INTRODUCTION

History of the Kanyakumari District:

Kanyakumari District is located in southern most part of Indian sub-continent. Kanyakumari plays a vital role in the socio economic life of the people. It lies between 77° and 77.36° of east longitude and 8.03° and 8.35° of the northern longitudes. In Kanyakumari, three seas merge which symbolizes and it is a place of pilgrimage. Pilgrims appears to have kept alive the link between north and south India.

Boundaries:

Kanyakumari District has natural boundaries of its own. It is bounded by Thirunelveli District on the North-East, the Indian Ocean in the South, the Arabian Sea and the Kerala on the West and North-West and Bay of Bengal on the East. These

1 The term Kanyakumari is derived from the famous Bhagavathi Temple, situated the Southern tip of the Indian Sub-continent. It derived the name from the virgin Goodess-Bhagavathi to whom the temple in Kanyakumari is dedicated. This place is a popular pilgrim centre. The people from all over India took sacred bath at Kanyakumari. The pilgrims appears to have kept alive North and South India.


boundaries give a Separation to the people of Kanyakumari District.

Area:

Kanyakumari District is small, when compared with other District in Tamil Nadu. The total area of the District is 1684 Sq.Kms. It is divided in to four taluks, namely Agasteeswaram, Thovalai, Kalkulam and Vilavancode. The two Northern most taluks such as Agasteeswaram and Thovalai together are known as “Nanchilnad”. Once this District was a part and parcel of Travancore. It was merged with TamilNadu in November 1, 1956.

Population:

Kanyakumari District is a thickly populated area and its population according to the census of 1981 was 1,423,399. Most of the people of this District speak Tamil and certain groups of people are also well-versed in Malayalam.

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5 Ibid. P.2.
Mountains:

The mountain ranges of Kanyakumari District give additional beauty to it. A large portion of the Thovalai Taluk consists of hills and mountains. The attractive Udamalai running towards the North-West and South-East is very lofty. Mahendragiri is the highest mountain in Kanyakumari District. The height of the mountain is 5,427 feet. 'Maruthuvalmali' is located in the South of Mahendragiri.

Maruthuvalmali separates Augusteewaram Taluk from Thovalai. The height of Maruthuvalmalai is 370 meters. In the North East of Udamalai contains Marvattoor hills. It occupies a large portion of Kalkulam Taluk. These hills are very high and contain full of rocks. Another mountain range in Kanyakumari District is located in Sroolakode region. This rocky mountain contains peaks, and thick forest. This mountain ranges serve as an abode of various social groups.

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and animals. Nowadays, it attracts the attention of a number of planters.\footnote{Ibid. P.29.}

**Plants:**

The climate of Kanyakumari District is suitable for the growth of large variety of trees and plants. Wet and dry cultivations are thriving simultaneously.\footnote{Gopala Krishnan. M., Op.Cit. P.3.} The thick coconut fields on the bank of the rivers and paddy fields are the star tractions of this place. Big trees like anjili, mango, tamarind, cashew and other varieties are familiar to this place. Palms available in this area are useful to the people. Paddy and banana trees are widely cultivated crops.\footnote{Ibid. P.4.} Rubber is also cultivated.

**Rivers:**

Pazhayar is the river which flows through the centre of the District. The word “Pazhayar” means “Old River”. It is
running towards the East of Kottar\textsuperscript{14} town. It also irrigates the lands in Parakkai, Suchindram, Thenkamputhur, Kurirchi, Therur, Mylady and Thamarakulam and finally flows into the back waters of Manakudy\textsuperscript{15}.

Kodayar has its source in the great range of mountains about 1½ miles to the east of motachy peak. Thamiraparani runs, towards south by crossing the southern high way at Kuzhithurai and merges with the sea, west of Thengappatinam\textsuperscript{16}.

**Geography of the region:**

Kanyakumari District is bounded on the east by the Bay of Bengal, south by the Indian Ocean west by the Arabian sea and the State of Kerala. The District has rich water resources

\textsuperscript{14} Kottar: Kottar is a part of Nagercoil it is not only a religious centre, but also a commercial centre. It is located on the verge the river Palayar.


\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., P.13.
including major reservoirs, major irrigation tanks and ponds, a few major and minor river systems and estuaries\textsuperscript{17}.

