CHAPTER – I

TOPOGRAPHY OF TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT

Tirunelveli is one of the southern most Districts of Tamil Nadu. It is 3000 years old with an eventful past and rich tradition\(^1\). It emerged as a city and is considered one of the oldest in the Indian sub continent, with a history that dates back to 1000BC. During the British rule, it was an administrative unit and attained the status of being the headquarter. At times, the Districts were mostly named after the towns where the headquarters were located. The town was the headquarter since the British rule\(^2\). This District occupies the eastern half of the extreme southern end of the Indian Peninsula. It lies between 8°9’ and 9°3N N and 77°12N and 78°23N E and has the area of 6792.08 square kilometres. It constitutes 5.24 percent of the total area of Tamil Nadu, with an extreme length of 31 K.M. from north to south and a maximum width of 100 K.M. near the Madura frontier. In shape, it is roughly triangular, having the Western Ghats as its western and the sea as its eastern and southern boundaries. On the north, it is separated from Madurai District by no natural features, but by a parallel drawn east and west through the town of Virudupati\(^3\).

\(^3\) Tirunelveli District Collector's Conference, District Profile, Tirunelveli, 1943, p.4.
The southern most hills of the Western Ghats serve as a natural barrier between the western side of the District and the State of Travancore upto within a few miles of Cape Comorin, the extreme southern point of the Indian Peninsula\textsuperscript{4}. The city is located on the west bank of the perennial river, Tamiraparani, whereas Palayamkottai is located on the right bank for this reason, they are referred to as “Twin Cities”. Tirunelveli is also often called the “Halwa City” for its very famous sweet Halwa\textsuperscript{5}.

**Origin of the name of the Town Tirunelveli**

Tirunelveli is also called Nellai. The English equivalent to nel, the Tamil word is paddy (rice fields). Both the names Tirunelveli and Nellai directly associate to rice fields. It can be seen that the city is surrounded by fertile paddy fields enriched by the perennial river Tamiraparani\textsuperscript{6}. During the Pandya period, Tirunelveli was just a chief town of the Pandyas to the south of their capital. During the Nayak period, it became the capital of their southern


\textsuperscript{5} Palayamkottai occupies a peculiar place in name. The word *palayam* is prefix to palayamkottai but in the places Gopichettipalayam and Rajapalayam, the word *palayam* occupies as suffix. (*The Hindu*, (Daily News Paper, English) Tirunelveli, dted 13\textsuperscript{th} March 2008).

province. Since then, it was known as \textit{Tirunelveli Seemai}\footnote{During the Nayak administration, village was the lowest unit of administration. Several villages were grouped together and called \textit{Makanam}. Many \textit{Makanams} were combined to form \textit{Desam}, \textit{Mandalam} or \textit{Rashtra}. There are inscriptional evidences to show that the \textit{Makanams} were divided into \textit{Seemai}. Tirunelveli was better known as Tirunelveli Seemai. Roughly the areas now Tirunelveli and Thoothukudi districts formed a ‘Seemai’ under Nayak administration. (K.N. Sivaraja Pillai, \textit{The Chronology of Early Tamils}, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1984, p.178).}. In the Tirunelveli \textit{Sthalapuranavasanam} written by M.Alagarsamy Pillai, he mentions the name Tirunelveli\footnote{In the \textit{Devaram} hymns, generally ascribed to the 7th century A.D there are references about Tirunelveli. Following is an example of the Thirugnanasambandar’s versification of the presiding deity of the town:-

\begin{verbatim}
G[\|\a Y u \|\l \m u T o \|\l p \S L r
UjR\|m C[ AWUm
L|p\a Y u \|\o R y N\|p\|\o j
\|\l \o p \|\j \o R O \|\l \o P V o
B\|p \|\o Y k O L k R o \|Yo
T\|o Y W \|\U \|\l \l s
\|\l \o R \|p \|\i \l o \|\U T o \|\p \S \|\l \|\l Sp
\|\o Y \|\U \|\o \|\o N p \|Yo R o \|\U. (M. Alagarsamy pillai, \textit{Tirunelveli Sthalapuranavasanam}, Tanjavur, 1916, p.170).}. The puranic version said that one Vedasarma, a staunch devotee of Siva, on his pilgrimage from the North to the South, was invited by Lord Siva in his
dream to his abode on the banks of the sacred river Tamiraparani. The devotee came and bathed at Sindupoondhurai and worshipped the Lord. Then he stayed there with his family and did his daily prayer by offering the rice cooked out of the freshly harvested paddy. Once there was a famine, which forced the devotee to collect paddy by way of begging and carried on his routine prayer. One day, he spread out the paddy to dry under the sun light before the Lord, and went for his ablutions in Tamiraparani. He prayed to the Lord for rain which he thought it could be a remedy for the famine. His prayer was heard and when he was bathing, a thunder storm broke out and it rained heavily. Vedasarma came to the place where he had spread the paddy. He saw a wonderous miracle. Despite, the rain around the area, the paddy that he spread did not get even a single drop of rain and the paddy did not get soaked. The area spreading the paddy was well under the bright sunlight. Since the town was called Tirunelveli (Thiru + Nell + Veli) as the Lord of the town hedged by the paddy for Tirunelveli means, “Sacred hedged paddy’. The paddy was hedged by rain, in course of time it was called as “Sacred paddy hedge”.

The Sthalapurana says that the earlier name of Tirunelveli was Venuvanam where Lord Siva married his consort Gowri. Other names of Tirunelveli, according to the Sthalapurana, are Tirumoorthipuram, Ibapuri, Tharanisaram and Sakalasithi. Other shortened name to refer Tirunelveli is

10 Ibid., p.3.
Nellai\textsuperscript{11}. The early Pandyas called it \textit{Thenpandinadu}, the Imperial Cholas called \textit{Mudikonda Cholamandalam}, the Nayaks called \textit{Tirunelveli Seemai}, the British called it Thinnevely\textsuperscript{12}.

In 1801, the British on the acquisition of the District from the Nawab of Arcot named it as “Tinnevelly” district, though their headquarter was first located in Palayamkottai as their military headquarter during their operations against the \textit{Palayakkars} of the south. Both Tirunelveli and Palayamkottai grew as the twin towns of the District. As their want and linguistic convenience, the British pronounced Tirunelveli as Tinnevelly.\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{District Bifurcation}

In 1984, the Government of Tamil Nadu constituted the Bifurcation Committee to study and recommend to the Government the details for the bifurcation of the District. In 1986, the Committee submitted its recommendations. Based on the recommendations, the Tirunelveli District was demarcated into two Districts, the headquarter being Tirunelveli and Thoothukudi. It came to effect on 20\textsuperscript{th} October 1986.\textsuperscript{14} Then the District was

\textsuperscript{11} V.S. Padmanabha Ayyar, \textit{A Short Account of Tirunelveli District}, Palayamkottai, 1933, p.37.

\textsuperscript{12} G.O. Ms. No. 465, Revenue Department, Tirunelveli, 13\textsuperscript{th} July, 1984.

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Idem}.

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Tamilarasu}, Government of Tamil Nadu, Bulletin, October 1986, p.7.
named as Nellai Kattabomman District. The Nellai Kattabomman District was renamed in the year 1997 and got its old name, Tirunelveli District.

**Boundaries**

The district has common border with the State of Kerala, the Bay of Bengal and the Districts of Virudhunagar, Thoothukudi and Kanyakumari. The lofty Western Ghat Mountains, in the west and north west and the Bay of Bengal in the south and the southeast stand as the natural boundaries of the District. The District is hemmed in by the Thoothukudi District in the east and the northeast almost running parallel from the north to the south. Kanyakumari District bounds Tirunelveli District in the west and the south-west. The lengthiest straight line that can be drawn on the area of the District connects the northern most point of Sivagiri taluk and the southern most point of the Radhapuram Taluk.

**Population**

The Census of 1991 reveals that the total population of the District is 25,01,832 of whom 12,29,902 are males and 12,71,930 are females. Of the total population, 17,08,656 dwell in the rural areas and 7,93,176 in the urban

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15 Kattabomman, a poligar of Panchalamkurichi formerly known as Veera Pandya Kattabomman, was hanged by the British at Kayathar in 1799. (G.O. Ms. No, 1314, Revenue Department, Tirunelveli, 27 Sep. 1986).

16 K.S.K. Vel Mani, op.cit., p.2.
areas\textsuperscript{17}. The total males and females of rural areas are 8,36,798 and 8,71,858 respectively and the figures for urban areas are 3,93,104 and 4,00,072. The total population of the District forms 4.48 percent of the total population of the State of TamilNadu. In terms of population, it is the tenth largest district of the state. The density of population in the district has been calculated as 367 per sq. K.M. in 1991 as against 326 per sq. K.M in the previous census (1981)\textsuperscript{18}.

**Religion**

As in other parts of Tamil Nadu, Hinduism, Christianity and Islam are the major religions professed in Tirunelveli District. Followers of Jainism and Buddhism also live in the district\textsuperscript{19}. There is unquestionable evidence that by the Sangam Age itself the fusion of Dravidian and Aryan religious practices had commenced\textsuperscript{20}. It is the incorporation of the three elements Pre – Dravidian, Dravidian and Aryan, which resulted in the Hinduism of Tamil Nadu. The Brahmi inscriptions found in the caves of the Tirunelveli and other southern Districts of Tamil Nadu, reveal that Jainism and Buddhism entered the Tamil country before the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century B. C. The contact of the South India with Islam is much older than that of the North\textsuperscript{21}. Kayalpattinam in the composite Tirunelveli District was one of the prominent Muslim settlements in Tamil Nadu dating back to the period between 12\textsuperscript{th} and 14\textsuperscript{th} centuries. A persistent

\textsuperscript{17} Census of India 1991, Series 23, Tamil Nadu part - II B(i), Primary Census Abstract for General Population, Director of Census Operations, Tamil Nadu, Madras, 1993, p.19.

