CONCLUSION

The study on “History of Road Transport in Kanyakumari District 1956-2004” makes it clear that the road transport plays a significant role in enhancing the socio cultural and politico economic life of the people of all ages to come. Known for natural beauty and varied rich resources, this enchanting land offered settlement to the people of diverse communities and religious afflictions from yore. However, from the beginning of nomadic life till the present day of achievements in all spheres of life, the people of different ages attempted to find out suitable devices to travel from one place to another with their kith and kin and their baggage and luggage. A perusal of the available records reveals the fact that man in the remote past used to walk long distance in search of food, clothing and shelter. With the passage of time from the days of barbarism to the present day of achievements, they utilised some domesticated animals such as bullock, ox, donkey, camel and elephant not only to carry the people but their luggage too. During their majestic march in search of veritable storehouse of knowledge on the sands of time, they find it inadequate to travel on animal back to carry their articles to distant and far off places. However, with the growth of their mental acumen, they settled in a particular place and engaged in cultivation and followed advanced process of production. Therefore, not depending on animals for transport, they discovered other means like wheel-carts, and coaches to travel long destination which in course of time led to the development of gasoline and combustion engines which was modified in later days to suit their convenience and comfort. This tendency resulted in the invention of motor cars and buses which were subsequently modified to a greater extent as we see the transport system of the present day.
In the process of road transport, extension of bus service is the most vital aspect of providing adequate transport facilities to the people. It is understood that the government adopted various policies including the nationalisation of bus routes and either passing or amending Motor Vehicles Act to suit to the changing needs of the day. Though nationalisation met with severe opposition from the private transport bus service and other organisations, the subsequent governments viewed it seriously and nationalised most of the bus services in the state including Kanyakumari District. Subsequently, the government introduced buses to various new routes meeting the challenges and response of the people. No doubt, the growth of transport system largely depending on the extension of bus services. In the venture, the government concentrated on district wise, inter-district and inter-state bus operation. Various committees were formed to look into its smooth functioning.

It is imperative on the part of the government as well as an organisation to create a sound establishment for its proper development and progress. At the apex of administration stood the Minister of Transport who is ably assisted by Secretaries, in the State level and Managing Director in the regional level. Besides, General Managers are entrusted with the responsibility of looking after the administration of district level, in addition to Branch Managers to control the affairs of every branch offices located in various places in Kanyakumari District. Apart from these officials, a hierarchy of officials in the cadre of Superintendent, Chief Cashier, Upper Division Clerks, Lower Division Clerks, Auditors, Peons and other staff who are ably assisted by a large number of crew members such as Conductors, Drivers, Checking Inspectors, Mechanical Engineers, Foremen, Fitters, Welders, Tyremen, Blacksmiths, Carpenters and other workers to manage the development for its smooth running. All these officials and the servants are entitled to earn remuneration and other perquisites depending on their cadre, experience and for their meticulous service.
The road transport requires the assistance of a separate wing not only to build new bus body but also undertake renovation and repair works. As the number of buses increased to cope up with the demands of the mounting population, it is inevitable that the road transport met with frequent breakdowns causing engine failures and accidents spoiling the buses partially or fully. Therefore, it is inevitable to establish a body building office as well as workshops to carry out all such works. It is an interesting fact to state that the body building depot established at Ranithottam attained greatest appreciation for building strong as well as comfortable buses. Though, the government proposed to shift the Ranithottam body building depot to Tirunelveli, there was a stout protest from the public, crew members and politicians. Consequently, the Ranithottam depot is not shifted and still works with much dedication.

With the growth of road transport, operating buses in different routes, accidents are quite imminent. The increasing number of buses operating in narrow and hazardous roads, careless and negligent driving, driving under the influence of intoxicants and various other reasons, accidents are very frequent in Kanyakumari District. Though timely action is taken to widen the roads, fixing signals at strategic points, employing police officials to control traffic, giving awareness to the crew members and all other preventive measures are adopted, it is strong to state that no day is free from accidents in some parts or the other. As it incurs heavy loss of life and property, the government took precautionary measures to safeguard the life of the people even by introducing 108 ambulance service. However, the dread of accidents is imminent and court cases for claiming compensation are common. Though, the buses are properly insured for the payment of compensation to the victims, various cases of accidental are pending in the court for years together. In some cases, even after the judgement the department is in a lethargic mood to pay compensation which resulted in contempt
cases and attachment of buses; there is no end in solving such issues which remain still a pernicious problem.

Every organisation in a democratic set up enjoyed the rights to from Labour Unions to safeguard the just and legal rights and privileges. With this motive, most of the members are affiliated to a union of their choice. Periodical elections are conducted to elect their leaders who actually represented the grievances of its members to the higher authorities and concerned ministry. Every year witnessed a strike in demanding either pay revision or bonus and other perquisites. Affiliated to various political organisations, its leaders and members fought for safeguarding their interest at any costs. However, occasional lapses on the part of trade unions led to strikes paralising the entire road transport system which affects the public at large. Today, labour union of the road transport department is all powerful which to a certain extent determines the power politics in the State.

