CHAPTER V

CULTURAL CONDITIONS OF KANYAKUMARI DISTRICT

The Kanyakumari District Gazetteer (1986) and Kanyakumari District, Census Report has a fund of information on the educational aspects pertaining to Tamilnadu and the details regarding Kanyakumari are enumerated below.

"Knowledge is the weapon which saves one from evil. It forms a rampart which cannot be destroyed by foes. The learned possess everything, while the unlettered are really poor, even if they have riches (Kural: 430)"

Avvaiyar (a Tamil Poet) had many associations with Nanjilnadu a part and parcel of the present Kanyakumari district. Unlike in other parts of the State, there are Shrines of Avvaiyar in the district. She has sung the praises of Nanjil Valluvan, a ruler of Nanjil Nadu. Avvai worship is considered as a separate cult in the Vilavancode area of the district. It is locally known as "Avvai Virutham".

The other poet is "Oruchirai Periyanar", who also claims to have belonged to Nanjilnadu.
"Perumkuntrur perumkausikanar" is another Tamil savant who is the author of "Malaibadukadam", and he hail from Eranial or Muttam of the Kanyakumari district.

Before the advent of modern education, the traditional "Pāl schools" (Gurukulam education system) were conducted invariably by individual teachers. Higher education, particularly pertaining to religion has been a monopoly of the Brahmins.

The significance of having a teacher for each village has been recognised by the author of "Thirikadugam". The teacher was known as Kanakkayar and alternatively in the post sangam period as "Uvattiar". "Asariyar" is apparently a teacher of vast learning and an author of literary works. A teacher of a large number of pupils has been known as "Kulapathi".

During the Sangam period the Cheras had their rule extended over certain parts of the present Kanyakumari district and the remaining portions were under the Pandyas. After the Sangam Cheras, the entire area of the present Kanyakumari district and the remaining portions were under the Pandyas. The Ay rulers were independent and sometimes owed allegiance to the Pandyas. The Pandyas were the patrons of letters and poets. Many of them were poets themselves. The Pandya king, "Aryapadai Kadantha Nedunchelian" advised his people to take to learning either by paying a fee or rendering services to the teachers.

In Kerala (including the present Kanyakumari district) the Nambudri Brahmins allowed only the eldest son to contract permanent marriage and
rear a family. The younger sons, freed from family chores, devoted themselves generally to study and teaching and helped in promoting literacy among the masses.

In the Year 1819, Nagam Aiya writes in the Travancore Census Report: "Every village, had a 'Pial school'(Gurukulam School). The master was called the "Ashan" and the Village boys and girls were taught there a few simple lessons in Malayalam. The "Ashan" is either an "ambalavasi or a sudra, or sometimes even an "Iluya".

The Christian Missionaries, as elsewhere in India, were the pioneers of English education in the erstwhile Travancore State and more particularly in the then South Travancore, which area presently forms the Kanyakumari district. The Portuguese and the Dutch who came to the erstwhile Travancore state even prior to the British, did little towards the cause of education. But the Protestant missionaries, who arrived later, were the first to introduce English education in the district, which was part and parcel of the then Travancore State.

The originator of the English school in the erstwhile Travancore State was Rev. William Tobias Ringle Taube, a native of Prussia and a man of great force and character. He came to the State in 1806 and then onwards, he devoted his whole energy to evangelistic work and wherever he went he carried with him the mission of English education. He was incessantly preaching and teaching and he established many schools for poor children, christians as well as non-christians. The second, but most important missionary to be mentioned in connection with the
promotion of education in the district is Rev. Mead. He was the master workman who developed the Infant Mission left by Mr. Ringle Taube and shaped it into an extensive organisation Rev. Abbs has said that Mr. mead was the founder of both Nagercoil and Neyyoor, infact he was the father of the South Travancore (present Kanyakumari district) mission (christian organisation).

The entire credit of establishing the first full-fledged educational institution in the district, ie., at Nagercoil goes to Rev. Mead. He drew up a plan for educating the children of the Christian converts and youth of other sects who might be willing to hear the words of God, with other secular studies, in the hope that the students thus trained might here after become the means of introducing the principles of Christianity.

The Nagercoil Seminary developed into the Nagercoil Christian College and later it was christened as the Scott Christian College and it still flourishes. Another important early missionary enterprise towards the cause of Technical education in the district was the foundation of the school of Industry at Nagercoil in 1820.4

The Christian Missionaries were the pioneers not only of the western or English education in the erstwhile Travancore state, but also pioneer's in female education. The earliest girls schools in the country were established between 1819 and 1823 and were most diligently developed and extended from time to time. Mrs. Mead, Mrs. Mault, Mrs. Miller, Mrs. Thompson, Mrs. Norton, Mrs. Bailey and Mrs. Baker are the honoured names associated with these pioneer education enterprises
among the women of Travancore, the Organisational set up of the department of education, on the eve of merger with Tamil Nadu is given below.

The Director of Public Instructions of the Travancore - Cochin state was the head of the department of education. Under his administrative control, were inspectors, Inspectresses of schools in the Range level, and Assistant Inspectors and Assistant inspectresses at the district educational level. Later the posts of the District Educational Officers were created. The four taluks of Agasteeswaram, Kalkulam, Thovalai and Vilavancode which formed part of the erstwhile Trivandrum district were under the control of the District Educational Officer, Trivandrum upto 1954. With effect from April 1, 1954, the Nagercoil educational district was headed by a District Educational Officer.

When the district of Kanyakumari was formed and added to the then Madras state in 1956, the Education Department of the State was headed by the Director of Public Instruction. He was assisted by subordinate officers and necessary complementary staff in his office at the State level. Besides the posts of the divisional Inspectors at divisional level, the District Educational Officers at the educational district level and the inspectresses of Girls school at the circle level were created under the administrative and disciplinary control of the director of Public Instruction. The entire State was divided into two divisions having headquarters at Madurai and Coimbatore. Each division was under the control of a Divisional Inspector. When Kanyakumari district was formed, it came under the control of the Divisional Inspector.
When Kanyakumari district was formed, it came under the control of the Divisional Inspector of Madurai, who was having jurisdiction over the districts of Madras, Chengalpattu, South Arcot, Thanjavur, Madurai, Ramanathapuram, and Tirunalveli. The entire Kanyakumari district was formed as one educational district and had a post of District Educational Officer at Kanyakumari district. There were 15 District Educational Officers for the whole State. Consequent to the organisation of states, 13 senior posts were transferred from Travancore-Cochin State to the Madras State of which 4 posts came under the Subordinate Education Service.

When the district was formed in November 1956, there were 585 Educational Institutions of all categories in which 103,225 male pupils and 81,919 female pupils were studying. Of these Educational institutions, 344 were Government elementary schools, 82 aided elementary schools and 15 were elementary schools without receiving any aid from the Government.

The total number of boys in elementary schools was 64,587 and the total number of girls was 56,473. There were 39 Government secondary Schools, 59 Mission Schools, two Schools without receiving aid, for boys and six Mission Schools for girls. In the boys schools, where girls were also admitted, 33,923 boys and 20,786 girls were studying. In the girls schools, 438 boys and 2,840 girls were under instruction, for in the primary sections of the girls schools, boys were also admitted. Basic Schools under the new concept were also established and there were seven such Govt. basic Schools and one aided basic school having 1,327 boys and 1,116 girls on the rolls. For all these categories of schools, there were 1,242 men teachers and 1,123 women teachers imparting Education.
Besides these, there were also two Nursery Schools viz.. Duthie Nursery School, and London Mission Nursery School and one Kinder Garten School, i.e. Home Church Kinder Garten School and a Drawing School by name Chithra Drawing School. With regard to teacher training, there were three ordinary training schools for men, of which two were run by the Govt. and one by an aided private agency. In these schools, there were 136 boys and 60 girls as trainees. There was also one aided ordinary training school for women, in which 50 girls were under training. There was also one Government basic training school for men in which 50 boys and 15 girls were undergoing training.

