CHAPTER 2
PROFILE OF THE TOWN

Wayanad, known as the green paradise, is one of the hill area District in the Kerala State, the “Gods own country”. Kalpetta is the district head quarter and only urban centre in the district. In this session, the location, area, population, administrative division, physiography, climate, history & evolution and bio diversity of the town is described.

2.1 Location

“Wayanad” the 14th District of the state was formed as late as on 1.11.1980 combining North Wayanad Taluk of Kannur District and South Wayanad Taluk of Kozhikode District. The District lies between 75° 47’ 23” and 76° 26’ 40” East Longitude and 11° 30’ 08” and 11° 58’ 40” North Latitude with an area of 2131 Sq.Km. It is the border District totally contained in highland region, and shares its boundary with Tamilnadu and Karnataka at East. To its West and North-West are Districts of Kozhikode and Kannur while Malappuram District forms the Southern boundary. Kalpetta, the only Municipal town in the District, lies between 76° 30’ and 76° 66’ East Longitude and 11° 34’ 12” and. 11° 38’ 24” North Latitude. It is located about 75Km east of Kozhikode and is equidistant (about 120Km) from the famous tourist centres viz. Mysore and Ooty.

The administrative head quarter is located within the Kalpetta Municipality emphasising its importance in terms of administrative town, provision of district level services and so forth. The height from mean sea level varies from 731m to 1371 m. The Municipality is surrounded by Kottathara Gramapanchatyt at its north, Muttil and Meppadi Grama Panchayats at East, Vythiri Grama Panchayat at its south west and Pozhuthana and Vengappally Grama Panchayat at its West. The spatial location of the Kalpetta Municipality in Wayanad District is shown in Fig 2.1 and the distance of important urban centres from Kalpetta is shown in Fig 2.2.

![Fig 2.1 Location of Kalpetta Municipality](image-url)
2.2 Area, Population & Administrative Divisions

The geographical area of municipality till the year 2005 was 34.14 sq km. Later 6.33 sq km area has been added from the adjacent Meppadi grama panchayat. Now the total area of the Municipality is 40.47 sqkm which accounts for 1.89% of the total area of the district.

The population of Kalpetta municipality as per 2001 census is 29612, which constitutes 3.79% of the district population. The male population is around 50.15% which indicates almost equal male and female population. The population density is 732 persons per sq km, which is low compared to other towns in the state. The other major growth centres in the district are Sulthan Bathery and Mananthavady shows still lower density value.

The total No. of electoral wards as per the ward division in 2010 is 28. As per the 2001 ward division there were 21 wards. So for the study and analysis, ward division in 2001 is considered. The spatial location of 28 wards of Kalpetta Municipality is shown in Fig 2.3.
2.3 History & evolution

The present District of Wayanad was formed by merging the South Wayanad Taluk of erstwhile Kozhikode District and North Wayanad Taluk of erstwhile Kannur District on 1st November 1980. This section tries to explore the history and evolution of the town Kalpetta.

2.3.1 History of Governance

Recorded history of the District is available from the 18th century. In ancient times, the land was ruled by the Rajas of Veda tribe. In later days Wayanad came under the rule of Pazhassi Raja of Kottayam Royal Dynasty. When Hyder Ali became the ruler of Mysore, he invaded Wayanad and brought it under the way. During the period of Tipu, Wayanad was restored to the Kottayam Royal Dynasty. But Tipu handed over the entire Malabar region to the British, after the Srerangapattanam Truce he made with them. This was followed by fierce and internecine encounters between the British and Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja of Kottayam. When the Raja was driven to the wilderness of Wayanad, He organised the war, like peoples Militia with the help of Kurichiya tribal and engaged the British in several Gorilla type encounters. In the end the British could get only the dead body of the Raja who killed himself somewhere in the interior of the forest.

