CHAPTER II

PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA

2.0 Kanyakumari is the smallest district in the state of Tamil Nadu. By its very location, the district occupies a unique place among the other districts of Tamil Nadu. It is the land's end of the Indian Peninsula, where waters of the Arabian Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal meet. The district was bifurcated from the erstwhile Travancore Cochin state with effect from 1.11.1956 and merged with Tamil Nadu State. It has an area of 1493.94 square kilometres and a coastline of 68 kilometres, stretched on the three sides of the district and this tiny district is famous for vast green stretches of paddy fields, rich forests, coconut groves and mineral sands.

The district is bounded by Trinveli district in the north and north east, Kerala state in the north west, Bay of Bengal in the south east, Indian Ocean in the south and the Arabian Sea in the west.

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1 National Informatics Centre, Collectorate of Kanyakumari District, Nagercoil.
2.1 Administrative Set Up

Having the head quarters at Nagercoil, the district has been divided into two Revenue divisions, namely, Padmanabhapuram at Thuckalay and Nagercoil, and four taluks, namely, Agasteeswaram, Thovalai, Kalkulam and Vilavancode, and eighty one revenue villages.

To carry out development work the district is divided into 9 community development blocks, consisting of 66 town panchayats and 88 village panchayats. There are 4 municipalities, namely, Nagercoil, Colachel, Padmanabhapuram and Kuzhithurai. The district has seven assembly constituencies and one Parliamentary constituency.

2.2 Rainfall, Soil and Minerals

This district has a unique advantage of the rainfall both during the south west (June to September) and north west monsoon (October to December) rains. The rainfall is generally very high in the northern parts of the district, mainly mountain areas, and low in the southern parts of the district, mainly coastal areas. The average rainfall of the district is 1465 millimetres per year.

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In Kanyakumari district, there are three main types of soil groups found; namely, lateriate type soil, red loam soil and mixed type of red and alluvial soil. Lateriate type of soil is found in Thiruvattar, Munchirai and Thuckalay. Red loam soil is mainly found in the western side of the district. Mixed type of red and alluvial soil is found in Agasteeswaram and Thovalai taluks.

The soil is sandy to sandy loam in texture. Lime status is absent due to the occurrence of more areas under acid condition. The high acidity prevalent in the district is mainly due to the heavy rainfall and heavy leaching of base in the hilly areas. Limestones and granites are the only minerals available in the district.

2.3 Agriculture

The district is purely agricultural and it mainly depends for its economy on agricultural income. Based on the physiography the district can be divided into three natural divisions of mountain terrain, low lands and undulating valley. In the hilly areas of Western ghats plantain crops like tea, coffee, rubber, spices, and tapioca are raised where as in the plains paddy, banana coconut and vegetables are grown.
Paddy is the most important crop in the district and extensively cultivated in an area of 38,541 hectares. Next to paddy comes tapioca with an area of 9,598 hectares which is also a staple food for the inhabitants. Paddy and banana are irrigated while tapioca is a dry crop. Nearly two-thirds of the total area under paddy lies in Agasteeswaram and Kalkulam taluks alone. The district is better placed with 42 per cent of the net cultivated area enjoying irrigation facilities from dams, rivers and tanks. The farmers have not been going in much for tapping of ground water because of good rainfall and irrigation facilities from Government canals and tanks.

The normal cropping pattern followed in the district is to raise a short term crop first and then a long term crop in a year.

The total area of forests is about 550 square kilometres which works out to 33 per cent of the total geographical area of the district; whereas the state average in only 15 per cent.
The important subsidiary activities carried on by the cultivators and agriculturists are diarying, goat rearing and poultry farming.

2.4 Fisheries

The district has a coast line of 60 kms spreading over the East coast and west coast. More than 60,000 working fishermen are actively engaged in fishing. An area of one lakh hectare is reported to be suitable for marine fishing. One of the richest fishing grounds in the world, namely, Wadge bank, lies 88 kms from south of Cape Comorin and extended to about 56 kms on either side of Cape Comorin. The annual catch of fishing is estimated to be about 60,000 tonnes. Nearly 50 per cent of the fish landed is consumed within the district. The estimated inland fishing is around 110 tonnes. The entire coastal area in the district has 45 fishing centres.

2.5 Industries

Kanyakumari is industrially backward. A number of factors have hampered the industrial development of the district. The important factors are lack of mineral resources, industrial raw materials and proper transport facilities and high cost of lands.

Ibid.
The non availability of lands for non agricultural purposes is also responsible for industrial backwardness of the district.

In spite of all these deficiencies a number of small scale industries have come up. The important activities of the small scale units are cashew processing, engineering, painting, match units, wooden furniture making, oil crushing, nylon fishing net making and brick work.

In the cottage sector, coconut fibre and coir making is the prominent one. Bee-keeping, mat weaving khadi, spinning and handloom weaving are the important cottage industries. Handloom industry is very important next to fishing. There are around 13000 looms and 70 weavers Co-operative Societies in this district. Coir manufacture is also major industry along the coastal belt and cashew processing is export oriented and coir products are also exported to foreign countries.

The district has been a land of handicrafts. The major handicrafts of the Kanyakumari district are as follows: Hand embroidery, lace, hand made motifs, temple Jewellery, silver jewellery, stone, carving wood carving, sandal wood carving, Chemical itching on wood, lacquerware, cane and bamboo, Banana fibre, Talipot Fibre,
Jute based handicrafts, screwpine, Koragrass mats, Reed mat products, palm leaf, Wax models, Terracotta, musical instruments, laminated wood crafts, coconut shells and sea shells.