\textsuperscript{18} Idem.


and doubtful tradition ascribes the introduction of Christianity in Tamil Nadu dated back to the period between 12th and 14th centuries. A persistent and doubtful tradition ascribes the tradition of Christianity in South India to St. Thomas in the first century A.D.\textsuperscript{22}

**Census Report**

The 1991 census, the first census after the formation of the district has recorded that the religions professed in the district are Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, Jainism, Sikhism and Buddhism. The following table extracted from the census report shows the total number of males and females of different religions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People</th>
<th>Hindus</th>
<th>Christians</th>
<th>Muslims</th>
<th>Jains</th>
<th>Sikhs</th>
<th>Buddhists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>997595</td>
<td>121277</td>
<td>110459</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>1025026</td>
<td>131453</td>
<td>115141</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Castes in the District**

The earliest archival source mentions the names of castes that existed in the composite Tirunelveli District by 1800 is the \textit{Dehazada} and population tables of the different taluks in the province of Tirunelveli\textsuperscript{24}. The Hindu castes mentioned are "Smarta Telugu Brahmins, Shree Vyshnavas, Mardivas Sadvati, Maharashtra Brahmins, Kannada Brahmins and Shola Brahmins, Shiva

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Ibid.}, p.440.

\textsuperscript{23} K.K. Pillay, \textit{op.cit.}, p.230.

\textsuperscript{24} David Ludden, \textit{Peasant History of South India}, Madras, 1985, p.225.
Bhakthas, Vishnu Bhakthas, Vadugu Rajahs, Gosamys, Muddabadi Gaunypandaram, Gurukkal or Oduvar, Malaikattipandaram, Aundythathan, Vyravar, Caucatvellalar, Soshiya Vellalar, Tuluva Vellalar, Thondaimandalathu Mudali, Vudaloogu Naicken, Cowra, Vallial Chetty, Yeddian Germa Yeddian, Vullay yeddian, Yella Vanian, Patunoocarweavers, Kycolar weavers, Condiancotay Maravars, Cottaly Maravan, Collinductti maravan, Agambadiar, Toteir, Reddiah, Vatuven Anuppen, Panan, Moochien, Culticaran, Punnishaven, Autvanian, Chalupen, Pandalar or Artisans, Cuddchelcaren, Coshavan or Potter, Ambattan or Barber, Vannar or Washermen, and Shayacaren or dyers."

The Hindu castes of Ezhavas Ilavar, Shanar, Chunnam, Purravan, Oormelacaran, Otten, Chowlecaran, Cudden and Coravan have been listed as inferior ones in the record and the castes of Pallaar, Vulluven, Pariar, Shemman or Chukkklier and Pooray Vannar have been given as Hindu low castes. Puliars have been mentioned as the hill tribe of the district.

Though the 1833 record speaks about 70 castes, the census of 1871 the first organized census of India has written only sixteen Hindu castes in the district. They are Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Chetties, Vellalars, Ilavars, Kummalars, Kanakkan, Kycolan, Vannian, Kosavan, Sathani, Sembadavan, Shanars, Umbattan, Vannan and Parayar. The 1871 census report says that the Protestant Mission succeeded in converting a considerable number of Shanar

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community to Christianity and the Catholic Mission was popular among the Paravas and the fishermen.

The 1881 Census recorded about 17 Castes. They were Vaduga, (former) Vaniyan (oil Manger) Chetty (Merchant) Balija (Merchant) Kaikolar (weaver) Brahmin (Priest/ Land lord) Pariah (Farmer / Labourer) Shanar (Farmer / Toddy tappers) Marava (farmer) Kusavar (Pottar) Vellala (farmer) Pallar (labourer) Idaiyar (Shepherd) Ambattan (Barber) Vannan (Washerman) Satani (Templeservant) and Kammalar (Artisan). In the census of 1901, as many as 65 castes were enumerated in the District and the principal (in population) among them are Brahmins, Paravars, Shanars, Maravars, Vellalas, Kammavan, Ilavar and Katasahs. The Principal castes in the District as given in the 1961 census report are Vellalas, Nadars (Shanars) Maravars, Kammavars, Kambalattars, Reddis, Brahmins and Idayars or Yadavas.

The Mohammedan castes mentimed in the record are Pattany or Tulukkan and Lebbai or Shonagar. The people and their castes who had embraced Christianity have also been given. As per the record people of the Rajahs Vellalars Chutty, Murravan, Vaniyan, Purravan and Shanar castes had embraced Christianity.

Taluks

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26 H.R. Pate, *op.cit.*, p.20.
When the Tirunelveli District was bifurcated into Tirunelveli Kattabomman and Thoothukudi Districts with effect from 20th October 1986, ten of the taluks (i.e.) Tirunelveli, Palayamkottai, Sankarankoil, Ambasamudram, Nanguneri, Radhapuram, Tenkasi, Veerakeralan Pudhur, Senkottai and Sivagiri together formed Tirunelveli.

Ten taluks of Kattabomman district constitute Tirunelveli District. Veerakeralan pudhur is an additional taluk while the other nine are full pledged taluks. Administrative steps have been taken to upgrade Veerakeralanputhur into a full pledged taluk.\(^{28}\)

**Land**

Eastward from the Western Ghats, the District is a plain land having wide geological diversities. It may be divided into five major natural divisions, which are Western Ghat slopes, river valleys, dry red lands, coastal ‘teri’ lands and plains of black soil. The western portions of the taluks of Sivagiri, Sengottai, Tenkasi, Ambasamudram and Nanguneri form the slopes of the ghats, which are bestowed with natural forests, rivers, streams, waterfalls, wild life and irrigated lands. The river valleys are the lands that have skirted the rivers of the District on both the banks being benefitted by its water through irrigation. These are the fertile spots of the District. This part includes some patches of Ambasamudram, Palayamkottai, Tirunelveli and Tenkasi taluks.

where the chief river of the district and one of the five chief rivers of Tamil Nadu, the Tamiraparani with its tributaries flows.

Dry red lands are scattered in the District. The areas except the ayacuts of the rivers and tanks forests of the district are dry and either red or black. Though the District includes in its name paddy (űSp), it is famous for palmyra trees. This tract of dry red land is famous for having palmyra groves. The Statistics of 1917 shows that there were about nine million palmyra trees in the composite Tirunelveli District.²⁹

Coastal Teriland is the peculiar geographical division of the District. The area is an undulating sandy coastal plain sloping imperceptibly to the south, southeast towards the Gulf of Mannar. The average elevation of the level is between 15 mtrs and 25 mtrs. The above sand dunes known as teri and coastal sand dunes known as teri both are studded with palmyra trees. In some of the depressions among the sand dunes, the local rain and the flow of the sub soil water from the dunes accommodate and create inland lakes called taruvais, which are striking features of the teri landscape. Paddy and plantains are raised in the beds of these taruvais as the water gradually subsides and recedes after the rain.³⁰

Cotton cultivation is one of the significant phenomenon and distinguishing feature of the District. The black soil tract, which is considered

²⁹ H.R.Pate, op.cit., p.15.
the best suitable soil for cotton cultivation, spreads over Sankaran koil taluk and its surroundings. The District as a whole is sloping from the west towards the sea, so that, the rivers that originate in the Western Ghats flow towards the east.

Irrigation Channels

The important irrigation channels branching off from both the banks of the river Tamiraparani are the South Kodaimelalagian channel, North Kodaimelalagian channel, Nathiyunni channel, Kannadian channel, Kadagan channel, Palayam channel, Tirunelveli channel, Marudur melakkal, Marudur keelakkal, South main channel and North main channel. Most of the channels are as old as that of the beginning of the history of Tamil Nadu as the ancient and medieval rulers dug them for improving cultivation. The channels in turn feed many tanks, which are other sources of irrigation.31

Dams

There are eight dams built across the river Tamiraparani to utilize the water for irrigation in an efficient way. Of the eight, seven have been built by the rulers of Tamil Nadu before the river advent of the British and the eighth one at Srivaikundam, the only dam across the Tamiraparani in Thoothukudi

31 Registers on Rivers and Rivulets and their History, Executive Engineer, P.W.D., Tamiraparani Division, Palayamkottai, 30th Sep, 1995.
district, built by the British Government in the year 1869. The seven dams in the district are Kodaimelalagian dam in Papanasam, Nathiyunni dam in Ambasamudram, Kannadian dam just below the confluence of the Thamiraparni and the Manimuthar, Ariyankayakurram dam in Ariyanakipuram, Palavoor dam in Palavoor, Suthamalian dam in Suthamalai and Marudur dam in Marudur near Sivalaperi.32

Climate

The District has a hot tropical climate. The summer season, which is particularly oppressive from March to May. The principal characteristics of the climate of Tirunelveli are light rainfall and an equable temperature. In the hot months, from March to June, the thermometer rarely rises above 95° in the shade. The coolest months are December and January. The southwest monsoon season begins in June and ends in September. The period from October to December is the north-west monsoon season.33

Rainfall

The rainfall is most on the hills and least on the eastern side of the District. In Tenkasi and Ambasamudram the maximum is nearly 60 inches, while the minimum is about 20 inches. In other parts of the District the rainfall varies from between 40 and 50 inches as maximum between 10 to 15 inches as

minimum. The average annual amount received in the District as a whole is about 25 inches, which is one of the lowest figures in the Presidency. Though its rainfall is scanty, Tirunelveli gets the benefit of the two monsoons as both cause freshes in the Tamiraparani. These, indeed, occasionally rise very high and do considerable damage\(^3^4\). For the district as a whole, the rainfall in the post monsoon and northeast monsoon seasons, constitutes 56 percent of the annual rainfall\(^3^5\).