On the Technical Education side, though there was no Polytechnic, there were two Govt. and six aided industrial schools, where 195 boys and 66 girls were imparted training in various technical trades. There were also nine approved commercial schools and 536 boys and 165 girls were attending these commercial schools.

Primary Education

There were 381 institutions with a pupil strength of 107,921 and a staff strength of 2,047 in 1959-1960. Out of these institutions 291 were government managed and the rest private (census 1981).

Basic Education

A new orientation has been given to Elementary Education by the introduction of basic Education. The main purpose of this scheme was
to terminate the system of learning slowly from books and to give the children resourcefulness. Children are taught basic crafts like spinning, weaving etc, so as to make them productive on the basis of learning. The Government aims to convert all the existing elementary schools into basic schools and provide at least one Basic School for each village with a population of over 500 persons. During 1959-1960 there were 64 Basic Schools in the district and 17,867 pupils were attending them.\[^7\]

**Secondary Education**

In Kanya Kumari district, the higher secondary courses were attached to 42 boys high schools and 5 girls high schools. While this pattern was introduced, there were nearly 5 higher secondary schools in Panchayat union, in an average. In 1988, there were 33 Govt. higher secondary schools, 37 aided-mission and 12 aided non-mission higher secondary schools functioning in the district, which include 8 higher secondary schools for girls. Of these eight, two schools are run by the Government, five by the aided missions and the remaining one by an aided non-mission agency.\[^8\]

**Collegiate Education**

Scott Christian College was the first to be established in the district. As has been stated earlier, this college originated from the Nagercoil Seminary founded in 1818 by Rev. Mead of the London Mission Society. In 1893, the Seminary was converted in to a second grade
college, under the university of Madras. It was known as a first grade college in the Kanyakumari district.³

The south Travancore Hindu college is the only other college of the district in the year 1959-1960.

During 1965-1966, there were eight colleges in the district, including one graduate teachers training college at Attoor, established in the year 1963. Later in the year 1967, pioneer Kumaraswamy college, Nagercoil was founded. In the year 1970-71 Sree Ayyappa college for women, sunkankadai and Arignar Anna college, Aralvaimozhi were established and then the total number of the colleges in the district became eleven. The twelfth college in the district viz., St.Judes college at Thootthoor, was opened in the year 1988-89. In Nagercoil, christian college for women was also opened. Besides these 13 colleges, there are two self financing colleges and they are muslim Arts and Science college at Thiruvithankodu and Sivanthi Adithan college at Nagercoil, both established in the year 1984, the youngest colleges in the district.

Technical Education

In Kanyakumari District six polytechnics of which one is own by the Government, one by an aided private management and four by the private self-financing agencies. Eighteen indus trial training institutes of which two are run by the Government and sixteen run by private managements.
Seventy commercial schools approved by the Government and more than 63 unapproved commercial schools.

**Adult Education**

The Adult Education Programmes of the Government of India and the Government of Tamilnadu are launched to remove illiteracy particularly among the rural folk in the country. For the implementation of the programmes, a separate Department of Non-Formal and Adult Education was created. The head of the department at the State level is the Director of Non-Formal and Adult Education. At the district level, there are non-formal and Adult Education Officers to implement the programme and they are assisted by the project officers. There are also supervisors to assist the project officer in correctly identifying the illiterate area to open centers and to watch the progress of the learners in the centres. Besides, the Government programmes there are also voluntary agencies to light the lamp of education among the illiterates.10

**Development Programmes and Adult Education**

Adult Education Programme is linked with various developmental programme such as family planning and child welfare, integrated rural development programme, training of youth for self-employment programme (TRYSEM) and Development of Women and Children Programme. Some objectives of this programme are, improvement of the position of women in regard to the social and economic status, amelioration of the conditions
of the weaker sections of the community including the scheduled caste, scheduled tribes and physically handicapped, conservation of energy resources, particularly, the renewable sources of energy conservation of the environment including programme of tree planation, social forestry and social conservation. These programmes, when implemented, indirectly educate the beneficiaries also.

**Education for the Physically Handicapped**

Apart from the academic schools and colleges and technical institution, there are also special schools for the Education of the blind and deaf pupils in the district. They are 1. Church of South India School for the Deaf, Kottaram. 2. Church of South India School for the Blind, Irenipuram and 3. Government School for the Blind, Nagercoil.

The former two schools are run by aided missions and the latter school is run by the Government Church of South India High School for the Deaf, Kottaram. the C.S.I. School for the deaf at Kottram was inaugurated on 29, June 1966. The total number of students who have undergone Education in the school every year since its inauguration is given in Table 5.1
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total number of students</th>
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<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>1986-87</td>
<td>28</td>
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</table>

*Source: Records from Church of South India School (Irenipuram)*
The C.S.I. school for the blind at Irenipuram was started in August 1970. Though the official news recognition by the department of social welfare was granted only in the year 1974-75. The government sanctioned grant for five posts of secondary grade teachers. The main objective of the institution is to give education, training and rehabilitation of the blind pupils. The pupils in the school are given periodical free medical check-up by the ophthalmologists of the C.S.I. Hospital, Neyyoor. Besides regular Education, integrated Education programme for visually handicapped children was started in the year 1984-85 and expanded.

The pupils of the school participated in the fourth National Sports Meet 1986 and fifth National Sports Meet 1987 at NewDelhi and won awards.

The total number of pupils who have studied in this school every year, since its establishment, is given below in Table 5.2
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984-85</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985-86</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Same as Table 5.1*
Government School for the Blind, Nagercoil

The Department of Education of the Government of Tamilnadu opened the school for the blind at Nagercoil on 22 September 22, 1975 and later in 1980, the school was handed over to the Department of Social Welfare. This is a primary school having classes up to the fifth standard.

The teaching aids used to teach the children in the school are, Braille books and science articles supplied by the Government of Tamilnadu. Some voluntary organisations also had donated some aids to the school such as tape-recorder, radio and furniture. There is a free hostel in the school. The inmates are supplied with uniforms free of cost.

Female Education in Kanyakumari District

The Mother Theresa women university kodaikanal, has opened a study centre in the district which at present functions in the campus of the Sivanthi Aditatanar College, Nagercoil. The aim of establishing the study centre is to extend the research activities and social welfare schemes for the benefit and welfare of women.

Education of Backward Classes, Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes

The department of Adi-Dravida and tribal welfare maintains three residential schools and fourteen free hostels, of which one is for college boys and the remaining for high and higher secondary school for girls and boys.

The department of backward classes welfare runs thirteen hostels in the district of which three are for college girls, eight are for high and
higher secondary school girls and two for high and higher secondary school boys.

The Government have started a Polytechnic at Nagercoil and this has made a beginning towards the provisions of facilities for technical studies. This institution at Nagercoil has provided training to 121 students during 1959-1960.

According to 1981 census report literacy rate of Kanyakumari district works out to 63.85% as against the literacy rate of 46.72% Tamil Nadu. The literacy rates of males and females of the district are 68.55% and 59.08% as against 58.26% and 34.99% of Tamil Nadu. Among the taluks, Vilavancode has recorded maximum of 71.41% of literates, while Agasteeswaran has got 59.49% of literates.

Education naturally leads to service and the country has much benefited from service schemes such as the National service scheme.

National Service Scheme

The National service scheme has been introduced in the colleges and higher secondary schools to create national and social awareness among the pupils. Each volunteer enrolled under the scheme, has to work for not less than 120 hours, per year and the duration of the membership is two years. On completion of two years, a member should have worked for 240 hours in the various fields mentioned below:

1) Adult Education, 2) Organisation of mass immunisation, vaccination, medical checkup camps, 3) Sanitation and hygienic awarness,
4) Service in orphanages, and correctional institutions and helping the disabled and invalids as also, 5) Traffic control, 6) Cleaning Temple, 7) Watering and tree planting 8) Cultural and recreational activities, these are the prime objectives of NSS volunteers.

In Kanyakumari district the N.S.S. units are functioning in all the colleges and most of the higher secondary schools. In N.S.S. both boys and girls are eligible to be enrolled as members.

