Kalkulam, once the seat of Travancore Maharajas, later emerged as a separate taluk of Kanyakumari District in Tamilnadu, housing places of legendary and historical importance. Evergreen hills, perennial rivers, dense forests, a long coastal line beautify this taluk. Structures of great antiquity and architectural value made it a significant taluk in the history of Indian subcontinent.

Kalkulam taluk had been under the rule of the Pandyas, the Ays, the Perumals, the Cheras, the Venad rulers, the Chola Pandya Viceroy and the Maharajas of Travancore. The Ays who ruled this region were the subordinate chieftains of the Cheras who were ruling the southern part of the Chera kingdom. During the reign of the Perumlas, taking advantage of their weakness Sendan or Jeyantha Varman, the first Pandya king massacred the people of Kurundadu and won a great victory at Sennilam, a place near Manavalakurichi, in Kalkulam taluk. The Ays pressed by the Pandyas gave place to the later Cheras.

Another historical importance of this taluk was that it came under Chola supremacy during the time of Bhaskara Ravi Varman Tiruvadi (978 A.D. -1036 A.D). Rajaraja I, the great Chola ruler led an expedition against the Venad ruler, conquered the southern portion and named it as Rajaraja Thennadu. Inscriptional evidences at Tirunandikkarai and Seramangalam show
that the whole of Kalkulam taluk came under Rajaraja Thennadu. Muttom a
place in Kalkulam taluk was renamed as Mummudi Cholanallur by Raja Raja.
Kadiapattinam, an ancient sea port, was well known at the time of Rajaraja.

With the arrival of the Cholas, Travancore including Kalkulam
entered into a new phase in its history. Rajaraja, wherever he went, ennobled
the temple as the pivot of social and religious life. Bestowing gifts on temple,
organisation of Brahmin feeding, establishment of the institution of Devadasis,
insistence on the practice of singing devotional hymns from Devaram and
Tiruvasakam and popularisation of religious festivals and ceremonies were
some of the reverential activities which he revelled in Kalkulam taluk.

The epigraph found in Tiruvitancode mentions that Jatavarman
Sundara Chola Pandya was appointed as the Viceroy of the southern tip in
1018 A.D. The inscriptions found at Kanyakumari indicate that a village named
Alur in Kalkulam taluk was surnamed Vikrama Chola Pandyaapuram after the
Viceroy Maravarman Udayar Sri Vikrama. It proves that Kalkulam taluk
came under this Vice Regal system until the reign of Maravarman Udayar Sri
Vikrama. The Vice Regal system did not continue after the accession of
Kulothunga in 1070 A.D.

During that time the Venad power established its supremacy over
the southern area in a rejuvenated form. The enfeebled condition of the Chola
authority in the south afforded a splendid opportunity for the Venad kings.
Then Kalkulam was the capital of the Venad rulers. It was not definitely known when the capital was changed from Tiruvithamcodu to Kalkulam, also known as Padmanabhapuram. But Kalkulam was the capital till the royal family of Travancore shifted their capital to Trivandrum.

The Venad kingdom was very often at war with its aggressive neighbours. One such battle took place at Kaniyakulam near Alur in Kalkulam against the forces of Thirumalainaick of Madurai. Another severe battle fought in Kalkulam taluk was the Battle of Thiruvattar between Kerala Varma and the Mughal Sirdar Mugilan. During the reign of Virakeral Varma, Thiruvithancode, Keralapuram, Kalkulam and Udayagiri Fort of Kalkulam taluk gained political significance.

Another significant incident was the entry of European powers. In the beginning, the rulers of Travancore managed to keep the Portuguese and the Dutch away from their territory. But Travancore was forced to make an alliance with the British. At that time the Dutch were very powerful in the west coast. They established settlements at Colachel. They attacked Travancore from a fortification that they had secured near Colachel and captured some territories. But finally the Dutch were totally defeated in 1741 at the Battle of Colachel and many of their soldiers were captured. One of them was DeLannoy who subsequently served Martanda Varma as the commander of a regiment in the Travancore army. He served loyally to Travancore and kept his iron foundry at Udayagiri. DeLannoy died at Udayagiri in 1777. The mortal
remains of the great general was buried with full military honours in the Church at Udayagiri Fort.

During the reign of Rama Varma Maharaja, a British Resident was stationed at Trivandrum. Velu Thambi of Talakulam became the Dalawa of Travancore and very soon differences of opinion arose between Velu Thambi and the Resident. The British fought a final war with Travancore and for this war Velu Thambi gathered soldiers from the barracks at Puliyoorkurichi, an important place near Padmanabhapuram. The successful operation of the British retreated Velu Thambi to the north. The departure of the Dewan marked the end of all Travancore resistances to the British.

