INTRODUCTION

Kanyakumari District, the southern most extremity of the Indian subcontinent, is an enchanting land of natural beauty and panoramic view. It is situated in the tropical region of the Indian Peninsula where the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal converge.\(^1\) A part of the erstwhile princely State of Travancore prior to 1956, the Tamil speaking area of Travancore got constituted into the present Kanyakumari District in 1956 as per the State Reorganization Commission of Indian State on linguistic basis with Madras State, now known as Tamil Nadu.\(^2\) Kanyakumari District comprises four taluks, i.e., Agastheeswaram, Thovalai, Kalkulam and Vilavancode with a total area of 1684 Sq.kms.\(^3\) Bounded by Tirunelveli district on the north and the east, Kerala State in northwest and the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean in the west and south respectively. The District lies between 77\(^0\)05' and 77\(^0\)36 feet of the eastern longitude and 8\(^0\)03 feet and 8\(^0\)35 feet of the northern latitude.\(^4\) As per the 2001 census of India, the District has a population of 1,669,763, of which 829,542 are male and 840,221 are female.\(^5\) One of the best literate districts of Tamil Nadu, this part of land is endowed with high mountains and hills, perennial rivers, fertile soil, pleasant climate, long costal lines, greeny forests, rich flora and fauna and a variety of natural resources.

\(^{1}\) Gopala Krishnan, M. (Ed), Gazetteers of India, Tamil Nadu State, Kanyakumari District, Madras, 1995, p.2.
\(^{3}\) Sreedhara Menon, A., Trivandrum District Gazetteer, Trivandrum, 1962, p.5.
\(^{4}\) Gopala Krishnan, M., op.cit., p.22.
Mountains and Hills

Kanyakumari District settles comfortably between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea coast. The mountain ranges which overlook the sea in the west run more or less parallel to the coast. Situated at the foot of the Western Ghats, the District is endowed with few mountains namely Parvathamalai, Dheepakadai mottai, Varayattu mottai, Samikutchi, Thiruvannamalai mottai, Petchi mottai and Sambal mottai. Mahendragiri is the most important of them and is 5427’ in height. In the extreme southeast the mountain range gradually sinks to the mid land plains and finally loses itself in the Indian Ocean near Kanyakumari. In the east, the mountain range leaves open several passes. Among them, the Aromboly pass forms the best entrance to the District from Tirunelveli to Trivandrum. Moreover, it was through this pass that the Tamil powers often invaded South Travancore in the early period. This pass has played a great role in the military and strategic history of the erstwhile Travancore State. There are also some isolated mountains with rocks of varying sizes scattered throughout the District. The most important mountains are ‘Maruthuvamalai’ in the Agastheeswaram taluk, the Velimalai and Chungankadai mountain in the Kalkulam taluk and Viniyakundam at Munchira in the Vilavancode taluk.

8 Nambiar, P.K., op.cit , p.5.
9 The Maruthuvamalai, known also as the Marunthu Vazhum Malai, is the abode of medicinal herbs. According to tradition, a piece of which fell down here, and it was carried by Hanuman from Mahendragiri to Srilanka for healing the fatal wounds of Lakshmana, the brother of Rama, the epic hero.
**Rivers and Lakes**

The rivers of the District are mostly perennial and short. The river Paralaiyar rises in the mountainous north of Mahendragiri hills in the Thovalai taluk and it passes through wild tract to enter the plains at Tiruvattar and flows in a south westernly direction. After a course of 37 kms, it enjoins with another river namely the Kothayar near Tiruvattar. The two rivers get united to form the Kuzhitturayaru, which is locally called Thambaraparani. This river, flows through the hilly tracts of Kalkulam and Vilavancode taluks, and reaches the sea at Thengaipattinam. The Mullayar in Vilavancode taluk flowing about 11 Kilometers joins the western Thambaraparani near Thikkurichi. The Valliyar, another important river with a length of 16 kms, flows into the Arabian Sea near Kadiapattinam. Yet another important river the Paraliyar (or Pazhalar) join the sea at Manakudy. Most important artificial fresh water lakes are Pechiparai, Perunchani and Mukkudal. Manakudy lake of Tamarukulam and the Thengapattinam lake are two natural salt-water lakes in the District.

**Soil**

Soil of the District is mostly of the red loam variety. In the coastal regions, however, the sandy type of soil prevails. Generally, gravelly soil is seen near the mountain ranges. In the low lying areas, a mixture of white sand and sandy loam is seen. But in the midland valleys and high lands, a fairly

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13 Ibid., pp.92-93.
fertile soil of fine type is seen. It is a mixture of gravel and sand.\textsuperscript{14} Climate and rainfall make the land more fertile and alluvial.

