
141. The Statistics of Travancore 1941-42, Trivandrum, p. 70.
excise revenue. As per the Statistics of 1921, there were twenty six arrack shops in Kalkulam taluk.  

In course of time, the palmyra industry began to decline due to the decrease in the number of climbers. With the construction of the Pechiparai Dam, much of the dry lands had been converted into wetlands. Consequently the climbers had become paddy cultivators and thus their original calling died out. The shifting of labour to tea and rubber estates had also resulted in the decrease in the number of climbers. Recruiting coolies from other communities had been great. The educated *channar* community induced their brethren to take up more profitable and less arduous jobs.

Eraniel in Kalkulam taluk was one among the most important weaving centres in Travancore. Thousands of weavers with their looms lived in the neighbourhood of Neyyoor, Eraniel and Palliyadi.  

Thorthus, mundus, thuppaties, pudavas, nariels, towels, sheets, surgical bandages were the chief finished products produced by these weavers. It is stated that the *nariels* woven by them were used by the royal family.

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members and the kings. They occasionally presented the *nariels* to the neighbouring rulers. In pre-war days the average income of a labourer was 5 chs per day. ¹⁴⁵ Since there was no proper organization of the industry, the earnings and the supply of yarn were completely controlled by the merchants. After the advent of mechanization in the weaving industry the local weaving loom lost its importance.

Palmyra leaves were used, to a large extent, for mat weaving and basket making. The mats made out of palmyra leaves were much stronger than those of screw-pine leaves. A large number of people were engaged in mat weaving in Eraniel.¹⁴⁶ It was a common sight to see a few colourful mats and baskets hanging outside their gate waiting for a buyer. Another branch of this industry existed at Eraniel for making palmyra leaf fans. Till recently these fans were in common use especially on a hot day. ¹⁴⁷ Since the advent of electrification the use of these types of handmade fans lost their value and popularity, hence they slowly disappeared from the market.

Originally the Dutch introduced Indigo cultivation into Kerala.¹⁴⁸ Successively indigo cultivation followed in Kallukootam of Kalkulam taluk. Mr. Manual Belderbeck settled near Colachel in 1814 A.D., found that Kallukootam was the favourable locality for the cultivation and manufacturing of indigo. Hence he purchased lands at Kallukootam and established a factory

two miles away from Neyyoor which offered employment opportunities to many Christian families around this area.

Mr. Brown, a Danish man began the Indigo trade at Colachel about the beginning of the 19th century. Hence the trade proved a great success, and Col. Munro made it an article of free export for six years for encouraging the Indigo trade. Rev. Mead supplied cheap labour to the factory and hence indigo manufacturing became a source of livelihood to hundreds of Christian families. Later, two Europeans Mr. Dullo and Mr. Coke, who came from Tuticorin and settled at Neyyoor revived and expanded the trade. Later on Mr. John Bilderbeck handed over the indigo garden and the premises to Rev. Mead as an endowment as per his father’s wish for the maintenance of the Christian Mission there. 149 The endowed indigo grant became the mission land and still being enjoyed by the mission.

149. C.M. Agur, *Church History of Travancore, Madras, 1903*, p. 310.