INTRODUCTION

Kanyakumari District, one among the 32 Districts of Tamil Nadu is situated on the southern most extremity of the Indian sub continent. It is an enchanting land of natural beauty and panoramic views. Found on the Tropical region of Indian peninsula, this area is known for vast stretch of paddy fields, coconut groves, rubber plantations, dense forest and gifted with rivers, fertile land, mineral wealth and pleasant climate with sufficient rainfall suitable for human habitation. This district has many beautiful Tourist Spot, one of them being Cape Comorin where the Indian Ocean, Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal Converge$^1$. A place of pilgrimage, Cape Comorin is the only place where one can enjoy the unique sight of sun rise and sunset on the confluence of the three seas$^2$.

A part of erstwhile princely State of Travancore, the Tamil speaking area of South Travancore got merged into the present Kanyakumari District on 1$^{st}$ November 1956 as per the State reorganization commission of Indian State on linguistic basis with Madras State presently known as Tamilnadu$^3$. A part of South Travancore before re-organization, the present Kanyakumari District comprises of four taluks namely Agastheeswaram, Thovalai, Kalkulam and Vilavancode with a total area of 1684 Sq. Kms$^4$.

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Bounded by Tirunelveli District on the north and east, Kerala State on the north-west and Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean in the west and south respectively, this district lies between 77°05' and 77°36' of the eastern longitude and 8°03' and 8°35' of the northern latitude\textsuperscript{5}. According to the Census Report of India, the district has the population 1,669,763 of which 829,542 are male and 840,221 are female\textsuperscript{6}. But it has substantially increased during the subsequent ten years. Though it is one of the tiny districts in the state it has endowed with cent percent literacy.

The name Kanyakumari is derived from the famous goddess of the place namely Kanni Bhagavathi Amman\textsuperscript{7}. According to the popular legend, the Goddess Parvathi, a virgin did penance on one of the rocks of this lands end to obtain Lord Shiva as her husband. But, her failure to achieve the goal, she attained incarnation as Kanni Bhagavathi or Devi Kanyakumari\textsuperscript{8}. A visitor can see a temple dedicated to her is situated on the seashore of Kanyakumari which attracts millions of devotees from all over India. Hence, the District is named as Kanyakumari in memory of the Goddess.

\textsuperscript{5} Gopala Krishnan, M., op. cit., p.22.
\textsuperscript{7} Tamil Arasu, Government of Tamilnadu, March 1992, pp.17-18.
\textsuperscript{8} The popular legendary story is that seven miles of the north of cape is the famous shiva shrine situated at Suchindrum and Lord Shiva a sacred figure of the puranas is said to have loved the virgin goddess at cape. It seems the marriage was actually arranged once and when Shiva began walking towards his fiancée’s abode, the Lord was stopped by Sri Vishnu himself transforming into a cock and crowing, heralding the dawn! Thus the marriage was stopped and Kumari continues as a Kanya “virgin”. (Madras Information, Vol.XI, No.2, February 1957, p.11).
Physical Features

Kanyakumari District has a variety of physical features. Predominantly an agrarian region with vast natural resources and a variety of geological features, it settles between the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea coast. Based on physiography, this district falls under three natural divisions namely mountainous terrain, low lands and undulating valley. The north east of the district covers the eastern part of Vilavancode and Kalkulam Taluk which contains a mountainous terrain. In the extreme west and south west is the seacoast which is flat and fairly fertile. This strip of land along the sea coast forms the low lands. In between the mountainous region and the sea coast there exist a strip of undulating valley and a few streams running towards the west9.

On the whole, the region has a gentle but definite slope towards the west from the east this gentle slope and natural divisions with their evergreen vegetation makes the region enchanting abundant with rich flora and fauna. The mountain ranges which appear to over look the sea in the west run more or less parallel to the coast. Accordingly, situated at the foot of the Western Ghats the district is gifted with few mountains namely, Parvathamalai, Thiruvannamalai Mottai, Petchmottai and Sambal Mottai10.