Flora

Tirunelveli District can be divided naturally into three distinct regions, namely, Coastal region, Midland region and Mountaneous region\(^3^6\). The coastal region with backwater, salty swamps and foreshore vegetation, is found in Kottam, Uvari, Vijapati, Kudankulam, Perumal malai, and Levingipuram. The flora is very poor due to physiological dryness of the soil, less rainfall and strong wind velocity. The midland region lies between the coast and the Western Ghats, with few discontinued hillocks covered and represented by Shrub Flora and long stretches of shifting red sand locally known as ‘teri’ Palmyra tree is dominant in the region. The eastern slopes of Western Ghats


\(^3^5\) Report from the Additional Director General of Meteorology, India, Meteorology Department, Pune, April 6, 1995.

included in this district are very rich in Flora and Fauna. These forest tracts include the reserve forests of Thirukkurungudy, Mahendragiri, Singampatti, Sengaltheri, Kalakkadu, Naterikal, Manjolai, Kakachi, Nagapothigai, Ainthalapiotighai, Kannikatty, Papanasam, Courtallam and Sivagiri. The average rainfall of these places varies from 750 to 3500 mm. The following forest types are found in these hilly regions; southern tropical thorn forests, southern tropical dry deciduous forests, southern tropical moist deciduous forests, tropical semi evergreen forest, southern tropical wet evergreen forests, and grassland at high altitudes\textsuperscript{37}.

**Fauna**

The fauna in general represents a majority of species related to those of other parts of the Peninsular India. The wild life though restricted to the Southern Western Ghats of the District, those living in the plains are equally versatile in their natural history and adaptations. Almost all the representative types of mammalian fauna occurring in other parts of the country are found here. The important highly endangered species of the Western Ghats of the District are the Asian Elephant, Tiger, Leopard, the Indian Bison or Gaur, Sambhar, primates like Lion-tailed Macaque and Nilgiri Langur, Nilgiri Marten, Tree Shrew, Nilgiri Tahr. Of these, Lion tailed Macaque, Tiger, Nilgiri Marten and Tree Shrew are the rare species. Certain important

\textsuperscript{37} Idem.
endangered small mammals are Leopard Cat, Fishing Cat, Slender Loris, Malabar Giant Squirrel, the Dhole, Porcupine and Mouse Deer.

The Sloth Bear and Wild Bear are moderately common and they sometimes descend to the plains too. In Mundanthurai plateau and Puliangudi scrub forests, two groups of spotted Deer or Chitat occur. The important mammals of the plains are the Indian Fox, Jackal, the Gerbil Rat, the Field Mouse and the House Rat. In the Kuthiraimoli, Theri extending into the Tirunelveli District along Radhapuram taluk from Thoothukkudi district. Indian Fox and Jackal are usually nocturnal and taking refuge in dens among rocks and moderately common in the hillocks of Nanguneri, Wolf Hill of Sivanthipatti and in Melapattam.

**Birds**

The important species of birds are the Hill Myna, the Nilgiri Whistling Thrush Fairly Blue Bird, the Malabar Great Pied Hornbill, the Rocket-tailed Drongo, the Malabar Trogan, the Great Black Woodpecker, etc. Other rare species of the hills are Pallas Fishing Eagle, Pale Harrier, Crested Serpent Eagle, Crested Hawk Eagle, Black Eagle, Forest Eagle Owl, Scops Owl, Nilgiri Green Pigeon, Nilgiri Wood Pigeon, Blossom Headed Parakeet, Hawk Cuckoo, Scarlet Minivet, etc. There are also certain migratory species of Warblers, Flower Peckers, and Fly Catchers, which are winter visitors of the ghats from North India Eastern Europe and Africa.
There are a large number of birds found in the plains as of anywhere also in the Peninsular India. Certain migratory non-aquatic birds are the Paradise Flycatcher, Golden Oriole and Indian Pitta. Aquatic migratory birds from the northern regions of India as well as abroad are usually winter visitors to various ponds of this District, extending their stay up to May-June.

Mention must be made of some important villages where innumerable birds flock during winter and spring. They are Koothankulam, Ilamilkulam and Ariyakulam. Special credit goes to Koothankulam and Ariyankulam, which are well protected by the villagers themselves, and recently Koonthankulam has been made as a bird sanctuary. A few important aquatic migratory species are the Grey Pelican, Apinted Stork, Lesser Flamingo, White Ibis, Glossy Ibis, Lesser Whistling Teal, Garghany, Spotbilled Duck, Spoonbill, Open billed Stork, etc. Recently, Bargeaded Goose has been found to visit Tirunelveli district, which has been hitherto reported to have its southern most range up to Mysore. A few of these birds have become residents here itself when local conditions of water availability and food are satisfied, even after June.38

**Early History of Tirunelveli District**

The first well-lighted epoch in the history of the District is that reflected in the literature of Sangam. Irayanar Ahapporulurai mentions some of the names of the Pandya kings and poets such as Kadumgon and Ugrapperuvaludi. They are found in inscriptions and it was the authentic records showing it.

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During the Sangam Age the Tamil country was divided among three crowned monarchs of the Chera, Chola and Pandya lines and a number of minor chieftains who according to the political conditions of the time owned allegiance to or fought for one or other of these monarchs or else led an independent existence.

The area now comprising the Tirunelveli District formed part of the Pandya country right from the Sangam Age. It was popularly known as Thenpandinadu. Ays were the Vel chieftains who ruled the country in and around the Pothigai hills. The Greek geographer, Ptolemy referred to ‘Ays’ ruling the country which included Cape Comorin and Mount Bettigo (Podhigi hills)\(^39\). The Sangam literature Thiruvilayadal Puranam, Madurai Kanchi, Purananuru, Paripadal, Agananuru, Nattrinai, Kurunthogai also refer to the Sangam Pandya rulers Vadimbalamba NiraPandyan, Nediyon, Nilamtharu Thiruvin Pandyan, Palyakasalai MudhuKudumi Peruvazhuthi, Mudathirumaran, Ollaiyurthantha Bootha Pandyan, AryaPadaikadanthantha Nedunceziyan and Thalaiyalamkananathu Cheruvendra Nedunceziyan\(^40\).

Chithramadathu Thunjiya Nanmaran, the brother of Aryapadaikadanthantha Neduncheziyan was the head of the ‘Korkai’, the second capital of the Pandyas and the present Tirunelveli District. It has been within the jurisdiction of the Korkai division of the Pandya administration. On Nedunceziyan’s death, his

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brother proceeded to Madurai from Korkai and took the Mantle of the Pandya Kingdom\textsuperscript{41}.

**Natural Sceneries**

The actual attractions of a country are mountains, peaks, rivers, lakes, coastlines, ports, wildlife sanctuaries and waterfalls. One can enjoy the beauty of these natural heritages of a country\textsuperscript{42}. India has great natural heritages, which contribute the resources for this industry. The above attractions are the assets of the country.

Tirunelveli District, the Western Ghats, the height of which ranges from 900 mtrs to 1800 mtrs. It dominates the western boundary of the District i.e., the western portion of Sivagiri, Sankarankoil, Tenkasi and Ambasamudram Taluks. The mountains are well connected with dense forest containing magnificent and valuable tress between elevations of 1000 mtrs and 2500 mtrs. The Ghats are regular without breaks throughout its existence in the District. It drops near the border of Tenkasi and Ambasamudram taluks from the Ariyankavu pass near Senkottai. In the southwestern corner of the District, i.e South of Ambasamudram taluk, the Western Ghats slope down forming the Aralvaimozhi pass, the gateway to the Kanyakumari District.

\textsuperscript{42} S. K. Gupta, *Tourism and Heritage Resources in Garhwal Himalaya*, New Delhi, 2002, p.60.
Along the skyline, the range averages 1500mtrs at least twenty peaks running up and over the height. Conspicuous among them are the Kattakadai Mottai, (1700 mtrs) above Sivagiri, the great dark mass of Kottaimalai (1900mtrs) over Puliyankudi Kuliratti (176mtrs) towering behind Krishnapuram, Panjantangi (1540mtrs) above Courtallam. In the Ambasamudram and Tenkasi taluks the ghats begin to widen out and above Papanasam the range attains its greatest thickness.43

Mountains

Agasthiarmalai or Pothigaimalai

The crowning glory of the Western Ghats in the District is Agasthiarmalai (1540m) otherwise known as “Eka Pothigai” or Periyapothigai. The early Greek writers refer to this hill as Betigio.44 It is second only to Kottaimalai in the District in height but it is the most striking peak considered as the highly sacred of the ghats. The Pothigai malai is frequently referred to in Tamil literature as the distinguishing mountain of the Pandyas who were addressed as the ‘Lord of Pothigai’. Pothigai literally means “a place where many things have been concealed”.

Thiruvilaiyadal Puranam, a Tamil work that narrates the supposed sportive deeds of Lord Siva, mentions Pothigaimalai as the abode of Agasthiyar, the dwarf Tamil Sage, believed to have participated in the first Tamil Sangam and authored Agasthiam, an ancient Tamil Philological work.

It is said in the purana that Agasthiyar was commissioned by Lord Siva to bring about equilibrium of the earth, which had titled downwards in the north (Himalayas) consequent on Lord Siva’s marriage with his consort Parvathy of Kailai (Himalayas) where assembled the whole of the celestial beings. Agasthiyar obeying the order, came to the south, stayed at Pothigaimalai and balanced the earth. Another tradition says that the rishi Agasthiyar having retired from the world. Pothigaimalai contains some elegant hills, which attract the people. They are

- Pothigai hill
- Aimpothigai hill
- Muthalai pothigai hill
- Nagapothigai hill
- Kattalai hill

**Pothigai hill**

Pothigai hill, which is also known as ‘Pothiam’, which means a secret place. This hill, which is 6800 feet above sea level, is the highest in the

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46 K.S.K. Vel Mani, *op.cit.*, pp.11-12.
Tirunelveli region. This was hailed as the hill of the Pandyas by the poets of the land. The Pandya Kings had assumed another name as Pothigai Thalaivan. This hill stretches about ten miles to the back of the other hills. The river Thamiraparani originates in this hill. The river runs over the major part of this District before flowing. The Pothigai hill can be spotted from Palayamkottai, the capital of Tirunelveli District.

It is believed that this hill is called Agasthian hill, in the name of the sage Agasthian. The Europeans made a path to the hill top by visiting the place frequently. The weather condition is almost in all month is the cooler. A few years ago, Dr. Brown, a meteorologist on behalf of the king of Travancore, established a meteorological research station on the top of this hill. Agasthian temple is also here on the hill station. It has been calculated, the hill receives an annual rainfall of 300 inches.

