IMPACT OF TOURISM ENVIRONMENT IN KANYAKUMARI DISTRICT

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Abstract

Kanyakumari is a costal town in the state of Tamilnadu on India’s Southern Tip. It is popular for watching sunrise and sunset over the ocean. The Tamil speaking taluks of Kanyakumari District viz, Agasteeswaram, Thovalai, Kalkulam and Vilavancode constituted the district of Kanyakumari. It was located in the south-west portion of the India peninsula, forming an irregular triangle with its apex at capecomorin. Kanyakumari District has a peculiar cultural environment area. Kanyakumari district was also known as Kumari kandam- Kanyakumari is the place of confluence of three seas. It is very good tourist place. There is 133 feet Tiruvalluvar statue, Gandhi mandapam (Father of nation), Kamarajar memorial, Vivekanandar rock. Not only that, the very famous fishing harbour is also located in Kanyakumari District.

There is very good kids entertainment and Amusement park for fun is “Baywatch”, at Kanyakumari. The very famous Baratha Matha temple, Bagavathi Amman temple, Venkadachalapathi temple also located in Kanyakumari. There are so many resources are available in Kanyakumari District.

Key words: Tourism, environment, Kanyakumari District, monument, Natural resources, streams, waterfalls, Forts

Impact of Tourism on Environment

Environment tourism is inherited by birth and it is handed down from generation to generation. It is the heritage of honor, pride and courage. It reflects the full range of inherited traditions, monument, objects and culture. Most important, it is the range of contemporary activities, meanings and behaviors that we draw from them. Kanniyakumari became famous because of its prime geographic location of having confluence of Indian Ocean, Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea. It assumed greater importance as a popular tourist centre by virtue of its major environmental features. Tourist potential of a country mainly depends on its climate, scenery, historical monuments, art, tradition, festivals and the people. If any place possesses all these above mentioned potentials or any one of these potential we may call it as a tourist centre. In fact, Kanniyakumari district provides all the above mentioned characteristic features and it became one of the major tourist centres in India. It attracts people from all over the country throughout the year.
Periplus (1st century A.D), Ptolemy (2nd century A.D) and the Sangam works like the Purana nooru, Silappathikaram, Manimekalai and Tholkappiam find references about its importance. Known as the Alexandria of the East, Kanniyakumari has been a cradle of civilization that dates from the days of the Lumerian Continent. There after the region witnessed far reaching changes as a part of the ancient Tamilakam. The Cholas, Cheras, the Pandyas and the Nayaks contributed to the growth of Kanniyakumari as a place of tourist importance. The Tamilnadu Tourism Development Corporation declared Kanyakumari, Vattakottai, Fruit Farm near Kanyakumari, Padmanabhapuram Palace, Suchindrum Temple, Nagercoil Nagaraja Temple, Petchiparai Dam and Udayagiri Fort etc as major tourists spots in this district. Thus Kanniyakumari District is one of the popular tourist destinations in Asia that attract people from different parts of the world.

Geographically, tourism is a universal industry and a highly organized complex business. Tourism directly encourages the development of hotel industry, transportation and gives a fillip to arts and crafts. It is also being recognized as a source of employment. By way of earning foreign exchange and employment opportunity, tourism also makes a tremendous contribution to the improvement of social and political understanding and cultural exchanges. Above all it also promotes national integration. Wild life viewing is thrilling, sparing and interesting. Many tours are built around different sanctuaries and national parks. Tourism is related to ecology and environment. Tourism depends on these and yet over exploitation is suicidal.

The name Kanniyakumari is mentioned equal to Kasi as an important pilgrim centre. In the words of Gandhiji “The soul religion is one but it is encased in the multitude of forms. India is a land of many religions and faith. In this land of multi dimensional culture, different religions exist side by side as jewels in a casket. Each religion is of equal importance. Thus the tourism aims at promoting not only religious understanding and toleration but an active reverence for all religions. The tourism in the different religious centres in Kanniyakumari District makes its contribution to the development of habits, attitude and qualities of character, which enable its citizen to counteract all those fissiparous tendencies which hinder the emergence of a broad, national and secular outlook. In Kanniyakumari one can see people with different life styles and languages. Thus tourism promotes social and national integration.