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Mahendragiri is the most important mountain with 5427 feet height. In the extreme south east, the mountain range gradually sinks to the mid land plains and finally enters into the Indian Ocean near Kanyakumari\textsuperscript{11}. In the east, the mountain range leaves open several passes. Among them the Aramboly pass forms the best entrance to the district from Thirunelveli to Trivandrum. In the past, it was through this pass the Tamil powers frequently invaded South Travancore and thus played a significant role in the military and strategic history of Travancore State. Apart from this, there are some isolated mountains with rocks of various size spread throughout the district. The Maruthuval Malai in the Agastheeswaram Taluk, the Velimalai and Chunkankadai Mountain in the Kalkulam Taluk and Viniyakundam at Munchirai in the Vilavancode Taluk\textsuperscript{12} are some of the small mountains which not only safeguarded Kanyakumari District from invaders but provided varied resources too.

**Coast Line**

Besides mountains and passes, Kanyakumari District is gifted with a long stretch of coast line of about 68 kilometers spreading over the east and west coast. Its coastal landscape consists of a long sandy beaches, rocky and sandy ridges and sandy and swampy estuaries. The geological formation of the district is made up of marine and alluvial soil, raised beaches and alluvium, sand stones, varied clays and lignite. The beach deposit at Manavalakurichi, Cape Comorin and other coastal

\textsuperscript{11} Nambar, P.K., \textit{op. cit.}, p.5.
\textsuperscript{12} Gopalakrishnan, M., \textit{op. cit.}, p.4.
areas in Kanyakumari District contain heavy minerals of industrial use such as retile, limonite, zircon and monazite. Colachel is known for its natural port situated on the west coast in Tamilnadu\textsuperscript{13}.

Forest

In Kanyakumari District, an area of 54644 hectares of 32.7% of the total area is covered by natural forest. According to the Forest Survey of India, Dehradun 15,000 hectares of the forest are classified as dense forest besides nine reserve forest. Forest one of the principle natural resources not only maintains environmental stability but plays a vital role in preserving ecological balances. The forest in Kanyakumari District abound in trees like teak, black wood, ebony, raw material for wide range of industries, supply fuel for cooking, timber for shelter, fodder for livestock’s and wood for making agriculture implements besides yielding species, fruits and roots for sustenance’s. For administrative purpose, the forest areas are divided into four territorial ranges namely Kulasekaram, Alagiyapandipuram, Boothapandi and upper Kothaiyar. Most of the forest areas are rich in timber and plants of great medicinal and economic value. From a visit to the forest areas, one could see the cultivation of commercial crops such as Tea, Coffee, Pepper, Cardamom, Cloves and rare medicinal plants in plenty\textsuperscript{14}.

\textsuperscript{13} Muthuswami, A.P., \textit{op. cit.}, p.9.
\textsuperscript{14} Tamil Arasu, Vol.XIII, Government of Tamil Nadu, Nov.5, Madras 1982, p.33.
Rivers and Lakes

The people of Kanyakumari District are endowed with some rivers. They are mostly perennial and short in nature. Two rivers namely Kothaiyar and Pazhayar flow through this district. The Kothaiyar otherwise known as Thambraparni River, rises on the southern extremity of the Muthukulivayal, flows through the two taluks of Kalkulam and Vilavancode and reaches the sea at Thengapattanam, covering the total length of 37 miles.

Similarly the Pazhiar flows through the taluks of Thovala and Agastheeswaram in a south eastern by direction and falls into the Manakudi Lake after a course of 23 miles. The river Kothaiyar is dammed at Pachiparai and the Paraliar which is the tributary of Kothaiyar is dammed at Perunchani and these two projects are designed to irrigate about 65000 acres of Paddy fields in Nanjilnadu and in Kalkulam\textsuperscript{15}. Besides these rivers Kanyakumari District is known for lakes and lagoons too. Prominent fresh water lake is Pachiparai, Perunchani and the lake of Thamaraikulam and Thengapattinam are the two natural salt water lakes adding the panorama of this district\textsuperscript{16}.

Soil, Climate and Rainfall

The soil of Kanyakumari District is generally fertile. It is mostly of black loam variety. In the coastal region sandy soil is almost found everywhere. The gravelly soil is commonly seen near the mountain ranges. But in the low land the mixture of

\textsuperscript{15} Madras Information, Vol. XI, No.11, November 1957, p.15.
white sand and sandy loam is seen. In the mid land Vallies and high lands a fairly fertile soil of five types are seen. Enough rainfall in different months makes the soil more alluvial and fertile. Generally, the district enjoys a pleasant whether providing warm and humid climate with cold season. The major factors that influence the climate of this region are the southwest monsoon and the northeast monsoon winds. Owing to the proximity towards the sea and the dwindling height of Western Ghats, the summer season is generally oppressive. Usually, the summer starts from March to May followed by South West Monsoon from June to September\textsuperscript{17}, providing heavy rainfall. However, the low height of the Western Ghats in this region stands on the way of heavy showers occasionally. This monsoon period last tills the middle of August or September and the atmosphere becomes dry. But when compared to other regions Kanyakumari District has a congenial climate endowed with adequate rain which makes the land mostly ever green.

