INTRODUCTION

The place Agastheeswaram is named after the prominent forerunner grammarian, Agastya. The tradition which prevails is that saint Agastya carried a Sivalinga on his way to the South. When he reached the place he installed the Sivalinga, built a temple and worshipped there. Hence, the place is called as Agastheeswaram in remembrance of Saint Agasthya.¹ After State Re-organisation in 1956, the two Panchayat Unions, Agastheeswaram and Rajakkamangalam were jointly called as Agastheeswaram taluk. It was one of the four constituent taluks of Kanyakumari District.² The taluk is surrounded by the three seas, viz. the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal.³ As such Agastheeswaram taluk is bounded on the north by Thovalai taluk, on the north-east by Tirunelveli District, on the East by the Bay of Bengal, on the South by the Arabian Sea and on the West by the Kalkulam taluk.⁴ The total area of the taluk is 130.07 sq. kilometers. It is situated in the southernmost tip of the Indian subcontinent.⁵

³ Pillai, K.K., Studies on the History of India with Special Reference to Tamilnadu, Madras, 1979, p. 475.
⁴ Ibid.
Agastheeswaram taluk comprises of two Blocks, viz. Rajakkamangalam and Agastheeswaram. It has two Panchayat Unions, 16 town Panchayats, 22 revenue villages and 25 Village Panchayats. Besides these, Nagercoil Municipality also comes within the limits of the Agastheeswaram taluk. As such Agastheeswaram taluk has no independent history of her own. She remained with the Nanchilnad during the early period and later on with the Venad and Travancore respectively. Hence, her political history was the history of Travancore.

0.1. The Land and the People

Situated between 8°10' and 8°20' northern latitude and 77°05' and 77°35' eastern longitude, Agastheeswaram taluk enjoys a temperate climate with the rest of the taluks of Kanyakumari District. During summer, the climate is hot but the sea breeze makes the taluk pleasant. The western part of Agastheeswaram taluk is elevated and mostly dry. On the sides of the rivers, coconut and paddy are cultivated. Besides these, there are mangroves, plantain gardens and palmyrah groves are found here and there. They enrich the rural economy. The eastern half of Agastheeswaram consists of fertile soil. A vast expanse of paddy fields present a pleasing sight.

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Majority of the population of the taluk depend upon agriculture as their main occupation. The landless too earn their livelihood by transplantation of paddy and weeding works. In the dry areas, cereals like blackgrains, green-grains, millets and different kinds of roots are cultivated. As the eastern part of Agastheeswaram taluk is rich in water resources, coconut gardens are found both on the coastal areas and on the plains from Chothavilai beach to Rajakkamangalam beach and in the interior areas. This enhances coir production and it has become a cottage industry.

Agastheeswaram taluk has no bigger mountains. There are small hills dotted here and there. One such hillock is the Maruthuval Malai noted for rare medicines and herbs. Medicines in Tamil is termed as “Marunthu” and “Malai” means mountain. Hence this hillock having rare medicines is called Maruthuvalmalai.

Agastheeswaram taluk has no noteworthy river. But river Palayar and a host of small streams, artificial canals and ponds are the source of irrigation in the taluk. Palayar originates from the Anaimudi hills in the Thovalai taluk traverses through Agastheeswaram taluk and terminates at Manakudy kayal or Manakudy backwater near Thamaraikulam.\(^7\) Palayar over a hundred feet width provides a series of anaicuts such as Sabari dam, [Ward and Corner, L., *Georgraphical and Statistical Memoir of the Survey of Travancore and Cochin States*, Trivandrum, 1993, p. 2.](#)
Kumari dam, Cholan dam and Pillai Petha Dam in the taluk.\textsuperscript{8} From these anaicuts subsidiary canals distribute water to the numerous tanks. These tanks serve as storage of water for feeding the crops. The branch canals which are serially connected are Puthanar, Pallikondda Canal, Mettukkal, Payodukal, Arasayar kal, Taerekal, Perunkalayar, Parakkai kal, Suchindram kal and Manakudi kal.\textsuperscript{9}

The Perumkalayar has fallen into disuse and the area irrigated by it is now included under the Puthenar. The Anendanar and the Puthenar are the most important branches, the former lying to the west and the latter to the east of the Palayar. The extent of cultivation covered by the Palayar Valley including these two branches is 16,959 acres being 71.6 percent of the whole wet area.\textsuperscript{10} The area directly under the Palayar is 6,287 acres, that under the Anendanar, 3,835 acres and that under the Puthenar including Perumkalayar, 6,837 acres.\textsuperscript{11} The Anendanar and Puthenar were formerly in a bad state, but of late they have been improved to a tolerably good condition. The latter channel has been provided with a head-work which affords full facility to the

\textsuperscript{8} This dam is called so. It so happened that at the time of completion of this dam a pregnant woman who came to take bath gave birth to a child. Hence the dam is called Pillai Petha Dam. (“Pillai” in Tamil means child. “Petha” means gave birth. She gave birth to a child near the dam. Hence the dam is known as Pillai Petha dam).