The progress of such a vast road transport system in the district left an indelible impact in all walks of human life. It not only provides better transport facility to promote economic as well as cultural assimilation but bridges the gulf between the rich and the poor, giving ample scope for social integration. People of different faiths, social strata and economic status without any discrimination mingle together freely, exchanging and imbibing each others ideas enabling them to obtain the pleasure in life, forgetting all detractions and tediousness of mundane and monotonous life and leaving a losting legacy.

Since independence, our road system is deficient in various ways, in spite of considerable and systematic development of roads in India. Keeping in view the vast area, large population and larger goods and passenger traffic, the road system is inadequate to operate buses frequently. Kanyakumari District is not an exception to this state of affairs. Rural roads are quite unfit for heavy vehicular
traffic in this district. Above all, the poor maintenance of road led to the damages of the newly operated buses which is a heavy loss to the government exchequer. Sub-standard and narrow roads do not permit heavy vehicles to run convenient, safe and free in this locality.

The bus fares in Tamil Nadu are raised whenever the State Transport Department are incurring huge deficit. Several times the transport department could not pay salary to their employees. Sometimes the transport corporations could not find out ways and means even to buy some of the basic materials for running the buses. This is the main reason for increasing the bus fares frequently. But, it seriously affects the economic position of passengers. The State Transport Department is investing a sizable amount of capital to provide amenities to the travelling public. But this is not adequate, because much of this expenditure is taking place only in urban areas and many of these facilities are unknown even today in many parts of rural India. For instance, coolies are available only in some important bus stations. This facility is not available in rural areas and the conductors simply refuse even to assist the passengers. Most of the private vehicle operators are providing these amenities to the passengers. It can be clearly seen from the city buses, mofussil buses and long route omni buses of the private transport operators.

The absence of transport planning naturally results in slow and lop-sided development, under utilization of existing transport facilities, unsystematic and fragmentary development of the transport system, severe competition, overlapping and duplicity of transport facilities, abnormal wastages, unwanted and undesirable distribution of transport facilities over different areas, higher capital and operating costs, defective control and poor coordination, wrong priorities and inconsistencies and conflict. Without a systematic policy, it is difficult to meet the present and future requirements in an efficient manner and at cheaper rates.
Planning should be flexible to incorporate the changing needs and circumstances. It has to be reviewed from time to time and modified periodically.

It is clearly noted from the study on the growth of transport department in this district that there is no substantial, significant and steady growth in the transport department. The major factor related to this type of meagre growth is that the transport authorities and the State Government are not willing to sanction more funds to the smooth growth of this department. Some officials pointed out that there is no proper maintenance and services in the government vehicles and even after long years of transport services, the old and outmoded buses are not discarded and new buses are not introduced. This has reduced the name and fame of the government bus services, their productivity and profit margins in the way of reduced number of passengers when compared to its counterparts.

The management of the State Transport Undertakings is complex and complicated. The decision making involves more explicit account of various social objectives, escalating costs and efficiency of the day-to-day operations, better understanding of the passenger behavior and their responses to transportation charges. Such knowledge would enable the operators to take rational decisions. The State Transport Department justifies the losses on the ground that they operate largely on uneconomic routes. However, though the government incurred a loss, it is the responsibility of the government to look after the welfare of the people instead of attaining profit. Unless the department achieves the ‘optimum size’ the department is bound to make loss. The main reason for this problem is that the keen competition made by private buses, vans and mini buses in the busy routes of the district. Further, the private transport owners do not operate during the off time such as late night services. The crew members of the government bus services willy nilly perform their duties without an iota of gaining profit. Their lethargic attitude and frequent quarrel with passengers hamper its development.
Without knowing the geographical condition deluxe bus are operated in some rural areas with exorbitant rate which do damages not only to such buses but affects its income generation. Therefore, it is suggested that such services are operated only in city or town limits after a thorough study of the landscape. Based on the introduction of the New Economic Policy, both the Central Government and almost all the State Government especially the Government of Tamil Nadu have completely changed their economic policy. The major economic policies are changed from welfare concept to profit motivation, a principle of the ‘new-capitalism’.

Another recent problem faced by the transport department in Kanyakumari District is the increase in work load, reduction of bonus, undue punishment, leading to suspension or long distance transfer or termination of services of employees and similar other harsh treatments of the government authorities. This widens the gap between the better relationship of the transport authorities and the employees. This has led to a serious problem of reluctance and negligence in doing dedicated service of the transport workers and also created problem of labour exploitation, inhuman tortures and reduction in pecuniary values also.

The most important problem of the transport department is the frequent political interference which often interrupts the smooth functioning of this department. Mainly the political functionaries of the ruling party always enter into the premises of these transport officials, staff and workers to do unlawful favours for them and their party people. In the same manner, the ruling political party often willfully charges the existing transport policies, even if they happen to be good for the department. The main reason may be that such policies were implemented by the opposite political parties.
Thus the transport department in Kanyakumari District keeps the government transport system in a perplexed condition. Therefore, some suitable measures can be taken to change the entire transport department for a highly prosperous and lucrative growth. Sincere efforts can be made by the State Government and the Transport Authorities to look into the real cause for these problems and based on that new and better devices can be adopted to bring back the ‘original glory’ of the transport department making a conspicuous impression in the minds of the people of the State in general and Kanyakumari District in particular.