**Flora and Fauna**

Gifted with scenic beauty, fine climate and rich resources Kanyakumari District is known for the wide variety of flora and fauna. The forest has about 600 species of gigantic timber trees and 35000 variety plants\textsuperscript{18}. Known for a variety of timber trees like teak, rose wood, sandal wood, *etti, aini, nai thekku, mayilai, maruthu, vegai, naval*, trees yielding gums, resin and dyes. Moreover, avenue trees cycades and palms bamboos and flowering and ornamental plants make the district a botanical

\textsuperscript{17} Travancore Administrative Report, 1944-45, Trivandrum, 1946, p.2.
\textsuperscript{18} Thina Thanthi Thakaval Kalangam, Nagercoil, 5 March 2009, p.42.
garden. Besides, the plantation of cardamom and tea are seen on the high elevation while pepper, rubber and ginger are available in the lower elevation. Tamarind, mango, tapioca, cashew, plantain, jack, palmyra and other similar trees are found on the plains. About 600 species of medicinal plants grow here, especially in the Maruthuvamalai region. Rauwolfia, arockia, patcha, helactres, hemidesmus, sbychnos and ramdia are some of the common medicinal plants available in the forests. Kolumthu an aromatic plant, scented flowers like Jasmine, Pitchi and Rose are also grown in plenty in Thovalai region.

This district is noted for its diverse fauna and rich wide animals like elephants, tigers and panthus. Moreover deer, porcupines, pigs, hedgehogs and wild bear are available in the hilly regions King Fisher and cranes are commonly found in the water bodies and wet lands. Reptiles include lizards, crocodiles, tortoises and snakes are found in the forest regions and plains. Mongoose and monkeys are found in plain and jungles besides rats, mice and hares. Trout and other varieties of fresh water fish are available in the Pechiparai reservoir.

Poisonous snakes such as cobra and viper are common in the forest region. Birds like pigeons, parrots, wood peckers, honey suckers, myna and crow are found in plenty. Insects such as earwigs, leaf insects, cockroaches, grasshoppers and the poisonous insects, the varieties of scorpions and spiders are also found in the district. However, the rich flora and fauna of the

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district are slowly vanishing due to deforestation, introduction of hydro electric projects, rising of plantation and urbanization.

**Social Condition**

Kanyakumari District with its pleasant climate, fertile soil and diverse flora and fauna attracted human settlements of different communities and religious affiliations. The social ladder of Kanyakumari District was a long one consisting mainly of Brahmins, Nairs, Vellahs, Ezhavas, Chetties, Muthaliyars, Nadar, Paraiyas and Pulaiyas\(^\text{22}\). Along with these group Barbers, Washer men, Paravas, Mukkuvars, Saliyars and Checkalavars were found in the society. The age old social regulation and taboos like untouchability, unseeability and unapproachability resulted in the stratification of the society into mutually antagonistic groups. In the hierarchical society, the Brahmins placed at the top. Their mastery in science and learning enabled them to occupy superiority over other groups. Moreover, they controlled the temple lands and pretended to its owners. Being a priestly class, they enjoyed monopoly of education, government services and priesthood\(^\text{23}\). Next to them, the Nairs, stood high in the social ladder who received land grants from the rulers for their Military Services\(^\text{24}\). As a privileged section, they were considered as nobles and developed their own social customs and conventions, rites and rituals, ceremonies and festivals, taboos and restrictions. Due to their royal connection as soldiers, their women were given to the Brahmins as

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\(^{22}\) Travancore Administration Report 1944-45, Trivandrum, p.2.