Along with the NSS the NCC also forms an active part of the co-curriculum activities. By the enactment of the NCC Act 1948 (Act No.XXXI) the National Cadet Crops came into existence. The Divisions and the Wings of NCC were started in the educational institutions consequent to the introduction of the above Act. The senior division pertains to boys in the colleges and the junior division to the boys in the schools, while the senior wing girls are from the colleges and the junior wing girls are from the schools.

During the study period there have been six NCC units functioning in six colleges, 19 in higher secondary schools and in 2 in high schools in the district. These units come under the immediate control of the "commanding officer" TamilNadu Battalion, N.C.C. Nagercoil. This battalion forms part of the N.C.C group, Head quarters at Madurai. In each educational institution where there is an N.C.C. company troop (sub - unit) there is one N.C.C. officer on a part-time basis.

The II TamilNadu Battalion of N.C.C. at Nagercoil has both senior and Junior divisions. The former consists of 647 cadets and the latter 2200. This Battalion is commanded by a regular army officer of the
rank of lieutenant colonel who is assisted by military and civil officers. Besides the normal training camps every year, the batallion conducts various combined camps touch as National Integration Camps, Annual Training Camps, etc.,

The assiduous training given in these educational institutions has resulted in the emergence of eminent scholars from this State.

Sheik Thampi Pavalar, a Tamil scholar and an authority on “Kamba Ramayanam” is popularly known as “Sadavadani” which means one who concentrates on many things. He has written many books and more important among them are, “Then kottaru, Pathittru pathu, Anthathi and Thirunagoor Thiruvanthathi. He has also written a commentary on “seerapuranam” His chief disciple has been Sasthankutty Pillai of Thengamputhoor who also has been an eminent Tamil Scholar.

Jeevanandham “Jeeva” a freedom fighter, a revolutionary politician, is yet another Tamil savant and his works include “Kalaiyum Ilakkiyamum” and “Bharathi valli”.

K.K. Sivaraja Pillai was the first director of the Tamil Research Centre, established at Madras in the year 1927. His book, Chronology of Early Tamils was published by the Madras university in 1932. He is an eminent scholar in the field of Tamil and Historical research.

Kavimoni Desikavinayagam Pillai, was a distinguished poet. He was an archeologist and historian.

“Kandalur Salai is an important research work of Kavimoni’s which gives a different interpretation of Raja Raja Chola’s victory at Kerala.
Arunuga Navalar

Arunuga Navalar, founded at Nagercoi, a religious organisation named "Thiruneri Thondakulam" in the Year 1928. His work describes the basic principles of Hindu philosophy.

Dr. B. Natarajan is an internationally reputed Economist, as well as, a Tamil scholar, Pandithan Rama Subramaniya Navalar of Nagercoil, in yet another Scholar who has authored various works like "Arulmani Malai" and "Nanjil Nadu".

The district has also produced three international authorities in Tamil linguistics and they are Dr. V.I. Subramaniyam and Dr. S. Agasthialingam (the first and second vice-Chancellors of Tamil University, (Tanjavur) and Dr. Muthushanmugam.

There are also popular novelists and story writers such as Neelapadmanabhan, Ponneelan, who are also famous Tamil Scholars.

"Isaac Arumai Rajan" is yet another Scholar of Tamil Literature.

Dr. S. Padmanabhan, a Journalist and famous Historian, also belongs to this district.

Medical Services

A good body houses a good mind. A district which has produced the above mentioned great minds should have experienced good health and this would not have been possible without good health services.

Aryapattar, Dhanvandiri and Kautilya's works mention the various types of medicines for the relief of incurable diseases, Till today this type
of medicine is a foundation for different types of treatment. Chola inscriptions and Pallava inscriptions and several types of Historical monuments reflect the effects of Ayurvedic Medicine."

Maruthuvalmalai, a hill in Kanyakumari district is considered as medicinal hill. According to tradition, this hill is supposed to be a piece of the mountain Gandha Madhana and dropped here while the mountain was carried by Hanuman to Lanka during the epic war between Rama and Ravana. Rare medical herbs are available here in abundance.

Sage Agastiya, the first grammarian of good old Tamil was also the foremost of the Siddars. This sage is believed to have lived in this land's end and there is also a village by name Agasteeswaram, apart from the taluk.

General palm leaf records like varmam and Varma Sasthra were written by Agasthiyar. Even today, this healing art of varma treatment is taught in Kanyakumari in the Guru-Sisya tradition, and treatment is also done by elders who are quite conversant with this method of treatment by applying tamil medicines in the required proportions. This method of treatment has proved successful in several cases.

From the period of Agasthiyar to the present day, the Siddha system of treatment has been preserved carefully by the people of Kanyakumari. The growth of the allopathic system of medicine in Kanyakumari district is also an interesting one. The early Protestant Missionaries were considered to be pioneers in the field of allopathic medicine of the London Mission Society (LMS) later known as the church of South India (CSI) which has laid the foundation for the modern allopathic system of practice in the district as early as 1838.
Table 5.3 gives a list of the Government Medical Institutions in Kanyakumari District.

Table 5.3

Government Medical Institutions in Kanyakumari District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Institution</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Bed Strength</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Government Tuber Closis.</td>
<td>Acharipallam</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Govt. Headquarters Hospital</td>
<td>Nagercoil</td>
<td>342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Govt. Hospital</td>
<td>Padmanahapuram</td>
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</tr>
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<td>4. Govt. Hospital</td>
<td>Kuzhithurai</td>
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<td>5. Govt. Hospital</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Govt. Hospital</td>
<td>Kualasekaram</td>
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<td>7. Govt. Hospital</td>
<td>Arumanai</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Primary Health Centre</td>
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<td>Buthukuzhi</td>
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<td>23. Primary Health Centre</td>
<td>Mutton</td>
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<td>24. Primary Health Centre</td>
<td>Rajakkamangalam</td>
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<td>25. Primary Health Centre</td>
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<td>26. Primary Health Centre</td>
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<td>27. Primary Health Centre</td>
<td>Arumanallore</td>
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<td>28. Primary Health Centre</td>
<td>Vellichandai</td>
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Source: District Gazetteer (1986)
In the implementation of Health for all by the year 2000 A.D. envisaged by the “World Health organisation” (WHO) Kanyakumari district with its rich Medical and Cancer Research and Treatment Centre at Nagercoil, is the most innovative project in health serve and medicare, and it may as well be considered as a remarkable contribution to the schemes of the World Health Organisation.

Education and health will give people, leisure to organise and create places of interest and leisure time activities.

Kanyakumari district, a unique place among the tourist centres of India, is 19 K.M. to the south east of Nagercoil the district headquarters of Kanyakumari, which is a place of hoary antiquity and which derives its name, from Kanyakumari the virgin Goddess. It is the lands end of the Indian peninsula, where the Arabian Sea the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal confluence.

This place has been a very famous pilgrim centre from very early times. The “Silappathikaram” also refers to Kanyakumari as an important pilgrim centre and people from all over India come to take a sacred bath.

The sculpture of the Goddess is considered to be one of the most beautiful in India. The place is also a health resort and a picnic spot. The “Vivekananda Rock Memorial” is another place for tourists. From very ancient times, the rock has been regarded as a sacred place. In puranic tradition, it has been known as “Sripadaparai” meaning the rock, that has been blessed by the touch of Sripada feet of the Goddess.12
With a considerable size and elevation and situated at a distance of about 450 yards from the tapering end of the main land, the rock provide an ideal and unique vantage point to visitors, desirous of having a "darshan" of our sacred land spread up to the Himalayas. The rock has been venerated by Shakthi worshippers through the ages as a place of great spiritual efficacy for doing “Sadana”. The Kendra's membership, offers selfless service irrespective of colour, creed, sex community or way of worship.

This sacred spot at the very end of this land of diverse cultures has been further, embellished by the gigantic statute (133 feet) of the saint poet “Thiruvalluvar” which has been declared open for public view (“Indian Express 2.1.2000”) by the State's present chief minister “Dr.M. Karunanithi” in the August presence of luminaries from various field, on the first day of the concluding year 2000 A.D. of the 20th century and the second millennium.