Thus Wayanad fell into the hands of British and with that came a new turn in the history of this area. The British authorities opened up the plateau for cultivation of tea and other cash crops. Roads were laid across the dangerous slopes of Wayanad, from Kozhikode and Thalassery. These roads were extended to the cities of Mysore and Ooty through Gudalloor. Through the roads poured in settlers from all parts of Kerala and the Virgin forest lands proved a Veritable gold mine with incredible yield of cash crops.

Until the beginning of the twentieth century, Kalpetta was known as Chaalippuzha. The stream that flows under the “Irumbupalam” was known as Chaalippuzha. A group of people...
known as *Chaliyanmaar* (weavers) had settled on the banks of these streams and carried on their trade of weaving and thus the stream had inherited its name. The registrar’s office, the police station among other offices along with registered documents of the day where all under the name *Chaalippuzha*. Some of these documents are present with some old timers to this day. The elders in the tribal population refer to Kalpetta as *Chaalippuzha* until recently.

The region between *Kainatty* and *Puliyarmala* (*Aalamthatta*) was known as Kalpettah. The origin of this name is from Kannada and the Jains were responsible for naming Kalpettah as this word means deposits of stones in Kannada. Kalpetta was influenced greatly by Jains during this period. When *Chaalippuzha* transformed into Kalpetta, this region of Kalpettah came to be known as old Kalpetta. William Logan, in his monumental work, the Malabar manual, refers to the old Kalpetta region. The present bus stand and surroundings were known as *Vandipetta*. This was the place where bullock carts transporting goods from Karnataka camped. The busiest part of the present day town, *Chungam* has another interesting story. This was the point where the British had their toll booth to collect toll and taxes. The collection shed was on the right side of the road to *Pinangode*. There was another massive wooden gate on the Calicut-Mysore road put up by the British.

Estimations based on records place the history of Kalpetta from about 1000BC. Until 930AD, Kalpetta was a part of *Ganga* dynasty. Then it became a part of *Hoysala* dynasty. Later it became a part of the *Vijayanagar* Empire and through ages fell into the rule of the Mysore *Wodeyar* dynasty. Further history of Kalpetta is rather scattered and is primarily available through William Logans Malabar Manual and a few British records. The rest of the history shows Kalpetta as being a part of the Kottayam royal family. The Dutch governor Vantese, records that Kalpetta region was ruled by Kalpetta Nair, a representative of Pazhassi Raja clan, who had 1000 soldiers at his command.

As a fall out of the rule of the Mysore sultans, Kalpetta was estranged from the rest of Malabar and was treated as a part of the *Srirangapatna*. Until the death of Tipu Sulthan, Kalpetta was part of Mysore. When the British decided to divide Wayanad, Pazhazzi Raja objected and on 1805 November 30, the resistance of Pazhassi Raja came to an end at *Mavilam thode* where he was shot dead. With Wayanad in total, along with Kalpetta came under direct British rule and thus entering the modern history. The pre-British historical and cultural indicators available are very feeble.

The Kalpetta Panchayat was formed in 1933. A meeting was convened by the Thalaserri Sub-Collector which included land owners and socially prominent personalities. This meeting decided on the formation of the Panchayat. There was initial hesitancy among the public to the formation of the Panchayat due to apprehension of a hike in taxes, but once the development opportunities became clear it was largely accepted.

Janab Kallangodan Moideen was elected as the first President of the Panchayat along with six other members. The Panchayat which had very meager resources was forced to tax even cycles and radios. Shri. Edachana Shambu Nair became the first employee of the Panchayat. The Panchayat office was situated in the residence of Janab Kallangodan Moideen. The official records were maintained in this residence. Two almirahs is all that the Panchayat had to show as its assets.

The Panchayat had the right to call a village court and execute orders. Criminal cases and civil cases were considerations below Rs. 150 could be settled by the Panchayat. Fines and lashes were the punishments (discontinued till 1960). Collection of building tax, profession tax, cleaning, lighting of street lamps, maintenance of streets and bridges were the primary works
undertaken by the Panchayat. Janab Kallangodan Moideen continued to be the President for the full term of 5 years. He volunteered to step down due to infirmities of old age.