sambhandam form of marriage. They followed marumakkathayam system of inheritance till the enactment of the act of 1925 which abolished the matrilineal joint family system and established an individualistic matrilineal system called makkathayam\textsuperscript{25}. Besides the Nairs, the Vellalas, the agriculture group held a position below the Nairs and social prestige and rituals ranking second to the Brahmans and practiced vegetarianism. They too adapted marumakkathayam system of inheritance. This paved the way for their decline. Therefore this system was abolished below them were the Nadars and Ezhavas. They were under the control of Brahmans and the Nairs who not only oppressed them but treated them as their slaves\textsuperscript{26} though they formed the majority and claimed superiority over the paraiyars\textsuperscript{27}. The Nadars were largely Palmyra tapers and making coarse sugar or jaggery. Most of them were sub-tenants to Nairs, who were prohibited from carrying umbrellas, wearing shoes, golden ornaments, rearing milk cows and their women were prohibited from carrying water in their hips and covering the upper part of their bodies\textsuperscript{28}. However, due to their hard labour, they purchased the lands of the Nairs who in course of time migrated to Kerala. With the spread of Christianity especially the protestant mission, the women of the Nadar caste were allowed to wear upper garments like the high caste women and all other social taboos were thrown away in due course.

\textsuperscript{27} Robert Hardgrave, The Nadars of Tami Nadu, California, 1969, p.56. 
Similar to the Nadar’s, the Ezhavas were regarded as untouchables. They were neither allowed to enter the temple nor permitted to walk along the public roads groaned under this prenicisious situation, the Ezhavas engaged themselves in the cultivation of coconut and palm trees and indulged in agriculture, rope making, toddy drawing, weaving and other industrial activities. Commonly known as Panicker, the Ezhavas of Travancore followed makkathayam (matrilineal) marumakkathayam (matrilineal) and misravazhi (mixed system) forms of inheritance. However, the Ezhava Regulation Act of 1925 not only raised their socio-economic and political life, but put an end to the practice of treating them as untouchables.

Kurups occupied a place of prominence in South Travancore. They owned most of the landed property in Nanjilnadu and enslaved many of the depressed communities. Similar to them the Chettiyars are traditionally the community of business men and traders. The term “chettu” means “frugal” and probably this designation came to be awarded to the community because of their simple frugal way of life and chettu are popularly called Chetty and classified into Kottar Chetty, Parakkai Chetty and Attungal Chetty. Mostly they resemble like Tamil Sudras in their customs and manners. A division of Chetties are called Checkalavaniar who engaged in oil pressing and oil trade.

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The Saliyar are the wearing caste. The word Saliyar is derived from the Sanskrit word salika meaning weaving. They claim to be equal to the Vairyas in the social hierarchy. The Kamalars are divided into endogamous sub caste such as Gold Smith, Black Smith, Carpenter, Mason and Brazier. The village barbers locally known as Navithar, who engaged in their traditional profession and served as local physicians and their wives were the village midwives\textsuperscript{32}. The Parayas and Pulaihahs were considered to be low castes and were treated as slaves by the higher caste. The word para is derived from parai or drum as this caste furnishes the drummers especially at funerals. Though their legitimate lights were denied, they were known for their strange muscular power, and capable of hard work\textsuperscript{33}. Their homes were usually situated out side the village limits\textsuperscript{34} known as Paracheri. Similarly, the name pulaihah comes from the word pula meaning funeral pollution. They occupy a very low rank in the social scale and considered as a polluting caste and sun is their chief object of worship\textsuperscript{35}. Kanikaran’s is a group of hill tribes found settled in some pockets of the villages. Similarly the people of Mukkuva caste settled near the sea shore mostly engaged in the traditional occupation fishing. They are also lime makers and served as Palanquin bearers and boats men.

\textsuperscript{34} John. A. Jacob, \emph{op. cit.}, p.13.
\textsuperscript{35} Oliver Mendel Sohn and Marika Vicziany, \textit{The untouchables, Subordination, Poverty and the State in Modern India}, New Delhi, 1998, pp.37-39.
Religion

Kanyakumari is a land of temples. They are dedicated to Shiva and Vishnu. There is no village without a Madan or a Kali or a Sastha temple. Some others are dedicated to Muruga, Bagavathi and Ganapathi. The famous temples of this district are located in Kanyakumari, Suchindrum, Parakkai, Nagercoil, Boothapandy, Velimalai, Thiruvattar and Padmanabhapuram. Most of the temples of this district were constructed during the reign of the Imperial Cholas. The unprivileged sections worshipped the village deities like Age, Madan, Esaki, Sudalaimadan, Vannaramadan, Neeli and Karunkali. A few groups worshipped the images of serpents. Moreover people of this district celebrate the Sivarathiri festival in the month of February (Masi) by making pilgrimage to 12 Siva temples located in different parts of Kanyakumari District. Among the Hindus a separate religious sect known as “Ayya Vazhi” based on the precepts of the founder Ayya Vaikunder establish number of pathis (temples) and offer worship.