Though this District plains are dry and arid due to excessive heat and low rainfall the perennial river Thamiraparani which originates in the pothigai hill rejuvenates the land and makes it fertile by its flood twice a year and the excess water flows towards the sea in the east and falls in to the Bay of Bengal47.

Aimpothigai Hill

Another significant hill in the Western Ghats is the Aimpothigai hill. It is believed that the hill got its name because of the fine small hillocks, which look like five heads of the hill\(^{48}\). It has many attributes like the pothigai hill. The natural beauty of the region enchants the visitors. Many rivulets and springs, which originate in this hill blend with the river Tamiraparani and increase its strength. The hill also abounds in tea and rubber plantations and coconut groves.

The Aimpothigai hill also has a rich resource of valuable and useful timber, which is used for house furnishing. Being close to Agasthiar hill, is also rich in endemic and rare flora. Senkurichi, Sarpanai, Kondapanai, Narayana Sanjeevi, Kongu and Nangu are some of the endemic plants found here. The region receives around 750 mm. to 3500 mm. of rain as an average\(^{49}\). Though the region receives rainfall from both the South West and North East Monsoons, it is from the South West Monsoon that it receives most of the rain. There is an abundance of herbs in this area, which face the danger of extinction. Therefore, the Government has set up a herbal garden here in an area of about 200 hectares\(^{50}\).

**Muththalai Pothigai hill**

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\(^{50}\) *Nellai Kathiravan*, Tamil daily, Tirunelveli, 29 July, 2001, p.2.
Near the Pothigai hill in the Western Ghats, another notable hill is the Muththalai Pothigai hill. It is so called because of the three hillocks on its top, which look like three heads. Many valuable trees of importance, hundreds of birds, varieties and a wide variety of animals attracts the people here. The land looks as if one can climb the hill as on a ladder from east to west. The hill has mounts to the height of 40 mtrs to 1500 mtrs above the sea level.

The clouds that descend from the sky and rest on the hill, the crowds of monkeys, which play with the clouds, the silver cascades that come dancing, are all the specialities in this hill tract. Crowds of people come to bath in the falls. The river water that flows over rare herbs has medicinal value. Sages have discovered many diseases and contributed to a healthy existence. Here one can find an abundance of herbs, which can cure even coronary diseases and diabetes. The herbs, which can save lives, are themselves in danger of extinction. Serious steps are being taken by the Central and State Governments to protect the herbs from extinction. It is believed that even mental diseases can be cured by taking bath in the waterfalls here.

The hill tract has been called as the “Ooty of Nellai”. Many tea, rubber and cardamom plantations found here, provide employment opportunities and feed many labourers. Crowds of elephants, varieties of deer, panthers and tigers are found in this hill tract. The Central Government has set up the

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Mundanthurai Tiger reserve here to save the tigers from extinction. This is the 17th tiger reserve set up in India\textsuperscript{52}.

**Naga Pothigai hill**

Agasthiar hill is a part of the Western Ghats in Tirunelveli District. Nagapothigai hill is a small portion of the Agasthiar hill. As the hill has the appearance of a dancing cobra, \textit{(Nagam)} hence it is called by the people as \textit{Nagamalai}\textsuperscript{53}. Tea and rubber plantations and herbal gardens are found here. This region is very fertile by the water of the rivers Tamiraparani, Pambar, Maylar, Karayar, Servalar, Manimuthar, Peyar, Ullar and Kouthalayar, which originate in the Western Ghats.

The region is widely known as Courtallam, a place of great tourist importance. It is the “Spa of the South”. This is not only a tourist spot but also a health resort. Courtallam water has medicinal properties since the water runs through forests herbs and the water runs therapeutic qualities to cure physical ailments. During the season (Period June to September in every year) thousands of peoples from far and near visit this place\textsuperscript{54}.

\textit{Nagamalai} region has tall trees about 150 years. Teak and bamboo trees are abundant here. Herbs, which can cure disease, are found in plenty. Animals like elephant, tiger, deer, wild boar, wild buffalo and monkey are also

\textsuperscript{52} H.R. Pate, Vol. 1, \textit{op.cit.}, p.274.

\textsuperscript{53} Personal Interview with Mr. Raman, Local Resident, Courtallam, dated 15\textsuperscript{th} August, 2009.

\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Thinathanthi}, (Tamil daily), Tirunelveli, 16\textsuperscript{th} June 2009, p.6.
seen in abundance here. Nalamukku, Kakkachi, Kuthiraivetti and Oothumalai are the important places in this region. Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve is also a part of this region.\footnote{K.V.S. Sharma, \textit{op. cit.}, pp.3-4.}

**Kattalai Hill**

To the North West of Papanasam there is a hill, which adds pride and charm to the Western Ghats. It is none other than the Kattalai hill. This has been called as the “Fort of hills”\footnote{Y.S. Kadakshamani, \textit{Working Plan for the Tirunelveli South Forest Division, 1976 - 1977 to 1985 - 1986}, Government of Tamil Nadu, Madras, 1981, p.21.}. This hill has all the beauties of nature as well as historical importance. Refugees from Travancore came to Tirunelveli through this hill. Between the 5\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th} centuries, Chera kings came through this hill to annex Cheranmahadevi region. This hill offers a pass to go to Travancore Country, and many people were able to cross this hill to enter the East. Trade and Commerce also conducted through this hill. There is a rock inscription here showing that the Chera Kings annexed Cheranmahadevi.

On the short cut from Travancore, there is Kattalai hill. The Vadakarai, popularly known as Chokkampatti Palayamkars lived near the hill. In 1759 they attacked the south Vadakarai region, is about 15 miles distant from here. Kottalai hill serves as a pass to south Vadakarai. This has an important place in Senkottai\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p.23.}. Pilgrims travel through this place for to worship, Lord Ayyappa in Sabaraimalai. This has also a Pass, which connects Tamil Nadu and Kerala.
This region serves as the eastern boundary of Kerala and the western boundary of Tamil Nadu. Though the region has the pathways for travellers to ‘travel, it abounds in dense forests and dangerous wild animals.

People visit this region because of its attraction and they have to be careful for the presence of dangerous wild animals like the tiger, panther, and wild elephant. Eighteenth, nineteenth century old trees were found here. Variety of birds, which attracts the people. Green and fertile forests add pleasure to the tourists.

Rivers in Tirunelveli District

Rivers play a significant role in the development of mankind. In fact, riverbeds are the cradles of the world civilizations. For all purposes from agricultures to power generation - rivers are an inevitable source. Among the rivers of Tamil Nadu, the Tamiraparani is an important river for agriculture, in Tirunelveli District. The Tamiraparani is a symbol of Tamil culture and civilization. It is an identity of the far south of India. The Pandyas were referred to as the rulers of the land, where the Tamiraparani flows. The Tamil and Sanskrit literature from the earliest time, mention the chief river of the

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58 Documentation Service Series-1, Tirunelveli, 1993, pp. 365-366.
District. Besides, the chief river the rivers in the District include the Peyar, Ullar, Karaiyar, Servalar, Pampar, Manimuthar, Varahanathi, Ramanathi, Jumbanathi, Gadanathi, Kallar, Karunaiyar, Pachaiyar, Chittar, Gundar, Aintharuviar, Hanumanathi, Karuppanathi, Aluthakanniar.

The two rivers of the District, which are not linked with the Tamiraparai, are the Nambiar and the Hanumanathi of Nanguneri taluk.

**The Tamiraparani**

It has several names like Tampraparani, Tamiraparani, Tamiravaruni, Tambraparni etc. The river is mentioned as the porunanathi in Tamil poetic literature. It gets recognition and referred to as a renowned one in Sanskrit literature too, which are as old as that of the Puranas and Epics.

The meaning and origin of the name Tamiraparani is reasoned out differently. Bishop R. Caldwell, in his book, ‘A History of Tinnevelly’ discussed the various interpretations of the word ‘Tamiraparani’ at length. According to him, the meaning of the name Tamiraparani in itself is sufficiently clear, but its application in this connection is far from being self-evident. Tamara means red, parani means parana, a tree that has leaves. Tamiraparani might, therefore, a tree with red leaves, but this is a strange derivation for the name of the river and the ideas naturally suggest itself that

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some events or legends capable of explaining the name lies beyond. He, further, discussed the similarity of the name Tamirparani and of the old name of the present.

Sri Lanka, which was called in olden days as Tambrabane and he tried to find out the political, cultural and anthropological interpretation of the land of the river with that island. He concludes that it seems more natural that Tamirparani, the tree with the red leaves should have been first the name of a tree, then of a town, then of a district and then of a river. (It being not uncommon in India for villages to adopt their names from remarkable trees).  

According to the Hindu mythology, when Lord Siva celebrated his marriage with Goddess Parvathi on the Himalayan Mountain. Many Gods Goddess and Sages were assembled. It resulted in the inclination of the northern part of the earth and the elevation of the southern part. When it so happened Lord Siva made a request to Saint Agastya to go to the Southern part in order to bring the earth to normal position. Saint Agastya was in a dilemma, for he wished to witness, the celestial wedding. The command was, however, obeyed on the promise given by Lord Siva to show his marriage ceremony on the meditation of saint Agastya. Accordingly, the Sage started his journey with a handful water of the Gangai river from the hands of Lord Siva.

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63 Ibid., pp.9-10.
64 Register on Rivers, Rivulets and their History, Extract provided by the Executive Engineer, Public Works Department, Tamirparani Division, Palayamkottai, 26th September 1995.
Saint Agastya reached Pothigai hill and made it ‘Southern Kailash’. Lord Siva showed his marriage ceremony on the meditation of Saint Agastya and asked the latter to fritter away the handful water of the Gangai river on the Pothigai hills, that water became a river, and that river is called Tamiraparani or Porunai river.

