

AN OVER VIEW OF PILGRIMAGE TOURISM IN AND AROUND THE MADURAI DISTRICT, TAMILNADU

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Abstract: Pilgrimage tourism attracts mostly aged people especially those whose above the age of 60. It is a journey taken to a places with an importance to an individual's belief and faith in seeking of spiritual spirits and believe, to get absolved of sins, to pray for relief from ill effects and disabilities of life, to express gratitude for blessings or simply to visit them for worship and so on. They are in the form of Holy shrines or temples. This paper will have an overview of pilgrimage tourism in south Tamilnadu with special referent to Madurai district.

IndexTerms - Faith, Pilgrimage, Temple, Tour.

I. INTRODUCTION

Tamil Nadu has abundance of scope in this segment. Tour and picknics are plays a major role in human life in order to refresh people are willing and they are ready to spend time and money for the most extend by refreshing them in the way of tour they get some kind of reliefness form all kind of problems there may be a lots of kinds of tourism but many kinds of people choose the pilgrimage tourism hence there are two in one purpose. they visit many temples and religious places for worship and spend time in the name of pilgrimage. There are many of places of worship for every devotee, Make their journey to one of the famous holy places of Tamil nadu blissful and contended by visiting the best pilgrimage spots in south india especially in and around the Madurai district.

II. BENEFITS OF PILGRIMAGE

Religion is one of the most important portions of life for people all around the world. In ancient times, people worshiped the Sun, because it gave them energy and light. Then there was fire, because it gave them warmth. Then different concepts of divinity, all of which are what made men what he is today. And even today religion is still going strong, proving how resilient and attractive the idea of bowing down to an all-powerful being really is. In this world more than 75 % of people believe in one religion or another. But when it comes to religion, almost all major religions have some sort of holy journey which reinvigorates the faith in their believers. Why do most religions have this concept of making its believers visit holy places?

Strengthening of faith:

While we talk about going on a pilgrimage, we think about investing your time, effort, and money to do something. And we invest our time, effort, and all the money we make on something that we are not interested to do but we people usually think about the benefits of this pilgrimage when making a some important decision. One of the most common effects pilgrimages have on a person is that it strengthens and renovates the faith inside that person. Going to a holy land, seeing a holy place, or touching a sacred wall, whatever it is maybe, it gives immense pleasure and confident to a devotee than anything else in the world.

It maximise the economy of the country:

By coming many pilgrims to a single country to visit holy and sacred places particular country get lots of income in that country government and non government organsations also get lot of income in the way of boarding and lodging, travels and sale of goods

Clean off sins:

Most people, who go on a religious journey, come back as completely different humanity of themselves. It is almost as if this pilgrimage remove them off sins, and brings them with positive energy always new and improved soul of themselves. They feel that after visiting the holy places all the sins that were done by them are removed and that should not be happened again in their life time. Because they believe that god is watching all the activities which are done by them in every second

Maintain the feeling of belonging:

Going on a pilgrimage with your fellow men and women belonging to a single religious group, retest a sense of belonging in a person. Doing the different religious rites in this long and sacred journey alongside these people also bring a sense of happy, unity, and care for one and another.

Closeness to the one above all

Almost majority of human beings believe in a God. A power that controls, governs and is the creator of everything and anything. These pilgrimages, to the holiest and the most sacred places known to a religion, reaffirms that belief and bring these people closer to God

III. PROFILE OF THE MADURAI CITY:

Madurai is a major city in the state of Tamil Nadu in southern India. It is the administrative headquarters of Madurai District. Madurai is the second largest corporation city by area and third largest city by population in Tamil Nadu. Located on the banks of River Vaigai, Madurai has been a major settlement for two millennia and is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. Madurai is closely associated with the Tamil language, as all three primary congregations of Tamil scholars, the Third Tamil Sangams, were held in the city between 1780 BCE and the 3rd century CE. The recorded history of the city goes back to the 3rd century BCE, being mentioned by Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador to India, and Kautilya, a minister of the Mauryan emperor Chandragupta Maurya.