\textsuperscript{9} Assessment of lands in the Thovalai and Agastheeswaram Taluks, 1893, Report, p. 3.


\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
supply of water, so that the rice cultivation all along the belt has been placed one more secure footing than before.\textsuperscript{12} The next important source of water supply is the Pandian kal which was very ancient across the Paraliyar. It diverts the flow to the Nanchilnad tract by means of Pandian kal which merges with the Palayar.\textsuperscript{13} Another source of irrigation is the Anandanar that passes through the western part of Agastheeswaram taluk. Of the three rivers, Palayar passes to the south from the western flank of Mahendragiri and passes through important places like Ozhihinaseri, Nagercoil, Kottar and Suchindram which have been noted historical and religious centres from the ancient past.

The plains of Agastheeswaram are divided into the fertile eastern part and the dry western part. Mainly the people cultivate paddy, coconut and plantain that boost the economy of Agastheeswaram taluk. There are a number of saltpans at Manakudi and Rajakkamangalam. The presence of plenty of coconut husks makes production of coir, and other coir products on the western part of the taluk, cashew topes, mango topes are found here and there. The remaining wet area is purely rain fed and is situated for the most part in the high level margins at the foot of the Velimalai above Anendanar and the Thovala and the Aralvaimozhi Hills of the east of Puthenar.

\textsuperscript{12} Report of the Agricultural Development Officer, 2007, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{13} Pharoah, A Gazetteer of South India, Madras, 1855, p. 602.
The coastline of Agastheeswaram has a stretch of 40 kms. It is neither broken nor rocky. As there was no forks, natural harbours are conspicuous by their absence. The people who live on the coastal areas are engaged in fishing. The Kanyakumari is a holy place because of the presence of Goddess Kanni Bhagavathi and it is the meeting place of three seas. Hence lots of pilgrims arrive here. The Chothavilai beach, Sangumugam thurai beach and Vattacottai are the important tourist parts.

The Taluk gets copious rain due to South West monsoon between June and August. The North East monsoon which occurs in October also brings rain to the taluk till the end of November. At times depression is also formed in the Bay of Bengal during November and heavy rain is caused because of the incessant rain for six months owing to South West monsoon and North East monsoon the taluk is fertile and supplies enough paddy so as to meet the demands of the people of Kanyakumari District.

Among the people of Agastheeswaram taluk, the Nadars form the majority community. The Brahmins, the Vellalas, the Nayars, the Chalias, the Chettis, the Mukkuvas and the Dalits are the other communities. They profess Saivism, Vaishnavism and other forms of Hindu worship. Yet Christianity is the dominant religion. But after 1956, there were religious conflicts between the Hindus and the Christians that causes communal and religious tension among the people.
0.2 Political History

Agastheeswaram taluk has no independent history of her own. The possession of Agastheeswaram was changing from one dynasty to the other dynasty. However, for the convenience of our study, her political history has been divided as follows:

The rule of Ays.

The rule of the Pandyas.

Under the Cholas.

Under Venad and

Under Travancore.

The Ay kings ruled this part of the country from 1\textsuperscript{st} century to 8\textsuperscript{th} century. They captured from the Pandyas the land stretching from Nanchilnad to Kanyakumari between 906 A.D. and 1400 A.D. K.K. Sivaraja Pillai is of the opinion that the Ays, were probably ruling this area between Pothigai hills to the southernmost part of the western ghats, i.e. Cape Comorin.\textsuperscript{14}

Ptolemy states that the territory of the Ays flourished in the South of the Chera kingdom and extended from Nelcynda to Kumari and the Pandya

\textsuperscript{14} Pillai, K.K., \textit{op.cit.}, p. 478.
The important Ay Kings who ruled over South Travancore were Ay Andiran, Titiyan, Atiyan, Titiyan II and Nanchil Porunam. Ay Andiran is said to be the independent ruler of the region that extended over the mountain tract from the Coimbatore gap in the Western Ghats down to Kanyakumari in the South. Purananuru extols him as a philanthropist who ruled over the region near the Pothyil hill. He is described as Vel Ay and Mal-Vel-Ay in Purananuru. He patronized the Tamil poets. The most important among them were Mudamociyar, Kuttuvan, Kiranar and Odaikilar. Another eminent poet Karikkannanar also refers to him in Nattinai. Ay Andiran drove the Pandyas from Nanchilnad and came to prominence sometime between 96 and 140 A.D.