**Climate and Rainfall**

The district has a warm and humid climate, with cold season. The summer season is particularly oppressive. The summer from March to May is followed by the southwest monsoon from June to September.\textsuperscript{15} However, the low height of Western Ghats in this region stands on the way of a heavy rain. The wind accompanied by occasional showers considerably moderates the dry atmosphere. This monsoon period lasts till the middle of August and again the atmosphere becomes dry.\textsuperscript{16} Anyhow, compared to other regions, Kanyakumari District has a pleasant climate, gifted with adequate rain.

**Coastline**

The coastal landscape of the Kanyakumari District consists of long and sandy beaches, rocky and sandy ridges and sandy and swampy estuaries. The District has a regular seacoast line of 68 Kilometers. The ancient port of Colachel is the only natural port on the west coast in Tamil Nadu.\textsuperscript{17}

**Forest**

Forest in Kanyakumari District provides enough resources to the settlers of this region. The total area of Kanyakumari district is 1,68,356,216 hectares. Out of this, an extent of 48,423 hectares is covered by forest. Most of the forests in the district are in the catchment areas of numerous streams and rivers.

\textsuperscript{15} Travancore Administration Report 1944-1945, Trivandrum, 1946, p.2.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., pp.3-5.
The forest situated on slopes of hills and plateaus with high rainfall, need protection from deterioration and denudation. For the convenience of administration, the forest areas are divided into four territorial ranges namely the Kulasekharam, Alagiapandiapuram, Boothapandy and Upper Kodayar. It is rich in timber and plants and trees of great economic value. In the forest areas commercial crops such as, coffee, rubber, pepper, cardamom and cloves are grown in plenty. Rubber plantations are found mostly in the areas of Keeripari, Paralaiair, Manalodai, Chittar, Mylar and Kallar.

**Flora and Fauna**

The District is noted for a wide variety of flora and fauna. The flora of Kanyakumari district are valuable timber trees, trees yielding gums, resin and dyes, avenue trees, cycads and palms, bamboos and flowering and ornamental plants making the district like a botanical garden. The District is rich in wild life. Animals include mild and wild ones like deer and bear. Domesticated animals like cow and goat are very common in the District along with a wide variety of birds.

**Political Condition**

The present Kanyakumari District consists of the parts which are locally known as Nanjilnadu and Idainadu. The earliest rulers of this region belonged to the Ay dynasty, whose ancestors are referred to as the “Hida Raja” in the Asokan rock edicts II and XIV. The term ‘Hida’ is a variation of ‘Ida’ or

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‘Idaya’, a synonym of ‘Ayar’, whose singular form is ‘Ay’. Probably, they ruled the region around Pothiyil Mountains.\textsuperscript{22} Thus the antiquity of the ‘Ays’ dates back to about 250 B.C and possibly still earlier.\textsuperscript{23} The Sangam classics refer to some of the notable Ay kings who ruled this region and they were known as AyAndhiran, Titiyan-I, Titiyan II, Alanchil Porunan, Atiyan, Sadayan, Kurunandhan, Karumandadakkan and Vikramaditya Varagunan.\textsuperscript{24}

The epigraphic sources available in the Kanyakumari District speak of the rule of the Chola dynasty. The earliest inscription of Raja Raja discovered at Darsanamcope in the District relates to his 8\textsuperscript{th} regnal year. This was followed by the discovery of inscriptions in the Sucindram temple. They describe the Chola rulers like Uttama Chola, Rajendra Chola who had their sway over Nanjilnadu in ancient times.\textsuperscript{25} The Chola rulers spread their reputation in Nanjilnadu upto the region of Kulothunga I. But with the rise of the Hoysalas and Western Chalukyas, Chola power declined. This decline of the Chola power infused a spirit of valour and enthusiasm among the Venad chieftains, and they established their hold over Nanjilnadu in a gradual manner.\textsuperscript{26} As per tradition, on the breaking up of the central Chera family, (which ruled over Kerala), one branch migrated to the south to settle in Padmanabhapuram. This group established the ancient kingdom of Venad. There are ample evidences in literature and inscriptions to show that the Pandyas were always in contact with Nanjilnadu. Kadungon, Maravarman, Sendon, Arikesari Maravarman, Kochadayan, Maravarman Raja Simha, Jatila Parantaka, Viranarayana

