INTRODUCTION

Kanyakumari District, the Southern most end of the Indian sub-continent is an enchanting land of natural beauty and panoramic view. Situated in the tropical region of the Indian peninsula, it is here the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal coverage\(^1\). A part of the erstwhile princely State of Travancore prior to 1956, the Tamil speaking area of Travancore got merged into the present Kanyakumari District in 1956 as per the State Reorganization Commission of Indian States on linguistic basis with Madras State, now known as Tamil Nadu\(^2\). Known as a part of South Travancore before reorganization, the present Kanyakumari District comprises of four Taluks namely Agastheeswaram, Thovalai, Kalkulam and Vilavancode with a total area of 1684 sq. kms\(^3\).

Kanyakumari District is bounded by Tirunelveli District on the north and the east, Kerala State on the north west and Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean in the west and south respectively. It lies between 77°05' and 77°36' of the eastern longitude and 8°03 feet and 8°35 feet of the northern latitude\(^4\). According to the census report of India, the District has a population of 1,669,763 of which 829,542 are male and 840,221 are female\(^5\). It is the smallest District in the State but endowed with best literacy.

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\(^1\) 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.
The name of the District, Kanyakumari is derived from the popular deity of the place named Kanni Bhagavathi Amman\(^6\). As per legend, Goddess Parvathy, a virgin did penance on one of the rocks of this land’s end to obtain Lord Shiva as her husband. On her failure to achieve the goal, she attained incarnation as Kanni Bhagavathi or Devi Kanyakumari. A temple dedicated to her is situated on the seashore of Kanyakumari which draws millions of devotees from all over India. Hence, the district is named as Kanyakumari.

**Physical Features**

Kanyakumari District settles 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\(^7\). Situated at the foot of the Western Ghats, the District is endowed with few mountains\(^8\) namely Parvathamalai, Dheepkadaimottai, Varyattumottai, Samikutchi, Thiruvannamalaimottai, Petchimottai and Sambalmottai. Mahendragiri is the most important of them and is 5427” in height. In the extreme south east, the mountain range gradually sinks to the mid land plains and finally loses itself in the Indian ocean near Kanyakumari\(^9\). In the east, the mountain range leaves open several passes. Among them, the Aramboly pass forms the best entrance to the District from Tirunelveli to Trivandrum. The Tamil powers often invaded south Travancore

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through this pass which played a role in the military and strategic history of Travancore State. Besides this, there are some isolated mountains with rocks of various sizes scattered through the district. The Maruthuvamalai\textsuperscript{10} in the Agastheeswaram Taluk, the Vellimalai and Chungankadai Mountain in the Kalkulam Taluk and Viniyakundam at Munchirai in the Vilavancode Taluk\textsuperscript{11}, are some of the small mountains not only safeguard Kanyakumari District but provided much resources.

**Rivers and Lakes**

Kanyakumari District is gifted with some rivers. They are mostly perennial and short in nature. Pazhayar is one among the prominent rivers which rises in the mountainous north of Mahendragiri hills in the Thovalai Taluk. It passes through a wild tract to enter the plains and flows in south western direction. After a long course of 37 kilometer’s, it enjoins with another river Kothayar near Thiruvattar. The two rivers get united to form the Kuzhitturayararu which is locally known as Thambaraparani\textsuperscript{12}. The length of the river is about 50 kilometers and this river flows through the hilly tracts of Kalkulam and Vilavancode Taluk and touch as the Sea at Thengaipattinam. Similarly the Mullayar in Vilavancode Taluk flowing about 11 kilometers join the western Thambaraparani near Thikkurichi. The Valliyar, another prominent river with a length of 60 kilometers and joins with the Arabian Sea near Kadiapattinam.

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\textsuperscript{10} Maruthuvamalai is the colloquial form of Maruthuvamalai which means the hill where the medical herbs grew in plenty.

\textsuperscript{11} Nambiar, P.K., *op.cit.*, p.5.