The lands end and the Sea naturally route one's attention to the ports which are the portals of trade and commerce in any country.

Colechel Port

The Colechel port is a commercial port of historical importance. The sea coast town of Colechel is about 22 K.M. west of Nagercoil. Between the 16th & 18th centuries this port has been a famous commercial port for the European merchants. During the period of Martandavarma who had conducted war with the Dutch powers at Colechel in August 1741, a crushing defeat on the Dutch was inflicted and once
and for all an end was put to the ambition of the Dutch to set up their colony in the country.\textsuperscript{14}

The main consequence of this pattern is that many soldiers were held captive and among them was the eminent soldier “Delonoy” He entered into the service of Martandavarma’s military and he is the one who has helped in reorganising the army and was instrumental winning many battles for Marthandavarma’s. This victory against the Dutch is commemorated by a pillar created at the site.

The Colechel port has afforded natural amenities for shipping because of its physiographical structure. A group of outlying rocks forms a practical break water and under cover of these rocks the loading and unloading and other shipping operations are carried out. Manakudy and Kovalam in the Agastheeswaram taluk are two sub ports attached to the Colechel port.

The Kanyakumari Port

This port is situated at the latitude 8°46' and longitude 77° - 33.2' east longitude on the southern most point of India. This port serves exclusively for the transport of tourists from Kanyakumari shore to the Vivekananda rock memorial. This port comes under the Tamil Nadu port department which is controlled by the State Transport Department.\textsuperscript{15}

Apart from the ports, there are forts and palaces that add to the progress and scenic beauty of Kanyakumari.
The Vattakotta Fort

On the eastern coast of Kanyakumari district is the Vattakotta fort. This fort was a part of the defence plan perfected by Delanoy during the reign of Martandavarma. This fort has been left intact and is a silent witness to the life and culture of bygone years. The only purpose of the fort at present is that it serves as a camping ground for visitors. The buildings inside the fort once housed the garrison. The well and tank are practically useless now. The fort, however, was well built and offers tribute to the efficiency and thoroughness of Delanoy.16

Odachikotta Fort

This is a small stone fortification, now in ruins covering an area of five acres of land and is situated about 4 K.M. to the south of Marthandam, on the Thengaipattinam road. It is said that Rani Odachi, the mother of the famous "Thirumalai Nayak of Madurai" who invaded NanjilNadu, is said to have lived in this fort which was named as Odachikotta after her. The recent tradition is that Rani Odachi had no issues for a very long time, and on the advice of some important persons, she came to Munchirai from Madurai and worshipped Thirumalaiappan the deity of the local temple. The fort was then, built at that time for her stay. It is said that the God blessed her with a child who was named "Thirumalai". When Thirumalai Nayak became the ruler of Madurai, he presented a valuable gold crown to this temple.17

The Udhayagiri Fort

This fort is situated near the Padmanabhapuram palace on the Trivandrum - Nagercoil, high way at Puliyoorkurichy. It is a about 15 Km.
from Nagercoil and 21 Kms. from Thuckalai and - Padmanabhapuram. The fort has been rebuilt in the reign of Marthandavarma the Venad king during 1741 to 1744.

Devasagayam Pillai was an able commander-in-chief of Marthandavarma's military force. In course of time - Devasagayam Pillai a close friend of Delano'y was converted to Christianity, under the influence of the great religious preachings of De'Lanoy. As this was not liked by the Travancore ruler, he persuaded him to give up Christianity but in vain. It is said that Devasagayam Pillai during his imprisonment worked a miracle. He hit the rock at this place with his elbow when water gushed out from the rock. The rock is now called "Muttadichanparai" This old rock is one of the holy places of the christians in this District.

Padmanabhapuram Palace

The Padmanabhapuram Palace is one of the most historic places in Travancore. The town is surrounded by a fort with an area of 187 acres. Up to 1744 the for and the palace were called "Kalkulam Kottai" and "Kalkulam Kottaram" respectively. On the eastern side of the fort is one of the rare archaeological museums containing fine architectural pieces, beautiful sculptures, mural paintings and weapons of war. The art and architecture of this palace is Kerala in origin. The forts and palaces housed people practising religious of various hues at various times.

Hinduism

The Hindu population is front ranking in Kanyakumari District. The great rulers not only housed themselves in well fortified forts palaces, but
they also ensured that their deities were installed in beautiful palaces of worship.

**Sucindrum Temple**

Sucindram is a small village about 12km from Kanyakumari and about seven kilometers from Nagercoil.

Sucindram means the place where Indra attained "Suchi" or purification. The Sthalapurana has it that Indra sufered a curse from Sage Gowthama, when he stealthily cast amorous glances at Ahalya the wife of Gowthama. Not able to suffer the mortification brought about by the curser, Indra had to seek immediate redemption. He came to Gana Aranya as this place was then called and offered worship to Lord Shiva. Relieving Indra of his curse Lord Shiva granted him his wish that the place where he attained purification should hence forth be called "Suchindrum".

The height of the "Gopura" from the ground level to the top of "kalasams" is 1346' and it is about 90’ in length 5’ in width, it is beautifully proportioned and the entire outside is embossed with figures from various legends and puranas. It has a seven storeyed gopuram and inside each tier are mural paintings from Ramayana and Stalapurana. The images of the Nandikeswarar, Sree Dharamar, Natarajar and Parasakthi are found near the staircase and are marvellous pieces of art.21

The new "Vasantha Mandapa" was erected in the 17th Century by "Matakuty Malayamma" of Parakkai. It is a splendidly constructed pavilion 24' long 21.9" wide which still stands as a monument of art. At its centre
Suchindrum Thanumalayan Swamy Temple
is a raised platform of stone 19' long and 16' wide and 31 1/2' high. From Panguni Utra (Mar / April) to the commencement of Chithirai Utsava, (April/ May). The huge image of Hanumar (Anjaneya) in the form of his Viswarupa, as given darshan to Sita, at the Asoka forest of Sri Lanka and as described in the Ramayana, stands to the eastern most corner of the northern corridor. The image is 18' 4" in height and is carved exquisitely out of polished stone. Being of marvellous, sculptural skill, it ranks first among the huge images of Hanuman found in the whole of India. The Hanuman is facing Ramaswamy Koil at the western end, with folded hands in anjali (prayer).

Three grand festivals are conducted at Suchindram every year. They are Markazi (December - January) Chithirai (April - May) and Avani (August / September) Utsavams.22

The great temple of Suchindram is one of the store houses of the specimens of the South Indian Art and Architecture.

Bhagavathi Amman Temple (Kanyakumari)

This temple is very famous in Kanyakumari district. Historians and the important scholars and spiritual leaders hold this to be the reason as to why this district (Kanyakumari district) came to be named after the virgin Goddess, it has been recorded that the Goddess Parvathy Amman had performed "Thapasu" (Meditation) on the rock abuting the sea at the tip of Kanyakumari to achieve the hand of "Lord Shiva" and hence in
Kanyakumari Bhagawathi Amman Temple
commemoration of this virgin Goddess, the place came to be called "Kanyakumari" (District Gazetteer) Vol.1 (1986). Thus this temple has a significance history in the Kanyakumari District.

Their are two important stories current about this temple. The eastern gate of this temple is opened twice a year during certain festivals. When the gates are opened the Goddess looks directly out to the Sea. Once, some mariners were so attracted by the power and brightness of Gems, that they came ashore and robbed the Goddess of her beautiful Jewels. What ever value the stories may have the fact remains that the gates are always closed except on the festival occasions

The Nagaraja Temple

The name Nagercoil is derived from the five headed serpent deity of the Nagaraja temple - which is situated in the heart of the town of Nagercoil in Kanyakumari district.

The temple of Nagaraja is surrounded by paddy fields, flower gardens and coconut growes. The garden is famous for its - Naga flower a symbolic representation of "Nagaraja" an image of Vinayaga which is enshrined in the south west corner of the inner prakara.