Titiyan is described as Potir Selvan by the poet-King Bhutappandiyan. During this region the neighbouring Pandya kingdom was ruled by king

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18 Purananuru, Stanza 125.
Bhutappandiyan. The sangam literature does not make mention of any war between Butappandiyan and Titiyan. But the Pandyan king must have come at least as far as Bhutappandi, a place named after him and where a temple called Bhuthappandisaramudaiyar was founded. So it may be suggested that the Pandya king and Titiyan came to an agreement fixing Bhutappandi as the western limit of Pandyan kingdom, leaving the region to the north and west of it in the hands of Titiyan. In the time of Atiyan, the Ay kingdom began to disintegrate. Alakiyapandiyan is said to have invaded the kingdom of the Ays and defeated Atiyan and reduced him to the position of tributary chief of the Pandya king. Paranar, the Tamil poet has described this historical fight in the Ahananuru and sings of the victorious flag of the Pandyas, flying on the top of the Potiyil Hills.

0.3. Under the Pandyas

The Ays after being defeated by the Pandyas, struggled in vain to regain their lost independence and their supremacy over the Potiyil region. Talayanankanam Ceru Venra Nedunceliyan who came to the Pandya throne during the region of Titiyan II repulsed the latter in the battle of Talayanankanam. Thus, the battle of Talayanankanam sealed forever the fate of the Ay kingdom. This heroic fight of Talayanankanam has been

20 Ahananuru stanza 35.
briefly described by Nakkirar in the Ahananuru.\textsuperscript{21} As a result of the battle of Talayanankanam, the Potiyil region was broken up into petty kingdoms.

After the discomfiture of the Ay kings, Eastern side of Agastheeswaram remained under Pandya rule for several centuries. The Pandya king Sendan (645-670 A.D.) invaded Nanchilnad.\textsuperscript{22} The only reliable basis for the inference is that he undertook expeditions beyond Aralvaymoli. Sendan assumed the surname Vanava, the distinctive appellation of the Chera. It is also inferred from certain surviving place-names that he might have conquered parts of Nanchilnad and commemorated his victories by bestowing his name on villages and temples. For instance, at Talakkudi, about three miles north east of Kottar, there exists the Temple of Sendanisvaramudiyar. Popular tradition connects this shrine with Sendan the Pandyan king. There is a temple known as Jayandanarkoyil. Further, a village in the Agastheeswaram taluk, located about five miles south-west of Kottar is known as the village of Sendanputur.

The next king who attacked South Travancore and places to the north of it was Sendan’s successor known as Arikesari Maravaraman (670-710

\begin{footnotes}
\item[21] Ahananuru stanza, 36.
\item[22] Travancore Archeological Survey (Hereinafter abbreviated as T.A.S.), Vol. VI, Part 1, p. 100.
\end{footnotes}
A.D.). He achieved victories at Kottar and captured it. The commentary of Iraiyanar Akapporul, clearly mentions this. So, it is certain that he conquered certain portions of South Travancore which were not under Pandyan authority. He completed the annexation of Nanchilnad with the Pandya kingdom. Kochadaiyan (710-740 A.D.) who succeeded Arikesari is said to have defeated Ay Vel, who held sway in the Western Ghats region in the battle of Marudur. The Ay king was defeated in the Ghats region in the battle of Marudur and was forced to acknowledge Pandya supremacy. Perhaps Kochadaiyan extinguished the last vestiges of the authority of the Ays in South Travancore.

During the reign of Maran Chadayan (765-815 A.D.) the ruler again seems to have reasserted his independence in the neighbouring region to the north, including a portion of Nanchilnad and the Pandya king has to wage a war with Ay Vel. The latter was defeated and his country was annexed. Not satisfied with this victory, the Pandya king marched against the Ay king, Karunadan, probably the successor Ay Vel. The result of this battle was not known but it is unlikely that the Ay ruler was completely subdued by the Pandya ruler. In this encounter, Karunadan was assisted by the Cheras, and

24 T.A.S., XII, pp 188-189.
the Pandya army was driven back as far as Karaikottai which is identified with Aralvaymozhi.\textsuperscript{25}

