Chapter I

PROFILE OF

THENGAMPUTHUR
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Nature seems to be at its best in Thengamputhur village interspersed with sea-shores and plains, the village is entirely free from monotony in appearance. The large trees, green vegetation and merrily fluttering colourful birds are the beauty of the village. It is one of the famous Town Panchayat of Rajakkamangalam Panchayat Union in Kanyakumari District.

Thengamputhur is naturally noted for its scenic beauty and its wealth. Our Thengamputhur village is quite suitable for life because of the fertility of its land and water. The village surrounded by greenish paddy fields, coconut groves, plants, irrigation tanks and gardens. The land of Thengamputhur is straight plain land and some villages in and around of Thengamputhur villages are like Valleys\(^1\). The soil of the land is commonly white in upper layer but inside the land is red soil, which is used for cultivation like vegetable plants. The Thengamputhur Panchayat has a fine water resources. Water from "Parakai Tank" flows around the Thengamputhur

\(^1\) Thengamputhur Town Panchayat Census Report 2006 - 2007
villages. The Thengamputhur Town Panchayat has 4.15 Sq. Kilometre\textsuperscript{2}.

Water is available in the Tank on all seasons except summer, but in summer also some water can be there. This river adds much beauty to the Thengamputhur Town Panchayat. The village Thengamputhur is recognized by the Government of Tamil Nadu as a Town Panchayat and there are Thirty two villages in and around Thengamputhur\textsuperscript{3}.

\textit{Land:-}

Thengamputhur is situated very near to Nagercoil. Till October 31, 1956 it was a part and parcel of Travancore government. In that year the Kanyakumari District was merged with Tamil Nadu on the basis of language of the people.\textsuperscript{4} This district infact served as the granary of Travancore till its reorganisation. When the merger of the district took place, the district was divided into four taluks for easy revenue administration. One among them is Agasteeswaram Taluk which is the southern most taluk of Tamil Nadu. Thengamputhur is located in Agasteeswaram Taluk. The two taluks namely Agasteeswaram and

\textsuperscript{2}Ibid
\textsuperscript{3}Ibid
\textsuperscript{4}Manorama Year Book (T) Kottayam 2002, p.6
Thovalai together constitute what is called Nanjil Nadu. So Thengamputhur is also considered as part and parcel of Nanjil Nadu.

Thengamputhur have its importance and proud by having Several Government and Public Offices, namely Telephone Exchange Office, Electricity Board Office, Co-operative Bank, Panchayat Office, Village Office, Ration Store, Banks, Schools, and a College. In the earlier days, the Thengamputhur was called "Odaikarai", because "Odai" (stream) was there in Thengamputhur.

The headquarters of Kanyakumari District is Nagercoil. Kottar which is nearer to Nagercoil has been a famous trade and commercial centre from time immemorial. For trade and commercial purposes, the Thengamputhur people depend upon the market at Kottar and Thengamputhur. From Nagercoil, Thengamputhur is away from six kilometres and one can reach Thengamputhur via, Parakkai very easily.

The origin of the name Thengamputhur is shrouded in mystery. It is generally said that the village is filled with coconut trees and

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6 Thengamputhur Town Panchayat Census Report 2006-2007
7 Manorama Year Book, (T), *op.cit.*., 2003, p.p.146-147
8 Personal Interview with Arulanthamani.S, February 9\textsuperscript{th}, 2007
hence the name “Thengamputhur”, might have been applied. The term “Thengu” in Tamil means coconut tree in English. In earlier days this village was not having lot of houses and there were large number of trees and plants, with their branches, so it was called “Puthur”. Joining the terms “Tennai” and “Puthur” and formed Tennai puthur which in the course of time came to be known as Thengamputhur.⁹

The surrounding places of Thengamputhur are very beautiful in nature and having lot of coconut trees. In Thengamputhur Town Panchayat, there is one village by name “Kaddeti”. This name is derived from the ideas of thickly land areas with trees and bushes.

Geography governs history and the geographical features of Thengamputhur constitute like coastal lines, rivers and irrigation which influence the political, social, cultural and economic life of the people of Thengamputhur. Like wise, nature also gives a standard of life, social customs, and institutions of the people. Geography dominates men’s life and he is largely subject to it. The Thengamputhur Town Panchayat is located in Rajakkamangalam Panchayat Union, the southern part of Kanyakumari District.¹⁰

⁹ Ibid
¹⁰ M. Gopalakrishnan, Kanyakumari District Gazetteer, Madras, 1995, pp.768 –69
Thengamputhur is located near the Puthalam Town Panchayat. It is bounded by Kattuvilai on the west, Kadetti on the East, Parakkai on the North, and Manakudy on the South. Three kilometers away from Thengamputhur, there is a beach called “Chothavilai Beach”. One of the famous Tourist centers in Kanyakumari district. The Government undertakes, several works in order to make it an attractive tourist center.