In this district the people believe that those who worship Nagaraja would lead a healthy life and would not be affected by any disease. In the month of Avani (August / September) the people from the surrounding villages come here and offer milk, salt and pepper and wooden toys to the deity. A grand festival is celebrated for ten days in the Tamil month
Thai (January / February) every year. An annual festival is celebrated every year for ten days in the Tamil month of Margazhi (December / January).  

**Bhagavathi Amman Temple (Mandaikadu)**

This is situated in Kalkulam taluk on the sea coast, north east of Colachel port. This temple dates back to the Seventh Century B.C. The annual festival called Mandaikkadu Kodai is celebrated in March for ten days and is the main attraction of this place. Poojas are held on Tuesdays and Fridays and are very important to the women devotees who worship on these days.

**Swamithoppu Pathi**

One portion of is the Nadar community, who are followers of "Ayyavaikundaswamy". They think that "Ayyavaikundaswamy" (Muthkkutti Swamy) is a incarnation of "God Mahavishnu".

Nearly 160 years back, a sage by name Muthukkutti swamy was fighting against the Travancore king for the liberation of the people, who inhabited between Manakkudi and Leepuram in Nanji Nadu area. He introduced a new pattern of worship., i.e., Idoless worship. He got many followers and he was worshipped by them, particularly the Hindu Ndars. After his death his graveyard has been developed as swamithope, where festivals takes place three times a year. Due to his influence most of the Hindu Villages now have Narayanaswamy temples in addition to the shrines of local deities which already exist. Ampalapathi, at Osaravilai is considered
Swamithope Ayya Vaigundarpathi Temple
"pati" in all villages, in which no idol worship is found. Instead of the sacred Usher, they use lime-sand called "Namam" to wear on the forehead upwardly. Muthukutiswamy prepared many doctrines called "Akilathirattu", which was being preserved in the form of palm-leaves and sent by the villages at the time of festivals in the patis. Even now the practice of reading this "Akilathirattu" is found and is known as "Eduvasippu". This was published in a book form nearly 40 years ago. "Muthukutiswamy" has referred to the village as manakudi or manvaipathi and the area as Kurunadu. Now the "Ayyavazhi" duly spread over the district and other parts of State. Most of the followers of Ayya Worship, created small temples, called "Nizhal Thangal".

The Thiruvattar Adikesava Perumal Swamy Temple

Situated at Thiruvattar, a village in Kalkulam taluk this temple stands on the banks of the river Thiruvattar amidst its picturesque scenery. Nammazhwar describes this as "Valiamikka Vattarai " the temple at Thiruvattar has been dedicated to "Adikesava Perumal" in the 16th century. The image in the central shrine is a Sayanamurthi stretched out on his commodious serpent bed and bears a close resemblance to the deity in the Sripadamanabaswami temple at Trivandrum.

Christianity is the second popular religion in Kanyakumari District.

Christianity

Christianity was first introduced in Kerala by St. Thomas 52-68 A.D. One of the apostles of Jesus Christ. Later St. Francis Xavier
who worked for some times in Tuticorin coast came to Travancore in 1544 A.D. The king of Travancore allowed St. Xavier to preach Christianity. A large number of people in Travancore embraced Christianity under St. Xavier. St. Xavier's method of conversion was simple. The Catholic missions have been very active in the district. The missions role is one of the major causes for the growth of education and the medical fields.

The role of the Salvation army (a division of Christianity) has also been very active in the district and the main aim of this organisation is to ensure the progress of the Parayar and other the suppressed classes of Hindus.

The Diocese of the Church of South India at Kanyakumari has its headquarters at Nagercoil. The role of this organisation is one of the important causes for the growth of education in Kanyakumari district. The study period 1956-86 shows the Christian Population to rank second next to the majority community. Their places of worship is called churches, and are listed below:-

**The Home Church**

The Home Church at Nagercoil is an outstanding example of the architectural achievement of the missionaries. The Church is 140 ft. long and 70 ft. wide including the space of 70' and 20' which forms the front Verandha and the office rooms in the rear. The Home Church is one of the oldest and largest of the Protestant Churches in South India.
Home Church Nagercoil
St. Thomas Church

St. Thomas Church is an old Church called "Thommai palli" or St. Thomas Church at Kumarimuttom about two kilometers north east of the Cape point. From the letters of St. Francis Xavier who worked among the villages here, about the period 1542, one learns the conditions of the Paravas who lived there and who were often plundered and pillaged by the payayas or Vadugas under the orders of the Nayaks of Madurai.

Mary de Mercode Church

This Church is a very lovely structure of graceful proportions, measuring about 153 Ft. in length and 53 Ft. in breadth with the position of the bell 53 ft. above the floor level. The central tower is crowned with a gold cross, the flag staff in front is about 130 ft. high. The Church Mary de Mercode is one of the Marvellous Churches of South India.

St. Xavier Church

St. Xavier was an outstanding and dedicated priest of the society of Jesus. He visited the coastal areas of Tamil Nadu from Goa. Then he visited Kottar in Kanyakumari district, were he was popularly known as "Valiya Pandaram" among the people of Kottar. The Church records show that the Church was built in the year 1600 A.D. In the year 1865 the Church was enlarged and the shrine of our lady was also renovated and vaulted over.

In 1942 in commemoration of the fourth centenary of the arrival of St. Xavier in India a beautiful tower to the Saint, a grotto to the blessed
Mother and a small shrine to St. Ignatious who sent St. Xavier to India, were constructed in the Cathedral premises. The Church of St. Xavier enjoys great fame as a place of miracles from early times. The annual festival is celebrated during the month of November - December lasting ten days. The car festival on the 9th day is the most important. During these festival days the shrine attracts a large crowd and visitors from all over the south throng the holy shrine.28

Islam

The religions in India are given the freedom of worship right from the peaks of Kashmir to the tips of Kanyakumari. Along with the temples and the Churches are the religious places for the Muslims in Kanyakumari District as they are in the rest of India.

The muslims are mostly engaged in the business field. The two section of muslims in this district are the "shiahs" and the "Sunnis" and the main places of the muslims are Thakkalai, Colechal, Kalkulam Taluk and Edalakudi in the Agasteswaram Taluk. The Peer Mohammed Oliyullah Durgah is at Thakkalai. It has been named after the great Philosopher "Mohammed Appa" who was born in Thenkasi of Thirunelveli District. After spending some time in spiritual pursuits in Peermedu of the Kerala state, he came and stayed at Thackalay. Being a Tamil poet of great eminence, he wrote many books on philosophy.

The anniversary of the great philosopher poet is celebrated every year on a grand scale on the full moon day in the month of Rejab (according to the Islamic calender). Anniversary day is declared as a local holiday for the district.
Peer Mohamed Dargha at Thuckaiay
CASTE SYSTEM OF TRAVANCORE

The people who belong to Vilavancode, Kalkulam, Thovalai Agasteeswaram taluks even though comprised of many communities, speak Tamil mostly. The people who live in this area have had to undergo great ordeals in the Malayali Government times. In a society where caste dominated, the low castes were subjected to glaring disabilities on account of the peculiar Social customs which were very strictly followed in Travancore. The low castes were considered to be untouchables by the high caste Hindus from times immemorial. They even received unsympathetic and inhuman treatment from the high castes.

They were considered untouchable and were strictly prohibited from entering in to the temples and using public wells, tanks and chatrams.

Equal opportunities of education and employment were denied to the Avamas (Low castes). There are instances where educated Avarnas were denied employment opportunities in government services, for the sole reason that they belonged to the depressed classes. They were not allowed to walk through streets where Brahmins resided.