It appears that Viranarayarana Chadayan who ascended the Pandya throne about 880 A.D. had also been actively connected with South Travancore. Some of his inscriptions are found in the Suchindram Temple. It is likely that Suchindram was one of the sacred places patronised by him. The fact that the Suchindram inscriptions of his period bear the regnal years of his reign is a clear proof that the locality was under his sway. Viranarayanasseri and Viranarayanamangalam, two villages located within a few miles of Kottar perhaps owe their names to the particular Pandya Sovereign. Again 900 A.D. Raja Simha II succeeded Viranarayana. That he continued to be in possession of Nanchilnad is attested by his inscriptions which are found in large numbers in this region.\textsuperscript{26} However, Rajasimha’s power, and age-long supremacy of the early Pandyas, was crushed by Parantaka Chola.

\textbf{0.4. The Cholas}

At the beginning of the tenth century A.D. South Travancore was annexed to the Chola empire by Parantaka (907-955 A.D.). His inscriptions

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{25} Ramanatha Iyer, A., \textit{The Travancore Archeological Series}, p. 7.
\item \textsuperscript{26} T.A.S., Vol. IV, pp. 120-123.
\end{itemize}
are found in South Travancore, especially in Suchindram. He defeated Maravarman Rajasimha the Pandya king. Parantaka captured Kanyakumari and extended his kingdom up to Suchindram as it is testified by the Suchindram inscription of Parantaka Chola I, which records the gift of fifty sheep for maintaining a perpetual lamp before the God of the temple at Suchindram. But, it was only in the reign of Raja Raja I, the greatest of the Chola rulers (985-1016 A.D.) that Chola authority was firmly established over the whole of the Pandya kingdom including Nanchilnad. His hegemony was accepted beyond the northern boundary of Nanchilnad. Several inscriptions in the Cholapuram Temple near Kottar bear witness to the Chola conquest of South Travancore. The temple itself by Madhurantaka, a native of Tanjore, who after serving as a military commander under the Cholas appears to have settled down in Nanchilnad as a subordinate chief. In commemoration of his great victory over the Pandyas, Raja Raja renamed Kanyakumari as Rajarajesvaram. Raja Raja seems to have consolidated his southern conquest by constituting the newly acquired places into a separate administrative unit called Raja Raja

27 T.A.S., Vol. XII, p. 188.
28 Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 188.
31 Ibid.
Pandinadu. Kottar which was the southernmost military outpost in the Chola dominion was named Mummudicholanallur and a Chola garrison, called nilappadi, was permanently stationed there.\(^{32}\) Thus by the end of the region of Raja Raja Chola, South Travancore became an integral part of the Chola kingdom.

Raja Raja was succeeded by his son Rajendra I. He made Cholapuram his capital\(^{33}\) and governed the far flung provinces through viceroys. He appointed his son Jatavarman the first viceroy over the Pandya territory. The southern part of the Pandya region including Nanchilnad came to be governed by the Chola Pandya viceroys lasting for nearly sixty five years, at the end of which period this system was finally abolished by Kulottunga.\(^{34}\)

Kulottunga I (1070-1118) the first of the Eastern Chalukya Chola emperors, came to the throne and was closely associated with South Travancore.\(^{35}\) An inscription of Tirukkalukkunram refers to his victories against the five Pandyas and the capture of the region round the Potiyil Hill and also the destruction of Kottar.\(^{36}\) He was opposed to the sharing power with the viceroys and hence it came under the direct control from the centre.

\(^{33}\) Ibid., Vol. III, p. 198.
He introduced a new system of opening military cantonments at various strategic places with a view of maintaining law and order and preventing attempts by the outlying regions breaking away from the empire. One such unit was kept at Kottar which is an integral part of Agasteeswaram. An inscription at Cholapuram dated in his 9th regnal year mentions about Kottar Nilappadai.  

During the reign of Kulottunga, the Western Chalukyas and Hoysalas achieved several victories over the Cholas and the northern portion of the Chola empire passed under their sway. Taking advantage of this disaster, Patantaka Pandya overran Kanyakumari. He is also said to have occupied South Travancore and even marched up to Vizhinjam and Kandalur Salai and captured them. According to K.K. Pillay, Parantaka did not occupy Nanchilnad, but only marched his army from Kanyakumari to Trivandrum nevertheless it must be conceded that he captured Vizhinjam and Kandalur Salai during his march through these places. Depending on the Kanyakumari inscription of Parantaka Pandya, one cannot contradict the conclusion that the Pandya king was successful in his campaign against Nanchilnad and even against Kupaka, the Venad ruler. The loss of

39 Pillay, K.K., Suchindram Temple, p. 29.
Nanchilnad in the south appreciably weakened the Chola power, which was soon dislodged by the Venad rulers.

