PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA
CHAPTER IV
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The profile of the study area is discussed under two major categories
with the profile of the Kanyakumari District and the profile of the
Agasteeswaram Block.

4.1 Profile of the Kanyakumari District

4.1.1. Birth of Kanyakumari District

Kanyakumari district has been named after Goddess Kanyakumari
Amman who is the popular deity of the area. Kanyakumari District formerly
known as South Travancore, Cochin. In the year 1956, While the States were
reorganized by the Indian Union this part of the land was merged with Tamil
Nadu. South Travancore was divided into two Edained and Nanchinad. Edinad
comprised Kalkualm and Vilavancode Taluks, and Nanchinad Thovalai and
Agasteeswaram Taluks.

4.1.2. Location

Kanyakumari is the southern most district of Tamil Nadu. The district
lies between $77^0.05$ and $77^0.36$ of the eastern longitudes and $80^0.3$ and $83^0.5$ the
northern longitudes.
4.1.3 Boundaries

The Kanyakumari District is bounded by the Bay of Bengal on the southeast, Tirunelveli District on the north east, Kerala State on the north west, Arabian Sea on the west and Indian Ocean on the south.

4.1.4 Climate

The Kanyakumari District has a unique advantage of rainfall during the south-west and north-east monsoons, the period of south-west monsoon is from June to September while the period of north – east monsoon is from October to December. The growth of food and non-food crops is highly favourable in this district because of its nearness to equator, its geography and other climatic factors. The range of the annual rainfall is 160 CMS. 90 CMS. The average rainfall is 140 CMS. The general climate of the district is amiable and pleasant for a tropical location. The monsoon winds, the proximity of the sea and the mountains and forests of Western Ghats influence the climate of the district to a large extent.

4.1.5 Temperature

Kanyakumari district has a favourable agro climate condition which is suitable for growing a number of crops. This district has a tropical climate and the maximum temperature varies from $29.8^0C$ to $32.5^0C$ from December to July and minimum temperature varies from $23.1^0C$ to $25.7^0C$ from January to March
dry season. April to May hot seasons. June to September south west monsoon and October to December north east monsoon.

4.1.6 Total Area

The area of Tamil Nadu is 1350058 sq.kms. Of this, Kanyakumari district occupies 1684 sq.kms and its occupies 1.29 percent of the total area of Tamil Nadu.

4.1.7 Population

According to 2001 census total population is 2756767. From the total population rural and urban population comprises of 1669763 and 1087002 respectively. The population of Kanyakumari district in last three decades are given in the table 2.1 below.

4.1.8 Literacy Level

The literacy rate in Kanyakumari District is almost cent percent. This is the highest in the State. The highest literacy rate in this district is due to several reasons like low drop out rate, proximity of the district to the State of Kerala, growth of educational institutions like community colleges, self-financing institutions, revolution in computer education, arts and science colleges, engineering and nursing colleges, etc.
4.1.9 Communication

There are nearly 250 post offices and 80 telegraph offices. Further there are about 5542 telephone connections and 172 public call offices. The telecommunication facilities are adequate in Towns and major villages.

4.1.10 Electoral Profile

The Kanyakumari District has seven Assembly Constituencies Viz. Kanyakumari, Nagercoil, Padmanabapuram, Colachel, Thiruvettar, Killiyoor and Vilavancode. They form only 2.99 percent of the total number of Assembly Constituencies in Tamil Nadu. All the constituencies are unreserved constituencies.

4.1.11 Municipal Profile

The Kanyakumari District has four Municipalities viz. Nagercoil Municipality with headquarters at Nagercoil, Padmanabapuram Municipality with headquarters at Thuckalay, Kuzhithurai Municipality with headquarters at Kuzhithurai and Colachel Municipality with head quarter at Colache.
4.1.12 Taluk Profile

The Kanyakumari District consists of four Taluks - Agasteeswaram Taluk with head quarters at Nagercoil, Thovalai Taluk with head-quarters at Boothapandi, Kalkualm Taluk with head quarters at Thuckalay and Vilavancode Taluk with head quarters at Kuzhithurai. These four taluks were transferred from the erstwhile State of Travancore and were merged to form the Kanyakumari District.

4.1.13 Panchayat Profile

There are 56 Town Panchayats and 99 Village Panchayats in this District. The District has two Revenue Divisions namely Nagercoil and Padmanabapuram

4.1.14 Block Profile

The Kanniyakumari District has nine Blocks. They include Agasteeswaram Block with headquarters at Perumalpuram, Rajakkamangalam Block with headquarters at Pazhavilai, Thovalai Block with headquarters at Bhoothapandi, Thiruvattur Block with headquarters at Thiruvattar, Thuckalay Block with headquarters at Kozhiporvilai, Kuruthencode Block with headquarters at Kurunthencode, Melpuram Block with headquarters at Pacode. Munchirai Block with headquarters at Munchirai and Killioor Block with headquarters at Tholayavattam.
4.1.15 Physiography

The Kanyakumari District is divided into three natural divisions on the basis of physiography. They are:

**High lands:** They constitute a mountainous division with spurs from Western Ghats running into it. They are Thovalai Taluk.