The high castes considered the practicing of untouchability was their right. They felt that if a person from the low castes touched them they would be polluted. Once polluted by the touch of a low caste, according to the customs and conventions at that time a purification ceremony was needed. Hence the low castes were commonly spoken of as out castes or untouchables. If a pulayar touched a Parayar, he was defiled and must wash his head and pray.
The Nairs were exempted from the land tax. They were the greatest slave owners of the country.\textsuperscript{31}

If a Pulayar touched a Nair woman she was considered as an outcaste for life. If a Pulayar touched a Brahmin the Brahmin had to take his bath at once and change his Brahmanical thread. On the other hand if a Nair was polluted by a Pulayar, he took bath immediately for purification.\textsuperscript{32} The sudra (Nair) women enjoyed a position in society because of their connection with the Brahmins.\textsuperscript{33}

Thus untouchability gave a lot of suffering to the people. They had no freedom to travel from one place to another. The low castes were compelled to place leaves so as to indicate their presence when they were at work. They were forbidden even to enter into the market places either to buy their daily necessaries of life or to sell their excess products which they had produced by their toil.\textsuperscript{34}

In the streets and on the roads the low castes had to keep a certain distance from the high castes. An Elava must keep 36 ft, from a Brahmin and 12 ft, from a Nair and Kaniyan would pollute a Nambuthiri at a distance of 24 ft. (Travancore Archeological series Vol.III).

The high castes did not permit the low castes to come before them on days when they pretended to be pure. In some places they had to seek shelter in the Jungles immediately on seeing a caste Hindu. They were restricted even access to the places of worship.

Still worse was the condition of the women of the low castes. They were not permitted to wear ornaments or to cover the upper part of
their body with clothes. (yesudhas R.N. 1975).35 "Gross" a foreign traveller of the eighteenth century recorded that the position of the lower caste of those days, who lived in a European centre for sometime, came before the Rani of Attingal (A provincial administrative place of Kerala) with her breasts covered, the Rani ordered to cut off her breasts immediately.

The men were not allowed to grow a mustache. They could not carry even an umbrella to shelter themselves from the scorching sun or from the rain. They were forced to pay taxes even to conduct to marriages. The people were affected by slavery.

In this social system of Travancore, the Brahmins were the top ranking people. The Nambudhiris were considered to be an important community. Next to the Nambudhiris the Nairs occupied an important place in the society. The Brahmins were exempted from capital punishments.36

The parayars and the Pulayars formed the lowest section in the Brahmin and Nair dominated society. They were the agriculturists. The condition of the non caste Hindus were deplorable. They were not allowed to open their mouth in front of the high castes. The evils of untouchability, unapproachability and prohibition of entry into temples were rampant is the society. Because of these disabilities the movement of the backward and other low castes was restricted.37

Right to dress is a basic right which was denied to the non caste Hindus in Nanjil Nadu. The unfortunate depressed classes were imposed with provocative, inequalities and social disabilities that eventually undermined their rights, liberties and status at large. The women of
unprivileged classes were not permitted the use of sandal marks, umbrella and certain types of jewellery. They were denied the right to cover their breast, which right was an exclusive social and civil right of the Brahmins.

The dress restrictions helped to distinguish status and caste distinction. The naked display of social apartheid and cultural imperialism disallowed the depressed class women to cover any part of their breast which evoked for long neither the feeling of immodesty nor humiliation and to act on the contrary, was considered an immoral and immodest Act.3

Westermarck (1923) observes it is not the feeling of shame that has provoked the covering, but the covering that has provoked the feeling of shame.

Life in the social, cultural and religious spheres presented a dismal picture and a sordid chapter in the history of Nanjil Nadu Unjust acts towards the depressed converts continued as a recurrent phenomenon in the Socio-religious life of the people by the suppressed classes, which included the Nadars and they were punished severely.

The Nadars

The Nadras are the majority people of Kanyakumari district. Their mother tongue is Tamil. Formerly they were known as Shanars, a name which the community now dislikes. It is said that “Chanan” is derived from the Tamil term “Choundror”

Dr. Caldwell considers the Nadars as immigrants from the Northern coast of Ceylon in very early times. The Nadars were called
"Nadalwars" in the old inscriptions of Travancore, which shows that they were once great landlords. They used to describe themselves in documents as "Valamkai Uyer Konta Iravikula Kshatriyar" which means "Kshartriyars" of the Solar race belonging to the right hand faction.39

According to Bate, (1917) the Nadars of Travancore were identical with those of Madras or Tirunelveli. They claimed a divine origin and believed themselves to have been made to carry crowns.

According to Raveendran (1973) the Nadars were large in numbers, performing agricultural labour and other kinds of useful work. They were always engaged in the more active operation of rural economy. They were treated by the high orders with scorn and contempt. Their foreign origin has recently been contested with much force at credibility. They are a well built and hardworking people. Their girls are married at puberty.40

Now widow's remarriage is permitted. A large section of the community has embraced Christianity. The suppression and illtreatment given to this community, in the past, by the so-called high castes of the Hindus, might perhaps be one of the reasons for such large scale conversions. They are agriculturists or land owners and are also engaged in trade. Now, there are many top officials in the educational and various other fields from this community.

The Vellalas

The Vellalas form the next major community in the Kanyakumari district. But the Nanjil Nadu Vellalas who belong to the Marumakkathayam
class have till very recently been found in large numbers in Nanjil Nadu comprising of the Thovalai and Agasteeswaram Taluks. Their mother tongue is Tamil. Evidence contained in ancient Tamil literature goes to show that the Nairs and Vellalas were originally of the same type.

According to Rao (1956) the word 'Venad' is composed from 'Vel' (Spear) i.e., the land of the spear. The sangam literature shows that the 'Velirs' or 'Vels' who were a fighting class were brought to the Dravidian land from Dwarasamuthra.41

The Census of India 1911 has expressed that the Vellalas of Nanjil Nadu have peculiar social customs. They also adopt various customs of the Nairs.

Nanjil Nadu Vellalars who are said to have come from Madurai in the 16th century A.D. also form another major community in the district. As Kanyakumari district has been formed a part of the Pandiya kingdom for a long time, probably, these agriculturists might have moved south wards from Thirunelvel district.

**Nairs**

The Nairs were formerly a military caste. A century and more of peaceful rule has brought about a major change in the character of the people. The Nairs have now become engaged in various professions, including government service. They are more prevalent in "Idanadu" (Vilavancode and Kalkulam) than in Nanjil Nadu (Agasteeswaram and Thovalai).
Various theories are advanced with respect to their origin. According to the "Kerala Mahatmiyam", the Nairs are the offspiring of the union of the junior members of the Nambudhiri family with members of other castes, because the Nambudhiris eldest son alone was permitted to marry in his own caste and raise a family whereas the younger son had to take to a life of teaching and dedication. According to the Census of India (1931), the Nair community numerically comes next to the Vellalas.

According to Malayalam literature (Keralolpathi) the Nairs are the descendants of the Sudras who accompanied the original Brahmin immigrants. Some writers identify them with some of the Nair tribes of Seythian origin. The term Nair is believed to be derived from the Sanskrit word 'Nayaka' a "leader" and is therefore allied to the Dravidian (Nayaker) or 'Naidu'. The most generally accepted theory is that the Nairs are Dravidians and belong to the same race and family as the bulk of the persons of south India. They practice polyandry and are "Serpent Worshippers." They either brought with them or adopted the Malayalam language.

The Nairs are divided in to the following subclasses:-

(1) Kriyathilnayers

They are supposed to represent the highest castes and are found more in Cochin and Malabar.

(2) Illakkars

Illakkars are the highest class of the Travancore Nairs. They are so called on account of their being originally attached to Nambudhiri illams.
(3) Swarubams Nairs

They come next in rank to llakkars and are from the Kshathiriyar families of Travancore.

(4) The Padamangalam Sudras

The Padamangaiam Sudras are those who are engaged in temple services such as sweeping, cleaning, carrying lamps etc., during processions.

The distinctive titles like 'Pillai', 'Thampi', 'Unnithan' 'Pannikar', 'Valiathan', 'Menon' are natural appendages to the Nair name. Their cultural importance is attached to the various titles and sub titles. Inter marriages are common nowdays.

Formerly Nairs had two types of marriages one before puberty called "Talikattu" or "Kettu Kalyanam" and other one after puberty known as "sampandam" or "pudavai koda" literally" cloth giving". The later one is the actual alliance as husband and wife while the former is almost a relic of the past. Marriage is settled after consulting the wishes of both the parties.