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} Velu Pillai, T.K., \textit{The Travancore State Manual,} Vol.I, Trivandrum, 1940, pp.276-278.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Nilakanda Sastri, K.A., \textit{A History of South India,} Madras, 1976, p.121.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Sivaraja Pillai, K.N., \textit{The Chronology of the Early Tamils.,} London, 1937, pp.112-116.
\end{itemize}
Varaguna II and Maravarman Rajasimha-II were the rulers who ruled this region from 560 A.D to 920. A.D. According to records, Vira Kerala Varma annexed the present Kanyakumari, Suchidrum and other adjoining areas from a local chieftain who styled himself as Nanjil Kuravan. The policy of conquest started by Vira Kerala Varma, was followed by the successors. During the 13th and 14th centuries AD, Venad was ruled by powerful rulers like Vira Udaya Marthandavarma (1314-1350). At the time, even some regions of the Pandyan Kingdom were brought under their control. This was achieved by Chera Udaya Marthandavarma (1383-1444) who brought a major portion of the present Tirunelveli District also under his sway. However, in course, the intervention of the Madurai Nayaks led to the fall of Venad. But they could not succeed much.

Bala Marthandavarma who ruled the country from 1729-1758 A.D. defeated the feudal chieftains of Venad and consolidated the royal authority. After his death, Karthikai Thirunal Ramavarma (Dharma Raja) who reigned between 1758-1798 A.D transferred the capital from Padmanabhapuram to Trivandrum. He was responsible for the over-whelming improvements in the field of agriculture, irrigation, communication and industries. Balaramavarma (1798-1810) who succeeded Dharma raised huge taxes and people could not bear the burden of taxation. Therefore, they rose in revolt under the leadership of Veluthampi. The regency of Rani Lakshmi Bai (1810-1815) witnessed improvements in trade and commerce through the enforcement of market

29 Nambiar, P.K., *op.cit.*, p.3.
32 Pillai, K.K., *op.cit.*, p.32.
In 1815, Parvathibai (1815-1829) succeeded her sister Rani Lakshmi Bai. Her period witnessed the large scale of conversion to Christianity by the activities of Missionaries and as a result, in 1816 the London Mission Society was established at Nagercoil.\(^{35}\)

Ramavarma Swathi Thirunal, who ruled from 1829-1847, introduced many administrative reforms in judiciary and implemented English education with the help of Christian Missionaries. He was also one of the musical maestros of South India.\(^{36}\) His successor, Uthiram Thirunal (1847-1860) improved the financial condition of the State by introducing an effective system of collection of revenue. In 1859, by a royal proclamation he abolished all restrictions on the use of the breast cloth by Nadar women in South Travancore.\(^{37}\)

Ayilyam Thirunal Ramavarma succeeded Uthiram Thirunal in 1860 and he continued in power till 1880. His reign witnessed conspicuous improvement in the field of agriculture. Moreover, he was the first King who opened separate Tamil Schools in Nanjil Nadu.\(^{38}\) Ramavarma Visakham Thirunal (1880-1885) a reputed scholar was the next ruler who initiated some reformative measures. He separated the police from the magistry with a view to improve the administration of criminal justice. The most important achievement was the inauguration of a Revenue Survey and Settlement. He improved the irrigation systems in South Travancore, the present Kanyakumari District.\(^{39}\) Sri Moolam Thirunal (1885-1924) succeeded by Ramavarma Visakam Thirunal. During his

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35 Pillai, K.K., *op.cit.*, p.53.
rule, for the first time in the history of the Travancore, attempt was made for
the people’s representation in the State’s legislative activities. He introduced a
new land Revenue Settlement in 1886. He adopted many measures to facilitate
the irrigation in Nanjil Nadu and Idainadu. His creation of the Sri Moolam
Popular Assembly was a milestone in the development of the legislative history
of the Travancore State.40

Sethu Lakshmi Bai acted as regent from 1924 to 1931 for Sri Chithirai
Thirunal as he was a minor. The greatest achievements of her administration
were the abolition of Devadasi system and putting an end to the cruel practice
of animal sacrifices in the temples under the control of Devasam Department.41
A number of highways were opened during her region. Sri Chithurai Thirunal
who ascended to the throne in 1931, was the last among the sovereigns of
Travancore and it was he who formed the Sri Chitra Council, a bicameral
legislature. During his rule, the Temple Entry Proclamation was issued.
Consequently, all the temples in the present Kanyakumari District along with
other temples in the State were thrown open to all Hindus including the Adi
Dravidar. It was a reform giving great significance to the people of the State.
Yet another important reform was the construction of trunk road connecting
Trivandrum and Kanyakumari.42