\textsuperscript{12} Kuzhitturayararu otherwise known as Thambaraparani is different from the river Thambaraparani which flows through Thirunelveli District.
Similar to this, Paraliyar or Pazhayar river joins the Sea at Manakudi. Besides these rivers, Kanyakumari District is known for few lake and lagoons. Prominent artificial fresh water lake are Pechiparai, Perunchani and lake of Thamaraikulam and Thengaiapattinam lake are the two natural salt water lakes adding the panorama of the Kanyakumari District\textsuperscript{13}.

**Soil, Climate and Rainfall**

Generally the soil of Kanyakumari District is fertile. It is mostly of the black loam variety. In the coastal region sandy type soil is largely found. Gravelly Soil is generally seen near the mountain ranges. However, in the lowlands, a mixture of white sand and sandy loam is seen. In the midland valleys and highlands a fairly fertile soil of fine type is seen sufficient rainfall make the soil more alluvial and fertile.

Usually the district enjoys a pleasant weather providing warm and humid climate with cold season. The major factors that influence the climate of this region are mostly the south west monsoon and the north east monsoon winds. The proximity towards the sea and the dwindling height of the Western Ghats, the summer season is generally oppressive. The summer starts from March-May is followed by south west monsoon from June to September\textsuperscript{14} yielding sufficient rainfall. However, the low height of the Western Ghats in this region stands on the way of heavy showers. This monsoon period lasts till the middle of August or September and again the atmosphere becomes dry.


\textsuperscript{14} Travancore Administrative Report 1944-1945, Trivandrum, 1946, p.2.
But when compared to other regions, Kanyakumari District has a pleasant climate, gifted with adequate rain which makes the land mostly evergreen.

**Coast Line**

Kanyakumari District is gifted with a long stretch of coast line of about 60 kilometers. Its coastal landscape consists of long and sandy beaches, rocky and sandy ridges and sandy and swampy estuaries. The ancient part of Colachel is the only natural port on the west coast in Tamil Nadu.\(^{15}\)

**Forest**

In Kanyakumari District, a sizeable portion of landscape is covered by natural forest. Forest, one of the principal natural resources not only maintains environmental stability but play a vital role in preserving ecological balances.

It provides raw material for a wide range of industries. Forests supply fuel for cooking, timber for shelter, fodder for livestock and wood for making agriculture implements besides yielding species, fruits and roots for sustenance. For administrative purpose, forest areas are divided into four territorial ranges namely Kulasekaram, Alagiapandipuram, Boothapandy and Upper Kodayar. It is estimated that nearly 54644 hectares of land in the district is covered by natural forest. Most of the forest areas are rich in timber and plants of great economic value. In the forest areas commercial crops such as tea, coffee, pepper, cardamom, cloves and medicinal plant are

grown in plenty. Besides, rubber plantation is found mostly in these areas of Keeriparai, Paralaiair, Manaloadi, Cittar, Mylar and Kallar.

Flora and Fauna

Kanyakumari District with its scenic beauty, fine climate and rich resources is noted for a wide variety of flora and fauna. The flora of Kanyakumari District are known for variable timber trees like teak, rosewood, sandal wood, trees yielding gums, resin and dyes, avenue trees, cycads and palms, bamboos and flowering and ornamental plants, making the district a botanical garden. Moreover the district is rich in wild life. Animals include wild and mild ones like elephant, tiger, bear and deer are in the dense forest. Domestic animals like buffalos, goats are very common in the district along with the wide variety of birds.