Besides Christians of various denominations found settled in Kanyakumari District. Roman Catholic Christianity was introduced in the district by St. Thomas, an apostle of Jesus Christ in 52 AD and later by St. Francies Xavier on European

Missionary. It is believed that he resided at Kottar in 1544 AD\textsuperscript{40}, visited the coastal region and converted many people to Catholicism. Similarly, Protestant mission in Kanyakumari District starts with the entry of William Tobias Ringel Taube at Mylaudy in Agastheeswaram Taluk on 25\textsuperscript{th} April 1806\textsuperscript{41}. Christianity forms the second major religion in the district and mostly they belong to the Protestant Christians and Catholics, Salvation Army, Indian Evangelical, Lutheran form, Latin Catholics and other denomination. Side by side of Hinduism and Christianity. Islam too flowered and blossomed in various places of Kanyakumari District and established its strong hold.

**Economic Condition**

Kanyakumari District is well known for agrarian activities. Most of the people engaged in agricultural production like paddy, coconut, palm, topica, banana, rubber, cashew, mango, arecanut, cloves, cardamom, pepper, ginger, turmeric, arrow root, groundnut and variety of pulses. Paddy is grown in two seasons locally known as *kannipoo* (April to June) and *kumbapoo* (September to December)\textsuperscript{42}. Coconut is the main cash crop is Kanyakumari and its copra is well known in the markets. Topioca is one of the important crops cultivated over an area of 423692 acres. Palmyra trees also raised and its sweet sap and sugar, leaves and timber provided a living to a great number of Nadars in the Kanyakumari District. The beautiful arecanut palm is planted in the damp soil and the banks of tanks and rivers. Rubber cultivation is so popular in Kanyakumari District.

\textsuperscript{40} John. A. Jacob, *op. cit.*, p.41.  
\textsuperscript{41} Lawrence, Y., *op. cit.*, p.21.  
\textsuperscript{42} *Thina Thanthi Thagaval Kalangiam*, Nagercoil, 10 March 2011, p.4.
Fishing is the ordinary man’s occupation. However, there are many industries like textiles, wood, metals, ceramic, and chemical products. The manufacture of salt is yet another profitable industry in Kanyakumari District. At present the Indian Rare Earth Factory at Manavalakurichi and the Spinning mills at Nagercoil and Aralvoimozhi and the Vijayalakshmi cashew company at Panavilai are the four major industries in this District\textsuperscript{43}.

Coir Industry thrives along the coastal areas from cape comorin in the south to Kollancode in the north. The Young Men Christian Association (YMCA) Rural Reconstruction Centre at Marthandam is engaged in bee-keeping. In recent years number of windmills is also sprung up in the Aralvoimozhi and its neighborhood.

\textbf{Early Political History}

Kanyakumari District with its rich resources and strategic location has had a chequed history and vicissitudes of fortune among various dynasties of South India namely Ay, Cheras, Cholas and Pandya from yore. Kanyakumari District has two geographical areas. They are locally known as Nanjilnadu and Edainadu. The area comprising the present Agastheeswaram and Thovalai Taluks known as Nanjilnadu and the areas of Kalkulam and Vilavancode Taluks are collectively known as Edainadu\textsuperscript{44}. In 700 A.D the Pandya King Arikesari invaded Kottar the economic capital of Kanyakumari. The Pandya