The city has a number of historical monuments, with the Meenakshi Amman Temple and Tirumalai Nayak Palace being the most prominent. Madurai is an important industrial and educational hub in South Tamil Nadu. The city is home to various automobile, rubber, chemical, hand loom textiles and granite manufacturing industries. It has developed as a second-tier city for information technology (IT), and some software companies have opened offices in Madurai. Tamil Nadu government planned satellite town for Madurai near Thoppur. Madurai has important government educational institutes like the Madurai Medical College, Homeopathic Medical College, Madurai Law College, Agricultural College and Research Institute. Madurai city is administered by a municipal corporation established in 1971 as per the Municipal Corporation Act. The city covers an area of 147.99 km² and had a population of 1470755 in 2011. The city is also the seat of a bench of the Madras High Court, one of only a few courts outside the state capitals of India.

Growth of tourist in Madurai:

The number of foreign tourists visiting Madurai has gone up to 2.17 from 1.22 lakh in 2016 which is an increase by 75% when compared to 2010. The number of foreign tourists in 2017 was four times higher than 2010. There is a good number of domestic tourists also as well. While the number of domestic tourists visiting Madurai and other southern districts is increasing every year. In the year 2017 it was registered sound growth of 24 % compared to its previous year.

Some of the important pilgrimage places in Madurai district

1. The Meenakshi Temple

Goddess Meenakshi appears in with a parrot in her right-hand at this shrine, which is generally associated with the Vaishnava azhwar saint Andal. It is believed that this shrine is one of the five locations where Shiva performed the 'Tandav' or cosmic dance of destruction, and hence, a huge statue of the Lord made out of silver is installed here. Nataraja is shown dancing with his right leg raised, which is a divergence from the more popular image where his left leg is raised. By visiting the Meenakshi Amman temple people get relaxed and they believe that all the burdens are said to the god Meenakshi Amman and she will take care of all the problems and she will give the satisfaction.

2, Alagar Koil

Alagar Koil is an exquisite temple situated in the north east of Madurai. The temple is the rest place of Lord Vishnu and is the sacred place for several followers of Lord Vishnu in the region.

3. Koodal Azhagar Temple

The Koodal Azhagar Temple, located in the centre of Madurai city of Tamil Nadu is a unique and famous temple of historical significance constructed in the Dravidian style of architecture and supposedly built by the Pandyas. Koodal is another name for the city of Madurai and Azghar in Tamil translates to 'beautiful one', referring to Vishnu as Koodal Alagar and his consort Lakshmi as Mathuravalli. Beautifully sculpted and carved by adding different shades of colour, the majestic temple imposes itself in the eyes of the beholder.

4. Mariamman Teppakulam

It was constructed in the honor of Lord Vigneshwara; this divine temple is situated about 5 km from the Meenakshi temple. It has a huge tank in the compound of the temple and holds the record of being the biggest tank in the region of Tamil Nadu. The tank is filled with water all year long. Legends say that the idol of the temple too was obtained from the bottom of the tank, while it was dug in the olden times. So the tank gained its popularity since then and the temple too was constructed in its memory. Several different kinds of festivals are celebrated in the temple and all rituals are done with great pomp and pleasure and the people have a wonderful time while they are in the temple.

5. Pazhamudhir Solai

Pazhamudhir Solai is a beautiful temple created in the memory of Lord Subramaniya who is worshipped by several people in southern India. It has great sculptures of Lord Subramaniya carved in wood and marble and is a wonderful temple with giant steps in the front of it.

6. Tirupparankundram Murugan temple, Madurai Overview

Tirupparankundram Murugan temple is one of the famous pilgrimage spots in southern India. The temple is an excellent masterpiece of art and is devoted to Mother Earth for the benedictions it has bequeathed on the holy earth. The marriage of Lord Subrahmanya was celebrated in this temple and since then several people have been bound in the marital bonds in front of the god in this temple.