A brief political sketch

Kanyakumari District that was formed in 1956 has a distinctive history of its own. It consists of four taluks with 6 assembly constituencies. Known as Nanchil Nadu or Edai Nadu this district due to its rich natural resources and strategic location this part of the land is a vicissitudes fortune among various dynasties from yore. Earliest known rulers of this region belonged to Ay dynasty whose ancestors are referred to as the

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“Hida Raja” in the Asokan rock edicts II and XIV. The term ‘Hida’ is a variation of ‘Idor Idaya’ a synonym of ‘Ayar’, whose singular from is ‘Ay’, probably, the region around Pothiyil Mountains was ruled by them\textsuperscript{19}. Thus the antiquity of the “Ays” dates back to about 250 B.C. and possibly still earlier\textsuperscript{20}. The sangam classics refer to some Ay kings such as Ay Andiran Titiyan. I, Titiyan II, Nanchil porunan, Atiyan, Sadayan, Kurunardhan, Karumandadakkan and Vikramaditya varagunam who ruled from 777 AD. to 925 AD\textsuperscript{21}. The origin of the Ays, like many other clans, is obscure. According to the \textit{Paliyam Copper Plates}, they were the descendants of the family of the Yadavas who claim a celestial origin\textsuperscript{22}. The epigraphical sources of this period available in the Kanyakumari District speak of the Pandyas who ruled this region. They were Kadungon, Maravarman Sendon, Arikesari Maravarman, Kochadyan, Maravarman varaguna-II and Maravarman Raja Simha-II\textsuperscript{23}. Towards the beginning of the tenth century, the Chola dynasty had slowly risen to power in the south. Thus, Nanchil Nadu comes under the sway of the Cholas who had driven out the Pandyas\textsuperscript{24}.

The pomp and splendor of the Cholas continued upto the reign of Kulothungachola I. But, with the ascendancy of the Hoysalas and Western Chalukyas, the Chola power began to dwindle. Utilizing this situation, the Venad chieftains thought of establishing their hold over considerable areas of Nanchil Nadu

\textsuperscript{19} Management plan of Arasu Rubber Corporation Ltd., 2006-2007, Nagercoil, pp.1-5.
in a slow and steady process\textsuperscript{25}. According to tradition, it is believed that on the decline of the Chera family which ruled over Kerala one of its branches, migrated to the south and settled in Padmanabhapuram. This branch established the ancient kingdom of Venad. Literary and inscriptional evidences reveal the fact that the Pandyas were always in contact with Nanchil Nadu. The Pandya Viranarayana, Varaguna II and Maravarman Rajasimha II were the rulers who ruled this region from 560 A.D. to 5920 AD\textsuperscript{26}. But Virakeralavarman annexed the present Kanyakumari, Suchindrum and other adjoining areas from a Nanchil Kuravan, a local chieftain\textsuperscript{27}. Subsequently, the policy of conquest and annexation initiated by Virakeralavarman was apoted by his successors. However, during the 13\textsuperscript{th} and 14\textsuperscript{th} centuries A.D., Venad was ruled by powerful rulers like Viraudayya Marthandavarma (1314-1350)\textsuperscript{28}. During this period some territories of the Pandya Kingdom were brought under his sway. Udhaya Marthandavarman, the Chera ruler brought a major portion of the present Tirunelveli District under his control. However, subsequent to the intervention of the Madurai Nayaks, the Venad Kingdom began to decline. But, they could not succeed much as they expected. Bala Marthandavarma who ruled the country from 1729-1758 A.D defeated the royal authority\textsuperscript{29}. After his demise, Bala Marthandavarma popularly known as Dharamaraja who succeeded the throne reigned the empire between 1758 to 1798 introduced some sweeping reforms including the transfer of the Capital from Padmanabhapuram to