Tourism in India is primarily cultural tourism. India has large cities, monuments, temples, mosques, great palaces beautiful sculptures and paintings and various artistic creations. The greatest attractions for the visitors to India is the picturesque valleys of Himalayas, Vindhyas, Eastern and Western Ghats and broad beautiful sunny beaches and the great diversity found in every-respect, in mode of living, dress, languages, character and religion. Kanniyakumari District in particular and India in general has great tourism potential due to its unique cultural and natural attractions.
Famous temples of Kanyakumari District

The Vishnu Temple of Tiruvattar is popularly known as Adikesavaperumal Temple. The deity Adikesavaperumal is in a sleeping posture and facing westwards. The Sreekoil consisted of a Garbhagraharam, having three doors – way and a maliga and of an ottakkal mandapam in front, and is built in granite and provided with a copper – sheeted roof. This temple is one of 108 shrines sacred to the Vaishnavites in India. The great antiquity of this place has been described by the Tamil poet Mankudikilar in a verse of Purananuru. It is believed that this temple was worshipped by Chandra and Parasurama. Nammalvar has sung a few poems in praise of Adikesava. One Pillai Perumal has also sung songs in praise of Adikesavaperumal. In the 16th century, Sri Krishna Chithanya of Bengal visited Thiruvatar. The surroundings of the temple attracted him so much that he was inspired to write ‘Sri Brahma Sambita’ an outstanding contribution to Hindu Philosophy.

Another famous centre of Vaishnavism is Suchindrum. The deity of the Vishnu Temple of Suchindrum is called Perumal. Perumal represents Vishnu. The Perumal Sreekoil is a granite structure with a Sikharam on the Garbhagraharam and terrace on the front mantapam. In front of the Perumal coil there are two mukhamandapams which are built in granite. On the south eastern side of the Perumal Mukhamandapam is the Garudhancoil.

Natural resources of Kanyakumari district

Pechipparai remains as a centre of tourism because of its beautiful dam. The boating facilities and garden in the dam attracts the tourists. Kalikesam, Muttom, Chottaivizhai Beach, Chankuthurai Beach, Olakkaruvi Water Falls and Mukkan are some other tourist spots in this district and only the local people visit this place to take bath during the holidays. There are no rest houses to save the tourist from rain and heat. The natural park in this place is neglected without maintenance. There is a dangerous “Suzhal” in the Kalikesam stream. Many people have lost their lives in this Suzhal. But there is no caution board to indicate the Suzhal areas. So the government should take steps for the improvement of Muttom and Olakkaruvi waterfalls.

Situated overlooking the shore, the temple is dedicated to the Virgin Goddess, Devi Kanniyakumari. She is a symbol of sanctity. According to a legend, Devi did penance to marry Lord Siva. However, owing to some misfortune, the wedding did not take place. She vowed to remain virgin (kanya). One can even see the footprints of Devi Kanniyakumari on a rock called “Sri Paada Paarai” in the Vivekananda Rock Memorial complex. The male tourists enter the temple should remove their upper garments.

Forts

There were three types of forts namely single row, double row and triple row popularly known as akamatil, idaimatil and puramatil. Archer holes were attached to the forts as the hiding place for the archers to hide in and discharge arrows on attacking enemies. To watch the hostile movement of the troops they built elevated observatory tower called parval. Equipped with bows and arrows the soldiers guarded the walls of the fort.
The entrance of the forts were mostly provided with double door one large and another small. The secret passages within the forts enabled the people living inside to get out of the fort in times of emergency. The gates were provided with strong bolts and cross bars. The doors were frequently polished and smeared with ghee. Silapadikaram mentioned that the Yavanas with drawn out swords were in charge of the gates.

Moat, another very important component of fort was popularly known as *kidangu*. The forts were surrounded by deep and wide ditches.