**Low Lands:** They constitute the sea coastal area. They are flat and fairly fertile. They are found in the west and south-west portion of the district.

**Midlands:** They are in between the mountainous range and the low lands. There exists a strip of undulating valley with a few streams available for cultivation.

4.1.16 Hill Ranges

The Kanniyakumari District has few hill ranges. At Muthukuzhivayal in the mountain range of Kalkulam Taluk there is a plateau of about 16 km long and 10 km broad at an elevation of about 1341 meters above the sea level. Besides there are a few isolated peaks.

4.1.17 Forests
The Kanyakumari District has a total forest area of 1,46,003 ha. There are serious differences of opinions about forest area between Census Report, District Records and Forest Records. The forest has enormous water resources. Economical, mechanical and bio-diversity aspects are provided for in plenty. Birds and animals live in large numbers. All these resources have impacts on human activities on the forest system.

4.1.18 Nature of soil

The soil of Kanyakumari district are broadly into two major groups namely red soil and alluvium soil. The red soil is further classified into red loam soil and red sandy soil and the alluvium soil is classified into coastal alluvium and river alluvium. In the sea coast sundry type of soil prevails and near the mountain ranges gravelly soil is generally seen.

4.1.19 Agriculture

Rain-fed crops like tea, coffee, rubber and paper are grown in the hills. Topioca and banana are grown in the lower slopes of the hills. Paddy, tapioca, coconut and vegetables are grown in the plains.
Rice is the main food crop grown in this district. Normally, two crops are grown viz. Kanni (Kharif) and Kumbam (Rabi). The kanni crop plantation is done during May and harvest during September. The Kumbam plantation is done during October and harvest during February. Paddy is also grown between July and December under unirrigated conditions. Paddy cultivation has declined during recent times.

Tapioca (Tuber rose) is the staple food of the low-income group of the people in this district. The area under this root-crop has fallen in recent times because the people in this district have started replacing this staple food item by rice.

Coconut is the main cash crop grown in this district. The price of coconut is attractive. Adoption of intensive cultivation, supply of high yielding coconut seedlings, etc. have resulted in an enormous increase in the area under coconut cultivation and its production.

Rubber is also grown in plenty. Kanyakumari is the only district in Tamil Nadu where rubber is grown. The area under rubber plantation which was only 2337 hectares during 1956-57 increased to 14,170 hectares in 1998-89 and again to 18,203 hectares in 2001-02.
4.1.20 Electricity

Kanyakumari is one of the districts in the country where almost all the towns and villages have been electrified. Since this is an industrially backward district priority should be given to provide power supply to the new industrial units. Unless electricity is assumed and power is supplied in time to new small-scale industries in priority basis growth of industries in the district will not be satisfactory.

4.1.21 Financial Resources

In terms of banking coverage Kanyakumari district could be considered as one of the well banked districts of TamilNadu. There are 14 branches of different commercial banks spread over 103 centres of the district. Indain Overseas Bank has been considered to be lead bank of the district for distributing of the necessary loans and advances to the farmers, industrialists and cattle rearers of the district. Apart from the commercial bank which play a predominant role in the agricultural and industrial development of the district, many other important financial institutions like that of the Co-operative Credit Bank, the National Rural Development Corporation and the IRDP Programmes also offer loans and credit to the small business units.
4.1.22 Road

The district has a good network of roads connecting important villages and towns in the district. Important commercial centers like Vadasery, Kottar, Manavalakurichi, Kaliakkaviali, Thoduvatty, Pudukadai and Karungal are well connected by roads. The district is also connected with the other districts of Tamil Nadu and neighbouring States. The total length of roads in the district is 1863 kms consisting of 54.2 kms of National Highways, 48 kms of State Highways. Roads are maintained by Municipalities. District Authorities and PWD and the rest maintained by Panchayat and Panchayat Unions. Adequate facilities exist for regular transport of passenger and freight to other districts and also to different places within the district.

4.1.23 Railways

Realising the long felt need for connecting the district with other areas by railways, a new railway line from Trivandrum to Tirunelveli, via Nagercoil with branch line from Nagercoil to Cape Comorin have been established the district of the railway line from Nagercoil to Trivandrum Central to 66 km and from Nagercoil to Tirunelveli Junction is about 75 kms and from Nagercoil to Cape Comorin is about 22 kms.
4.1.24 Rivers of the Kanyakumari District

The details regarding the river basins are given in the table of below.

Table: 4.1 Details regarding river basins in Kanyakumari district.