**Resources:**

Thengamputhur Panchayat has a fine water resources Parakkai tank is very lengthy and big in size. This tank supplies a substantial amount of water needed for cultivation. Another river is Paraliyaru. It flows through the taluks of Thovalal and Agasteeswaram in Nanjil Nadu and falls into the Manakudy estuary. The Paraliyar forms a lagoon called “Manakudy Kayal” or “Manakudy Lake”, before joining the sea. This Manakudy lake and Tamaunikulam are supplying water to Parakkai tank from which water is supplied to all villages of Thengamputhur Town Panchayat and also for cultivation.

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11 Puthalam Town Panchayat Report, 2005
12 Ibid.
13 M. Gopalakrishnanm, op.cit., p.5
14 Ibid, p.7
The length of the Paraliyar River is Twenty three miles.\textsuperscript{15} In Kulalthevilai there is one pool, which is having its starting point in Thengamputhur and its with "\textit{Parakkaikulam}".\textsuperscript{16} All these water resources supply water to "Parakkai Pathu" areas, Kadetti, and Palkulam areas. In Thengamputhur Town Panchayat, there are Thirty three hand pumps, there are twenty six power pumps, Hundred and Ninety two pipe service connections in around the Thengamputhur village. The periodicity of Water Service is daily. In the deep well pipe system there are thirty two pipes for the village people, open wells are three in number are functioning. There are eight hand pumps erected by the Panchayat and are functioning in Pudukudieruppu, Sasthankovilvilai, Thengamputhur, Maruthuvar Colony, Kilakattuvilai, Melakattuvilai, Vadakku AnchuKudieruppu, Chinnanaithanvilai, Mela Udaiyappankudieruppu, Kovil vilai, Thiru Nagar.\textsuperscript{17} Thengamputhur Town Panchayat have a full-fledged protected water supply system. About 10.00 lakh litres of water is received from over head tank and is supplied 78 LPCD per head.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{15} C. Deva Nesan, \textit{History of Tamil Nadu}, 2004, Marthandam, p.4.
\textsuperscript{16} Personal Interview with J. Jayachandra, February 19\textsuperscript{th}, 2007
\textsuperscript{17} Profile of the Thengamputhur Town Panchayat, p.4
\textsuperscript{18} IHSDP – Integrated Housing and Slum Development programs in Thengamputhur Town Panchayat. (Project Report prepared and submitted by executive officer – TTP)
Climate of the Town Panchayat of Thengamputhur, overall is hot - temperature except in the rainy season. The Panchayat experiences maximum rainfall from south-east monsoon and the annual rainfall is nearly 700 to 800mm. April to June is the hottest months and lowest temperature are recorded during the months of December and January. Temperature starts rising towards the end of February.\textsuperscript{19}

For communication, and conduct enough road are available here and roads are very well in some villages of Thengamputhur Town Panchayat, except Kadetti, Mela Udaiyappankudieruppu, Keezha Uyaiyappankudieruppu, Mela Kattuvilai, Keezha Kattuvilai, these villages are not having the transport facilities.\textsuperscript{20} In olden days transport facilities, were not up to the mark but nowadays this is not the case. The village has enough bus services. The bus route of the Thengamputhur and surrounding villages are 36 A Pallam, 37 Manakudy, 37A, Ambalapathy, 41 pallam, Apart from that mini bus services are available to the needs of the people.\textsuperscript{21} There are

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid
\textsuperscript{20} Report of the Kadetti Govt. Primary School.
\textsuperscript{21} Personal Interview with J. Jeyamathan March 19\textsuperscript{th}, 2007
some villages having panchayat road which are kept by the Panchayat in good condition for the daily use of the people.