\begin{tabular}{l}
\textsuperscript{25} Nambiar, P.K., \textit{op.cit.}, p.3. \\
\textsuperscript{26} Pilai, K.K., \textit{The Suchindrum Temple}, Madras 1953, pp.26-28. \\
\textsuperscript{27} Nilakanda Sastrı, K.A., \textit{The Pandya Kingdom}, Madras, 1972, p.23. \\
\textsuperscript{29} Nambiar, P.K., \textit{op.cit.}, p.3. \\
\end{tabular}
Trivandrum. Moreover, he effected over-whelming improvements in the arena of agriculture, irrigation communication and industries\textsuperscript{30}. Balaramavarma (1798-1810) who succeeded Dharmaraja imposed heavy taxes. As the people could not bear the burden of taxation, they revolted under leadership of Veluthampi\textsuperscript{31}. During the next period of the regency of Rani Lakshmi Bai (1810-1815) various improvements were effected in trade and commerce by the effective enforcement of market regulation\textsuperscript{32}. In 1815, Parvathibai (1815-1824) succeeded her sister Rani Lekshmi Bai. Her period witnessed the large scale of conversion to Christianity due to the activities of missionaries. As a result, in 1816 the London Mission Society was established at Nagercoil\textsuperscript{33}. The succession of Ramavarma Swathi Thirunal (1829-1847) was marked by many administrative reforms in judiciary. Besides, he implemented English education with the assistance of Christian Missionaries. Moreover, he evinced much interest in fine arts especially in music and earned an ever lasting reputation as one of the musical maestros of South India\textsuperscript{34}. Uthiram Thirunal (1847-1860) the next successor attempted to improve the financial condition of the state by means of effective election of revenue. As a social reformer, he abolished all restriction on the use of the Breast cloth by Nadar women in South Travancore, by a royal proclamation in 1859\textsuperscript{35}. After Uthiram Thirunal, Ayilyam Thirunal, who succeeded to the throne in 1860 continued to rule upto 1880. His long reign

\textsuperscript{30} Pillai, K.K., \textit{op.cit.}, p.32.
\textsuperscript{32} Nagam Aiya, V., \textit{op. cit.}, p.262.
\textsuperscript{33} Pillai, K.K., \textit{op.cit.}, p.53.
\textsuperscript{34} Sreedhara Menon, A., \textit{op.cit.}, p.223.
witnessed wide range of improvements especially in the field of land revenue, public works and other social reforms\textsuperscript{36}. The credit goes to Ayilyam Thirunal for his reforms in education. He was the first king who opened separate Tamil Schools in Nanchil Nadu\textsuperscript{37}. Ramavarma Vishakam Thirunal (1880-1885) the next successor was a reputed scholar who initiated various reforms in different fields. He separated the police from the magistracy with a view to improve the administration of judiciary and criminal justice. Moreover, he inaugurated a Revenue Survey Settlement and improved the irrigation system in South Travancore\textsuperscript{38}. Sree Moolam Thirunal (1885-1924) the next successor provided representation to the people in the state legislative activities. In 1886, he introduced a new land Revenue Settlement and adopted various measures to improve the irrigation in Nanchil Nadu and Idai Nadu. He was responsible for the creation of Sree Moolam Popular Assembly which was a milestone achievement in the legislative history of the Travancore State\textsuperscript{39}. Sethu Lakshmi Bai acted as regent from 1924 to 1931 for Sri Chithra Thirunal 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 temple under the control of Devaswom Department\textsuperscript{40}. A number of highways were opened during her reign. Sri Chithra Thirunal who ascended to the throne in 1931 was the last among the sovereigns of Travancore and it was he who formed the Sri


\textsuperscript{39} Sreedhar, K.P. \textit{Travancore Re Born}, Trivandrum, 1919, pp.19-20.

\textsuperscript{40} Lakshmi Rahunandan, S., \textit{At the Turn of the Tide the Life and Times of Maharani Sethu Lekshmi Bai}, Bangalore, 1995, pp.81-83.
Chithrai Thirunal 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 temple in the state were thrown opened to all Hindus including the Adi Dravidar communities. It was a reform of great significance to the people of the state. Yet another important reform was the construction of trunk road connecting Trivandrum and Kanyakumari\textsuperscript{41}.

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\textsuperscript{42}. This situation 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 18\textsuperscript{th} of November 1945, passed a resolution in favour of the formation of a United State by merging the States of Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. The Tamilians, who are predominant in the Southern Taluks of Travancore resented the resolution. So the Tamil language of Travancore was derecognized and Malayalam remained as the only official language in the State. This was an insult to Tamils

and they felt to lose their hold in social, economic and political spheres and became a discontented lot⁴³.