Vattakottai traces its origin from the days of the Pandyas, the Cheras, and the Cholas. The fort commanded a historical antiquity of its own. Vattakottai, a circular fort as the name indicates occupies a predominant position among the forts of South India. It is a granite fort six kilometers north-east of Kanyakumari, forms the terminal of a line of ramparts known as the South Travancore lines. It is noted for its scenic beauty with the sea on the one side and the Western Ghats on the other side. The desire for trade in spices brought the foreign traders into the Malabar markets from distant countries of the West. When the European traders joined the trade activity, the Moorish monopoly steadily began to decline. The European traders not only regulated the Eastern trade but also exploited the political situation in their favour. For achieving their aim, they engaged in local disputes, created intrigues and encouraged enmity among the local rulers. In protecting their trade interests they also adopted devices like the construction of forts at places of strategic importance. The fort that once regulated and decided the fortunes of the rulers continued to remain as the greatest legacy. But unfortunately most of such monuments are on the threshold of ruin and destruction.

The history of forts assumed new dimensions after the arrival of the Europeans. Some of the forts were built in places of scenic beauty, mostly on the sea coast, having a panoramic view of nature and one can enjoy the beauty of nature and horizon in all its changing moods during the day and in the evening. Some of the forts are connected with warehouses, arsenals, garrison quarters, factories and places of worship. These forts have been built as a shelter from invaders. There were narrow passages for escape from the grip of the enemy.

During the region of Marthanda Varma Vattakottai served as defense for Nanjil Nadu. It is rectangular in shape and covers an area of about three and a half acres. The fort is enclosed by walls 25 to 26 feet height, including the parapet, 29 feet thick at the front, 18 feet at the corners and 6 feet at the rear. The portion running into the area is the most strongly built under the orders of De Lannoy during the reign of Marthandavarma (1729-58). De Lannoy realized the importance of defense through fortifications. He succeeded to safeguard and protect Travancore through a process of scientific fortification. About 1810 A.D. the British forces under the command of St. Leger marched into Nanjil Nadu through the Aramboly Pass and demolished the defense lines. The small river by the side of the fort, and the green vegetation all around that added to the scenery of the fort and has now become a holiday resort and picnic centre.

Legends memories

Vivekananda Rock Memorial is a place in Kanyakumari which attracts large number of tourists. This great Indian spiritual leader and philosopher, who stunned the world in the Parliament of Religions at
Chicago, preached the religion of the mind and the power of meditation. As its name implies, it is essentially a sacred monument, built by the Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee to commemorate the visit of Swami Vivekananda to “Shripada Parai” during 24th, 25th and 26th December 1892 for deep meditation and enlightenment.

The statue is an embodiment of the essence of Tamil classic *Thirukkural* authored by Saint Thiruvalluvar. *Thirukkural* is a precious gem among the classics, unique in the deliverance of code of conduct to the mankind to follow for all the time. This classical work written in Tamil has been translated in over 66 languages of the world. The statue located at the confluence of the three great seas, also depicts the great tenets of the *Thirukkural* namely, Virtue, Wealth and Love. The imposing 133 feet high statue is created on a minor rock in mid-sea by Dr. Ganapathy Sthapathi and his team of around 500 sculptors and other technical experts. The statue is fully made up of granite stones, weighing 7000 tonnes and comprising 3681 pieces of granite boulders, each weighing 3-8 tonnes.

The place is very much associated with great persons like Swami Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi in whose names memorials have been erected here. They are beautiful and add to the attraction of this place. The beautiful Gandhi Memorial completed in 1956, is situated as a memorial to the father of the Nation. An urn of Mahathma Gandhi was kept here for public to pay homage before immersion. Mahathma Gandhi visited Kanyakumari twice in 1925 and 1935. In 1948 his ashes were immersed in the sea waters in Kanyakumari. In commemoration of this event a beautiful monument has been constructed here. The memorial was transferred to the administrative control of the Public (Information and Public Relations) Department from Public Works Department of Government of Tamil Nadu in the year 1978.