**Location of Kannanoor:**

The Attor village, located at Kalkulam Taluk belongs to Kanyakumari District. This village is divided into two villages. They are Attoor Village and the Veeyanloor Village. The Kannanoor village comes under the Veeyanloor Village.\textsuperscript{18}

**History of Kannanoor:**

Bala Raman changed his name as Bala Pathira Raman after a great king who ruled over South India. South India was called by different name as Chambu and Theevu, Navalan Theevu. Bala Raman was also a known as Kannan. During his rule, all temples in South India were called as Kannan temples. Since his period, some villages were also named after Kannan. The period of the crown prince Iraku Kula was dominated by great holy books like Ramayana and Mahabharatha written

\textsuperscript{17} Vareithiah. K., Water Resources of South West Coast, Nagercoil, 1999, P.101.

against Jainism. During this period Kannan temples and Kannan villages were changed by Krishnan temples and Krishnan villages by some in human and brutal persons. This practice was more in Kanyakumari District\(^\text{19}\).

During the period of Bala Raman, this village was called as Kannanur Desam. For example Kannanur village is nowadays called as Kannanoor and Thirukannancode was changed to Thickanamcode, Thirucharanathamalai was called as Chitharal, Kannancode as Kanncode, Kannan Kurichi was converted in to Kannakurichi Thirukanneshwaram as Kanesh Waram. These changes were made after the 14\(^{\text{th}}\) century by the Nambuthirees\(^\text{20}\).

**Fauna:**

Kannanoor region is equally noted for different types of Fauna. This is due to the low temperature and frequent

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\(^{20}\) Ibid, P.2.
rainfall. That portion of the Arabian sea around the Black area is famous for varieties of fishes. Mammals like cows, goats, and buffaloes are also found in plenty. Milk giving animals are maintained by the people in their house. So milk and milk products are popular with them. However their poverty keeps majority of them away from the use of these products.

**Climate:**

Almost all the places in the District enjoy a semi and tropical climate, with cool winter and warm to hot weather in summer. The minimum temperature ranges from 26.4°C to 30.51°C and the maximum varies from 32.54°C to 37.38 °C. The District has a warm humid climate. The summer season is particularly oppressive. The summer from March to May is followed by the South-West monsoon. Season from June to

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22. Ibid. P.42.


24. Ibid.
September, October and November constitute the post monsoon, or retreating monsoon season with frequent thunderstorms. December to February is the North-East monsoon season.

**Language:**

Tamil and Malayalam are the main languages spoken in the area. Tamil being the language of the majority of the people, South Travancore, has attained state recognition till the merger of Cochin with Travancore to form the Travancore-Cochin state on July 1, 1949. Since then, the Tamil language of Travancore lost its status of official language of the state. The loss of official status of the Tamil language of south sounded the Tamil movement which had its culmination on November 1, 1956. On that day out of the southern four Tamil Taluks of South Travancore the present Kanyakumari District was formed and merged with the Madras State. There after

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25 Ibid. P.302.
27 Ibid. P.7.
Tamil stands as the major language of the region and the District.

**People:**

Kannanoor region consists of a spectrum of castes. The important castes are Nadar, Nair, Sampavar, Vannar and Meenavas\(^{28}\). They are generally Hindus and Christians. The Christians mainly belong to the Latin Catholic, C.S.I. and other protestant denominations with the exception of a few Nair families, the majority of the people of the locality belong to the Nadar Community\(^{29}\).

**Population:**

The word population is derived from the Latin word papulus, meaning the people. It can be defined as a group of organism, the same species present in a particular area at the

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\(^{28}\) List of Communities Classified as Backward Classes and Denitrified Communities, Madras, 1996.

\(^{29}\) Travancore Directory for 1938, Trivandrum, 1939, P.110.
particular time\textsuperscript{30}. Kannanoor region has an area of 7.4 square kilometers\textsuperscript{31} and has a population of 7124\textsuperscript{32}.

**Life:**

The life style of the people varies from family to family and community to community\textsuperscript{33}. In a similar way their house style also varied according to the wealth and occupation of the occupants. It is said that the houses are noted for the people's simplicity and modesty in life. Most of the old houses were built of mud and unburned bricks\textsuperscript{34}. The flooring of the houses was done with cow dung, but costly constructions were done by the rich\textsuperscript{35}. The less affluent people built their houses with cheap materials and roofed with coconut or palm leaves\textsuperscript{36}. In modern days most of the houses are concrete ones. They are coloured


\textsuperscript{31} Kannanoor Panchayat, General Information Record, 1997, P.2.

\textsuperscript{32} Kannanoor Panchayat Statistical Report, 2006, P.1.

\textsuperscript{33} Personal Interview with Mr. A. Johnson, residing at Kannanoor dated 26.08.2006.


and fully painted Gardens are rarely maintained in front of the houses.

**Religion:**

The people of the area can be broadly divided into two religious groups. They are Hindus and Christians. Christianity spread in this region only after the establishment of the work of the London Missionary Society\(^{37}\). The Kanyakumari District is also a multi religious region. In the District one can see Hindus and Christians living in the same street. This is the condition of almost all the villages in the District. In Kannanoor area the Christians and the Hindus are the major divisions of the society.

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