The Nair women in the event of separation from their husbands by divorce or death, are not prohibited from remmarrying.

The law of inheritance is "Marumakkathayam" but the Nair regulation has made it virtually "Makkathayam" by making the widow and children of a deceased Nair male heirs to his separate (or) self acquired
property. It also sanctions the partition of "Tharavads" (families) the Shares being calculated per capita. The children now inherit the property of both the father and the mother.

The Villakkuthala Nair (some times called Vil-Nairs)

These are Barbers by occupation. Tradition has it that this caste was originally part of the Nair community and had become separated from it and formed a district endogamous group on account of its occupation. Even though they formed a separate caste, they were called ampattan, (Barber castes) in Tamil Nadu. In a desire to restore an ancient name which they lost in the course of time due to fortuitous circumstances, the Malayali Barbers resumed their original name "Vilakkuthala Nair". They follow the Marumakkathayam systems of inheritance. Some have given up their traditional occupation and have take to agricultural and other occupations. From the high to the low or vice versa is a natural phenomenon. Having dealt with the high caste Vellalas & Nairs, the next in focus are the low caste Elavas.

The Elavas

The Elavas are another community of Kanyakumari district. They are considered as backward class people "Shri Narayan Guru" (Social reformer) was born in the Elava community. His religious preachings brought about a radical change in the society. Fortunately his religious preachings gradually made the foundation for the eradication of untouchability. According to Kusuman (1973) Elavas were believed to have migrated from Ezham. (Ceylon)
The Mukkuvas

The Mukkuvas is one other community in the Kanyakumari district. This community is some times confused with the sea faring paravas. The term 'Mukhavar' meaning possession of 'Mukham' or 'Pearl' indicates the fact that they were originally engaged in pearl fishing. The fact that they are also traditional fisherman might be the reason for equating this community with Paravas. This is another community which has embraced "Catholicism" in large numbers. They are found along the sea-coast and back waters. There is a tradition that they are immigrants from Ceylon. Marriage of girls takes place before or after puberty and divorce is allowed.

Krishna Vagaigar

Originally "Krishnan Vagaigar" have been mainly agriculturists. Tradition says that they presented to the king of Travancore an image of Sri Krishna which they had brought with them from North India, their original home. This, the Maharaja commanded to be placed in the Thiruvampadi temple inside the "Padmanabha swami Pagoda". They were permitted to reside at Vanchiyur near Trivandrum.

The term "Krishnava" literally means people belonging to the same community as lord Krishna. Tradition traces the origion of Krishnavaka caste to Ampadi, the place of Shri Krishna's birth and early boyhood from where they are said to have migrated first to "conjeevaram" and from there to Travancore. There is reason to believe that these people once belonged to the Yadava tribe. The Krishna Vagaigar did not bring sufficient numbers
of women with them when they migrated to the erstwhile Travancore state and some of the men therefore, married local women and though originally "Makkathiyas" adopted "Marumakkathayam." The rest married in their own community and followed Makkathayam. Both these sections still exist, the marumakkathaya's have adopted the Malayali habits and customs. Among the Makkathayam section post - puberty marriage is allowed, but marriage is compulsory. The custom of bridegrooms sisters lying the thali is peculiar to this community, the orgin of which is traced to the legend of lord Krishna's marriage with Rukmanidevi in "Hindu Mythology". The dowry system prevails as among the Brahmins and Polygamy is permitted. When a man dies his younger brother takes his deceased a brother's widow as his wife.

In such cases, no regular marriage ceremony is gone through with, but they live as husband and wife. This generally happens, especially if the widow is young. The Marumakkathayam section is in the minority. The two sections do not inter marry nor do the women inter-dine. The Marumakkathayam section follow the Nair regulation partitioning their "Tharavad" (Family) properties. There is a move on the part of the younger generation of the two sections to bring about a fusion between them.

The Sambavars

The Sambavars of this district have changed their caste name to Sambavan. These people claim to be superior to other sets of Parayars and give an exalted account of their origin. They claim to have descended
from a Brahmin priest by name "Salasambavan" who was employed in a Shiva temple to worship God with offerings of meat every day. One day he earned the displeasure of god by concealing a portion of such meat, giving it to his pregnant wife. As result of which he was dismissed from his post and was also degraded to be a Parayar. The Sambavas are dark skinned people with broad shoulders and are sturdily built. They occupy the lowest place in the social hierarchy and claim to be superior to only a few other sets of Parayas and low castes like "Chakkiliyans" and "Pudhirai Vannans". In the days gone by the Parayars were treated as untouchables and suffered innumerable social disabilities at the hands of the high castes. Most of them are agricultural labourers working in the lands of the high caste people. In view of this humiliating position, a number of Sambhavas have embraced Christianity. Inspite of conversions they form a single ethnic group and make very little difference in their day to day life. The adherence to the Christian faith has not helped them advance in knowledge for they seem to know very little about the Doctrines of their adopted faith. Even in their ritual structure, there is difference only in matters of detail and form, but the core traits or the essential customs remain the same. Inter caste marriage and widow remarriage is common now.

Kannikaran or Kannikars

Kannikars are also known as "Kannis", "Kanniyans", "Veddanars", "Malayarasans or Malavedans". They are a primitive tribe simple and straight forward and live among picturesque surroundings for nature has allowed the Western Ghats to form a perfect backdrop to their settlements.
They live in groups of grass huts mostly around the Pechipparai lake. Their settlements which are called "vadis", consists of huts made of bamboo and grass, and are situated, as a rule, away from the tracks of men and animal. Around their dwellings are the patches of land which they cultivate for the time being. The ground is first cleared and roughly chopped with a billhook and after it has been set on fire, is ready without further tillage to be sown.

Cholam, Tapioca, Plantains and Chillies are the useful crops which form their staple food. They also collect and eat a few wild roots. It is their characteristic to welcome any visitor with warmth, offer them "Ural" (the wooden mortar for pounding paddy) to sit on and give them tender coconut, tapioca and honey. They are good "Shikaris" (hunders) and are fond of sports.

They know every inch of the forest in which they live. They are quite proud of their race, and they have faith in "Mandras" as a cure for diseases.

In matters of inheritance, they follow the Marumakkathayam. Yet under going a gradual change, nowadays, the ancestral properties are inherited by the nephews and the self acquired properties by the sons.

In the olden days, girls were married young even before they attained puberty. This might have resulted from a scarcity of brides. Even though the scarcity is still felt, no marriage takes place before puberty. But the age at marriage is still low. Marriages are arranged by parents and the elders in the family. Divorce and remarriages are rare.
No sexual freedom is permitted before marriage. The Kani women enjoy a high reputation for chastity. Though polygamy is permitted, it is not practiced invariably. Widow remarriage is permitted, but no Thali is tied during this marriage.

These are illitrates except for a few and their dialect is a mixture of Tamil and Malayalam. A residential school for Kanis was established at Pechipparai which has regular attendance of about 35-45 Kani children.

A minority welfare Centre has been opened at Pechipparai and a mobile medical Van visits Pechipparai and Peruchani twice a week. A multipurpose co-operative society has also been opened to help sell their products and also to supply them with their requirements at a fair price.

The communities of “Kammalar” or Asari” and "Chackarvars" and “Kerala Mudalis” are some of other the important communities of the district.

The people, whichever community they may belong to will have various degrees of the sense for aesthetic appreciation. Such as dance and music and other forms of art.

Folk Dances of Kanyakumari district

Many Folk dances are popular in this district. "Kathakali", "Kaliyai", "Thiruvathirai Kali", "Ottamthullai", "Kalari", and Karagam dance forms are very popular in this district.
Kathakali

The movements are adopted from the "Baratha Nattiya" with suitable modifications. It is now danced in the temples at Thiruvattar, Kulithurai, Munchirai, Thirpparap at Kanyakumari District and most of the places of Kerala State.