Vivekananda Rock Memorial is another place in Kanniyakumari which attracts large number of tourists. This great Indian spiritual leader and philosopher, who stunned the world in the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, preached the religion of the mind and the power of meditation.

This 180'-11 1/2 × 56 mandapam consists of Dhyana Mandapam, i.e. Meditation Hall with six adjacent rooms, Sabha Mandapam or the Assembly Hall including pratima mandapam (statue section) two rooms, a corridor and an open prakaram round the Sabha Mandapam, Mukha Mandapam (portion) and the Front Entrance steps with two rooms and a corridor below the steps. Shripada Mandapam square hall consists of Garbha Gruham i.e, (Sanctum Sanctorum) and the inner prakaram and the outer platform all around. Both the mandapams are so designed that the vision of Swamiji in the statue would be seen direct towards the Shripadam.

Regarded as the “King maker of India”, Kamaraj influenced many a political events in the country. From a humble background he rose to become the chief minister of Tamilnadu through sheer hard work and political acumen. As a tribute to the freedom fighter and “Perunthalaivar” (meaning great leader) this memorial was constructed where his ashes were kept for public to pay homage before immersion in to the sea.
Located in the Kanyakumari Town, the terracotta design depicting Swami Vivekananda Bharat Parikkrama pictures with description in English, Hindi and Tamil is an education for oneself. The Government Museum, situated on the beach road offers a good collection of sculptured artifacts and crafts of South Indian Temples and is one of the “mustsee” places in Kanyakumari.

Suchindrum is a small village about 12km from Kanyakumari and about seven kilometers from Nagercoil. This holy place is located on the back of the river Pazhayar, adjoining fertile fields and coconut groves and the temple is dedicated to Sri Sthanumalayan, The word denotes Siva, Vishnu and Brahma as, thanu represent Siva. Mal represents Vishnu while Ayan represents Brahma i.e Siva, Vishnu and Brahma is “One Form”.

Suchindrum means the place where Indra attained Suchi; i.e, purification. The Sthalapurana has said that Indra suffered a curse from sage Gowthama, when he stealthily cast amorous glances at Ahalya the wife of Gowthama. Not able to suffer the mortification brought about by the curse. Indra had to seek immediate redemption. He came to “Gnana aranya” as this curse, Lord Shiva granted him of His wish that the place where he attained purification should hence forth be called “Suchindrum”.

The Nagarja Temple is situated here. Though Nagaraja (serpent God) is the presiding deity, the images of Lord Shiva and Anantha Krishna are also enshrined here. The image of the Jain Theerthangaras, Mahavira and Parsvanathar are found on the pillars of the temple. The Nagaraja is installed on the ground where it was originally found and the sands are scooped out an given as Prasadam to the devotees. The entrance to the temple is reminiscent of Chinese architecture of Buddhist Vihara. It is 19km from Kanyakumari – Nagercoil is the headquarters of Kanyakumari District. This city is also equipped with fine Hotels and Restaurants to help the tourists. There are also excellent travel agencies and transport facilities to visit Kanyakumari.

Sanguthurai Beach is a beautiful beach which is very convenient for the local population of Nagercoil. The beach lies in Rajakkamangalam Panchayat Union. It is 13kms from Nagercoil and 15kms from Kanyakumari through west coast road. It is a developing beach centre. The district administration has now sanctioned a project for putting up of a children’s park, seating facility, open huts (kudils) with terracotta roofs and lighting facilities at the beach at a cost of Rs 6.00 lakhs. It is also proposed to put up a few shops for women self help groups at the site, which can provide eatables to the on coming tourists at beachside.

Muttom is a delightful place on the coast of Kalkulam taluk, attracting people desirous of having a seaside holiday. The seashore looks majestic because of huge beautiful rocks and creates a mystic atmosphere. Muttom beach is a famous shooting spot for both Tamil and Malayalam movies. Muttom is famous for its beautiful landscaping and high rocks dipping into the sea at the beach side. The seashore is having a rich heritage value for its ancient light house, which was originally established by the British in 1875 and subsequently improved in 1909. The sunset view point here is one of the most panoramic view points in the district. The district administration has developed basic infrastructure facilities like shady,
benches, car parking solar lighting, risk fee fencing on the rock etc. It is 16 kms from Nagercoil and 32 kms from Kanniyakumari.