\textsuperscript{44} Gopalakrishnan, M., \textit{op. cit.}, p.50.
invasion of Nanjilnadu is testified by the fish, the symbol and emblem of the Pandya kings at Vattakottai a granite fort situated 6 km north east of Kanyakumari. It is noted that the rulers took welfare measures in Nanjilnadu. For instance the Ay King Kokarunathadakkan established a vedic College known as Parthibasekarapuram salai at Munchirai in the Vilavancode Taluk\textsuperscript{45}. Nanjilnadu was under the control of Pandyas till the beginning of 10\textsuperscript{th} Century. But by 910 AD, it came under the control of Paranthaka Chola which is testified by the stone carving at Suchindrum and Agastheeswaram. However, Kalkulam and Vilavancode Taluks under Edainadu were under the rule of the Cholas. The Chola splender continued upto the reign Kolounga I. But the Chola power declined with the rise of Hoysalas and Western Chalukyas. Utilizing this situation, the Venad Chieftain (the descendents of Central Chera family) took advantage of the situation and gradually established their hold in Nanjilnadu\textsuperscript{46}. As per the tradition one branch of the Chera family migrated south and settled in Padmanabhapuram. This branch established the Kingdom of Venad which came to be known as Travancore, the anglicized form of Thiruvithancore meaning “the abode of prosperity”\textsuperscript{47}. The Venad Kings for about four centuries made incursions into the Pandya territories. To prevent invasions of the Venad, the Pandya princes and later the Nayaks obtained help from the Vijayanagar powers. In this rivalry, in 1609 Kanyakumari region fell into the hands of Viswanatha Nayak of Madurai but Nanjilnadu was well protected

by Venad. But between 1677 and 1696 Venad witnessed internal strife. Subsequently Venad was expanded toward north Kerala and to be known as Travancore with its capital at Padmanabhapuram near Thuckalay.

Marthandavarama widely acclaimed as the maker of modern Travancore (1729 A.D. – 1758 A.D.) defeated the feudal chieftains of Venad and consolidated the royal authority. He grew in strength to strength and merged Attingal with Venad by a treaty by which the off springs of the queen of Attingal to occupy the throne of Venad. Though Marthandavarma could win the battle of Colachel by defeating the Dutch army, he could not cope up with the thread from Chanda Sahib and paid huge sums of money as ranson to him which made him to withdraw. Consequently, Marthandavarma extended his Kingdom North wards upto Aluva and the present Kanyakumari District to be known as Southern Travancore. Karthikai Thirunal Ramavarma (Dharma Raja) who succeeded Marthandavarma reigned between 1758 A.D. and 1798 A.D. During the fag end of his rule he entered into the treaty with the British in 1795 by which the Britishers became the overlords of Travancore and a permanent British resident was accepted in the Travancore court\(^{48}\). His successor Balaramavarma entrusted the administration in the hands of his civil ministers. But people could not bear the burden of over taxation and so rebelled under the leadership of Velluthampi. Therefore, the King dismissed the corrupt minister and appointed Velluthampi as Dewan. During the regency of Rani Lakshmi Bai, (1810-1815) Travancore witnessed

improvement in trade and commerce through the enforcement of market regulations. In 1815 Parvathi Bai who succeeded her sister Rani Lakshmi Bai issued a proclamation permitting a less privileged class to construct tiled roof houses\textsuperscript{49}. The next King Swathi Thirunal (1829-1847) reformed the judiciary and introduced English education. His successor Utram Thirunal (1847-1860) improved the financial condition of the State, and in 1959 by a proclamation he abolished all restriction and used breast cloth by Nadar Women in South Travancore\textsuperscript{50}.

Ayilam Thirunal, (1860-1880) the sovereign of great learning in many languages promoted fine arts and appreciated the talented musicians. He not only opened schools and hospitals but improved irrigation and communication\textsuperscript{51}. Ramavarma Visakam Thirunal (1880-1885) separated the police administration from magistracy, inaugurated revenue survey and settlements, encouraged native industries and extended grant-in-aid to elementary education\textsuperscript{52}.

During the reign of Sri Mulam Thirunal (1885-1924) the famous Kothaiyar project in Nanjilnadu was started in 1895. Moreover, in 1908 a new department of agriculture was formed and revamped the medical services with qualified Physicians and Surgeons and the created Sri Mulam popular assembly\textsuperscript{53}. Sethu Lakshmi Bai (1924-1931) who acted as regent from 1924 to 1931 during the minority of Chitra Thirunal Balaramavarma formed

\textsuperscript{50} Hardgrave (Jr.), \textit{op. cit.}, p.183.
Village Panchayats in rural areas by an act of 1925 and opened number of highways. The reign of Chitra Thirunal Balaramavarma (1931-1949) the last sovereign of Travancore, witnessed the re-organization of legislature and various administrative and social reforms including making Sir Chitra State Council a bicameral legislature.