It is disquieting to say that the whole Tamil Nadu is a barren land for it has a few perennial rivers. The river Tamiraparani is one such perennial river that rises in the Porunai Country or Tirunelveli District and irrigates the entire District. It also occupies a special importance in its ancient heritage. It has pride in the inclusion of prosperity of mountain, soil, tributaries, prosperity of anaicuts, historical significance, maritime activities, commercial, agricultural, industrial, sacred centres, ancient towns, great leaders, saints, holy shrines, educational, cultural, literacy and civilized people. Thus the river short in size, has long significance in maintaining the heritage of the ‘Ten - Pandi’ region.

The river Tamiraparani has a great antiquity. It has its origin before the sea erosion that happened in the southern part of Tamil Nadu and before the elevation of the Himalayan Mountain and the Ganga valley in North India. Its antiquity of existence is mentioned both in Valmiki’s ‘Ramayana’ and Kambar’s ‘Ramakathai’. The foreign travellers like Megasthenes (302 B.C.) Ptolemy (150 A.D.) and Asoka Inscriptions (273 – 232 BC) and various Buddhist authors had mentioned about the river Tamiraparani⁶⁵.

The river Tamiraparani is the corrupt term of Tambiraparani. The origin of the name of Tambiraparani has been much discussed. In Sanskrit, the term ‘Tamra’ means ‘Copper’ and the second half of the word is identified with a leaf or a tree. As the river is copper coloured hence it is popularly known as Tambiraparani\(^{66}\).

**Course and Tributaries of the River**

From the source, the total length of the river is about 125 K.M. of which its course in Tirunelveli District alone is about 75 K.M. Originating of an altitude of 1725mtrs above Metre of Sea Level of Periya Pothigai hill ranges an integrar hill tract of Western Ghats. In the Ghats, the chief tributaries of the rivers are the peyar, ullar, karaiair, servalar and the pambar. These rivers join the Tamiraparani and enrich its courses before it reaches the plain. The first tributary, which enriches the water of the Tamiraparani in plains on the right side, is the Manimuthar. Then comes the Gadananathi, which joins the Tamiraparani at Tiruppudaimaruthur. Before the Gadananathi entry in to the Tamiraparani, it (Gadananathi) is joined by the rivers Kallar, Karunaiyar and Veeranathi or Varahanathi. Two other rivers, the Ramanathi and the Jumbanathi combine and flow in the name of the Veeranathi or the Varahanathi, which joins the river Gadananathi about 1.5 K.M. north east of kila Ambur. The river Pachaiyer is another tributary, which joins the Tamiraparani near Taruvai village in Palayamkottai Taluk. One of the

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important and affluent tributaries of the Tamiraparani is the Chithar or Chitranathi, which arises in the Courtallam hills and receives supply from the rivers Gundar, Hanumanathi and Karuppanathi. The Chithar empties itself into the Tamiraparani in Sivalappperi village.\textsuperscript{67}

**Other major Rivers in Tirunelveli District**

**The Pachaiyar**

The river Pachaiyar rises on the eastern slope of Western Ghats about 11 K.M. north west of Kalakadu at an altitude of 1000mtrs. above M.S.L.\textsuperscript{68} It flows eastward up to Padmaneri village from where it changes its course towards northeast. It is a tributary of Tamiraparani and makes its confluence with the river in the village Tharuvai. The total length of the river from its source to its confluence with the Tamiraparani is about 32 K.M. The river Pachaiyar has three tributaries, which are Kavayam odai, Anaikidanagu odai and Uppan odai. These tributaries join the river Pachaiyar in the villages Arasappattu, Vadagarai and Padmaneri respectively.\textsuperscript{69}

The river is also important in its contribution to agriculture. Nearly 8376 acres of land are irrigated by Pachaiyar. Many agricultural crops like paddy, cotton, maize corn and cash crops like banana and coconut are

\textsuperscript{67} Extract, Public Works Department, Tiruniveli, Sep,1995 *op.cit.*

\textsuperscript{68} *Tirunelveli Mavatta Neerpasana Manadu Souvenir, (Tamil) op.cit.* , pp.113-118.

\textsuperscript{69} *Idem.*
cultivated. In paddy cultivation the region ranks next to Thanjavur\textsuperscript{70}. There are altogether nine anicuts and two mud korambus (Dams) built across this river. The nine anicuts and the two mud korambus are at Arasapattu village, Nadathu anicut, palampathu anicut, padmaneri anicut, Sambukulam anicut, Kattalai - Kaduvetti anicut, Subbukutti anicut, Ponnakudi anicut, mud Korambai at Mela Thudiyan village and Thamirakurichi anicut. From each anicut a number of tanks get filled with water for the use of irrigation.

**The Karayar**

The river Karayar is a tributary to the Tamiraparani. It originates in the eastern slopes of Western Ghats. It flows in the northern direction and empties into the main river Tamiraparani near Vellanguli village in Ambasamudram taluk after crossing the Kannadian channel - through an outlet\textsuperscript{71}.

The Karayar Dam was constructed across the river Karayar. As the water of the river never dries up, the dam also never dries up. The river water stored in this dam is carried to the Tamiraparani. The Dam through two pipes generates electricity. This is supplied to several parts of Tirunelveli District. Moreover, this water, which is carried through steel pipes, is used for drinking and irrigation purposes. The water of this river is used to cultivate about 50,000 acres of land. Paddy is cultivated maximum twice a year due to the

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\textsuperscript{70} Reports from the Executive Engineer, P.W.D, Tirunelveli Division, 26 Sep. 1995.
availability of water. Apart from paddy, bananas, cotton, chillies, corn, maize, black gram, and pulses are also cultivated.

There is a famous Tiger reserve Mundanthurai in the Western Ghats, is situated in an area of about 846 square kilometres. Apart of this reserve covers the Karaiyar river. This has variety of tigers, deer, elephants, monkeys, foxes, wolves, bison, wild boars, and other animals.\(^{72}\)

Another interesting feature of the river is that it has a curative effect due to the presence of herbs in it. In Karayar the herb that cures Jaundice. The patients affected with jaundice, visit this place, take bath in this river water, and get cured of the disease. In addition to attract of the river has the presence of varieties of fish. As the water is quite clear the people able to enjoy the sight of the fish and feed them. This spot has tall and dense trees, varieties of birds nest and breed. Some of these birds feed on the fish in the river. At dawn and dusk, the songs of the birds are a feast to the ears of the visitors. Hence, the place is an attractive spot, with its natural beauties of flora and fauna.\(^{73}\)

**The Chittar**

The Chittar means - little river or chitranathi. It is a beautiful river. Its nature is invaluable gift to the district as it is the river, which causes a set of splendid cascades in Courtallam and its suburbs, an international cynosure often compared to the famous Spa falls of Belgium for its curative value. It is a


\(^{73}\) *Idem.*
major tributary of the river of Tamiraparani. The river takes its origin in the eastern slopes of the Western Ghats in the Courtallam hills, called Tirikoodom in literature at an altitude of 1750 meters above MSL. From its origin, the river climbs down for about six K.M, turns north and flows for about 16 K.M before turning towards the east. Its total length is about 80 K.M. It joins the river Tamiraparani near Sivalapperi village of Tirunelveli Taluk.

The river Chittar has its own tributaries. They are, the Aintharuviar, which joins it main river near Gajamajorpuram, the Gundar that join near Tenkasi town, the Hanumanathi which mingles with its main river near Veerakeralanpudar village and the Aluthakanniar which meets the main river in Kadapagothi village, all in Tenkasi Taluk. The river Chittar makes many patches of Tenkasi Taluk fertile.

There are 17 anaicuts or dams constructed across the river to harness its course. They are Thalai anaicut, Adivattanparai anaicut, Valvilagadi anaicut, Pulliyoor anaicut, Pavaoor anaicut, Thiruchitrambalam anaicut, Maranathi anaicut, Veeranam anaicut, manoor anaicut. Mettur anaicut, Ukkirankottai anaicut, Pallikottai anaicut, Azhakiapandiyapuram anaicut, Pallayarkulam anaicut, Shelliannallur anaicut, Piranjani anaicut and Gangaikondan anaicut. The anaicuts are the source of water supply and there are a number of irrigation tanks.

The Alathakannior

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It is a major tributary to the Chittar river. Arising in the eastern slopes of the Western Ghats, it flows 10 K.M. towards northeast before joining its main river (chittar) near kadapagothi village of Tenkasi Taluk. The eight anaicuts built across this river, are named as Thalai anaicut, anaicuts II, III, IV Kandamangalam anaicut and anaicuts VI, VII, and VIII.

The Aintharuviar

The Aintharuviar is one of the tributaries of the river Chittar. It takes its origin from the eastern slopes of Western Ghats and joins the Chittar river near Gajamajorpuram village. The river in its course causes a waterfall, popularly known as ‘Aintharuvi’. There are two anaicuts across the river and they are Aintharuvi anaicut and Itanaji anaicut.

The Jambunathi

It is a tributary of the Ramanathi. Like all the rivers of the District, it also originates from the eastern slopes of the Western Ghats. The river confluences with the Ramanathi near Mokkadagam village. The only anaicut built across this river is Subramaniyathevar anaicut75.

The Ramananthi

Originating in the eastern slopes of Western Ghats at an altitude of 1720mtrs. above MSL in the northwestern corner of Ambasamudram Taluk.

this river flows down the hills for about six K.M. in the thickly wooded forest and reaches the plain in Melakadayam village from where it runs about eight K.M. in addition, receives its tributary Jambanathi. The course of the Ramanathi after its merger with Jambunathi is known as the Veeranathi or Varahanathi. This river joins the Gadananathi near the village Kila Ambur. The Ramanathi, finally empties into the river Tamiraparani near Thirppudaimaruthur. The Ramanathi the Jumbunathi and the Gadananathi are both direct and indirect tributaries of the prime river of the District. The Ramanathi branches off into two; the Ramanathi vadakal and Ramanathi ‘thekal’ and rejoins at the juncture of its confluence with the Jambunathi. The division of the river takes place from the dam, ‘Thalai Anai’. The two branches of the river have totally eight reservoirs. The northern branch has three anaicuts, using Kallakal anaicut, Suchimadayar anaicut and Savalakaran anaicut. The southern branch has five anaicuts (i.e.) Mannanai (Sand dam) Ottai anaicut, Alkolli anaicut, Pottalpudhur anaicut and Adachani anaicut.