The history of Nanchilnad during the transition from the Chola authority to that of the Venad rulers is covered by a thick mist of historical uncertainties. On the strength of an inscription on the Pandyan Anai or the dam on the river Parali, Nagam Aiya records the achievements of Kupaka ruler. This inscription also records that a Kupaka ruler conquered Kottar and seized the whole of South Travancore in 1116 A.D.\(^{40}\)

**0.5. Under Venad**

On the causes of the eclipse of the Chola rule in Nanchilnad, there has been much speculation. Legend\(^{41}\) and fact have been so inextricably interwoven that it is difficult to say where fiction ends and truth begins. According to Shungonny Menon, when Travancore conquered the Pandya kingdom while under Muhammadan sway, Nanchikkuravan took Nanchilnad

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\(^{41}\) According to legend, one Konankikuravan by a spell of magic became enormously rich and usurped power in Nanchilnad. He ruled for 35 years and was succeeded by his son Bhommayyakuravan. Bohymayyakaravan was followed by Nanchikkuravan. Under Nanchikkuravan, the whole of nanchilnad came under his sway. But later on when Nanchikkuravan wished to get his son married to the daughter of a Vellala Chief named Periyavittu Mudali who occupied the highest position among the people was treacherously killed. It is said Periyavitty Mudali who promised to give his daughter in marriage to the son of Nanchikkuravan. Played a trick on the day of the marriage and caused the death of all the Kuravas by letting the marriage mandapa collapse by a special device. Then Periavittu Mudali became the master of the region.
and became its ruler.\textsuperscript{42} The reference to Muhammadan rule of the region seems to be a chronological error for there is hardly any Muslim invasion on South India till 1310 A.D.\textsuperscript{43} The Nanchilkkuravan episode was perhaps invented by a member of the periyavittu Mudali family. But T.K. Velu Pillai takes cognizance of the story in concluding that Vira Kerala Varma (1126-1140) had to defeat Nanchikuravan before taking Nanchilnad.\textsuperscript{44} K.K. Pillai disapproves the authenticity of this story and rejects it as a legend.\textsuperscript{45} However, it is evident from inscriptions and other sources that Venad came to establish its supremacy over certain portions of Nanchilnad in the first quarter of the twelfth century A.D.\textsuperscript{46} and continued to retain it with fluctuating fortunes under the Venad kings.

It was during the reign of Bhutala Vira Udaya Marthanda Varma (1516-1526 A.D.) a major war broke out between Travancore and Vijayanagar. The second invasion of Travancore by the Vijayanar forces took place during the rule of Sri Vira Kerala Varma (1544-1545 A.D.).\textsuperscript{47}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{42} Shungonny Menon, P., \textit{A History of Travancore, Madras}, 1878, p. 92.

\textsuperscript{43} Pillay, K.K., \textit{Suchindram Temple}, p. 32.

\textsuperscript{44} Velu Pillai, T.K., \textit{The Travancore State Manual}, Trivandrum, 1940, Vol. II, p. 76.

\textsuperscript{45} Pillay, K.K., \textit{op cit.}, p. 32.

\textsuperscript{46} Elankulam Kunjan Pillai, P.N., \textit{op cit.}, p. 404.

\end{flushleft}
Following the death of Achyta Raya in 1542 A.D. the Nayak Chief of Madurai asserted his independence. In 1533 A.D., Viswanata Nayak, who founded the Nayak Dynasty needed the border lands of Travancore. The year 1623 A.D. was the advent of Thirumala Nayak. He came with his forces to Nanchilnad. In 1655 A.D. Kalkulam or Padmanabhapuram became the seat of Thirumala Nayak. The other Nayak rulers who invaded Travancore were Chokkanantha Nayak and Timmappa Nayak. During the later half of the 17th century certain places of Nanchilnad were under the sway of Madurai Nayak.\textsuperscript{48}

After the extinction of the Madura Nayak dynasty, the Nawab of Arcot came to suppress the dominion of the Nayaks of Madurai. Even during the period of Nayaks, Travancore had constant disputes with them. The Nawab of Carnatic who succeeded the Nayaks of Madurai in power also continued this dispute. Anwaruddin was the first Carnatic Nawab, who invaded South Travancore. His successors were Maphazkhan, Yusufkhan, Hyder Ali, Tippu and others. But a treaty of alliance was concluded with the Nawab of the Carnatic in 1766 A.D. According to that Travancore Government had been paying an annual tribute of Rs. 6,000/- and a quintuennial tribute of five elephants\textsuperscript{49} with these the early and medieval


\textsuperscript{49} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 388-405.
period of her political history came to a standstill and paved the way for the modern period in the annals of the history of South Travancore.