Thengamputhur Town Panchayat is maintaining 38.56Km length of roads as detailed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Road</th>
<th>Length (Km)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cement Concrete roads</td>
<td>5.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bitumin Roads</td>
<td>18.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WBM Roads</td>
<td>5.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earthen Roads</td>
<td>10.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 38.56 km

The Town Panchayat is maintaining 3.75 km of roads of storm water drain. As per the slum area length of street cover by slum is 2.00km

There are seven slums in this Town Panchayat. These seven slums are taken up for improvement with communication facilities. Total 1.52 km of Roads are proposed for this areas under the Intergrated Housing and Slum Development Programmes in Thengamputhur Town Panchayat at an estimate cost of Rs. 19.40 lakhs. Many of the roads are fully damaged due to recent rains. In some slums full areas are covered with roads. Total population of

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22. HSDP Integrated Housing and Slum Development programs in Thengamputhur Town Panchayat (Project Report prepared and submitted by executive officer – TTP)
slum area is 400. The Slum area located in this Town Panchayat extends to six wards of the Town. The total area is the slum contribution 40% of the Total area of the town. The major part of the slums are provided with water supply, street lights. At present, under this slum improvement program 135 houses have been taken up for improvement.\textsuperscript{23}

Thengamputhur Town Panchayat is a first grade Town Panchayat and is situated near Nagercoil. Manakudy road overran area 4.15 sq. km and is adjacent to Kanyakumari District. This local body was constituted on Town Panchayat with effect from 1952.\textsuperscript{24}

\textbf{Demographic Profile:-}

Census data obtained from the census department are furnished below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Area Sq. Km</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Thengamputhur Town Panchayat</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>11372</td>
<td>5667</td>
<td>5706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>T.T.P.</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>12675</td>
<td>6330</td>
<td>6345</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table revealed that the population increase for the ten years is 1303, i.e., more than ten percent in between the two

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid

\textsuperscript{24} Inscription of Thengamputhur Panchayat Office, July 19th, 1952.
census. The curious fact is that male and female population increase proportionately.\textsuperscript{25}

The Thengamputhur Town Panchayat has been divided into fifteen wards and the total numbers of streets are 105. Total length of streets is 7 km.\textsuperscript{26} Number of houses in our Town Panchayat is 2873\textsuperscript{27} and the length of the street 2 kms. Town Panchayat is maintaining 579 street lights as detailed below.

\begin{tabular}{|l|l|}
\hline
Sodium Vapour Lamps & - & 21 \\
Tube Lights & - & 558 \\
Solar & - & - \\
Other & - & - \\
\hline
\textbf{Total} & & \textbf{579} \\
\hline
\end{tabular}

In this Town Panchayat limit, there is a Primary Health Centre at Muhilanvilai and six Private Hospitals in an around of Thengamputhur. The slum areas have the proximity of more than 1 km to the private hospital.\textsuperscript{28}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{25}IHSDP – Integrated Housing and Slum Development programs in Thengamputhur Town Panchayat (Project Report prepared and submitted by executive officer – TTP)
\textsuperscript{26}Profile of Thengamputhur Town Panchayat, p.4
\textsuperscript{27}Ibid
\textsuperscript{28}IHSDP – Integrated Housing and Slum Development programs in Thengamputhur Town Panchayat (Project Report prepared and submitted by executive officer – TTP)
\end{footnotesize}
In our Thengamputhur Town Panchayat there are thirty two villages. They are NGO-A Colony, Gunjanvilai, Parappuvilai, Vellaranvilai, Muhilanvilai, Vairavilai, Manikettipottel, Anandaswamypuram, Mela Udayappankudieruppu, Keezha Udayappankudieruppu, Pillayarpuram, Kovilvilai, Chinnanaithanvilai, Melakattuvilai, Keezhakattuvilai, Pottalvilai, Vandikudieruppu, Suvichesapuram, Azhizankattuvilai, Thirunagar, Kamchanparrappu, Pulluvilai, Kulathuvilai, Vadakku Anchiukudieruppu, Sasthankovil vilai, Pudukudieruppu, Thengamputhur, Therku Anchukudieruppu, Kaddeti, Palkulam, Uthandankudieruppu.29

People:-

The People who live in those villages belong to various communities. Yet there is unity and co-operation among themselves. There is perfect communal harmony and all are moving like sisters and brothers, and consider themselves as their own relatives. Thengamputhur is in habited by different sects of people belonging to various communities. They are Nanchilnattu vellalas, Nadars, Sambavars, Bharathavars, Asaris, Muslims, Pallar,

Kuluvan, Vannan, Vaniyar etc. such community people are found in large numbers.

The Nadars are a group of people inhabiting Tirunelveli and the Southern taluks of Travancore. They belong to one of the races that are commonly called as Dravidians. Tamil language is their mother tongue.