The Gadananathi

The Gadananathi or Karunaiyar, like the other rivers of the District has its origin in the eastern slopes of Western Ghats at an altitude of about 1700 mtrs in Ambasamudram taluk. It is a major tributary of the Tamiraparani.

The river after flowing about 8 K.M. receives the pamper and on its course, two other rivulets, kellar and Iluppaiyar, all these tributaries, join it at

76 Idem.
Sivasailam village. After the confluence, the river flows about 100 K.M. and merges with the Ramanathi in Kilaambur village. There are six anaicuts across the Gadananathi (i.e.) Arasapattu anaicut, Alwarkurichi, Thenkal anaicut, Manjapalli anaicut, Kakkavallur anaicut and Kanyeyan anaicut\(^77\). Thus the river water is taken for 17 K.M. through Kadagan channel and fertilizes about 5375 acres of land\(^78\).

**The Hanumanathi**

It is a tributary of the Chittar river. It rises at an altitude of 1650 metre above Courtallam in Tenkasi taluk. It rises in the slopes about 10 K.M. receives Karuppanathi, its tributary, then it flows and merges with Chittar river near Surandai village. There are nine anaicuts built across the river before it joins Karuppanathi. They are Mettukal anaicut, Karisalkulam anaicut, Ponpalai anaicut, Vallalkulam anaicut, Elathoor anaicut, Nainaragavan anaicut, Pungamkal anaicut and Kambli anaicut\(^79\).

**Karuppanathi**

It originates adjacent to the Hanumanathi to the north of it at the same altitude. It constitutes the major tributary of the river Hanumanathi. The Karuppanathi flows in the slopes for about 9 K.M reaches the plains in the villages Visavankulam where Vembanathi, a rivulet, contributes its waters to

\(^77\) R. Kalasan, *op.cit.*, p.28.


\(^79\) *Souvenir, Tirunelveli Mavatta Neerpasana Manadu* (Tamil) *op.ci*; pp .1-25.
the Karuppanathi as a tributary. Then it runs for 18 K.M and joins the Hanumanathi below Urmelagian anaicut built across the river karuppanathi. From its sources to its merger with the Hanumanathi, there are six anaicuts constructed over the river. They are Thalai anaicut, Kappalkal anaicut, Srivalankal anaicut, Openhead anaicut, Vadakkukal anaicut and lastly Urmelalagian anaicut.  

The Gundar

The river Gundar originates at Mundankoil Mottai above Courtallam. The rivulet Mottaiyar and few streams contribute to its water and it flows in Senkottai and Tenkasi Taluks for 20 K.M. and combines with the Hariharanathi. The combined river runs for about 8 K.M and joins its main river Chittar. Three masonry and three temporary anaicuts have been raised across the river. They are Nelorkal anaicut, Thottachi anaicut and Piranoor anaicut, Maravankal, Sambadaikal and Varahamandankal respectively.

The Mottaiyar

It is a tributary of the Gundar river at its head and an anaicut called Mottai anaicut has been built across the river.

The Manimuthar

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80 Idem.
81 Idem.
The river Manimuthar is a major tributary of the Tamiraparani river. It arises from the dense forest a top Senkutheri in Ambasamudram taluk at the height of about 1300mtrs from M.S.L. The tributaries of the Manimuthar are the Keezha Manimuthar (lower or eastern Manimuthar) and the Varattar. The river runs from its source for a distance of 9k.m. and confluence with the Tamiraparani near Kallidaikurichi. In its 9 K.M. course, it makes minor cataracts. The river contributes a lot, as tributary to enhance the water level of Tamiraparani as it is always in full spate and perennial.

The river receives its water from the Manimuthar falls. It runs for some miles through rocks and fertilizers of the Tirunelveli District. The hill tract, which supplies water to this river, receives an average rainfall of 750 to 350 mm.

In the year 1957, Manimuthar anaicut was built across the river just three K.M above it confluence with Tamiraparani. The water is stored and used for agriculture and drinking water purposes. This river supplies water to the regions like Nanguneri, Sathankulam, Vijayanarayana, Papankulam and Senkulam villages.

The Nambiyar

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84 Ibid., p.21.
86 R. Kalasan, op.cit., p.29.
87 Ibid., p.30.
The Nambiyar river is the water source to the Nanguneri taluk. It takes origin in the western slopes of the Western Ghats 8 k.m.s, west of Thirukkurungudi village of an altitude of 1500m. above M.S.L. It runs east words and turns southeast where it is crossed over by the Tirunelveli and Nagercoil trunk road and confluences in the Gulf of Mannar. The river has two tributaries, the Parattaiyar and the Thamaraiyar. The first tributary is a stream from Mahendragiri Hills and the second tributary originates from the combination of two hill streams, the Mombaiyar stream and the Kodumudiyar. These tributaries join the river Nambiyar at the foot of the Mahendragiri Hills. The river has been harnessed by built nine anaicuts, Mailaimani anaicut, Dhalavaipuram anaicut, Rajakkamangalam anaicut, Mylapuram anaicut, Kannanthur anaicut, Vijayan anaicut, Kovankulam anaicut, Thittikulam anaicut, and Pulimangalam anaicut.\(^{88}\)

**The Hanumanathis**

There are two rivers in the name of Hanumanathis one flowing in the Tenkasi taluk, which has been already dealt with, and the other in the Nanguneri taluk. The later has its spring head in the Mahendragiri Hills of the Western Ghats at a height of about 1400 meters. from the M.S.L. After flowing in the hills to a distance of 5 K.M. It touches the plains 6 K.M west of Panagudi village in Nanguneri Taluk. The river traverses in Nanguneri taluk for a distance of 30 K.M and confluences with the Gulf of Mannar in the Bay

\(^{88}\) *Idem.*
of Bengal on the coast of chettikulam village. Sivampillai anaicut, Senthil Kathayankal anaicut, Thandayalkulam anaicut, Senjothi anaicut, Perungudi anaicut, Vadakkankulam anaicut, Adankarkulam anaicut, Sakkillianparai anaicut, and Kanjaneri anaicut are the nine anaicut raised across this river.  

The **Karunaiyar**

The river constitutes the surplus waters of Vijayanarayanam in Nanguneri taluk together with the local drains flow as karunaiyar or Karuvenniraiyar. This river runs for a distance of 30 K.M. and meets the sea near Manappadu in Tiruchendur taluk of Thoothukudi District.

The **Vadamalaiyaru**

Two rivulets, Virisidai –idiyaru and kadaiyamayaru in the eastern slopes of the Western Ghats above Sankarankoil taluk, combine and flow as Vadamalaiyaru which runs in the taluk and empties into the big tank of Malaiyadikurichi.

The **Kottamalaiyaru**

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89 Souvenir, Tirunelveli Mavatta Neerpasana Manadu, *op.cit.*, pp. 113 - 118.
90 *Idem*.
This river also originates at an altitudes of 1700 mtrs. above M.S.L. in the Western Ghats above Sankarankoil taluk. It merges with the small taluk of Durgapuram\textsuperscript{92}.

**The Kombaiyaru**

The river springs forth from the Western Ghats Sankarankoil taluk over a height of 1700mtrs. It is a tributary of Deviyar, the major Portion of which benefits the Srivilliputhur taluk of Virudhunagar District. It merges with Deviyar near Vadayappatti village\textsuperscript{93}.

**The Rajasingiyaru**

The Kallimalaiyaru, the Pazhaiyaru and the Thattaparaiyaru, are flowing in the Western Ghats in Sankarankoil taluk at an altitude of 1650 mtrs. These rivers unite to one river and flows as named Pazhaiyaru. This river flowing after some distance takes the name Rajasingiyaru. Further, it divides in to two branches, one retaining the name, Rajasingiyaru and the other bearing the name, Ullaru. The two branches then merge with the Deviyaru and before the merger a stream branches off from the Pazhaiyaru and joins the Nichamba river after running in the name of Pazhaiyaru. There are four anaicuts across the Rajasingiyaru\textsuperscript{94}.

**The Mundhal odai**

\textsuperscript{92} Souvenir, *Tirunelveli Mavatta Neerpasana Manadu op.cit.*, pp.113-118.
\textsuperscript{93} Idem.
\textsuperscript{94} Idem.
This stream originates in Chokkampatti reserve forests (Tenkasi taluk) and runs in the plains in two branches.

**Tanks**

In Tirunelveli District, there are 420 big tanks and 1779 small tanks. The taluks which have more tanks are Tenkasi in 114 and Tirunelveli in 104. These water sources are used for irrigation. Besides rain water, the tanks are fed by the reservoirs of the rivers of the District by means of Channels. The statistics of the major and minor tanks in the taluks respectively are 104 and 159 in Tirunelveli, 30 and 120 in Srivaikundam, 40 and 639 in Nanguneri, 89 and 337 in Amabasamudram, 114 and 92 Tenkasi, 7 and 187 in Senkottai and 38 and 298 in Sankarankoil.  

**Ports in Tirunelveli**

The glory of Tirunelveli District is the Ports. It is noted with centres of natural beauty. It situates a clean and green environment ensuring pollution free of hygienic atmosphere. In addition to peaceful and calm locality with all facilities. The following are the very important ports in the Tirunelveli District.

**Kayal**

Kayal is a small village in the Srivaikundam taluk of the Tirunelveli District, situated in 8° 40’ N’, and 78°5’, near the sea, on the northern bank of

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95 *Souvenir Tirunelveli Mavatta Neerpasana Manadu*, (Tamil), *op. cit.*, p.100.
the Tamiraparani river. It was once a famous port, and was visited in 1292 by Marco Polo, the Venetian Traveller who called it ‘a Great and Noble City’, and noticed it at length. A similar glowing account of the place is given by two Persian historians quoted by Colonel Yale; Kayal sprang into existence after kolkai, but the silt of the Tamiraparani ruined both places as ports and has now turned them into inland villages. Relics of the ancient greatness of Kayal are, however, still discoverable in the shape of broken tiles and remnants of pottery. There are also two old temples with inscriptions. An interesting and detailed account of the place will be found in Bishop Caldwell's History of Tinnevelly.