0.6. Under Travancore

The modern history of South Travancore begins with the rule of Bala Marthanda Varma who ascended the throne in the year 1729 A.D. During the time of his accession the political conditions were unstable due to rebellions and the incessant inroads made by the Nayak and Nawab forces. But Marthanda Varma put a check to the invaders by seeking the assistance of the English East India Company. He even proved his ability by meeting the Dutch in the battle field at Colachel on August 10, 1741. He dedicated his kingdom to the Lord Sri Padmanabha Swamy and this dedication took place on behalf of his tutelary deity.  

Marthanda Varma was succeeded by Rama Varma Karthigai Thirunal (1758-1798 A.D.). He was popularly known as Dharmaraja. The important historical event in his reign was the invasion of Tippu Sultan and his defeat. Rama Varma was ably assisted by his efficient ministers Ayyappan Marthanda Pillai and Raja Kesavadas.

Balarama Varma succeeded Rama Varma at the age of thirteen. He was an inefficient ruler. The state’s finance came down to the verge of

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bankruptcy. To set right financial imbalance, taxes were excessively levied and forcibly collected. This tyrannical rule made the subjects agitate which ended in a rebellion against the State under the leadership of Velu Thampi.

Gowri Lakshmi Bai who succeeded Balarama Varma continued the policy of friendly relationship with the British. She dismissed Ummini Thampi and in his place appointed Colonel Munro as her Dewan. He found indiscipline and corruption in the administration. But by his efficient administration the economic status of the state was improved.\textsuperscript{51}

Gowri lakshmi Bai died and was succeeded by her sister, Gowri Parvathi Bai (1815-1829 A.D.), during whose reign also Colonel Munro continued to be the Dewan. Her period witnessed the large scale conversion to Christianity by the activities of Missionaries.

In 1829 A.D., Ramavarma Swathi Thirunal ascended the throne of Travancore. He introduced many administrative reforms like establishment of the Munsiff courts for trying small civil cases and criminal cases. Codification of law on the British model, introduction of western education and the creation of separate department of spreading European Engineering education and for irrigation are some of the highlights of this ruler. Besides

\textsuperscript{51} Nagam Aiya, V., \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 388-405.
a good administrator, he was also an eminent scholar in Malayalam and
Tamil.\textsuperscript{52}

Marthanda Varma Uthiram Thirunal succeeded Ramavarma. He ruled
Travancore from 1847 to 1860 A.D. He improved the financial condition of
the state by introducing an effective system of collection of revenue. It was
during his reign a crisis developed in Kanyakumari District. The core of the
crisis was the agitation of the Nadar Christians there for securing their
womenfolk the right to wear the upper garments and made permanent
achievement. It was also during his reign the construction of a new irrigation
canal called Ananda Victorian Marthanda Canal (AVM Canal) between
Trivandrum and Nanchilnad was planned.\textsuperscript{53}

Ayilyam Thirunal succeeded Marthanda Varma Uthiream Thirunal in
1860 A.D. His reign witnessed certain improvements in the field of
agriculture. He issued a proclamation in 1865 A.D. known as the Pandara
pattom proclamation. The rights of the tenants were not liable to he ejected
so long as they paid the stipulate rent and other customary dues. These two
proclamations were termed as the Magna Carta of the Travancore. Many
Schools were started in Nanchilnad during his reign.

\textsuperscript{52} Nagam Aiya, V., \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 388-405.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
Ramavarma Visakham Thirunal (1880-1885 A.D.) succeeded Ayilyam Thirunal. He condemned the police system and reorganized it. He separated the police which was under a Magistrate with a view to improving the administration of criminal justice. The most important measure introduced by him was the inauguration of a Revenue Survey and Settlement. He extended grant in aid to the elementary education. The native industries were encouraged.\textsuperscript{54}

Sri Mulam Thirunal succeeded Rama Varma Visakham Thirunal in the year 1885 A.D. His rule witnessed many sided developments in the State. For the first time in the history of Travancore State attempt was made for people’s representation in the State Legislation. A new Land Revenue settlement was introduced in 1886 which was in force for 30 years. In 1888 he inaugurated the Legislative Council and in 1904 the Assembly was named after him which afforded opportunity for the representatives of the people to have a say on matters of public interest.