**Waterfalls**

Ulakkai Aruvi is a natural waterfall situated in Azhagiapandipuram village of Thovalai Taluk. Water is available in this water falls in the summer season; many tourists come here for bathing and to enjoy the nature. The pathway to this waterfalls lies in the reserve forest. Makkudal this is a natural dam constructed by T. Chitirai Maharaja. It supplies water to Nagercoil Municipality and it is also proposed to get water here for Suchindrum and Kanyakumari. It is very picturesque spot and ideal for picnics by groups.

The Kodayar makes it’s descending at Tirparappu and the water fall at this place is about 13kms from Pechiparai dam. The river bed is rocky and about 300 feet in length. The waterfalls, a height of nearly 50 feet and the water flows for about seven months in a year.

There is a water theme amusement park, which is located at a distance of 2km on Kanniyakumari – Kovalam road. It is very near to sun set point. It opens from 10.00 A.M to 07.30 P.M. The Bay Watch Project is worth of Rs. 30 crores. It is prospective step to increase Kanniyakumari’s visibility in the Indian subcontinent. It is located at a distance of 1 km from Kanniyakumari near the new bus stand on Kovalam road.

There is Natural Park on the top of this place, where farms houses thatched with bamboos and flower gardens are found which attracts the tourists. This place is a picnic spot to this district. The Maruthuva Malai also known as the Marunthu Vazhum Malai the abode of medicinal herbs forms part of the Western Ghasts. According to tradition, the Maruthuva Malai is a fragment of the Sanjeevi Mountain, a piece of which fell down here and it was carried by Hanuman from Mahendragiri to Srilanka for healing the fatal wounds of Lakshmana, the brother of Rama, the epic hero. It stretches for more than a km, reeling a height of 800 feet at the highest point. It is about 11 km from Nagercoil.

There is a durgha named “Peer Mohamed Oliyullah Durgha” at Thuckalay named after the great philosopher Mohamed Appa, who was born in Tenkasi of Tirunelveli District. After spending sometime in spiritual pursuits in Peermedu of Kerala State he came and stayed at Thuckalay. Being a Tamil poet of great eminence, he wrote many books on philosophy. He had intimate relationship with the kings of Chera dynasty. It is said that he laid foundation stone for the Padmanabhapuram granite fort. The anniversary of the great philosopher poet is celebrated every year on a grant scale on the full moon day. Both the people of Kerala and Tamilnadu attend the celebration on large numbers irrespective of their caste, creed and religion. Kanniyakumari district is a wonderful tourist centre that provides scenic beauty and enthusiasm to all the travelers.

Overcrowding by tourists, especially at popular tourist attractions, and vehicle congestion resulting from tourism generates several of the environmental problems indicated above as well as lead to resentment.
on the part of residents and create an unpleasant situation for the tourists. Resentment by local people towards the tourists can be generated by apparent difference in economic circumstance, behavior, patterns, appearances and economic effects. Resentment of visitors is not at all uncommon, principally in areas, where there is an actual conflict of interest.

The negative social impact of tourism is closely related to increase in the field of prostitution, and crime of various kinds of organized gambling. In the extreme cases, crime, prostitutions, gambling and drug traffic imported many of the holiday’s imposed upon tourists in their home areas are absent before. The other evil effects of tourism are in most modern tourist projects there has always been a conflicts a land use and environmental damage through hotel construction and waste disposal.

The Pechippara Dam is the head of a scheme of irrigation which has almost literally made the desert to blossom like a rose, turning the dry land of south Travancore into the fertile plains of Nachilnad, the granary of the South. Back of the hundreds upon hundreds of acres of flourishing paddy line, lies a history full of romance and marvel. So accustomed are we to the miracles of modern engineering, that we usually pass them by with an appreciative nod. Engineering feasts of the past, however, make us pause, wonder and marvel.