Kayalpatinam

It is a small port in the Srivaikuntam taluk of Tirunelveli District, situated in 80° 34’ N, and 78° 8’ E, a few miles to the south of the Tamiraparani river and 18 miles south of Tuticorin. It is a union, with a population (1901 census) of 11,746. Its sea-borne trade which is chiefly in rice and coconuts with Ceylon and timber and areca-nuts with Travancore is carried on by the Musalman tribe Lebbais. There is also some trade in Palmyra-leaf boxes and jaggery (coarse sugar), and a large salt factory is at work.


97 Ibid, p.284.
Korkhai (Kolkai, Kolchoi, Kolchei)

Korkai is a village in the taluk of Srivaikuntam, in the Tirunelveli District, situated 12 miles east of Srivaikuntam town. This has the population of (1901 census) 2518. It is a famous port in South India. Tradition asserts that it was the earliest seat of the Dravidian Civilization, and the spot where Chera, Chola, and Pandya the legendary progenitors of the three famous South Indian Dynasties, ruled in common before the two first founded kingdoms of their own in the west and north. It eventually became the capital of the Pandyan line, and was known to the early European geographers as one of the most important trading place in India. It is mentioned by the author of the Periplus (A.D.80) as celebrated the places for pearl fishing, and is also referred to by Ptolemy (A.D. 130). The sea gradually retired from korkai, owing to the deposit of the silt of the Tamiraprarani on the shore in front and in consequence a new emporium (Kaval) arose between korkai and the sea.\(^{98}\)

Kulasekarapattinam

Kulasekarapattinam town and seaport situated in the Srivaikuntam taluk of the Tirunelveli District. It is a union, with a population (1901 census) of 19898. A small quantity of salt, of excellent quality is produced here. The principal exports are fibre, oils and oil - cake, Jaggery (Coarse Sugar) and

\(^{98}\) *Idem.*
tobacco. The total value of the exports in 1903 - 1904 was 3.8 lakhs, and of the imports 4.3 lakhs\textsuperscript{99}.

**Veera Pandyan Pattinam**

Vira Pandya Pattinam was an important medieval Pandya port which flourished under the rule of Maravarman Sundara Pandya. It was named as Cholanadu kondan Pattinam after Maravarma Sundara Pandya who conquered and annexed the territory of the Cholas\textsuperscript{100}. The port was frequented by these Arab Muslim merchants as well as Tamil Muslim merchants known as Marakkayars. Quadi Abu Bakar, the Muslim chief of the port issued an order in 1387 that out of the proceeds from the sale of commodities conducted in this port, a tax of quarter of one percent was to be paid for the maintenance of the Jumma Masjid of the place. It is to be noted that this port of Virapandyapattinam was primarily a famous Muslim trading centre before the emergence of kayalpattinam which was also located very close to it\textsuperscript{101}.

**Punnaikayal**

The Portuguese traders settled down on the southern bank of the river Tamiraparani in 1544 to conduct their commercial activities in Punnaikayal. This is evident from three letters, written from there dated 14\textsuperscript{th} March 1544, 5th

\textsuperscript{99} Ibid., p.285.

\textsuperscript{100} S. Jeyaseela Stephen, *Portuguese in the Tamil Coast Historical Explorations in Commerce and Culture* 1507-1749, Pondichery; 1998, p.27.

September 1544 and 18th December 1544\(^{102}\). Its strategic location with the sea on the one side and the lagoon on the other which could be reached by boat was considered as an advantage very much liked by the Portuguese.

A mud fort was constructed here in the same year\(^{103}\). It was the second Portuguese mud fort on the Tamil littoral in the Eastern Coast of Peninsular India. The Portuguese captain and factor of the pearl fishery coast took up permanent residence here with a garrison of fifty men. According to Portuguese documents, Punnaikayal was almost like an island and often got flooded, but the port was eventually saved because one such flood in the Tamiraparani river formed a new outlet into the sea\(^{104}\). Lisbon, the Portuguese captain appointed by the Portuguese king could exercise overall supervision and control over the pearl fishery coast. The paravas were converted by the Portuguese Missionaries and they stationed at Punnaikayal. They were subjects to use the pearl fishery in this fort. A letter dated 6 December 1547 very clearly stated that they had made Punnaikayal as their permanent headquarters and started staying in the new residence built there\(^{105}\).

The King of Vijayanagar used to collect from the Nayaks of Kanyakumari and this native chieftain approached the Portuguese captain Antonio Moniz for military assistance, in the war against the Vijayanagar

\(^{102}\) Ibid., p. 72.
\(^{103}\) R. Caldwell. *op. cit.*, p.72.
\(^{104}\) S. Jeyaseela, *op. cit.*, p.72.
\(^{105}\) Ibid., pp. 72-73.
forces and in return promised to build fortress in Kanyakumari at his own expense obliging himself to pay each year panams. However, the Portuguese captain of the pearl fishery coast refused to extend any military help knowing that their existence in the port settlement of Punnaikayal very much depended upon the favour or disfavour of the Vijayanagarulers. In 1560 once again the Nayaks of Madurai invaded Punnaikayal and demanded his right to two days fishing of pearls as tribute due to him. When the fall of Vijayanagar Empire in 1565 was a great blow to the Portuguese commerce although the Vijayanagar army which plundered and attacked Punnaikayal settlement was never helpful to Portuguese commerce on the pearl fishery coast even much before their fall of the battle of Talikota.

**Forts**

Forts are once used by the poligars in this region. They served as military out posts for the British. Even today the forts have been maintained by the Government of Tamil Nadu and they are the heritages of Tirunelveli District. They are situated in Tirunelveli, Palayamkottai, Vasudevanalloor, Kayattar, Panchalamkurichy, Nerkattum seval, Ramanathapuram, Sivagangai, Kovilpatti and Sivagiri. Of all the forts were the strongest and was a stone built one. In practice, the poligar built the forts according to his wish for the safety.

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In Tirunelveli, Madurai and Dindigul there were twenty five, twelve and eighth forts respectively.109

**Wild Life Parks and Sanctuaries**

Ancient Kings considered the deforestation and bringing the land under plough as an agricultural reform. Now, the Central and State Governments all over the world consider the aorestation and the preservation of forests as the backbone of the forest policy. The British records show that those who killed the wild animals such as elephants, tigers and lions were rewarded by the District administration. Now, the state policy is totally prohibiting hunting to preserve the animals by passing related acts.110 In the District, there is a Tiger Reserve Mudanthurai and two bird sanctuaries in Koonthankulam and Moonradaippu.

**Mundanthurai - Kalakad Tiger Reserve**

The Mundanthurai - Kalakad Wild Life Sanctuary in the Tirunelveli District is developed as a National Tiger Reserve from the year 1988 with a total area of 817 sq.K.M in the south most Western Ghat ranges.111 This tiger project for the preservation of tigers - was started by the Government of India in 1973 due to their concern for Indias dwindling wild life. There are at present

109 *Idem.*


111 *Brochure, Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve, op.cit.*
19 Tiger reserves spread all over the country. Each tiger reserve is managed by the concerned State Government with the assistance from Government of India.

Prior to the tiger scheme of the Government of India, the Government of Tamil Nadu constituted the Mundanthurai wild life Sanctuary in 1962 under the Wild Animals and Birds protection Act of 1912\textsuperscript{112}. The area of the sanctuary was 5678 K.M. and falls within the Ambasamudram taluk. Later in 1976, the Kalakad reserve was notified as a wild life sanctuary\textsuperscript{113}. The nearest stations are Cheranmahadevi, and Ambasamudram which are 20 K.M and 15 K.M, respectively from this place. The nearest Airports are Madurai and Trivandrum. One can reach this place by road also from Ambasamudram and Kalakad. Frequent buses are playing from Ambasamudram and kalakad to this place\textsuperscript{114}.

In the year 1988 the two Sanctuaries were merged together to form Kalakad - Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve. The total area of the reserve is 817.89 K.M. out of which 459 sq. K.M is core zone and 358 sq. K.M. is buffer zone. The wild life census on the pugmarks, conducted in 1992 shows that there are 17 tigers, 24 elephants, and around 100 panthers\textsuperscript{115}. The great diversity of geographic and climatic features of this conservation unit has led to rich bio-

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{112} K.S.K. Vel Mani, \textit{op.cit.}, p.41.
  \item \textsuperscript{113} \textit{Idem}.
  \item \textsuperscript{114} Brochure, Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve, \textit{op.cit.},
  \item \textsuperscript{115} Report from the Field Director and Conservator of Forests, Project Tiger, Tirunelveli, 31 Aug 1994.
\end{itemize}
diversity of fauna and flora. The premier conservation project nurtures, inter-
alia, varieties of rare threatened and endangered flora and fauna in abundance
in which tiger is at the apex of the complex biotops. Out of 4390 species of
flora, (175 families, 1256 genera) recorded in the erstwhile Madras Presidency,
this conservation unit alone accounts for 2105 species (157 families 872 genera) out
of which, 32 are endangered. Among the fauna, nearly 17 are endangered116.

The tiger reserve is the southernmost habitat of the tigers. Other
predators like panthers, jungle cats, civets, dholes, jackals, striped hyenas are
also seen here. The reptiles and the amphibians of the reserve include king
cobra, common Krait, russel, viper, dark Pit viper, monitor lizard, garden
lizard, tortoise, crocodile, and rare species of frog. The avifauna of the
sanctuary consists of as many as species such as egrets, herons, jungle fowls,
spur bowls, partridges, squills, emerald oves, minivets, bee easters, sparrows,
owls, night jars, kites, flower peekers, eagles, swifts wagtails, wood peckers,
kingfisher, dragons, parasite fly catchers, parakeets, etc117.