Travancore had an administration comparable with that of British India.
This continued till 1947 when a popular Government was set up in the State. In
1946 Cochin was merged with Travancore. Till the merger of Cochin with
Travancore, the Tamil language enjoyed equal status with Malayalam in
administration. Since then, it began to lose its official significance.43 This

41 Lakshmi Rahunandan, S., At the Turn of the Tide the life and Times of
Maharani Sethu Lekshmi Bai, Bangalore, 1995, pp.81-83.
43 Daniel, D., Struggle for Responsible Government in Travancore, Madurai,
1985, pp.40-41.
situations led to the struggle for a separate Tamil speaking area. As a political revolt of the people of this region, they fought for the merger of the Tamil speaking areas with the Madras State. The period between 1945 and 1956 bears much significance as far as the modern history of Kanyakumari district is concerned.

The Travancore State Congress, on 18th of November 1945, passed a resolution in favour of the formation of a United State by merging the states of Travancore, Cochin and the Malabar. The Tamilians, who were predominant in the southern taluks of Travancore, resented the resolution. So, the Tamil language, which was recognized as one of the state official languages of Travancore was de-recognized and Malayalam remained as the only official language in the State. This was felt as an insult to Tamils, and they came to lose their hold in social, economic and political spheres and became a discontented lot.44

However, a conference of Tamilians was convened on the 16th of December 1945 at Nagercoil in which prominent Tamil leaders like Sam Natheniel, Velayutham Pillai, K.Nagalingam, Gandhiraman, S.N.Doss, R.K.Ram, Muthaiya, V.Markandan and P.S.Moni participated.45 A resolution to form a political party to fight for the cause of the Tamilians was passed and as a result the All Travancore Tamil Congress emerged on the 30th of June 1946.

In 1947, All Travancore Tamil Congress held a conference in Iraviputtur in which leaders like S.Thavasi, Chidhambaranathan, C.Madhavan Pillai, T.T.Daniel, T.Nagalingam, C.Umai Thanu Pillai and others participated. In this conference the name of the party was rechristened as “Travancore Tamilnad

44 The Travancore Administrative Report, 1940-1941, Trivandrum, 1942.
“Congress” and the leaders pledged themselves to safeguard the interests of the Tamil minority in the state and to achieve the goal of the merger of the Tamil speaking taluks of the State with the then Madras State. Moreover, the commissions decided to transfer the five Southern taluks of Travancore viz Thovalai, Agastheeswaram, Kalkulam, Vilavancode and Shencottah to the Madras State. The remaining four taluks, which the Travancore TamilNadu Congress wanted to be merged with Tamil Nadu, were allowed to remain with Travancore- Cochin State. The claims of the Tamils over the taluks of Peermedu and Devikulam were ignored by the Commission as these taluks were of great economic importance to the Travancore- Cochin State.

The Indian parliament, based on the recommendations of the State Reorganization Commission, passed the States Reorganization Act in March 1956. Accordingly, the four taluks namely Agastheeswaram, Thovalai, Kalkulam and Vilavancode were merged together and formed the, “Kanyakumari District”. Senkottai taluk was merged with the then Tirunelveli District. On the 1st of November 1956, Kanyakumari District of TamilNadu blossomed with Nagercoil as its headquarters. The formation of this district fulfilled the long cherished aspirations of the people of the locality.

**Economic Condition**

Agriculture is the important occupation in Kanyakumari District. The major agricultural products are paddy, coconut, palm and roots. Rice is the stable food grain in the district. Proper soil for paddy cultivation is found in Valleys or plains irrigated by channels. Coconut is another main cash crop in

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49 The Hindu, dated 2nd November, 1956, p.4.
Kanyakumari cultivated in over an area of 4,23,692 acres. Palmyra trees were also abundant in this area once. The palmyra with its sweet sap and sugar leaves and timber provided a living to a great number of Nadars in Kanyakumari District. Rubber is cultivated mainly in the taluks of Vilavancode and Kalkulam. It provides employment opportunities to the people of this region. Fishing is the major occupation of the coastal people. Fish resource of this district is rich and varied. Moreover, to facilitate the fishing occupation, the Government established a Fisheries Unit at Nagercoil in 1957. Also, there are many industries like textiles, wood, metals, ceramic, chemical products and other industries in this District. The beach sands at Manavalakurichi are rich in mineral deposits like limonite and monazite. The Indian Rare Earth Factory is one of the famous industries in this District, established at Manavalakurichi providing employment avenues to many people. Moreover, spinning mills at Nagercoil (Nagammal Textile Mill) and Aromboly (The Kanyakumari District Cooperative Spinning Mill Limited) are the major spinning industries. Coir industry has a great scope in Kanyakumari District, which thrives along the coastal areas from Kanyakumari to Kollancode. The Y.M.C.A. Rural Reconstruction Center at Marthandam is engaged in bee-keeping. The honey produced at this centre fetches world wide market and acclaim. Besides, many other industries also flourished in the nook and corner of this district.