Pechippara is such a beautiful place; it is regrettable that the great majority of visitors to the State do not drive the few extra miles off the main road to see it. Those visitors who wish to spend some time there should to well armed with mosquito curtains. Following the Tiruvattar road and going miles beyond, one comes to a planting section on the Western Ghats- and to the famous mountain of Maha Indra or Mahendragiri. The peak is the highest in the south, ranging about 5,500 feet.

The development of tapioca cultivation in Kanniyakumari District clearly shows two important things; the possibility of furthering land production by introducing new crops; the need for foodstuffs. It was introduced into Travancore less than fifty years ago. Within a few years it has increased greatly in popularity. There are now 498,379 acres under cultivation. The acreage under paddy, an old crop, is 658,522 acres. This is a remarkable growth which may be accounted for in several ways; tapioca grows on high ground with poorer soil, such as laterite usually is, and although it requires a moist climate does not require irrigation; it grows easily without very much labour and yields abundantly, maturing in nine to eleven months; the country people like the taste. For these same reasons tapioca is very cheap. Once it constituted a major portion of the diet among the poorer people of Kanniyakumari District, since many of them were not afford to eat rice. It has the additional advantages that when cut in slices and thoroughly dried, it would keep in perfect condition for months.

There are several varieties of tapioca. Several of them require parboiling to rid the root of the poison in it. Tapioca contains a cyanogenetic glucoside associated with an enzyme which has the property of causing the splitting up to the glucoside and the consequent formation of prussic acid. When the first water is thrown away the tapioca is again boiled and becomes an easily digested starchy food. Since this root constitutes such
a major part of the diet of thousands of people, it is regrettable that it is not more nourishing. A pure diet of tapioca is not as nourishing as a pure diet of Irish potatoes.

The ‘Travancore Minerals’ factory started in 1907 on the sea coast of Colachel is noted for the largest ilmenite factories in the world. At present ilmenite is being mined in Travancore, Norway and Senegal, the volume of production being in this order. It has been mined previously and still occurs in Brazil, New Zealand, and Quebec. Originally it was started to mine monazite, a yellow sand which contains thorium, the oxide of which has the property of becoming incandescent when heated and is thus valuable for gas mantles, Very lights and pyrotechnics in general.

**Significant of Tourism**

Tourism activity has long lasting socio-economic impact on the host economy and community. Tourism industry employs a large number of unskilled and semi-skilled personal. The employment generation potential of this industry is more than that of other general industries for a given capital investment. The hotel and restaurant industry are the key components of the tourism industry which creates 89 jobs as against 44.7 job in agriculture and 12.6 in manufacturing industries. There has been a significant growth in employment generation of tourism industry. The total labour force had been increased from 3 percent in 1983 to 5-8 percent of the total employment in 2000.

Tourism is an important medium of social and cultural development. It builds lasting good will and friendship among the nations. It helps in regional development of the country and acts as a means of social education and better understanding instrument in integrating this world into a “Single Universe”.

Tourism occupies a prominent place in the changing trends of the modern world. Everyone in this world desires to enjoy the life with refreshment and entertainment not as a whole but as a part of life, free from mental and physical unrest. Today tourism presents an unparalleled challenge to the marketing world. The vastness of the market, its unpredictability, the diversity of the product itself, the sheer numbers involved and above all, the financial and social logical rewards to be gained have made tourism one of the most directly competitive markets in the world. Between 1950 and 1970, there has been an accelerated growth in the world tourism. Many countries whether they are developed or developing having due importance to tourism as an industry which offers much scope for expansion.

It is true that Kanyakumari District inherited greater tourist potentials than other tourist attractions elsewhere in the world, but at times tourism used to spoil the vital interests of environmental safety through the negligence and misappropriation of ecological resources to the sake of tourism. So tourism should be eco-friendly without ruining the fundamentals of environment.

**Reference**


15. *Silapadikaram*, 15: 208