Thiruvathirai

This is a dance mostly by girls. They sing about the heroic performance of important persons from the Puranas. Each girl strikes the stick (Kole) which she holds in each hand and the striking of these sticks and the steps, which she makes are rhythmic to the tune.

Karagam

This dance is common in the country side. It is practised by both men and women during the time of festivals and marriages.

Kalari

Kalari means Adimurai. It means that any persons can protect themselves through Kalari (against the attack of enemies).

The various inscriptions of many temples in Kanyakumari District express the importance of Kalari. The Kalari consist of five major parts viz., "suvadu", "fighting with hands", "locking", "extricating" and "training in weaponry". There are a number of similarities between the Kalari and the martial arts of China & Japan, like Kungfu and Karate. It has been said that Japanese experts in Karate have come to Kanyakumari district for studying and observing the Kalari
systems, which in all probability could be considered the mother of Karate and Kung-fu. Even now there are one or more Kalari schools in each village of this district. The utility of this ancient art in the police and defence departments deserves careful study.

Kanyakumari district as mentioned above is an adjoining district to the Kerala State. Moreover, the district has been with Kerala till 1956. During the present survey work, one was able to notice 50 percent bilingualism in practice in almost all the border areas of Kanyakumari district. The Tamil accent which one hears in these areas is heavily influenced by the Malayalam pronunciation pattern. The speakers of Tamil who live in these areas pronounce many of the nasal plus plosive clusters (N) as nasal-plus nasal (NN) cluster. Also the impact of the Malayalam lexical features is heavy unlike the grammatical features. In the pronunciation of vowels one can easily identify the occurrence of (O) in the words final position. The frequency of the occurrence of Velar nasal (n) and palatal nasal - (n) is also considerably high when compared to the situation in other dialects.

**Villu-pattu**

Villu-pattu is yet another ancient art form of southern Tamil Nadu. This art form is one of the important features of Kanniyakumari district. ‘Vil’ or ‘Villu’ in colloquial Tamil means ‘bow’. The vibration of the string of a prominent bow is used by the artist as the base for his / her performance that is called Villu-Pattu. The list of Villupattu is no longer confined to the kodai festivals nowadays.

Folk and Folk art find a common place in the festivals of a place.
Ceremonies of the People in Kanyakumari District

Various Ceremonies celebrated by the people belonging to different castes in Kanyakumari district are birthday, name giving (Namakarana) Ear boaring (Kamavedha) Puberty, Thalikattu, Betrothal, Marriage, Pregnancy and Funeral. Certain ceremonies are celebrated only by some castes, whereas some others are common to all castes.

Birthday

Birthday is an important ceremony devoted to thank the almighty for the past help and invoking his special blessings for the future.

Birthday celebration is common to all castes and is celebrated by people all over the world irrespective of caste and religion. The Ancient Greeks, Romans and Aryans have given special importance to the anniversaries of their birthday. The people of modern lives of highly civilized nations of Europe and America also celebrate their birthday.

Birthday is celebrated differently by different castes. Birthdays are celebrated on a grand scale and people spend a lot of money on food, clothes, sweets, and miscellaneous items. However, the expenditure on these items may differ according to the social and economic status of the people.

The Nadar community mostly (Hindu Nadars) conduct the earboaring function in temples. At the time they give meals and clothes with money to very poor people. They invite all their relatives and friends, People spend some amount of money on food, clothes, ornaments, flowers
and sweets. The pattern of expenditure is different and according to this economic status.

**Puberty**

The Nadar community conduct this function for the girls attaining the age of maturity. Marriage is the most important function of all castes including Nadars. It is decidedly the most expensive. The Norms and realities of marriage find expression in the marriage ceremonies themselves. Betrothal the religious symbolism of the community involvement in the meals and reception and the bond formed by future exchanges between the families highlight the many significant features of marriage as institution. The marriage is solemnized according to the rights of this families religion. The marriage itself is the most important of the Individual life cycle ceremonies. Marriages are arranged by parents and approved by elders. Divorces and remarriages are rare. No sexual freedom is permitted before marriage.

**Pregnancy**

This ceremony connected is with women and is performed during the time of pregnancy. This is the first antinatal ceremony of importance which the pregnant woman has to perform in the seventh month of pregnancy or some times in the ninth month. The ceremony is celebrated with sumptuous feast to all the friends and relatives. Till today it is the most important ceremony of Hindu Nadars of Kanyakumari district.
Main Festivals of Kanyakumari District

The Main festivals in Kanyakumari district are celebrated mainly on the basis of caste. The important festivals celebrated in Kanyakumari district are Deepavali, Pongal, Saraswati pooja, Karthigai Deepam, Vinayaka Chathurithi, Onam, Tiruvatirai, Christmas, New Year, Easter, Ramzan, Bakrid and Muharam apart from other Sikh, Buddhist and Jain festivals celebrated by a fragment of the population.

Deepavali

Deepavali is universally observed by the people of all classes high and low, rich and poor. All the Hindus celebrate this festival on a large scale. This festival is celebrated in commemoration of the happy incident of the destruction of the demon called Narakasura by Lord Krishna.

The chief observance of this festival is an oil bath early in the morning which is considered equivalent to a bath in the Ganges. People usually enjoy delicious food and new clothing on this special day. Fire crackers form an important part of this festival. This festival requires a lot of money to be spent on clothes, food stuff especially sweets, which carry the familiar Tamil term “Patchanam” and of course fire crackers.

Vinayaka Chathurthi

Vinayaka Chathurthi festival is celebrated by the people belonging to all communities except Mukkuvas. When celebrating this festival a clay image of the deity and of a mouse, his vehicle, are made and duly consecrated and worshipped in every Hindu family. This festival incurred
some expenditure due to purchase of food articles, preparing sweets, flowers and some pooja things.

**Thiruvatirai**

Even though the Tiruvatirai is celebrated by most of the Hindus those, it is essentially a function for the Nair women's future well-being. Expenditure include those for pooja things and other items.

**Christmas**

Christmas is the popular festival of the Christians. All christians celebrate this festival. From the selected castes Nadars and Mukkuvas are the important in celebrating this festival on a grand scale. No other celebration is so spectacular and jovial none so enriched with so many customs and ceremonies. People spend huge amount for buying expensive dresses, greeting cards, fire crackers, christmas gifts, decorative papers and food items.

Christmas Cake is a special feature of this festival in most of the christian families. People decorate their house with various type of things.

**New Year's Day**

This is one of the festivals of all castes and religions. But mostly the Christian celebrate this festival with importance on a large scale. New Year is the first day of January and is associated with the Christian religion and it is reckoned as a Christian festivals. The new year is a festival of beginings. It is one of the most ancient and universal of mankind's feasts. Many Hindus also celebrate this as a beginning of the
year. People spend money for buying new cloths, sweets and other food items.

**Easter**

Easter festival is celebrated by the Christians. Especially, from the selected castes, Christian Nadars and Mukuvas celebrate this festival with great importance. Easter is also so spectacular as Christmas and therefore so familiar to the general public. Easter commemorates the central fact of the Christian religion. To celebrate this Easter festival people spend a lot of money on food, sweets, new cloths and other miscellaneous items.

**Karthigai Deepam**

Karthigai Deepam is an important festival of the Hindus. It is a festival similar to Deepavali. This festival is celebrated on the full moon day in the Tamil month Karthigai, when the moon enters, the constellation Keatigai. The main important feature connected with this festival is the display of lights. People of different castes spend ways according to their economic situation.

The Kanyakumari district has offered a fascinating profile to be probed and pinpointed in the researchers effort at understanding to potential and its progress from the earliest times and with special emphasis on the study period (1956-86).

This fascinating piece of scenic India has evolved as a microcosm of the country's diverse culture and traditions and projects a scintillating picture of social harmony and religious tolerance.
Foot Notes

1. Thirukkural, Thiruvalluvar. 421 chapter

2. Padmanabhan P., Contribution of Kanyakumari District to the Tamil World, Nagercoil, 1982


8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.


11. Palm leaf Records about Ayurvedic Medicine, Mathilaham Record Centre, Trivandrum.


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