54 In this industry sand was processed and the limonite and monazite were separated. Limonite finds a good market in United Kingdom, Japan and other foreign countries.
56 Starch, Chank, Salt, Fishnet, Bricks and Tile industry and Honey processing were the major small industries in this district.
Society

The rich natural resources together with the pleasant climatic condition offered settlement to people of diverse communities in Kanyakumari District. However, in the social set up, the four fold divisions of vedic caste system never existed in this District. There are about 72 castes and many sub castes found settled in this region. The Brahmins of the Kanyakumari District seem to be migrants from North India. Traditionally, they are priests who perform poojas in temples. They were well educated and were employed in high posts in the erstwhile Travancore State. They claimed superiority over other castes and occupied every position of trust and responsibility in the State. The British Government considered the Brahmin race as the Brain of India. Next to the Brahmins, the Nairs, another privileged group in the State lived on the lands that were granted to them in return for their military service. The Brahmins and the Nairs were considered the higher castes and they held high positions in the State. They had their own martial customs, art of warfare, cult of ancestral worship and original art form the Katakali, a dance drama. Their names and customs link them with the Nagas of Nagaland or the Newars of Nepals. However, their shared characteristics and worship of the serpent deities make them more akin to the Nagas than to the Newars. Their women were free to marry a member of their own caste or of a caste higher than thrice. The Nairs took pride in giving their young and pretty looking girls to the Brahmins.

59 George Nortan, Rudiments, Being a Series of Discourses addressed to the Natives of India, Madras, 1941, p. 287.
in marriage. As a result of their matrimonial connection with the Brahmins, the Nair women enjoyed an exalted position in the society.\textsuperscript{64} The Vellalar, the land-lords and agriculturists are found in the Districts as well.\textsuperscript{65} The Nanjil Nadu Vellalars are also called Pillai or Mudali. The terms Pillai means “Sons of the Soil” and Mudali means “the first man”. Therefore, the term Vellalar is derived from the Tamil word Velanmai meaning agriculture.\textsuperscript{66} The Vellalars possessed vast stretches of landed property in Nanjil Nadu and claimed superiority over many depressed communities.\textsuperscript{67} The Chettiar are traditionally a community of businessmen and traders. The term Chettu means “frugal” and probably this designation came to be attested to the community because of their very simple and frugal ways of life. They are popularly called Chetti.\textsuperscript{68} The Saliyars, a weaving caste is derived from the Sanskrit word “Salika”, meaning “Weaving”. In the social hierarchy, they claim to be equal to the Vaisyas.\textsuperscript{69}

The Krishnavakai, popularly called Kuruppus, occupy a place of eminence in South Travancore. They owned most of the landed property of Nanjil Nadu and enslaved many of the depressed communities.\textsuperscript{70} Nadars came next to the Nairs in the social hierarchy. The Nadar of the extreme south and east were immigrants from the adjacent Kingdom of the Pandyas and the Nayaks while those of the western part were the natives of the area. They were under the control of the Brahmins and the Nairs who oppressed them and treated them as their slaves though they formed the majority. The Nadars in the

\begin{itemize}
  \item Robert Caldwell, \textit{The Tinnelvely Shannars}, Madras, 1949, p.5.
  \item \textit{Ibid.}, pp.291-296.
\end{itemize}
eastern part of Kanyakumari worked in the lands of the Brahmins but claimed superiority over the depressed like the Pariahs. They were largely palmyrah tappers and making worse sugar or jaggery. They were the first to embrace Protestantism in South Travancore. The Christian Missionary Movement gave them ample opportunities to develop their potentiality.

Kammalars occupied a high status in the society. They are divided into endogamous sub-castes of Marayasari, Kollasari, Musari, Kollan and Tattan (Carpenter, Mason, Braziar, Blacksmith and Goldsmith. They are mostly saivites in worship. The village barbers, locally known as Navithar, were the local physicians and their wives were the village midwives in those days. The Parayahs and Puliah were considered to be low castes and were treated as slaves by the higher caste. The word Pariah is derived from parai or drum as this caste furnishes the drummers, especially at funerals. But, drumming is not their only profession, nor is it confined to this caste only. They are agriculture labourers, attached to the soil. Their homes were usually situated outside of the village limits. The name Pulaya comes from the word pula, meaning funeral pollution. They are the peculiar race in Malabar found in the north of the Nanjil Nadu who occupies a very low rank in the social hierarchy, and they are considered as a polluting caste.