In 1948, as the only English speaking individual and as the Manager of Kalpetta bankers, Shri. T.S.V Iyer was elected President of Panchayat. It was during his Presidency that the functioning of the Panchayat was moved to the present premises of KFC.

1964 January marked the day of the first Panchayat election. Shri. M.K. Jinachandran became the President. He continued till 1965 when he resigned due to health reasons. Shri. T.N. Krishnan Nair, the then Vice-President, took over as President. In 1967, Shri. P.M. Padmanabhan became the Panchayat President. It was during his tenure that there was a surge in development activities. The Panchayat bus stand, the shopping complex, drinking water distribution and moving the Panchayat into its own building were accomplished during this period.

In 1967, the Kalpetta Panchayat became a grade 1 Panchayat. From 1971 May, it was again upgraded to a special grade Panchayat. In three consecutive years 1969-70, 70-71, 71-72, the Panchayat set a record by collecting 100% taxes due. In 1973, in connection with the 25th year of celebrations of the independence of India, the Kalpetta panchayat won the first place among the panchayats in Calicut district and the second place at the State level. In 1973 March 15, the Panchayat shifted to its present premises which was inaugurated by the chief editor of Mathrubhumi Sr. K.P. Kesava Menon.

1979 saw Advocate Mathai being elected as the President. The second fresh drinking water project and the community hall construction were undertaken under his stewardship.

1988 saw Janab Kallongodan Abdul Rahman become the President. Within a short period of time, he led various development activities including the Nallukettu chola fresh drinking water project.

Jaiprakash Narain, V.V. Giri, V.K. Krishna Menon, N.N. Vanchu, Ramakrishna Rao, Kamaraj, Govindh Vallab Pant, P. Ramachandran, V. Viswanathan, Pattom Thanu Pilla and AKG are few of the leaders who graced the Panchayat by their visits and the Panchayat was honoured to provide warm reception and hospitality.

Kalpetta became a Municipality on 1st April, 1990. The existing governing council of Panchayat took over as the advisory committee of the Municipality. The President became the Municipal Advisory Committee Chairman. By an order of the Government, this Council was dismissed in 1991. The period that followed where the Municipality was run by bureaucrats, unfortunately created a lot of controversy. On 25th September 1995, the first Municipality election took place. Adv. P. Chathukutty was unanimously elected as Chairman.

Presently the municipal area compresses of 3 Revenue Villages viz. Kottappady, Kalpetta, Thirikkaippatta and is divided into 28 electoral wards. Election to the municipal council is held every five years.

2.3.2 History of Development

It was after the advent of the British rule, at least a semblance of development reached Kalpetta. Even before 1887, according to William Logans Malabar Manual, prison, registrar office, police station and post office were established in Kalpetta. The Police station was situated in the present village office. The Lock up can be seen to this day in this building. The prison was situated where the Thiruhridaya devalayam stands today. The remnants of the prison walls are still visible. The plantation offices, block office, malaria office, labour office, the Court were all present at Kalpetta by 1920.
The survey conducted by Lt. Col. Ward and Connor in 1821, mentions that there were no towns in Wayanad. It does, however, mention that there were a few merchant establishments at Kalpetta. The entire trade of the day conducted in the south of Wayanad happened out of Kalpetta.

The 200 year old market at Kalpetta was one of the leading markets in Malabar. Goods from Mysore arrived through bullock carts. More than 150 bullock carts arrived at the market and these goods controlled the market. People walked to the market from places like Meppady, Pozhuthana, Vengappally, Kottathara, Muttil, Thrirkepetta and Vythiri. Huge crowds were drawn to the market which even those days peaked on Sundays.

In 1921, the bus from Calicut to Puthupady was extended to Kalpetta. But by 1922, the British following the Malabar riots confiscated the bus. The bus service then re-started in the year 1927. The initial car owners in Kalpetta were Shri. Jinachandra, Shri. Padmaprabha, Janab Neelikandy Moldeen Haji and Janab Arrakkal Moidu Haji. The Irumbupalam, the silent witness to the developments of Kalpetta, collapsed in 1940. Though an alternate concrete bridge replaced the Irumbupalam, it still stands as a monument. In 1954, the Mysore-Calicut road underwent surface tarring. In 1956, January 14, electricity arrived. In 1958, telephone services were established.