**Early Education**

Kanyakumari District is not lag behind in education ever since the remote past. The importance of education was felt by the Tamils of Yore. Thiruvalluvar, the great Tamil Writer extols learning as the only imperishable wealth and the learned are honoured highly not only is their land but all over the world.\(^5\)\(^4\) We come to know from Sangam literature the prevalence of education in ancient Tamilnadu. It mentions the pial or portico school in the villages. In those days education was wide spread and people irrespective of caste or sex obtained the benefits of education. But with the spread of Bakthi Movement and the construction of temple as its consequence, the privilege of imparting education was brought under the control of major temple of prominence. Such temples centered educational institutions were variously known *ghatikas*, *salas*, *guhais* and *mathas*.\(^5\)\(^5\)

Kanyakumari District, a part of South Travancore was credited with the Parthibasekarapuram Salai (Vedic College) attached with Vishnu Temple at Parthibhapuram near

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\(^{54}\) *Thirukkural*, 400; 397.

Munchirai in Vilavancode Taluk and Rajarajaperumsalai attached with Bhagavati Temple at Kanyakumari in Agastheeswaram taluk of Kanyakumari District. Established for 95 students (sattar), this college offered different course of study such as Vedas, Mimansa Sastra, Vyakaranam (Grammar) Puranas, Silpasastras, Agamas, international relation, geography and history. As in the present day, various rules and regulations were framed regarding the eligibility for admission, code of contact enforcement of discipline recruitment of faculty members and their remuneration and administration in details in the Parthibhasekarapuram Copper Plates of Ko-Karunanthadakkan⁵⁶. Subsequently, with the decline of temple centered education, the states took up, the responsibility of providing education in their respective regions. As such the Travancore Sovereigns too envied one with the other and introduced various measures to impart education.

Travancore is known for traditional system of education. Known as eluthpallis and village schools where the village school master locally known as Asan disseminates Knowledge. However, the introduction of western system of education was a boost to the local people. The direct involvement of the state in the field of education began in 1817 A.D. Her highness Gowri Parvathi Bai with the assistance of Dewan Col. Munro introduced free and compulsory education in the State. Suitable legislations were enacted to start Malayalam School in all villages and parents were instructed to send their children between 5 and 10 to schools.

⁵⁶ Ten Pandya Copper Plates, P.A., II; Travancore Archeological Series Volume, I & II.
Apart from the state, the Christian Missionaries were also encouraged to start mission schools throughout Travancore. The Catholic and Protestant missionaries established respective mission schools in their settlement area. They became the pioneers of modern education by teaching English and Modern Science\textsuperscript{57}. Tobias Ringle Taube, while engaged in evangelical work, established a first English school at Mylaudy in 1806\textsuperscript{58} and established several school in South Travancore. Followed by him, Rev. Mead, another Protestant missionary from 1817 to till 1873 strived hard to establish several schools and considered him as the pioneer of introducing female education in state.

The government too granted tax free lands to start free school. Since then, various legislations were enacted to start schools. Till 1956 Kanyakumari District witnessed with an array of primary, middle and high schools. Subsequently, with the merger of four taluks of South Travancore with Tamilnadu of new district namely Kanyakumari was formed on 1\textsuperscript{st} November 1956. In consequence, all educational institutions were brought under government of Tamilnadu which met with vicissitudes of fortune till the present day with various changes.

**Sources of Information**

A study on “Education in Kanyakumari District 1956-2004” will not be completed unless its relevant source materials are brought light and analyzed critically. Both primary and secondary sources collected from the National Archives, New

\textsuperscript{57} Hacker, I.H., *A Hundred Years in Travancore*, London, 1908, p.66.
Delhi; Tamil Nadu State Archives, Chennai; Directorate of State Archives, Trivandrum; Kerala State Secretariat; Record Section Legislative Library, Trivandrum, University Library, Trivandrum; Public Library, Trivandrum, Connemara Public Library, Chennai, Secretariat Library, Madras; Manonmaniam Sundaranar University Library, Thirunelveli; The Collectorate Library at Nagercoil and Kanyakumari District Library furnish valuable information for the study.