Kanis are the next in order who are mostly found in the land between the plains and mountains. The Kanis live as small clans under a Mutta Kani or headman.\textsuperscript{77} Fishing is the traditional occupation of the Paravas and Mukkuvars. They migrated from Sri Lanka and most of them follow Catholicism.\textsuperscript{78} Devadasi system was one of the social evils predominantly found in the Kanyakumari District. Religious affiliation and poor economic status induced some of them to offer their young girls to the temples to serve the God. They were popularly known as Devadasis, meaning female servants of the Gods.\textsuperscript{79} In course of time, it developed into an institution and became proverbially notorious for moral corruption and social degradation. Child marriage and joint family system existed among some sections of the people of this District.\textsuperscript{80} The high castes wore valuable costly ornaments and attained a high degree of education. Such privileges were denied to the low caste people.\textsuperscript{81}

Kanyakumari District is a land of temples. Generally, the Hindus worshipped Shiva, Vishnu, Muruga, Bagavathi and Ganapathi. A few temples are also found in this District, which received much prominence as a religious center of Jainism such as Nagaraja Temple, Nagercoil. Thus, the name of the city is derived as Nagercoil from the presiding deity Nagaraja.\textsuperscript{82} Moreover, the other famous temples located in the areas of Kanyakumari are Suchindrum, Parakkai, Nagercoil, Bhoothapandy, Velimalai, Thiruvattar and Padmanabhapuram. Most of the temples of this District were constructed during the reign of the Imperial Cholas.\textsuperscript{83} The unprivileged sections

\textsuperscript{77} Oliver Mendel Sohn and Marika Vicziany, \textit{The Untouchables, Subordination, Poverty and the State in Modern India}, New Delhi, 1998, pp.37-39.
\textsuperscript{80} Frieda Hauswirth, \textit{The Status of Indian Women}, London, 1932, p.90.
\textsuperscript{81} Kunjan Pillai, N., \textit{op.cit.}, Vol.XXVIII, pp.169-174.
\textsuperscript{82} Singh, K.S., \textit{op.cit.}, p.287.
\textsuperscript{83} Gopala Krishnan, M., \textit{op.cit.}, pp.117-118.
worshipped the village deities like Agni, Madan, Esaki, Sudalimadan, Vannaramadan, Neeli and Karunkali. A few groups worshipped the images of serpents.\textsuperscript{84} The Christian Community forms the second major community in the district. Among the Christians in the district, the Roman Catholics constitute the major group.\textsuperscript{85} The Muslims who occupy the third major community in the District form about five percent of the population. They are fairly distributed in all the taluks of the district especially in places like Thiruvithankodu, Thuckalay, Colachel, Thittuvillai and Edalakudy. Muslims are mostly engaged in trade and commerce. The two major sections of the Muslims at this place are the shiahs and the sunnis.\textsuperscript{86}

**Source of Information**

A study will not be complete unless it brings to light the relevant source materials, utilized for writing the thesis. Both primary and secondary sources collected from various quarters are employed. They are given in the form of genuine footnotes and they are also appended as bibliography at the end. The study is largely based on the primary source materials preserved in Kerala’s State Archives, Kerala; Kerala University Library, Trivandrum; Tamil Nadu State Archives, Egmore; Tamil Nadu Secretariat Library, Chennai; Institute of Road Transport, Taramani; Cannimara Public Library, Chennai; Kavimani Library (Kanyakumari District), Nagercoil; Scott Christian College Library, Nagercoil; S.T. Hindu College Library, Nagercoil.

This thesis has been prepared on material taken from the archival sources belonging to different periods. The primary source of information for the period under study (1956-2004) are Transport Official Records, Letters from various Transport Officials, Proceedings of the Transport Department, Government Orders, The Fort St.George Gazette, Tamil Nadu State Transport Department Performance Budget, Various Motor Vehicles Acts, Census Reports, State Manuals, Administrative Reports of the Government of Tamil Nadu, Madras State Administrative Reports, Road Transport Year Books, Namasamy Transport Corporation Limited Annual Reports, Petitions of Private Transport Owners, Minutes of the Transport Meeting and Gazetteers. In addition to this, Statistical Reports, Transport department Annual Reports and Personal Interviews have been found equally useful to write this thesis. Besides primary sources, secondary sources like Books, Newspapers, Journals, Magazines, Unpublished Ph.D. theses, District Gazetteers and Encyclopedia give glimpses of information pertaining to some of the related aspects of the study.