However, a conference of Tamilians was convened on the 16 of December 1945 at Nagercoil in which Prominent Tamil leaders like Sam Natheniel, Velayuthan Pillai, K. Nagalingam, Gandhiraman, S.N. Doss, R.M. Doss, R.M. Rom Muthaiya, V. Markandani and P.S. Moni participated⁴⁴. A resolution to form a political party to fight for the cause of the Tamilians was passed and as a result all Travancore Tamil Congress was emerged on 30 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. Umaithanu Pillai and others participated. In this conference the name of the party was rechristened as “Travancore Tamilnadu 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 State⁴⁵. Moreover, the commission decided to transfer the five Southern Taluks of Travancore namely Thovalai, Agastheeswaram, Kalkulam, Vilavancode and Shenkottah with Tamilnadu. But, the Claims of the Tamils over the taluks of Peermedu and Devikulam were

⁴³ The Travancore Administrative Report, 1940-1941, Trivandrum, 1942.
ignored by the Commission as these taluks were of great economic importance to the Travancore Cochin State\textsuperscript{46}.

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\textsuperscript{7}. Shenkottah taluk was merged with the then Tirunelveli District\textsuperscript{47}. On 1 of November 1956, Kanyakumari District of Tamilnadu was blossomed with Nagercoil as its headquarters. The formation of this district fulfilled the long cherished aspirations of the people of the locality\textsuperscript{48}.

**Economic Condition**

Kanyakumari District is known for forest, long coast line, mineral wealth, vast stretch of paddy fields, coconut groves, rubber estate and a variety of green vegetation. Agriculture is the main occupation of the people of this district. Major agricultural products are paddy, coconut, palm and variety of roots such as tapioca, sweet potato, arrow roots and different kinds of vegetables. Rice is the stable food grain\textsuperscript{49} in the district. Fertile soil for paddy cultivation is found in valleys and plains irrigated by dams, channels and tanks. Coconut is another principal cash crop, found cultivated mostly in an area of 4,23,692 acres through out Kanyakumari District\textsuperscript{50}. But in the recent years,

\textsuperscript{46} Dina\textit{malar}, dated 1\textsuperscript{st} November, 1956, p.9.
\textsuperscript{48} The Hindu, dated 2\textsuperscript{nd} November 1956, p.4.
\textsuperscript{49} Nilakanda Perumal, The Truth about Travancore, Madras, 1939, pp.iii-V.
\textsuperscript{50} Velupillai, T.K., \textit{op.cit.}, Vol.III, pp.31-34.
paddy fields, coconut groves are converted into Rubber plantation. Consequently production of paddy and coconut diminished in this district. Similarly palmyra trees, with its sweet Juice and sugar, jaggry leaves and timber provided a living to most of the economically depressed Nadars of Kanyakumari District. But in the recent years, palmyra tapping is considered as an inferior profession and accorded a low status in the society. Therefore, most of the palmyra tappers abandoned this menial work and were forced to seek some other lucrative Job.

Next to this, Rubber is cultivated mainly in the taluks of Vilavancode and Kalkulam. But now a days, Rubber Plantation is fastly spreading in other areas too. It not only provides employment opportunities to the people of this region\textsuperscript{51}, but enables them to get sufficient income for their subsistence. Owning a little land of rubber plantation yields a major source of income to meet the day to day expenses of the people.

Fishing is another major occupation of the people who settled in the coastal region. The long seacoast provides fish resources of rich and varied type in this district. In order to facilitate fishing, the Government established fisheries unit at Nagercoil ever since 1957\textsuperscript{52}. In addition, this district is endowed with the Indian Rare Earth Factory, established at Manavalakurichi providing employment avenues to many people\textsuperscript{53}. Moreover, spinning mills at Nagercoil (Nagammal


\textsuperscript{52} Chacko, P.I., "\textit{Fishery Wealth of Kanyakumari District}, Madras Information, Vol. IV, No.3, Madras, 1958, p.22.