Important Festivals Celebrated In Madurai:

Many number of both foreign and domestic tourists come and worship these festivals .during these festival seasons the income of the municipality is going to peak and income of the small vendors giving more benefits.A festival exclusively for tourists is celebrated during the month of April or May.

Name of the Festivals	Month of the Year
Avanimoolom Festival	August/September.
Float Festival	January/February.
Chithirai Festival	April/May
Govt. Chithirai Exhibition	April/May.

Avani Moolam Festival: This is a Unique festival celebrated every year that falls on the Moolam Nakshatram day in the month of Aavani [Aug– Sept] at the Madurai Meenakshi Amman Temple. The festival is basically dedicated to enact the Miracles of Lord Shiva. A couple of those Miracles are:

- ✓ Puttukku [pudding] Mann [sand] Sumappathu [to carry]. That is, to help an old woman, Lord Siva worked as Labour to Carry Sand for Pudding as wages.
- ✓ In another Miracle Lord Shiva sent his Ganas [solidiers] as horses to save Saint Manikkavasagar from punishment who had promised the King to buy Horses which turned out to be jackals.

The Float Festival: Mariamman Teppakulam [Temple Tank] Float Festival in a 16 acres tank is one of the most colourful temple festival, annually held in the month of Thai [Jan-Feb] to mark the birth anniversary of King Thirumalai Nayak, who had built this tank which is 5 kms from the Madurai Town. Goddess Meenakshi and Lord Sundareswarar are seated on a Float [Theppam] colorfully decorated with flowers and lights moves around the tank with traditional musical treat in the background. Mariamman Temple is on the Northern side of the tank.

Chithirai Festival: This Festival Takes place on the Chithirai Purnami [Full Moon] day falls on the month of [Apr – May]. Mythical legend says Lord Azhagar [Vishnu] rode on a Golden Chariot to the venue of Celestial Wedding of Goddess Meenakshi and Lord Sundareswarar. This event is enacted as Chithirai festival every year.

Tourist Festival: Tourist Festival is being organized by the Department of Tourism within the Thiumalai Naiker Mahal to showcase the Tradition and Culture of the state during the Pongal Festival days. The Tamil Nadu Government conducts a month long Chithirai Exhibition during the Chithirai Festival is another Tourist Festival of Madurai.

Year wise revenue details of Tamil nadu by tourists3.4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Year	Earnings from tourism for Tamil Nadu (Rs. In crores)	Year	Earnings from tourism for Tamil Nadu (Rs. In crores)	Year	Earnings from tourism for Tamil Nadu (Rs. In crores)to be expected
1993	989	2003	2066	2020	9152
1994	1140	2004	2266	2030	12753
1995	1192	2005	2556	2040	16450
1996	1361	2006	3020	2050	20165
1997	1512	2007	5430		
1998	1788	2008	6230		
1999	1750	2009	7171		
2000	1809	2010	8246		
2001	1913	2015	7341		
2002	1966				

Source: statistical analysis and trends of tourism along Tamil nadu

In the above seeing income maximum income asised from the Madurai district.

How can be reached Madurai?

Madurai is easily accessible from different parts of the country by air and rail. It's also connected to the southern region of India by road.

Air: Madurai Airport is one of the points of entry by air. Flights can be booked from Chennai and a few major Indian cities. Travelers coming in from abroad will arrive at the nearest international airport, Chennai International Airport.

Rail: Traveling by train is the preferred mode of entry for many domestic tourists. The railway station is connected to many cities in India. If you're traveling from Chennai, it takes about 8 hours to reach Madurai.

Road: Travelers coming in from cities in South India can take a bus to Madurai. It takes about 8 to 10 hours to get here from Chennai.