**Organization of the Thesis**

The content of the present study on “History of Road Transport in Kanyakumari District 1956-2004” has been framed into seven chapters besides an introduction and a conclusion. The introductory part gives a graphic description of the area, location, climate, flora and fauna and a brief sketch of the early political history, the description of the source material and the chapterisation.

In the first chapter on “**Early History of Road Transport**”, an attempt is made to highlight the early transport system and the primitive mode of transport that prevailed in those days. In the early period, people who wanted to go from one place to another had to walk. When they had a heavy load to move, they carried it. Then they found it was easier to drag a load on branches or sticks that were tied together. In due course, they learned to build a sledge by tying across two runners with strips of hide. Next came the litters which have served as the first vehicle designed to carry people. Stretching animal skins across two poles made litters. With the passage of time, the primitive people learned how to teach animals to carry packs and pull sleds. It is evident from the records that animals like bullocks, donkeys, camels, humped cattle,
horse, elephants and dogs were trained to be beast of burden. As people gathered together to live in cities, trade and manufacturing increased and so the need for transportation grew considerably. Consequently, the invention of wheel opened a new mission of transportation. It made possible for the development of the carts, the chariots and numerous other types of wheeled vehicles, to which horse and other animals were harnessed. In fact carts and chariots were used mainly for military purpose in the beginning. Later, they were employed in trade and travel. At the same time, horseback riding was also facilitated by the introduction of iron horse shoes and general use of stirrups. With the growth of horse drawn transport and horseback riding, stronger, lighter, and more efficient vehicles like carriages, stage coaches, horse cars and covered wagons were developed. However, these developments were inadequate to meet the growing requirements of the mounting population. Therefore, more comfortable and speedy transportation facilities were thought of. It resulted in the introduction of machine energy, which led to the development of railways. Side by side, early self propelled road vehicles powered by steam and electricity were developed, which opened the way for the modern automobile invention with internal combustion engine, fueled by gasoline. Within a few decades, automobiles and other motor vehicles, trucks and buses were introduced. In the long run, various developments were achieved in the automobile system, which can be seen in the present road transport system including private bus services before and after nationalization. All these facts are narrated in the first chapter.

“Extension of Bus Operations” which adorns the second chapter explains the licensing system, introduction to private bus services, mode of bus operation, collection of fares, the tussle between the passengers and the private bus operators, the exorbitant rate of fares collected, preference given to certain selective routes are narrated. The drawbacks of the private bus services and the various other factors that led to the nationalization of buses are also briefly explained. The measures adopted by the subsequent governments to speed up
the extension of bus services in different areas are also vividly portrayed. The different Motor Vehicles Acts passed periodically to augment transport system is also touched upon. The attempts made by the government to regulate fares, creation of State Transport, bifurcation of State Transport into different corporations, abolition of corporations and amalgamations of bus services into four regional zones and its impact are also described. Moreover, Inter-State bus operation and the formation of various rules and regulations to govern the Inter-State Transport System are also briefly sketched. The various measures adopted by the Government then and there to introduce new bus routes to facilitate transportation are also explained.

The transport department blossomed with a head office at Nagercoil and expanded widely with various branch offices at different places in Kanyakumari District. The number of buses operated increased day by day which led to the employment of a hierarchy of servants to manage the transport department. The income considerably increased which necessitated the appointment of other staff members to maintain accounts pertaining to income and expenditure. Moreover, a proper well-knit administration is essential to manage the entire transport administration. In the apex of administration to manage the transport system in Kanyakumari district stood the General Manager whose office is established at Ranithottam. From 1956 to 2004 several General Managers were appointed by the Government from time to time to manage the administration. Among them T.Srinivasan, Venkataraman, Devasahayam, Vargeesh, Raghupathy Row Naidu, Inbasagaran, Sivanandam, Ananthakrishnan are known for their administrative skill and ability. During their period the department not only flourished but also catered to the requirements of passengers. An attempt is made to state their rights and privileges, powers and functions and their perquisites. Similarly, Branch Managers were entrusted with the responsibility of managing each section of the respective branches. Their mode of appointment, powers and functions and all other privileges are narrated. Moreover, the duties of the Conductors,
Drivers, Checking Inspectors, Time keepers, Technical staff and other menial and manual servants are described in detail in the third chapter on ‘Office Establishment’.