\textsuperscript{53} 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.
Textile Mill at Nagercoil) and Aramboly (The Kanyakumari District Co-operative 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 YMCA Rural Reconstruction Center at Marthandam is engaged in bee keeping. The honey produced at this centre fetches world wide market and acclaim\textsuperscript{54}. Besides, many other industries\textsuperscript{55} also flourished in the nook and corner of this District.

**Society**

Kanyakumari District with its pleasant climate and fertile soil and diverse flora and fauna offered settlement to the people of different communities and religious affiliation. But, in the social set up, the four fold divisions of caste system as laid down in the *Vedas* never existed in this district. A survey in the district reveals the fact that people of about 72 castes and many sub caste found settled in this district\textsuperscript{56}. In the social hierarchy, the Brahmins occupy the highest place in the social ladder as priest who performed *poojas* in the temple. They were proficient in *Vedas* and other religious texts and hence were employed in high position in Travancore. Next to them, the Nayar’s enjoyed a privileged position and lived on the lands that were granted to them in return for there Military Service. In South Travancore, they were the landed magnets. But due to their social custom including the *marumakkathayam system* of inheritance, their

\textsuperscript{55} Starch, Chank, Salt, Fishnet, Bricks and Tile Industry and Honey Processing were the major small Industries in this District.  
tharavadu began to loose its hold in society and most of them migrated to Kerala. Akin is them, the Vellalar caste, another privileged community as land lords and agriculturists are found in some parts of this district. They possessed vast stretches of landed property in Nanjil Nadu and claimed superiority over many depressed communities\textsuperscript{57}. The Chettiar
ts are traditionally a community of business men 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{58}. The Saliyars, a weaving caste is derived from the Sanskrit word “Salika”, “Weaving”. In the social hierarchy, they claim to be equal to the Vaisyas\textsuperscript{59}. The Kurups self styled as Krishnavakai occupy a predominant place in Kanyakumari District. They owned most of the landed property in Nanchil Nadu\textsuperscript{60} and enslaved many of the depressed communities. Another prominent community is the Nadars who rose to prominence due to their hard work though considered as one of the depressed communities in the early period. They were under the control of Brahmins and the Nayar’s who ill treated them as slaves though they formed the majority. They were largely palmyra tappers and engaged in making sugar and jaggery. However, with the passage of time the Nadars embraced Christianity and the Christian Missionaries gave them enough opportunities to develop their skill. Accordingly, they became land lords and rich traders and thus their status too enhanced greatly. The Kammalars occupied the high status in the society.

\textsuperscript{57} Singh, K.S. People of India (Tamil Nadu) No. X2, Part III, New Delhi, 1997, p.1608.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., pp.291-296.
\textsuperscript{60} Samuel Mateer, The land of Charity, New York, 1870, p.61.
They are classified into five endogamous sub-castes as Gold Smith, Black Smith, Braziar, Carpenter and Mason. The Barbers, locally known as Navithar served as local physicians and their wives as village midwives in those days\textsuperscript{61}. Akin to them, the Parayar’s who were the agricultural labourers. Their homes were usually situated outside of the village limit. Considered as a polluting caste, various restrictions were imposed on them by the high castes. Similarly the Kanis locally known as Kanikars are found settled in the land between the plains the mountain. They formed a minority community and live in small clans. The Paravas and Mukkuvars are another community lives near the sea. Coast and engaged in fishing and fish trade. Thus a field study reveals the fact that Kanyakumari District provides settlement to people of various castes and clans.