After independence the place remained rather under developed until the formation of the district in 1st November 1980 and up gradation of the panchayath to municipality in 1st April 1990. After the town started developing gradually with facilities for a district head quarter, the major facilities are concentrated on the both sides of NH 212 which is passing through the centre of the town. Compared to other district head quarters Kalpetta is gradual developing nature.

2.3.3 Socio-Cultural History

According to the 1921 official statistics, the population of Kalpetta totalled to 2469. This consisted of Hindus-1913, Muslims-440, others-116. The total land in possession was 5591 acres. This belonged to 71 individuals and 116 families. Adelaide, Carrolina, Thoryambattu, and Perinthatta were the four large estates.

The main plantation crops grown were pepper. Coffee, tea, rubber, paddy, ragi, banana and vegetables were largely grown. Ploughing of the land was done by cattle. There were 35 bullock carts used for transport. 241 buffalos and 308 cows were used as milking animals. It is pertinent to note that the Kalpetta market never had any vegetables arriving in it for sale. The land value was very low, primarily because of the huge taxes levied on these lands.

Tribal were the traditional labour force in these lands. The owner-labourer relationship was very firm. Wages were paid in measurements of paddy. Special benefits on occasions of onam and vishu were also given to the labourers. Nilayadi, Kallum-mannum, Karikkal, Okkupodi,
Kaa rra were some of these benefits. The tribals in certain parts of Kalpetta, however, did suffer hugely in those days.

The freedom struggle echoed in Kalpetta in 1921 in the form of non co-operation movement. Maniyankode Krishna Gowdar, Munderi Sundara Iyer and Dharma Raja Iyer spearheaded the Congress movement and donated towards the Rupees 1 crore fund of the Congress.

The first political meeting in Wayanad took place in 1921 at Vandipetta in Kalpetta. Shri. K.P. Kesava Menon took part in this meeting of which Shri. Dharma Raja Iyer writes in his diary as follows: “Krishna Gowdar and Munderi Sundara Iyer were the people who encouraged this meeting. Shri. K.P. Kesava Menon, the Congress leader from Calicut and an Islamic scholar and orator were present. The meeting was held in a shop owned by Neelikandy Kunjee at the Kalpetta market. The armed Vythiri police began patrolling around the meeting police. The people who had assembled were frightened. Sensing this discomfort Kunjee refused permission to conduct the meeting in his place. Since there was no other venue available for the meeting Krishna Gowdar along with few of his labourers cleared a ground beneath a mango tree near the market and conducted the meeting at this small venue. The speeches of the two guests were received with warmth and applause. I had the opportunity to express the vote of thanks through my speech.”

It was during these times that the Congress committee in Kalpetta was formed. The details were presented at the meeting by Shri. A.K. Gopalan (AKG). The attendance was very less. It was also during these days that the handloom cloth first made its appearance in Kalpetta. Shri. Dharma Raja Iyer introduced this material. Shri. Krishna Gowdar and Shri. Munderi Sundara Iyer became the promoters of this material. They endeavored in promoting khadi by door to door sales.

In a weeklong conference of the Congress in Madras, in 1927, Shri. Krishna Gowdar, Shri. Subbiah Gowdar and Shri. Dharma Raja Iyer took part as representatives of Malabar. In this conference, they had the opportunity to meet Mahatma Gandhi, Anne Beasant, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Showkat Ali and Moulana Mohammed Ali. This moment has been cherished by Shri. Dharma Raja Iyer and finds a special place in his diary.