4.1.25 Irrigation

As far as irrigation facilities are concerned the district is better placed with 42 percent of the net cultivated area enjoying irrigation facilities. Chittar Dam, - I, Chittar Dam II, Neyyar Dam and Kodayar are important irrigation systems in this district, benefitting about 24,000 hectares. Pazhayar, Valliyaru, Thovalaru, Thamiraparani and Malayar are the important rivers which irrigate an area of about 88605 hectares in the district. Puther, Parakkai, Therroor, Thazhakudi, Erachakulam, Vembanoor, Periyakulam, Amuthavari are the important tanks.

4.1.26 Industry

A number of factors have hampered the industrial development in the district. The most important among them are lack of mineral resources, industrial raw materials, proper transport facilities and suitable climate. The non-availability of land for non-agricultural purposes and the high cost of farmland are other factors. In spite of all these deficiencies, number of small scale industries have come up in the district. There are three large scale industries and
one medium scale industry in the district. They are Indian Rare Earths Limited, Manavalakurichi, Kanyakumari District Co-operative Spinning Mills Limited, Aramboly, Nagammal Spinning Mills Limited, Nagercoil, TAC Floor Company Ammndivilai. Important activities of the small scale units are cashew processing, engineering, printing, wooden furniture making and oil crushing. Among the cottage industries coir industry is the most prominent one. Manufacture of materials from palma leaves and fibre, bee keeping, beedi rolling, pottery, mat weaving, khadi spinning and handloom weaving are the other important cottage industries. The district has been a land of handicrafts. The important crafts are lace and embroidery works, sculpture, wood carving and making articles from bambooreed, screw pine and seashells.

4.2 Profile of the Agasteeswaram Block

4.2.1 Population

Agasteeswaram Block is a thickly populated block compared to other blocks of Agasteeswaram taluk. It has the population of 449822 people as per the 1991 census. Of this population, 224272 were males and 225548 females.
4.2.2 Education

This Block is educationally advanced. There are 64 schools (primary 45, Middle Kendra Vidyalaya Higher Secondary School, Arts and Science College 1. In literary, the Taluk stands first in Agasteeswaram and has been declared as 100% literate.

4.2.3 Soil

The soil found this Block was similar to that of the taluk. Red, red sandy, black alluvial and black loom are the typical soil. These soils are suitable to grow paddy, banana, tapioca and different horticulture crops.

4.2.4 Land Utilization

The total agricultural output depends on the quantity and quality of land available and its uses. The total cropped area is 11,237 hectares.

4.2.5 Agriculture

This block is fully dependent upon the agricultural sector. Paddy, pulses, tapioca, banana are the major crops in the block, whereas coconut, vegetables, fruits, cashew, are the major commercial crops in the block. The important feature of this block is production of off-season mangoes.
4.2.6 Cropping Pattern and Yield

The block falls in the Height Rainfall Zone where both southwest and Northwest monsoons are active. A major portion of the available land resources are put to use and specially, plantation are dominating in the cropping pattern. The gross cultivated area under food crops is diminishing every year and this area is shifted to high income yielding.

4.2.7 Irrigation

Well irrigation is the major source to irrigate the cultivated crops. Normally the dug wells are 50 to 60 feet deep. People depend on the dug wells for crop cultivation. But the supply of water from the dug wells for irrigation is going on diminishing due to the scarcity of rainfall. This leads to a gradual reduction in the cultivation of various crops. As a result, transition took place from agriculture to beedi-making for the livelihood of the people in this village.

4.2.8 Climate and temperature

The climate prevailing in the village is normally hot. The temperature, on an average varies from 35°C to 40°C as the maximum and from 24°C to 26°C as the minimum.
4.2.9 Crops

Major cash crops paddy, banana, tapioca and different vegetable crops are cultivated. Now the land in which the crops were cultivated seems to be cultivable waste land because water supply for irrigation is almost nil.

4.2.10 Occupation

Agriculture was the main occupation formerly. Now agriculture is a rare phenomenon. Beedi-making could be the only alternative occupation for agriculture in this village. Businessmen, small traders, shop-keepers and government employees are also found doing their occupations.

4.2.11 Transport and Communication

Transport facilities are available with State Transport Corporation buses. In addition to this many private transport vehicles like taxi, van, minibuses, auto, etc. that render services in this regard. Communication services are rendered by post offices. There are many telephone connections in this block which make exchange of information and communication easy.
4.2.12 Banking and Finance

Banks are available in the Block. The village people get various types of loans from government banks of and private Banks. 45 banks are available in the block. They include the Primary Agricredit Society, Non-Agricredit Society and Co-operative Stores. People are getting jewel loan, agricultural loan and vehicle loan.

4.2.13 Industries

There are a variety of small scale and cottage industries. Tiles industry, cashew nut processing and cattle industry, and fibre industry, male workers are working in coconut fibre industry and saltpan. Women workers are working in Beedimaking and cashew nut industry. They also work in cottage industries and sea-shells to make handicrafts.