Approximate distance by road from Madurai to various cities:

City	Distance (kms)	City	Distance (kms)	City	Distance (kms)	City	Distance (kms)
Agartala	3800	Guntur	840	Panaji	1024	Agartala	3800
Agra	2304	Gurgaon	2500	Paradwip	1803	Agra	2304
Ahmedabad	1938	Guwahati	3162	Pathankot	2982	Ahmedabad	1938
Aizawl	3725	Gwalior	2180	Patna	2434	Bhaktiyarpur	2465
Ajmer	2390	Haldia	2104	Pondicherry	324	Bangalore	446
Akola	1507	Hasan	533	Porbandar	2332	Barauni	2576
Aligarh	2387	Hissar	2671	Pune	1278	Barddhaman	2167
Allahabad	2100	Hubli	851	Purulia	2146	Bareilly	2516
Ambala	2698	Hyderabad	1008	Raipur	1773	Belgaum	983
Amritsar	2953	Imphal	3646	Rajkot	2154	Bellary	747
Asansol	2252	Indore	1935	Rameshwaram	172	Bhagalpur	2480
Aurangabad	1359	Jabalpur	1759	Ranchi	2235	Dhanbad	2229
Guntur	840	Panaji	1024	Siliguri	2684	Dhule	1502
Gurgaon	2500	Paradwip	1803	Shillong	3262	Dibrugarh	3601
Guwahati	3162	Pathankot	2982	Shimla	2849	Dimapur	3436
Jaipur	2431	Ranipettai	505	Shivpuri	2158	Dindigul	66
Jaisalmer	2540	Raurkela	2013	Silchar	3488	Durgapur	2292
Jalandhar	2870	Rohtak	2568	Solapur	1035	Ganganagar	2565
Jammu	3089	Sagar	1885	Srinagar	3382	Gangtok	2801
Jamnagar	2240	Saharanpur	2637	Surat	1722	Gaya	2449
Jhanshpur	2073	Salem	243	Thane	1420	Ghaziabad	2525
Jhansi	2083	Sambalpur	1864	Thanjavur	163	Ghazipur	2297
Jodhpur	2380	Shahjahanpur	2542	Trivandram	264	Gorakhpur	2398
Bhavnagar	2125	Jorhat	3465	Thrissur	303	Gulbarga	1109
Bhopal	1847	Kakinada	1128	Tiruchy	128	Ludhiana	2811
Bhubaneshwar	1679	Kandla	2303	Tirunelveli	154	Mangalore	629
Bikaner	2623	Kanniyakumari	235	Mysore	382	Meerut	2571
Bilaspur	1884	Kanpur	2283	Nagpur	1495	Moradabad	2571
Kolkata	2120	Kochi	270	Nanded	1292	Motihari	2600
Chandigarh	2744	Kohima	3501	Nashik	1480	Mumbai	1441
Chennai	444	Kohlapur	1086	Nellore	616	Muzaffarnagar	2560
Chittardurga	644	Kota	2189	Ujjain	1990	Tirupati	596
Coimbatore	217	Kozhikode	405	Delhi	2507	Lucknow	2374
Cuttack	1704	Krishnagiri	355			Udaipur	2197

Source: Madurai tourims.

IV. CONCLSION

Values such as Hindus action at the heart of the community, hospitality for all, equality, a sense of the sacred, silence and solitude, good stewardship of this world created by God, are of great benefit not only to the temple but also to our society. Practises such as having a 'rhythm' of prayer, a rule of life, awareness of both the natural and supernatural presence of the Holy Spirit. The importance of positive role models.

In addition to the spiritual benefits of pilgrimage, there are currently opportunities for the temple to work in partnership with governments, local communities, commerce, the hospitality industry, and the voluntary sector as pilgrimage routes are re-established around our country. This may lead to practical temporal advantages in relation to health improvements (both physical and psychological). the madurai district plays an important role in south tamil nadu for toruist and it give sound economic growth for the development of tamilnadu government and also madurai give life for many business people and small vendors also.

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