From a few stray hints that are found in the Tamil literature and the traditions peculiar to the race, we learn that the Nadars belong to a wave of warlike adventurers who migrated towards the South from North India. The fact of their having been a ruling race at one time is borne out not only by such expressions as Nadar and Nadalvar. The expression Nadalvar occur in some ancient stone inscriptions of Travancore. The people of this caste are ordinarily called shanars by people of other caste, but they themselves use the term Nadars. The term Nadar is also used as a title. The titles Tiruppapar Nadar, Udaya Marthanda Nadar, Nagamani Marthanda Nadar etc. were used in early days. In Thengamputhur Town Panchayat majority people belong to Nadar community. These

30. Personal Interview with V. Arul, June 3rd, 2007
32. Nagam Aiya, *op.cit.*, p. 393
caste people embraced Christianity but majority of them still adheres Hinduism.

Vellalars are classified as *Makkavazhi* and *Marumakkavazhi* according to the marriage customs and inheritance. In Thengamputhur Town Panchayat Vellalars are residing in a village exclusively. For Vellalar there is one Amman Temple in Thengamputhur. The People of Vellalar communities are only allowed inside the temple for worship. In a Vellalar Community when a girl attains puberty the Asan or priest sprinkles raw rice on the head of the girls seated in a room with a light in front of her and presents the purificatory oil with which she anoints herself. This is done on the tenth day after menstruation, the pollution lasting for full ten days. There is no special ceremony for consummation. In the past *tali* is not removed on the husband’s death. The issue of such a union is considered as the legitimate issue of the deceased having full rights of inheritance of his property as well as to that of his natural father, provided the latter has not offspring by his duly married wife. These customs are not practiced among them now. The dead are cremated, but no ceremonies are performed on the first two days. The offering of oblations beings on the third day and,

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33. Personal Interview with Ravi Councillor, July 19th, 2007
the son performs the funeral rites and in his absence the nephew. The “Sanchayanam” takes place on the second day. Pollution lasts for sixteen days.\(^3^4\) Nanjil Nadu Vellalas who are said to have come from Madurai in the first century A.D.\(^3^5\)

The Thengamputhur is inhabited by different sects of people belonging to various communities. One among them is called Pallar. They were otherwise called as “Vathiriyar”.\(^3^6\) Paravars are also residing in the village. They are involved in fishing and selling the same in market and house to house. They belong to catholic faith and became the ardent followers of Christianity.\(^3^7\) Parathavar community is different from them are involving in lime stone making.

Sambavar community people are all included in scheduled caste only. These peoples are mostly found in Kadetti, which is under the Thengamputhur Town Panchayat. Palkulam and Kadetti join together and form one ward. They all the people are S.C. and they get the government previlages. Christians among them are considered as backward and treated as B.C. only. But they do not

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\(^3^4\) V. Nagam Aiya, \textit{op.cit.} p.393
\(^3^5\) M. Gopala Krishnan, \textit{op cit.} p.117.
\(^3^6\) \textit{Ibid}
\(^3^7\) Personal Interview with Justin.J June 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 2007
get any previlages given to the S.C. people. 38 In Thengamputhur, Muslims have been also living from a long past. They have there own mosque at Thengamputhur for their workship. They mingle with the other people and have no problem with Hindus.

The status of women in Thengamputhur Town Panchayat in those days was not very high comparing with women at present. They were expected to do certain house hold works alone. They were not even permitted to participate in certain functions and were kept aloof. 39 For example certain restrictions were quite common in this village regarding marriage, and attending other celebrations in the house. Widows were prohibited to participate in religious functions and they had to follow certain restriction adhered to, but at present those restrictions of are not prevalent even in Hindus, Christians and Muslims.

The choice of birde grooms is also limited to a few families, they desire to secure the best of as the family members like. Primarily, marriage was nothing but a kind of service to another family. This custom's seems growing in spite of the rapid spread of

education among the members of the community. Though, in those days women were restricted to go to school, but at present they were permitted to offer any kind of studies in schools, colleges, they were allowed to accept any work in govt. offices and private firms. On the whole, the women belonging to all community in Thengamputhur are engaged in some kind of work to earn their livelihood, and lead a happy life. In earlier days, the Muslim women were not allowed to enter into the mosque for worship. But at present also they are not allowed freely to go and worship their "God Allah".

From the fore-going pages, it is seen that the village Thengamputhur is an ancient village originated from time immemorial. It is a fertile area suitable of agriculture and other occupations. People belonging to various communities live here and they all kept good relation and friendship with each other. Though in the past the village had very little facilities regarding water and transport, but at present the village has much developed after the establishment of the Panchayat System.

40. Robert L. Hardgrave, The Nadars of Tamil Nadu, Bombay, 1969, p.21
41. Ibid