During Gouri Lakshmi Bai (1811 to 1815 A.D) the Resident Col. Munro assumed the Dewanship of the state. No doubt the reforms of Munro had definitely changed the social and economic life of the people of Kalkulam taluk. The administrative reforms, social improvements and religions toleration of the succeeding monarchs of Gouri Lakshmi Bai completely changed the outlook of the people of Kalkulam taluk.

As in other parts of Travancore it was only sixty five years ago that the people of this taluk witnessed a major historic change. That change took them away from the long epoch of monarchy and entered into the path of democracy. This event was followed by the merging of this taluk with the Madras State.
After the merger, the administrative set up of the local bodies then in existence in Kalkulam was allowed to continue until 31st March 1962. The Tamilnadu Panchayat Act 1958 was extended to this taluk with effect from 1st April 1962. It is the only taluk in Kanyakumari District with two municipalities, i.e. Padmanabhapuram Municipality and Colachel Municipality. The local institutions of Kalkulam taluk rendered meritorious service to the betterment of people of the taluk.

Kalkulam taluk had been part of the kingdom of Travancore for a long time. Hence it shared the socio-cultural traits of Travancore very much. Caste played a pivotal role in the social status of the people of Kalkulam. Brahmins were considered to be superior human beings and they occupied the highest rank in the caste ladder. Nairs were considered as caste Hindus next to Brahmins. Ezhavas, Nadars, Pulayars and Parayas were considered as low caste people and they were kept at a distance. The low caste people were considered untouchables and many social discriminations were imposed upon them.

While pursuing the social history of Kalkulam taluk, it is evidently seen that along with untouchability other social evils like pulapedi, slavery and Devadasi systems were in existence. The Christian missionaries worked among the poorest of the poor and did much for their welfare. Thus, side by side with their evangelical work the missionaries took efforts to bring about social uplift of the downtrodden. People looked to the Christian missionaries for benefits and favours from the government.
It is hard to believe that such evils really prevailed in the taluk because the people of the village today sit and dine together in social gatherings like marriages and festivals without any discrimination of caste, colour or creed. There is a feeling of equality among the people of all castes and between both men and women.

With the gradual elimination of caste prejudices and caste exclusiveness, custom and tradition became less and less effective. The educated people and those who are associated with them bring the people nearer to the mode of dressing which is in vogue in other parts of India. A healthy change is noticeable in the wearing of ornaments. The restrictions imposed by custom on wearing of ornaments have completely disappeared. The outlook of the people, their life in general, has changed due to the spread of education. The society is moving forward and becoming more receptive to new ideas and ideals.

As far as religion is concerned nature worship was the most ancient form of worship prevailing in this region. Naga worship was prevalent among Nairs. When Vardhamana Mahavira and Siddhartha preached their new-found faiths, Kalkulam as a part of Travancore, became receptive to their faiths.

Thirunandikkara in Kalkulam was one of the four famous Jain centres of Kanyakumari District. The rock out cave temple at Thirunandikkara
was a Jain one originally. It was Rajaraja I converted this temple into a Siva temple in the 10th century A.D. Similarly, Mandaicadu Baghavathi Amman temple was built by a Buddhist monk who came from Kerala. The doctrine of Ahimsa and the Buddhist practices of *Uthsavams* and religious processions became part and parcel of the Hindu form of worship.

After the 8th century A.D., Saivism and Vaishnavism flourished and during that period many temples were built here for Siva and Vishnu. Of the twelve Sivalayas (which are famous in connection with the pilgrimage-run on Sivarathri) of Kanyakumari District, Kalkulam possessed seven. Adi Sankara, the religious reformer, made Thirparappu in Kalkulam as the temporary centre for his religious propagation. Adikesava Perumal temple at Thiruvattar is a fine example of the existence of Vaishnavism in Kalkulam taluk. It is one of the 108 shrines sacred to the Vaishnavites in India.

At Kumaracoil Subramanya Swamy is worshipped in the name of Murugan. Thus the existence of prominent temples such as Thiruvattar, Mandaicadu and Kumaracoil and the importance given to them in the whole of Travancore show the deep rootedness of Hinduism in this region. The worship of interior deities like Yakshi, Bhutatan, Muppidari, Sudalaimadan Mariamman etc. is confined to the people of lower castes.