It gives a thrilling experience to trekkers. This tiger reserve is opened on
all days between 6 A.M. to 6 P.M. throughout the year. However, the best
season is September to January. Forest rest houses and dormitories are available at

116 Report from Officer in Charge, Zoological Survey of India, Southern Regional

117 Idem.
Mundanthurai and Thalayanai\textsuperscript{118}. Forest rest house of Sengaltheri provides accommodation with catering facilities\textsuperscript{119}.

**Koothankulam and Moonradaippu Birds Sanctuaries**

The two villages of Koothakulam and Moonradaippu in the District are emerging as a new favourite of the migratory birds. It is just 38 K.M away from Tirunelveli and is nearby Nanguneri town. It may soon be catapulted into the list of popular water bird sanctuaries in the country. This village is sparsely populated. Migratory birds start coming by December end and fly away to their northern homes by June or July. After they lay eggs, hatch them and the young ones grow old enough to fly with the older ones. About 35 species of birds is it this calm but congenial village for breeding\textsuperscript{120}. The village has with beautiful natural surroundings consisting of forest and ponds. The migratory birds come here from Pakistan, Mayanmer, Srilanka, the United States of America and Australia, flying across miles and miles to reach the place. It is claimed that in this season about 10,000 birds from various countries migrate here. Some of the species of the birds that can be easily spotted here are painted storks, pelicans, comorants spot-bill-ducks, white ibis, egras, herons, minivets fly catchers, kingfishers - partridges, quails spotted and

\textsuperscript{118} Personal Interview with the Range Officer, Range Office, Kalakkad Mundanthurai, Tiger Reserve, Kalakkad, 16\textsuperscript{th} May 2008..

\textsuperscript{119} website, http : //the comforts com/the comforts directory.

\textsuperscript{120} E. Thirumalai Kumarasamy, *Tourism Assets of Tirunelveli District*, A Paper Presented in the Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli, 19 and 20 September 1996.
brown doves, babblers, chipmunks, and pleasant-tailed jacanas. These birds do not build nests in trees but lay their eggs only in mounds of earth in the tank. In order to attract more birds throughout the year there is a proposal to plant fig trees, alther anyan, naval (jamoon) etc. and to provide water to the irrigation tanks in around Koothankulam all through the year.

**Moonradaippu Birds Sanctuary**

Moonradaippu bird’s sanctuary is situated in the most beautiful surroundings of the Nagercoil Tirunelveli National Highway, away from 18 K.M in Tirunelveli. This bird sanctuary is the most performed tourist destination for the bird watchers and the nature lovers. The migratory birds have been visiting this hamlet for decades during the breeding season. The best season for the tourist is April to June.

**Water falls**

**Courtallam**

Courtallam waterfalls are the greatest attraction, not only to the domestic people but also to the foreigners. It is best fresh water bathing place in the world. Tirunelveli comprises many water falls in other parts of the District.

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121 website, *op.cit.*, p.4.
123 Interview with Stephan, Local Resident, Moonradaippu, 15th August 2009.
The very important waterfalls are Courtallam, the “Spa of the South” is situated at an elevation of about 170 mtrs. on the Western Ghats in the Tirunelveli District. This is the world famous health resort, because Courtallam water has medicinal properties. The water runs through forests of herbs and the water has therapeutic qualities to cure physical ailments. It is about 9 K.M. from the Tenkasi railway station on the Southern Railway connected by Virudhunagar Tenkasi chord line as well as by the main line passing through Kovilpatti, Maniyachi, Tirunelveli and Ambasamudram. The town is connected to all the important main roads by good metalled roads.

The picturesque surroundings with the backdrops of cloud-capped spurs of the Western Ghats lend unusual charm to the falls. The rapturous scene of the falls gets the heightened by the cool breeze that wafts during seasonal months (June to September) along with intermittent drizzle and sunlight.

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125 Thirukkuttala Sthala Varalaru (Tamil), Courtallam, Nov.2004, pp.30-35.
126 Apper Versified the place Courtallam – Et\do VTU\uW\o Ecou\i\Oi T\om\i\OY
127 In tamil £\do V\i\OT\uW\o (M. Radha Krishnapillai, Thennattu Kovilgal, Tamil, Chennai, 1957, p.219).
During the season as also from November to January the period of the North-East Monsoon, the waterfall, vadaruni, seems to be one of the most striking natural beauties of the place. Such an idyllic place strikingly surpasses others in its having a vast spread of cascade of different location is the hill range\textsuperscript{128}. All along the spurs of the Western Ghas which form more or less a hemisphere around Courtallam, there are eight places where water pours down torrentially with varying velocity and force according to the height of the precipice\textsuperscript{129}. They are Main falls, Chittaruvi, Shenpagadevi falls, Thenaruvi, Five falls, Orchard falls, New falls and Tiger falls. The Old Courtallam falls also known for 'Thiru Courtallam'\textsuperscript{130}. This river named as sittaru, means siriyaru (small river) is also known as ‘Palaru’. The puranas mentioned this river is ‘Chitra Nathi’\textsuperscript{131}. Other names of Thiru Courtallams are Madhu undan ooyirmeetapuram, Peedurkanda theerthapuram, Pavargameetapuram, Vezhampuchithapuram, Vedan Valanchaithapuram, Sivathurogam theerthapuram, Vasanthaperur, and Devakoodapuram. This history of those names has been explained about the sthala paranas\textsuperscript{132}.

From early days itself Courtallam has been considered as a sanatorium of the District and this place was frequently visited by the Europeans. Affluent

\textit{The Hindu, Daily News Paper, Tirunelveli\textsuperscript{1} English October 28, 1994).}


\textsuperscript{129} Arulmigu Thirukuttalanathaswami Thirukoil Sthala Varalaru, \textit{op.cit.}, p.34.

\textsuperscript{130} Interview with A. Ponkumar, Local Resident, Courtallam, 14\textsuperscript{th} August, 2009.

\textsuperscript{131} Thirukkuttalanathar Sthala Varalaru, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 34 - 35.

\textsuperscript{132} Souvenir, Tirunelveli Mavatta Neerpasana Manadu, (Tamil) \textit{op.cit.}, pp.1-25.
citizens and officers owned bungalows here. In some places in the mountain, oranges, coffee, coconuts, Jackfruits and guavas, cardamoms etc., are cultivated.\textsuperscript{133}

Visitors to this place like to have bath in these falls from dawn to dusk. One can have bath at any time in a day and one would not get sneezing or cold as the water is said to possess medicinal qualities of the herbal plants in this mountain. Many medicinal reports say that the falling of the water, after first shock is over, gives an indescribable feeling of pleasure but its constant beating hastens the circulation and produces a fine glow all over the body. It also dispels languor, raises the spirits stimulates appetite and promotes digestion. It is, therefore, said that those suffering from rheumatic joints, chronic headache, nerve disorder and fits of insanity get cured by lengthy stay at Courtallam. There are also institutions run by ayurvedic physicians and many patients suffering from insanity get treatment here. The scenic setting of this place accompanied by the tender care of the physicians yielded a good result in the patients with mental instability.\textsuperscript{134}

Apart from the dashing cascades it has temple, dedicated to Lord Siva called as Thirukutralanathar which faces east. The Goddess is Kuzhalvaimozhi (Venu-vakuadini) and is on the right of the presiding deity. Goddess Parasakthi is in the left\textsuperscript{135}.

\textsuperscript{133} Interview with S. Manikandan, Local Resident, Courtallam, 14\textsuperscript{th} August, 2009.
\textsuperscript{134} Souvenir, Tirunelveli Mavatta Neerpasana Manadu (Tamil) \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 1-25.
Manimuthar Falls

Manimuthar falls originates in the Pothigai hill on the Western Ghats. The perennial river Tamiraparani flows through the Tirunelveli District. There are few waterfalls in the river. The most significant among them is the Manimuthar falls. It is a historically significant sacred spring called Kalyani Theertham. The water from this spring flows through rocky crevices before falling over Manimuthar. This falls flows at a Distant of ten kilometres from the Manimuthar village and five kilometres from the Manimuthar dam. People can travel for 5 K.M. from Manimuthar dam by boat to reach the falls. The water is flowing in this falls throughout the year. This water has a sacred quality and hence pilgrims come here to bath in the water. Sometimes bathing is prohibited due to this casualties, because some dangerous whirlpools are here. The Peoples are advised very carefully to bath137.

Pambar falls

The pambar falls is found in Vanatheertham near Pavanasam. From a distance, this appears like the long tails of a snake, and hence it has derived its

136 E. Thirumalai Kumarasamy, op.cit.
137 Interview with A. Perumal, Local Resident, Manimuthar, 15th August 2009.
name as pambar falls. This has two cascades, one of 500ft. height and another of 200ft. height. This stream is parani which originates in the Pothigai hill\textsuperscript{138}.

**Agasthiar falls**

There are some references about the river Tamiraparani occurs in some folk songs. It is believed that the river is sacred. The Tamil poetry referred it as porunaiyaru. Agasthiar falls is found near kalyani cascade on the slopes of Pothigai Hill. It is 3 K.M. distant from Papanasam. It originates in Agasthiar hill and falls from a height of 100ft. Boat facilities are arranged by the Distinct administration to go to Agasthiar falls from Tamiraparani dam. The waters of this falls are stored in the Tamiraparani dam and utilized for irrigational purposes\textsuperscript{139}.

The waters of Agasthiar falls has some medicinal quality. The best time to visit this place is June July. People believed that once the great Sage Agasthiar bathed in this falls. That is why the falls is called after his name, Agasthiar falls\textsuperscript{140}.

\textsuperscript{138} R. Caldwell, *op.cit.*, p.11.
\textsuperscript{139} Arulmigu Thirukuttala Nathaswami Thirukoil Sthalavaralaru, *op.cit.*, p.38.
\textsuperscript{140} Interview with S. Mariappan, Local Resident, Courtallam, 14\textsuperscript{th} August, 2009.