The demise of Sri Mulam Thirunal posed a problem over the rulers since the heir apparent to the throne, Sri Chithirai Thirunal was only 12 years old. Hence, Sethu Lakshmi Bai the senior Maharani became the regent. The credit of abolition of the Devadasi System in South Travancore and abolition

\textsuperscript{54} Elankulam Kunjan Pillai, P.N., \textit{op.cit.}, 1969, p. 19.
of animal sacrifices in the temples under the control of Devaswom Department goes to this Maharani.

Sri Chithirai Thirunal ascended the throne in 1931 and the regency of Sethu Lakshmi Bai came to an end. Since 1931 the State had many sided progress. In 1936 the Temple Entry Proclamation was issued by the king at the influence of Sri C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer, the Dewan. It was a reform of far reaching importance and was the first of its kind in India. In 1938 the Trunk Road between Trivandrum and Kanyakumari was reconstructed with concrete. After the independence, South Travancore was separated by the State Re-organisation from Travancore and a new district called Kanyakumari was born on November 1, 1956.

0.7. The Sources

The source materials used for bringing out the History of Agastheeswaram Taluk can be divided into Primary and Secondary. Minutes, Government Orders, Letters and Correspondence, Proceedings both the Legislative and officials, Reports such as the Missionary Reports, Administrative Reports and the Reports of the various Government officials, Acts and Proclamations constitute the primary sources. Published works of the reputed authors of the past pertaining to the subject, Journals, Manuals and Gazetteers constitute the secondary sources.
The records of the Travancore Government kept and preserved in the Record Office and Secretariat and State Archives, Nalanda, Trivandrum furnish a wide range of information regarding political, social and economic matters. But they do not wholly deal with the Agastheeswaram taluk alone. While they are explaining social, economic and political problems they make references to the Agastheeswaram and other taluks of South Travancore, later called Kanyakumari District after 1956. They are very helpful to trace the early history of not only Agastheeswaram taluk but the whole of Travancore.

Next comes the Government Orders. Except a few orders all the rests are from the Government of Tamilnadu and the Municipal Administration. These records have direct bearing on the subject. The orders come in the form of directions to the local self officials.

Next in order comes the minutes and the proceedings of the local self Government regarding the welfare programmes that they plan, and decisions taken to deal with the local problems. As such, it is the decision of the local leaders, because they know the problems of the people and are discussed in the presence of the Government officials. These records have direct bearing on the subject of our study.

The official correspondences form another set of records that are useful for the present study. As the name indicates the official
communications are mostly directions and enquiries regarding official matters. The proceedings, as they are called, consists of various matters of interest.

Next in order comes the Curzory Reports. The Cursory Reports are prepared for the annual inspection of the District Collector or any subordinate officer to the collector. These Curzory Reports enlighten one with the administrative unit of the particular taluk, the income and the other particulars. It is necessary that they should inform the District Administration about the number of officials and scheme of work of the officials. If anyone wants to learn more about not only the Agastheeswaram but also about other three taluks they should refer or consult the Curzory Reports of that taluk.

The Government of the present Tamilnad announced various welfare schemes then and there for the welfare of the people. These schemes and programmes are to be implemented in time by the officials. After completion of the programmes, the officials are expected to send reports within the financial year. These reports bring to light, the name of the schemes and amount spent and the list of beneficiaries. There are Women’s Welfare Schemes, Widow Remarriage Scheme, Mother and Child Welfare Schemes and Anjuham Ammayar Marriage Scheme. These schemes are really worthy schemes. After completion of these schemes, the Panchayat
Unions are expected to submit annual report to the government. These reports convey how the schemes are implemented and the criterion for the selection of the beneficiaries is mentioned. These reports keep us informed of the social welfare schemes that are implemented in the Panchayat Unions and the Block as a whole.

The report on the fight against diseases like the elephantiasis, cholera, various kinds of fever like chicken kunia bring to light, the sufferings of the people due to these diseases, the blind belief of the people have in their Gods and Goddesses. Sometimes, the health officers of the Panchayat Unions and the Panchayat feel sore about the refusal of the people to take medicines from them. It shows that even at this age, they believe in woodooism, clairvoyant decrees, and the influence of supernatural powers on their lives. Sometimes they felt that these diseases are caused due to the wrath of their Gods and Godesses.