In spite of the domination of cottage and small scale and handicraft industries there are a few large scale and medium scale industries such as:

Indian rare Earths Ltd., Government of India at Manavalakurichi.

-- Kanyakumari district Co-operative Spinning Mills Ltd., Aralvoimozhi.

-- Nagammal Spinning Mills Pvt.Ltd., Nagercoil and
-- TAC Flour Company, Ammandivilai.

Indian Satelite Research Organisations (ISRO) Liquid propulsion testing facility is situated on the Mahendragiri hills near Kaval_Kinaru, the border village between Kanyakumari and Trinelveli district. To trap wind energy, thousands of wind mills are coming up in this area.

2.6 Financial Institutions

In terms of banking coverage, the district could be considered as one of the well banked districts in Tamil Nadu. In addition to a number of private money lenders, 10
public sector banks and 12 private sector banks operate in the district. The Kanyakumari District Central Cooperative Bank Ltd., is the financing agency of the co-operative sector in the district catering to the short and medium term credit needs of the co-operative institutions with its head office at Nagercoil. The bank has 5 branches covering 4 blocks in the district. Other blocks are being served by the branches in the adjacent blocks.

2.7 Population and Occupational Pattern

The primary Census abstract (1991 census) of Kanyakumari District regarding population and occupational pattern is presented in Table 2.1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>8,03,839</td>
<td>7,96,510</td>
<td>16,00,349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC Population</td>
<td>38,339</td>
<td>38,523</td>
<td>76,862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST Population</td>
<td>2,622</td>
<td>2,601</td>
<td>5,223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population below Age seven years</td>
<td>1,01,698</td>
<td>98,657</td>
<td>2,00,355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literates</td>
<td>6,01,724</td>
<td>5,47,054</td>
<td>11,48,778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivators</td>
<td>57,968</td>
<td>3,599</td>
<td>61,567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Labourers</td>
<td>1,59,305</td>
<td>18,105</td>
<td>1,77,410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers Livestock and Forestry</td>
<td>32,514</td>
<td>1,482</td>
<td>33,996</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers: Manufacturing</td>
<td>5,177</td>
<td>8,200</td>
<td>13,377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Production in household industry</td>
<td>(38.70)</td>
<td>(61.30)</td>
<td>(100.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers: Mining &amp; Quarrying</td>
<td>829</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction workers</td>
<td>20,406</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>20,524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade and Commerce</td>
<td>34,998</td>
<td>3,603</td>
<td>38,601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers</td>
<td>90.67</td>
<td>9.33</td>
<td>(100.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport, Storage and Communication</td>
<td>15,964</td>
<td>440</td>
<td>16,404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers</td>
<td>97.32</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>(100.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workers in other services</td>
<td>44,445</td>
<td>19,998</td>
<td>64,443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Workers</td>
<td>3,95,041</td>
<td>69,046</td>
<td>4,64,087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marginal Workers</td>
<td>5,262</td>
<td>18,782</td>
<td>24,044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-workers</td>
<td>4,03,536</td>
<td>7,08,682</td>
<td>11,12,218</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Figures in Brackets are Percentage to the respective totals.
Source: Primary Census Abstract, 1991 census, Kanyakumari District, National Informatics Centre, Collectorate, Kanyakumari District, Nagercoil,
As per 1991 census the total population of the district is 16,00,349 with the density of 945 persons for 4 square km. The population of scheduled caste and Scheduled Tribes constitutes 82,085 (5.13 per cent of the total population). Nearly 59 per cent of the workers derive employment from agriculture and allied activities. The district has relatively more agricultural labourers than cultivators. The main workers constitute 29 per cent of the population where as the marginal workers constitute only 1.50 per cent. Non workers constitute 69.50 per cent. Barring population below the age of 7 years, the literacy rate of workers is about 82.06 per cent. The crude literacy rate, that is,

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\text{Number of literates} \quad \frac{\text{(X 100)}}{\text{Total population}} \quad (\text{inclusive of 0-6 age group})
\]

is 71.78 per cent. For male, the crude literacy rate is 74.86 per cent and for female, it is 68.68 per cent. Thus the gender difference in literacy rate works out to be 6.18 percent. In Tamil Nadu, Kanyakumari district ranks first in female literacy rate and ranks second (next to Madras) in male literacy rate. The average size of household is 5.

Workers engaged in manufacturing and production in household industry (including handicraft workers on part time basis) and other than household industry (including handicraft workers on full time basis) number about 50,214 (10.82 per cent) of the total workers. Among them males constitute 28,612 (56.78 per cent) and the remaining 21,602 (43.02 per cent) are females. Manufacturing and production in the household industry is being dominated by female workers.

2.8 Livestock Population

The district has a livestock population of 219,447 which including 98,537 cattle and buffaloes.

Kanyakumari district is one of the few districts in the country where all villages and towns have been electrified. This district has a peculiar social set up with more than 93 per cent middle class and a very negligible percentage of millionaires.

In the district, according to 1991 Census, the number of occupied residential houses is about 3,23,813 and the number of households is 3,27,516.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{5}}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{6}}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{5}}\] District Census Hand Book, Village and Town Directory and Village and Townwise Primary Census Abstract.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{6}}\] Primary Census Abstract, 1991 Census, National Informatics Centre, Government of India, Nagercoil.