The government records constitute the most relevant primary sources of information for the study. The records preserved in the Tamilnadu archives in the forms of Government Orders and Official Records of the Education Department, Census Report, Madras Administration Report, Public Instruction Report, School Annual Report and News Paper Reports, throw a plethora of information for making a comprehensive analysis. Moreover, the Administrative Reports of Travancore, The Annual Report of L.M.S. and Catholic diocese also furnish ample information for making a systematic study. These original sources contain detailed accounts on the formation and up gradation of school from lower to higher secondary, collegiate education and professional education. The rules and regulations pertaining to the establishment of educational institution, the infra structure facilities required, the mode of appointment, salary of the staff members, their condition of services and the power and functions of government and private officials are gleaned from the primary sources. Besides the daily news paper referred form the Hindu Office in
Madurai, The Dinamalar Office in Nagercoil and Thirunelveli are largely helpful for making a comprehensive study.


**Organization of Thesis**

With the help of primary and secondary sources, the thesis has been framed into 5 chapters apart from an Introduction and a Conclusion. In the introductory part detailed information is provided with a brief history of Kanyakumari District and early education upto 1956 besides providing source description and chapterization.
The first chapter on “Primary Education” gives the graphic account on the growth of primary education under Travancore Sovereigns and the subsequent changes that brought to streamline education suitable for the people of Kanyakumari District by Government of Tamil Nadu till 2004. Moreover, an attempt is made in this chapter to highlight the mode of education introduced from Kindergarten to Middle School both public and private. Besides, attention is paid to portray the rules and regulations for admission, duration of the course, scheme of the curriculum, periodical revision of the syllabus, maintenance of discipline, mode of coaching, basic qualification for teachers, N.C.C., N.S.S., and other such progressive measures are critically brought out in this chapter.

“High School and Higher Secondary Education” which adorns the second chapter of the thesis furnishes an account on the growth of education from 9th standard to 11th standard which forms a core of High School Education. Subsequently, due to the introduction of 10, +2+3 pattern of education 11th standard attached with high school education was merged with one year pre university course attached with college was brought down to the schools in the name of Higher Secondary. Further attention is bestowed on examination pattern, syllabus, fee structure, scholarships qualification for high school and higher secondary teachers, their promotion, salary and transfer, in service training for the teachers are described. In addition the impact of the introduction of secondary higher education in the High School Campus including the examination pattern one also touched.
The “Collegiate Education” constitute the third chapter of the thesis provides a cogent account of the major arts and science colleges flowered and spread its fragrance to the people of near and distant areas. Proper attention is bestowed upon to expose the mode of education offered by some prominent colleges in Kanyakumari District under the affiliation of Madras University and the subsequent transfer to Madurai Kamaraj University and later switchover to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Thirunelveli due to the formation of new universities. The condition for admission, subject offered, the fee structure, mode of examination, impetus for research, scholarships extra curricular activities such as sports and games, N.S.S., N.C.C., Blood Donation Camp, U.G.C. Norms for teachers recruitment and their welfare besides some teacher training colleges are all properly narrated in this chapter.

The forth chapter “Professional Education” concentrates on the Medical and Technical Institutions sprouted across Kanyakumari District to cater to the needs of education. In such colleges the mode of U.G. and P.G. admissions made for various medical and technical courses are briefly examined. Besides I.T.I. Institutions, Polytechnic Colleges, some information is provided to the nursing courses, pharmacy, dental, paramedical course too. Mode of admission, fees structure and the facilities offered to the students to preserve the studies are also touched upon.

The last chapter “Administration” which adorns in this thesis deals with the administrative arrangements made by the Government of Tamilnadu from time to time. It is interesting to
State that in the formative period of Kanyakumari District, the Chief Educational Office is at Thirunelveli District but later a separate CEO office was established at Nagercoil for administration convenience. Besides, establishing the DEO offices at Nagercoil, Thuckalay and Kuzhithurai, Inspector offices are formed at various places. Similarly, the arts and Science Colleges in Kanyakumari District functioned under different universities are brought under Manonmaniam Sundaranar University ever since 1990. So also all the Technical colleges are managed by Anna University Chennai since 2005. Likewise, all the medical institutions are brought under the preview of Dr. M.G.R. University, Chennai. Above all, the effect of the administrative changes made in the Education Department periodically is also briefly examined.

The concluding part gives the bird’s eye view of all the chapters besides giving the research findings and some progressive suggestions to stem the tide of the galloping student’s population, pursuing admission, meeting the challenges of Modern Education.