These temples played an important role in the socio-political life of the Hindus of ancient period. Village life then centred round the temple.
The temple festivals were the most important events in the year looked forward to by the village folk. The annual festival at Mandaicadu is the biggest festival in Kanyakumari District and people in large numbers from all parts of this District and from the neighbouring state of Kerala participated. The fairs which are often associated with these temple festivals were miniature exhibitions and the people enjoyed well during the festival day.

Christianity in Kalkulam was introduced straight from the land of Jesus Christ not long after His crucifixion. Tradition associates its introduction with St. Thomas (52-68 A.D) one of the twelve Apostles of Jesus Christ. The Church at Thiruvithancode in Kalkulam was one of the oldest in the world, older than that of any in India.

The London Mission Society started their proselytising activities in 1806 A.D under the leadership of a German by name Ringeltaube. The mission flourished only due to the influence of the British residents. The protestant missionaries had involved themselves in the social uplift of the people of this region. Their service in the field of education, medicine, technical training and socio-economic liberation of the lower classes had played a significant role in the progress and upward mobility of the people.

As a result there were severe persecutions of the Christians and other lower castes. However in spite of the persecutions of the Christians a large number of Nadars and other lower castes embraced Christianity. At the
beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, one finds a well established indigenous protestant Christian community in Kalkulam.

The converts to Roman Catholic Christianity were originally the fisher folk residing near the coast of Kalkulam. In fact the presence of a Catholic centre at Mulagumodu reveals that Nadars of interior areas also came under the catholic fold.

In the 17\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th}, Centuries Christians were severely persecuted, especially those at the interior areas. The higher castes, if happened to get converted to Christianity, were severely punished. The persecution and death of Devasahayam Pillai is a typical example of how the higher castes were prevented from becoming Christians. Christianity and its members began to be looked upon as unpatriotic and alien to the socio political and religious traditions of Travancore. In course of time the higher castes began to show keen interest in the welfare of the lower castes to prevent their conversion. As a result, religious identity began to emerge as the prominent one in the place of the prevailing caste identity among the lower castes.

Unlike the Christian and Hindu population which were intermingled, Muslims were concentrated in a few centres like Thiruvithancode, Thuckalay, Manalikkarai and Colachel. Among the places of worship the mosques in Thiruvithancode and Thuckalay were very famous.
Muslims on their part respected the customs of the country and maintained a friendly relation with the local population.

Education in Kalkulam taluk has been an extensive one which divides itself into various stages. *Salais, Sabha Mutts, Ezhuthupalli* and *Pial* Schools catered to the educational needs of the people of Kalkulam. A notable feature of education was the existence of physical education in the form of *Kalaripauattu*. This type of physical training was more or less similar to the Karate of the present day. It is unfortunate that this type of physical education suffered neglect in recent times and as a result a native rural martial art is on the verge of extinction.

After the 19th century Kalkulam taluk benefited much due to the concrete educational policy of the state. English education was introduced. Schools in this taluk also increased in number. Lady missionaries encouraged women’s education. A boarding school for girls at Neyyoor was certainly a blessing for the girls of this area. Due to the Government policy of free-education in government schools and compulsory primary education, the number of school going students went up day by day. Nowadays it is very rare to find an illiterate in a house. The increase in the number of schools made it easy for a child to get education. Until the year 1962 there was no collegiate education in this region. Hence only a very few well-to-do people went to the nearby taluk for their higher education.
In ancient days Ayurveda system of treatment for diseases prevailed. Before the emergence of the Vaidyasala Department, native Vaidyans were specially employed for the treatment of patients during epidemic seasons. Public health services began with the vaccination services of Travancore Government. After the stable footing of the Vaidyasala Department, grant in aid Vaidyasalas were started at Eraniel, Padmanabhapuram, Thiruvattar and Ponmana. These Vaidyasalas adopted the traditional method of treatment. Along with recognised Vaidyans unrecognised Vaidyans were also practising in this taluk. As many of the Vaidyans were quacks, the popular faith in them steadily declined. The London Mission Society was the first to introduce allopathic system of treatment.

The London Mission started its medical work in 1838 choosing Neyyoor as the Medical Mission Centre. Started as a humble work it grew to the status of the biggest medical mission. At the time of its commencement the society was primitive and was plunged into superstitions. Under these circumstances the London Mission Society appeared with new vision and hope. Eminent doctors viz. Fells Bentall and others put the Neyoor Medical Mission in the map of the world as the largest Medical Mission in the world as early as 1910.

Dr. Pugh was the first surgeon in India who raised the Neyyoor Hospital and the Medical Mission to a reputed surgical centre. Dr. Somerwell who was responsible for putting Neyyoor on the map of the surgical world
rendered surgical treatment through which hundreds of lives were saved. The installation of X Ray unit in the Neyyoor Hospital further saved the lives of numerous patients. The medical training given to the children of the downtrodden and the treatment given to all irrespective of caste, creed, religion or region made many to follow the new faith Christianity.