**Religion**

Religion is considered as the opium of mankind. As such Kanyakumari District is a land of temples. The Hindus worshiped Siva, Vishnu, Muruga, Bhavathi and Ganapathi. The famous temples of Kanyakumari District are the Nagaraja temple at Nagercoil, Thanumalaya temple at Suchindrum and a coast of other temple at Parakai, Bhoopathandy, Velimalai, Padmanabhapuram and Thiruvattar. In addition Kanyakumari District is famous for Siva worship in the temple located at Thirppparappu, Tirunandikkara, Ponmanai, Pannippagam, Kalkulam Melancode, Tiruvithancode, Tiruppanikode and

Nattalam. Moreover the unprivileged sections of the society worshiped village deities like Agni, Madan, Esaki, Sudalaymadan, Vannaramadan, Neeli, Kali and Karunkali. In addition, a few group worshiped the images of serpents. Apart from Hinduism, Christianity forms a second major religion of the people of District. Among the Christians the Roman Catholics constitute the major groups. Besides Catholics, the Protestants also from another Christian group of this district. Apart from them the Salvation Army and Pentecost Mission have their churches in Kanyakumari District. Muslims who occupy another major community are settled in all the Taluks of the district especially in places like Thiruvithankodu, Thuckalay, Colachel, Thittuvilai and Edalakudy. Muslims are mostly engaged in trade and commerce.

**Source of Information**

The topic of study of any type is incomplete unless it brings to light the relevant source materials utilized for writing the thesis. In this task, maximum effort has been taken to collect most of the primary and secondary sources available in the form of Records, Books, Journals and News Papers kept preserved in the Kerala State Achieves, Trivandrum; Kerala University Library, Trivandrum; Center for Development Studies, Ulloor, Trivandrum; Tamil Nadu State Archives, Chennai; Collectorate Record Office, Nagercoil; Mathilagam Records, Bishop House Library, Marthandam; and the Manonmaniam Sundaranar University Library, Tirunelveli have been consulted for the study.

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Besides the primary sources, a large number of secondary sources like books, news paper reports, journals, magazines, unpublished Ph.D thesis, District Gazetteers give glimpses of information to form a cogent account of the topic. In fact, primary sources are supplemented by the published works in English, Malayalam and Tamil. Secondary sources comprised of the published works of Eminent authors like Agur. C.M., Church History of Travancore; The Progress of Christianity in Travancore; Abbs John, Twenty two years Missionary Experience in Travancore; Alexander. J.P., South India Church History; Christu. S.D; Kunratathu Vilakku (Tamil); David Thomas, Christian Enterprise in Kerala; Emiliyana. D.M., Msgr. Joseph Kuchijalil (Tamil); Hacker. I.H., A Hundred years in Travancore 1806-1906; Kusuman. K.K., Slavery in Travancore; Hough James. A History of Christianity in India; Kadayakham. Y., Malankara Catholika Sabai Varalaru (Tamil); Lawrance. V., History of Catholic Church in Kanyakumari District; Mathew Elenjikal, Baptism in the Malankara Church Bangalore; Mackenzi, G.T. Christianity in

Design of the Study

Based on the critical analysis of the primary and secondary sources, the content of the present study on “History of Malankara Syrian Catholic Mission in Kanyakumari District” has been designed into seven chapters in addition to an Introduction and a Conclusion. The introductory part gives a graphic account of the formation of Kanyakumari District and its physical features including climates and rainfall, forest, flora and fauna, a brief political history, economic condition, social set up, religion, sources of information and design of the study.

In the first chapter on “Origin and Growth” an attempt is made to depict the spread of Christianity in Travancore starting from St. Thomas and the subsequent split of Christianity Catholics of various denominations namely Roman Catholics and Syrian Catholics, Latin Catholics and Jacobites and the emergence of Protestantism in southern region are briefly narrated. The sectarian groups of the Catholics introduced sweeping changes in their liturgy, traditions and customs. However the schism that accrued in the Catholic Church created
a division in the church and hence a major groups of its adherence left the congregation. But, the reunion movement under Bishop Mar Ivanios left a lasting legacy which led to the origin of the Malankara Syrian Catholic Church in South Travancore. In its subsequent growth Fr. Joseph Kuzhinjalil rendered meritorious services which is elaborately dealt with. Moreover, an attempt is made to narrate the establishment of churches in different parts of Kanyakumari District.

