PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It cannot be refuted that in the long chequered history of India, the history of the south has been neglected. Whether it relates to the ancient period or modern period the history of South India is systematically ignored.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the first education minister, Government of free India once remarked, "the history of India is till concealed in the depths of the soil waiting for the archaeologists who will bring new data to light for the reconstruction of the history of ancient India".

The history of South India particularly of Kanyakumari district is hidden not only under the soil but also under the sea. In the southern most end of India no sincere attempt has been made so far in the field of excavation and underwater archaeology. The history of South India can be wonderfully recovered if any excavation in the land and scientific research under the sea around Kanyakumari are undertaken.

Eventhough this is the trend, some scholars are trying their level best to unearth the hidden history of this glorious land. The scholar who belongs to this region has very much impressed with the hoary past of this region and decided to do intensive research on this area. The outcome is the present thesis.

The thesis entitled "Historical Monuments of Kanyakumari District" is an attempt to highlight the historical,
cultural, artistic, sculptural significance of Kanyakumari District. The present Kanyakumari District is a treasure house of ancient monuments. It was a part and parcel of the celebrated ruling families of ancient Tamilakam like the Cheras, the Cholas and the Pandyas. After that it became a part of Venad kingdom.

It became a part of Travancore kingdom when Maharaja Marthandavarma founded the modern Travancore. Thanks to the successive efforts of the Travancore kings, this region became very prominent. In the midst, Vijayanagar expeditions, and Muslim expeditions happened. When the Nayaks of Madurai established a close contact with this region, once again spiritual, cultural, architectural and artistic developments occurred in this region.

Through the ages, a number of temples, forts, palaces, and other historical monuments were constructed. Due to the advent of Christianity and Islam, a number of churches with Gothic as well as Greco-Roman style and Islamic and Sorasanic architecture respectively were built.

Among the Christian missions working in the district of Kanyakumari, the London Missionary Society was a prominent one. The churches founded by this missionary society have constituted themselves into the Kanyakumari Diocese of the Church of South India.

The Home Church locally called as Kallukoil at Nagercoil is an outstanding example of the architectural achievement of the missionaries. It is one of the oldest and biggest of the Protestant churches in India.
Among the post modern churches in the district, the church at Marthandam constructed by Rev. Robert Sinclars of England has a majestic appearance.

The Catholic churches of Kanyakumari coast have been built in Gothic architecture. The Cathedral of St. Francis Xavier, one of the most impressive historic monuments of India, is situated at Kottar, a suburb of Nagercoil is a renowned pilgrim centre for Christians and it is generally known as Second Goa.

It is strongly believed that the first Christian church in Kanyakumari district is the St. Mary's Church at Thiruvithamcode. It comes under the seven and half churches founded by St. Thomas, the apostle of Christ. Two kilometers north – east of the cape point, there is an old church called Thommai Palli or St. Thomas Church at Kumari Mutton. It is now in ruins and only the foundations of the old church are now visible besides the present chapel of St. Sebastian.

Islam spread in this region due to the sincere efforts of the Sufi saints who came from the Middle East. A number of mosques and dargahs were built with Sorasanic architecture.

Earlier this region was influenced by Jainism and Buddhism. Chitharal alias Thirucharanathu malai and Thirunandikkarai, the important Jain centres with international reputation are situated in this region. Buddhist influence in this region has been proved by the under - water Archaeologists with their latest observations about Esanthangu alias Sreemoolavasam.
Kanyakumari district is famous for its secular monuments like palaces, forts, dams, and other historical buildings and with this background a systematic study has been done on this theme.

Though the scholar collected huge amount of information about this region, only limited sources have been included in this work. She has consulted a number of academicians, historians, scholars and people who are closely associated with the monuments. In that context she wishes to acknowledge them.

In this context I record my unstinted thanks to my Guide and Supervisor Dr. L. REGINALD JACOB, M.A., B.Ed., M.Phil., Ph.D., Associate Professor and Head, Department of History and Research Centre, Scott Christian College (Autonomous), Nagercoil for his timely help, fruitful discussions, unfailing courtesy and encouragements, made me to submit the thesis in time.

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