The extension of bus routes necessitated the introduction of new buses and a separate department for body building. Usually, the chase from Ashok Leyland, Benz and Tata were purchased and used to build bodies from the state owned workshops established at different places. One such workshop was established at Ranithottam in Nagercoil on 17th July, 1961. Not only bodies were built for the new ones here but maintenance and repair works were also undertaken. Moreover, necessary rules were framed from time to time stipulating the working conditions of the staff members employed in the workshop at Ranithottam. Ranithottam workshop undertook body-building for the state-owned transport buses and extended its help to the transport department of other states too, especially Kerala. As a result, its popularity spread far and wide. However, there was a move to shift the Ranithottam workshop to Tirunelveli which called for strike by the crew members of the transport department in the Kanyakumari District. When the strike gained momentum, thanks to the timely intervention of political leaders, the move was dropped. All these aspects are dealt with in the fourth chapter, “Body Building and Repair Works”.

The fifth chapter, “Accidents and Compensation” provides detailed information regarding the reasons for accidents. Usually, the accidents on road occur because of the trifling fault committed by the driver of vehicles, cyclist or by the pedestrian. The prevailing illiteracy and ignorance, the lack of civic sense and traffic rules among the public, the unprecedented expansion of shops, cabins and erections of hoarding on the roadside, untrained driving of vehicles by untrained and inexperienced drivers, driving under the influence of intoxicants, overloading of vehicles, drivers inattentiveness, and the madly racing youngsters on motorbike and cycles result in road accidents. Generally,
it is stated that 75% of accidents on road are caused due to rash and negligent driving and 25% accidents happen due to carelessness of the victims. The traffic rules are not strictly followed due to people’s ignorance and their general tendency to hurry and reach faster. Besides, roads are very narrow and the number of cars, bi-cycles and other automobiles are constantly increasing. Mechanical failures too caused accidents. A perusal of the records reveals the fact that the number of accidents has been ascending during the successive years. Whatever may be the restrictions, accidents are quite common. In order to avert accidents and to help the families of the victims, the practice of giving compensation becomes the order of the day. The measures adopted to avoid accidents by the Government, Non Governmental Organizations and other Agencies are also highlighted. To regulate motor vehicles on road, the social welfare oriented Motor Vehicles Act was enacted in 1939 and has been replaced by Motor Vehicles Act, 1944. This said Act has further been amended by Amendment Act, 1988, with effect from 14th November, 1994. The present Act deals with provisions to provide compensation to the victims of road accidents and seek to provide more deterrent punishment in the cases of certain offences. Some major accidents that took place in different parts of Kanyakumari District and the amount of compensation paid are graphically pictured in this chapter.

With the growth of a full-fledged transport department, the number of staff members in different categories increased elaborately to meet the requirements of its administration and management. However, the department witnessed frequent strike as gleaned from several records and newspaper reports. Whenever a crew member was assaulted or manhandled by a passenger, immediately all the staff members employed in various branches resorted to strikes leaving buses in zigzag positions at cross roads demanding either the arrest of the culprit or punish him. Similarly, as per the request of the labour unions, the labourers resorted to strike demanding higher wages, bonus and various other privileges including promotion avenues. Every pay revision
is usually witnessing a strike as it did not satisfy all sections of the crew members. Further, the transport administration witnessed a rift between the students on the one side and the crew members on the other. This too led to the stoppage of buses all on a sudden. In this chapter, an attempt is made to highlight the multifarious factors that paved the way for strikes and lockouts. The various measures adopted by the successive Governments to pacify the agitators then and there either by granting privileges or by granting various concessions are also understood from the records. All these factors are also portrayed in detail in the chapter on ‘Labour Unions and Strikes’.

In the last chapter on ‘The Impact’ a systematic analysis is made to project the various impacts and contributions of this department to facilitate the cherished ambition to provide amenities to transport the passangers as well as goods and services. The buses not only linked the people of various cities and towns to remote corner which in turn enabled the people of the upper strata to mingle with the people of the lower strata and vice-versa. Consequently, they got ample chance to learn each others’ customs, habits and integrate themselves without any caste and creed distinction. Besides, it provides cultural assimilation. Moreover, proper transport facilities boosted the economic viability by promoting trade and commerce. Every people have the chance either to purchase the required article or to dispose of their surplus products through the introduction of proper transport and transit system. Development of road transport helped speedy movements of either the troops or the police personnel to the riot-hit areas. Such other various impacts are highlighted in this chapter. The concluding part provides an over all sum up of all the chapters, a graphic picture of the research findings and various other suggestions for the better administration and the development of the road transport system in Kanyakumari District.