“Ecclesiastical Services” which adorns the second chapter explains the mode of worship followed by Parish Priests in the Churches on every Sunday and on other religious occasions. Moreover, the method adopted to propagate religion is also briefly dealt with. In addition for the promotion of religious services, various organizations such as Balar Sabai, Kolping Society and similar other endeavors are also explained. Above all, the active role of the nuns in the propagation of religion is also narrated in this chapter.

With the formation of the Malankara Syrian Catholic Dioceses, the propagation of religion necessitated the promotion of learning too. The Missionaries from the early days found it necessary to instruct the new adherence and converts to read and write not only to eradicate ignorance and illiteracy but to make the people to read the Bible and to receive spiritual sustenance. To cherish this ambition, the missionaries took up the task of imparting education in each village where they established the churches. Therefore a humble beginning was made to establish Primary Schools to teach alphabets and attempted to teach the story from Bible and comparing it with
their day to day life. Consequently, Malankara Syrian Catholic Dioceses with its churches got the credit of establishing Primary Schools, Middle Schools, High Schools, Higher Secondary and Colleges, including Training Colleges and other technical institutes. The impetus given to education is detailed on the third chapter “Promotion of learning”.

In the fourth chapter on “Economic Empowerment” an attempt is made to portray the welfare activities undertaken by the Missionaries to boost the financial enrichment of the masses by introducing various schemes. A perusal of the records reveals the fact that in the early days the Missionaries attempted to enhance the financial resources from its economic poverty. After stabilizing its own resources various other measures were adopted to enhance the economic of its followers. A large number of employment avenues were created by means of establishing markets, small scale industries like weaving, mat, basket making, bee-keeping, lace making, stitching embroidery Poultry forming livestock domestication and the like. In addition, the Bethany estate provided large scale employment to the skilled and unskilled labours. Moreover their educational institutions, hospitals and other industrial, establishments too generated employment potential. Besides, the formation of self help groups encouraged the people to stand on their own legs to earn, to save money and prevented the people from borrowing money from the money lenders at exorbitant rate of interest. All these activities are portrayed in this chapter.

“Social Emancipation” which forms the fifth chapter provides an account of the role of the Malankara Syrian Catholic
Missionary to promote the society from orthodox beliefs and superstitions, adoption of caste hierarchy and social taboos, restrictions on temple entry and the like are brought out. In addition, their active role in establishing orphanages, women's emancipation from bondage, removal of ale holism, their role in the Tsunami are all elaborately discussed.

In the sixth chapter entitled “Health and Hygiene” an attempt is made to explain the condition of the people before the arrival and spread of Missionary Service in Kanyakumari District. It is very sad to state the unhygienic food of the poverty-stricken people, the spread of contagious diseases and the mode of dress of the people made them subservient to the affluent people involvement of the missionaries to instruct the people to adopt hygienic measures and the use of nutritious food to prevent the spread of diseases and other such activities are narrated. Moreover, to improve health, the Missionaries took active steps to supply food materials including milk powder freely. Above all they tried their best to provide toilet facilities in each house and advised them to use pesticides to eradicate mosquito and other insects. In addition proper instruction was given to keep the houses and its premises clean and tidy.

The last chapter “Administration and Impact” gives a graphic picture of the Administrative measures and the tremendous achievement of the Malankara Syrian Catholic Mission in cherishing their objectives of religious propagation together with their socio-cultural and politico-economic activities among the people irrespective of caste creed, sex or economic status. Above all, the indelible imprints left by the missionaries
in the upliftment of the poor are brought to light under this chapter.

The concluding part provides an over all summary of all the chapters besides giving the research findings and some suggestions in an analytical, thematic and objective way, the thesis presents.