There are other sources like Memorandums, petitions, Royal Proclamations, Nittus and letters of correspondences. They bring to light many proclamations promulgated by the Rajas to remove certain inhuman practices such as oozhiam services and upper cloth problem, slavery and other social disabilities under which the people were groaning. The memorandums and petitions submitted by the people and the missionaries reflect the feelings of the people against social, religious and economic
disabilities under which they were suffering for decades. The Proclamations of 1822, the Government Order of 1880, the Proclamation of 1858 and the Royal Proclamation of 1936, against the prohibition to enter into temples are highly useful for the present study. Thus the primary sources give sufficient source materials for the present study. The secondary sources are also highly useful for the present study. They supply with to write the disjointed units and make the study interesting.

The secondary sources that are used in writing the thesis are also highly useful. They are Achutha Menon’s *Cochin State Manual*, Nagam Aiya’s *Travancore State Manual*, T.K. Velupillai’s *The Travancore State Manual*, Amalan’s *Vaikunda Mahatmiyam*, Arnold’s *Nationalism and Regional Politics in Tamilnadu*, Balachandra Nadar’s *Ahila Thrattu Ammanai*, Daniel’s *Struggle for Responsible Government*, Sabah Retnam’s *Tsunamis*, Francis Buchanan’s *A Journey from Madras through the Countries Mysore, Canara and Mabalar*, Francis Day’s *The Land of the Perumals*, Gladston’s *Protestant Christianity and People’s Movement in Kerala*, Hardgrave’s *The Nadars of Tamilnadu*, Hugh Tiner’s *The Foundation of Local Self Government in India Pakistan and Burma*, Hutton’s *Castes in India*, Keay’s *A History of Education in India*, Gopalakrishnan’s *Gazetteer of Kanyakumari District*, Krishna Iyer’s *Social History of Kerala*, Kusuman’s *Slavery in Travancore*, Majumdar’s *Vedic
Age, Muthaih’s Adult Education, Muthalib’s Theory of Local Government, Narchison’s Called to Serve, Nurul Hasan’s Challenges to Education, K.M. Panikar’s History of Kerala, Periavan’s Agastheeswaram Oru Encyclopedia, Peter and Ivy Peter’s Liberation of the Oppressed A Continuous Struggle, Ponniah’s Kumarijilla Yedu and Villavarajan’s The Diocese of Kottar are some of the important published works referred for this thesis. These published works supply with the necessary links whenever there is disjointed links.

Thus these sources furnish wholesome account on the History of Agastheeswaram taluk. But unlike the sources for the other studies the scope for biased writing is limited. Yet a comprehensive study of the different kinds of sources is necessary to get a right perspective. Analytical and narrative historical method is used in writing the thesis. Footnotes are cited at the foot of every page to enable the readers to find the references easily.

The subject is studied with the following objectives:

1. To give emphasis on the study of Local History.

2. It is an attempt to bring to light the role of local self Government and how far they are useful to the society.

3. To bring to light how the people responded the social, religious and natural challenges.
The Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was formed from the study before the final attempt.

1. The role of Travancore Government in dealing with the problems of the people.
2. The role of local self government and its impact.
3. Natural calamity and barider management of the people of Agastheeswaram.
4. The social reform movements and the impact of Ayya Vaikundar.
5. How the education was developed and its social impact.

Research Design

The thesis is designed into the following chapters. The thesis opens with the introduction. It deals with the geographical location, the fauna and flora, the people and the political history. The concluding part deals with the description of sources and the research methodology applied.

The first chapter deals with the communal divisions and its impact on the society and economic condition before 1958. It also deals with the communal hierarchy and its effect on the society.

The second chapter explains in detail the religious condition. The people are followers of Vaishnavism and Sivism. Besides these, Jainism
developed in Agastheeswaram. Christianity both Protestantism and Catholic religion flourished.

The third chapter deals with the social reforms in Agastheeswaram taluk after the coming of the Protestant missions, abolition of slavery, temple entry proclamations were the important incidents. Another important social reform was the rise of Muthukutty Swamigal and his fight for social equality.

The fourth chapter brings to light the administrative changes and economic developments in Agastheeswaram. The designation and powers of the revenue and village administrators underwent a change. The economic activities increased. Various kinds of village and cottage industries began to develop besides agricultural operation.

The fifth chapter clearly explains the growth and development of local self Governments and their powers and functions including their usefulness to the people.

The sixth chapter deals with the growth of education under the Protestants who were pioneers in introducing western education. The education that the people received created a sense of social and political awakening among them.

The seventh chapter explains the educational endeavours of the Catholics and the establishment of schools and colleges. Mostly their activities were confined to the Catholic population.
The penultimate chapter deals with the challenges of nature and how the people of Agastheeswaram taluk responded to it.

The last chapter being the conclusion, it is the summation of the above facts written in the above chapter.