Due to ignorance and illiteracy people considered some diseases like leprosy as incurable. The Medical Mission extended its services to other diseases like leprosy also. Thus was started a leprosy hospital in 1887. This humble beginning was blossomed into an up-to-date, well equipped leprosy hospital at Colachel with all modern facilities for the treatment of in-patients and out-patients. That leprosy was no more an incurable disease had been proved by the healing of many patients received every year and the fear towards the disease had been eliminated. This work was appreciated and recognised by the people and it is quite evident from the support received yearly. Besides these, there were three Government Hospitals at Thuckalay, Colachel and Kulaseharam and two private hospitals, Jalal Hospital, Thiruvithancode and the Hindu Mission Hospital, Eraniel.

The distribution of land as it exists in Kalkulam taluk is mainly the result of social customs, the laws of inheritance and the legislative enactments made from time to time. Though the people of Kalkulam had been agriculturists for several centuries, they are still following the traditional methods of cultivation. Since the size of holdings are too small due to sub
division and fragmentation, modern techniques like tractor ploughing, bunding, aerial spraying and mechanised harvesting cannot be carried out. As a result the yield is poor. The pressure of population on land is heavy and it has resulted in fragmentation of the agricultural holdings.

In ancient days the wet lands of Kalkulam was chiefly dependent on rain fed tanks. After the commencement of Kodayar irrigation project which is the main irrigation source of this taluk, large tracts of uncultivated lands had been converted into the rich rice fields of today. People cultivated multifarious crops like banana, betel vine, vegetable crops, coconut, tapioca, rubber etc. Paddy crop was given top most priority. Kalkulam taluk is a higher earning taluk in Kanyakumari District through rubber cultivation. The rubber produced in this area is superior in quality in the international market which gets premium price and a handsome profit. The rubber planters of Kalkulam had contributed to the prosperity of the region.

On the whole the standard of living of the people of Kalkulam taluk has progressed. However, free access to alcohol has ruined families. Not only the manual workers and fishermen, but also a good number of others spend part of their earnings on alcoholism. Hence the standard of living of these people declines and they are forced to live in miserable conditions. Neither the government nor the district administration has done anything significant in this regard. May be through awareness education, they could be persuaded to keep themselves away from alcohol.
People get the basic necessities of life like drinking water, good shelter etc. Schools and Hospitals are affordable even to an ordinary person of this taluk. Thanks to the government, almost all the houses are electrified. Only a handful of huts are seen in a few places. All the others are concrete houses. The people of Kalkulam taluk lead a life of ease and comfort compared to those of other parts of India. This taluk is rich in rubber, timber, fruits and fish which have not yet been fully utilised. If new rubber industries, timber based industries, fish manure and fruit preservation are set up, Kalkulam taluk will become one of the leading industrial centres in Tamil Nadu.

Nowadays roads form the chief means of transportation in Kalkulam taluk where there are practically no navigable river. The illustrious Maharaja Marthandavarma conceived the plan of connecting Colachel with Trivandrum by water. The Anantha Victoria Marthandan Canal formed the beginning of a system of waterways designed for the transport of heavy goods to the markets of South India from the safe harbour of Colachel. This canal which runs from Mandaicadu to Pozhiyur was opened for transportation in 1867 A.D. Goods such as fish, coconut-husk, coir, coconut, sand, fuel, timber, etc were transported particularly from Pozhiyur to Thengapatnam. The government and the people utilised the Canal till recent times. They had a lot of benefit after the construction of the Canal.

Today the A.V.M. canal is not fit for navigation because of the selfishness of people and the uncaring attitude of the government officials.
Now this canal flows like a drainage. In some places it has been fully encroached by people. If we leave the situation to continue, in future, such a great historical canal will exist only on books. If the government takes suitable steps to revive the canal it will minimise road traffic and reestablish the commercial supremacy which South Travancore had enjoyed in the early centuries.

Another project the government has neglected for a long time is the construction of the Colachel harbour. This natural harbour was a prosperous one during 16th and 17th centuries. It has diminished in importance since 19th century on account of the development of the ports at Quilon and Alleppey. It was a long demand of the people to build a new commercial as well as fishing harbour. They have demanded through various ways in the district and at the state level for the speedy construction of the harbour. The proposal to construct a modernized sophisticated international level harbour is pending with the government. No doubt the construction of this harbour would definitely enhances the economy of this taluk.