Shri. Subbiah Gowdar from Kalpetta was so impressed and involved in the works of Mahatma Gandhi that he willed a large part of his will towards upliftment of the Harijans. The press of the day applauded this move. Accepting Shri. Subbiah Gowdar’s donations and to begin a center for upliftment of the Harijans, Mahatma Gandhi came to Kalpetta on 1934 January 14. Gandhiji was welcomed by a huge sea of humanity. He arrived at 9A.M and was greeted by the traditional tribal welcome, accompanied by dance and music. Gandhiji was accompanied by Shri. K. Kellappan, Shri. Deshabhandu Shyamji Sundara Das, Shri. K. Madhava Menon, and Shri. U. Gopala Menon. The welcoming committee was headed by Shri. Dharma Raja Iyer. A large amount of contributions towards upliftment of the Harijans were presented to him. Shri. Munderi Sunder Iyer and Janab Kallangodan Moideen handed over Rs. 500 as donations received from residents of Kalpetta.

Shri. Dharma Raja Iyer and Shri. Munderi Sundera Iyer became members of the Malabar District Board of 1930. Shri. K. Kellapan was the president of the Board. Shri. Dharma Raja Iyer also became the member of the educational council.

In 1940-41, when individual satyagraha began, the ripples were felt in Kalpetta. The movement was led by Shri. E.K. Shekharan Nair. The Vice-President of the Panchayat and renowned freedom fighter Shri. V.N. Raman Nair set an exemplary example.
2.4 Physiography

Wayanad District forms the Southern edge of peninsular shield. The topography is highly undulating and rugged with steep slopes and mountain ranges. It is distinctly marked by the Western Ghats where ground elevation above mean-sea level (MSL) range between 700-2100m and is totally contained within the high land region (Elevation > 700m). The District has been topographically divided into three units viz. Very high (High range with rugged topography), moderately high (High range with moderately rugged topography) and mid region. The details are shown in the Fig 2.4.

![Physiography of Wayanad](image)

*Fig 2.4 Physiography of Wayanad*

The physiographic map of Wayanad shows most of the area belongs under moderately high region. Thus it is clear that Wayanad district is in high land region. Major area of Kalpetta Municipality except some hilly portions falls within mid land region contour map of the Municipality is shown below as Fig 2.5 in which the ground level varies from 731m to 1371 m.
The slope Profile of the Kalpetta Municipality is shown in Fig 2.6. The town is also blessed with vested forest area of 511 Ha which comes around 12.63 % of the total geographical area.
2.5 Climate

Due to the high altitude and presence of surrounding forest area, the district has a salubrious climate. The average rain fall in the district is 2322mm. The average wind speed is 3-8 km/h. High velocity winds are common during the South-West Monsoon and dry winds blow in March-April. High altitude regions experience severe cold. During hot weather the temperature goes up to 29°C and the minimum temperature is 19°C.

Generally the year is classified in four season, namely Cold weather (December-February), Hot weather (March-May), South-West Monsoon (June-September) and north-east monsoon (October-November).

2.6 Bio-diversity

Kalpetta is rich in Bio-diversity. It is the only Municipality having rich forest content. The dense vegetation concentrated on the outer peripheral area of the Municipality keeps the Municipality fresh with agrarian nature having a total area of 40.47sq.km. The developed area comes only 8.30 Sq.km and the remaining area being occupied by forest, vegetation, paddy field and water bodies. The most important crops in the Municipality are Coffee, Tea, Pepper etc. and the paddy constitutes 2.92% of the total area. The town is blessed with vested forest area of 511 Ha which comes around 12.63 % of the total geographical area with wide range of flora and fauna. The forest area accommodates wide range of aromatic and medicinal plants, endangered species, forest products etc...

The paddy has been largely converted for cash crops as well as construction purpose due to the cheap land value and economical loss in paddy cultivation. The predominant crop is coffee which accommodates indigenous crops also. Areacanut and banana cultivation have extensively came up recently especially in converted paddy areas.

2.7 Inference.

The above description clearly points out the importance of the Kalpetta in terms of its strategic location, proximity to interstate and intra state urban centres and tourist places of national importance, unique topography, salubrious climate, unique bio diversity. The evolution of the town to the present status of district head quarter from an ancient small stream based town together with the historical aspect is also evolved.