

HERITAGE TOURIM - SRIRANGAM SRI RANGANATHASWAMI TEMPLE – A STUDY

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Abstract

Tourism is a temporary movement of people from their residential places to other places for pleasure seeking. World Tourism Organisation says that tourism is an economic, cultural and social activity. McIntosh and Goeldner (1986) states that tourism is the process of attracting tourists, host governments and communities and hosting through the relationship arising there on. Nowadays tourism occupies an important place in the revenue of the government. With a lot of new specialisations tourism developed a lot. **Cultural tourism, Heritage tourism, Medical tourism, Eco-tourism, Festival Tourism and so on are the specialisations in this regard.** Heritage tourism is a branch of tourism that was oriented towards the cultural heritage of the location where tourism is occurring. The National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States defines heritage tourism as "travelling to experience the places, artifacts and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past", and "heritage tourism can include cultural, historic and natural resources". Culture has always been a major object of travel, as the development of the Grand Tour from the 16th century onwards attests. In the 20th century, some people have claimed, culture ceased to be the objective of tourism: tourism is now culture. Cultural attractions play an important role in tourism at all levels, from the global highlights of world culture to attractions that underpin local identities. India is a land of varied culture and it possesses abundant cultural and heritage centres that attract a lot of foreign tourists towards it. The magnanimous temples, forts, tombs and palaces are the standing examples of the marvellous art and architecture of the ancient people. The temples are not only the worshiping places but also a centre of all social and legal activities. In this regard an attempt is made to study the heritage and cultural importance of Srirangam. Srirangam Sri Ranganathaswamy Temple is in Thiruchirappalli Tamilnadu. It is also called as Thiruvarangam. This temple conserved the cultural heritage of Tamilnadu. It is the most important one among the 108 divyadesams. It is considered as first and foremost temples of all divyadesams. It is referred as BhoologaVaigundam. Festivals speak volumes of heritage of the society. So, this paper also tried to study the festivals celebrated in Sri Ranganathar temple. This temple is famous for its festivals. Here throughout the year for three sixty five days three sixty five festivals are celebrated which depicts the culture and heritage of the country. Each festival celebrated in this temple tells the social and cultural life of the people. It attracts pilgrims and tourists from inside and outside India. So the main objective of this paper is to bring to lime light the heritage and cultural importance of Srirangam temple.

IndexTerms - . **Heritage tourism, Renganathar temple, Festivals at Srirangam and niche tourism**

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is travel for pleasure or business. It is an activity which started in the ancient period itself. In those days travel started for trade and commerce, after that pilgrim tour became a part and parcel of the human life. In Hindu scriptures it is said that a Hindu must visit four holy places in his life time, namely, Padrinath, Dwaraka, Puri and Rameswaram. Pilgrimage became an important activity of all people. Later after the introduction of Industrial Revolution the modern concept of tourism emerged. Travelling for pleasure, leisure and recreation became the new concepts in tourism. The concepts of money economy and leisure time motivated the people to go for various places for relaxation. Tourism may be domestic or International. The World Tourism Organisation defines tourism more generally, in terms which go "beyond the common

perception of tourism as being limited to holiday activity only", as people "travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure and not less than 24 hours, business and other purposes".

Today, tourism is a major source of income for much country. Tourism has become an important source of income for many regions and entire countries. The *Manila Declaration on World Tourism of 1980* recognized its importance as "an activity essential to the life of nations because of its direct effects on the social, cultural, educational, and economic sectors of national societies and on their international relations."

In 1936, the League of Nations defined a *foreign tourist* as "someone travelling abroad for at least twenty-four hours". Its successor, the United Nations, amended this definition in 1945, by including a maximum stay of six months. There has been an up-trend in tourism over the last few decades where international travel for short breaks is common. Tourists have a wide range of budgets and tastes, and a wide variety of resorts and hotels have developed to cater for them.

Niche tourism refers to the numerous specialty forms of tourism that have emerged over the years, each with its own objective. Many of these terms are used in the tourism industry and academics. Others are emerging concepts that may or may not gain popular usage. Examples of the more common niche tourism markets are:

- Agritourism
- Culinary tourism
- Cultural tourism
- Dark tourism (also called "black tourism" or "grief tourism")
- Eco tourism
- Extreme tourism
- Geo tourism
- Heritage tourism
- Medical tourism
- Movie tourism
- Natural tourism
- Religious tourism
- Slum tourism
- Sport tourism
- Virtual tourism
- War tourism
- Wellness tourism
- Wildlife tourism

Among these types Heritage tourism is a widely practiced tourism, especially in India where abundant cultural heritage is seen. Cultural and Heritage Tourism is a tool of economic development that achieves economic growth through attracting visitors from outside India, who are motivated by interest in the historical, artistic, scientific or lifestyle/heritage offerings of the community, region, group or institution. Such travel is focused upon experiencing cultural environments, including landscapes, the visual and performing arts and special lifestyles, values, traditions, and events. Tourism is widely recognized for its tangible outcomes (job creation, tax revenues) as well as its less tangible outcomes (quality of life). It may be built upon a wide variety of attractions, including agritourism, arts tourism, cultural and heritage tourism, destination tourism, fairs, events and conferences, sports teams, recreation, and more.

Governments play a very important role in promoting tourism and the ministries are successfully introducing innovations in tourism concepts. UNESCO also motivating the tourist concepts of the countries by recognising the important tourist spots as World Heritage Monuments. In India many temples in South India, Forts, Scenic spots and Transports are recognised as World Heritage Monuments. Recently in 2017 Srirangam Sri Ranganathar Temple received the UNESCO Asia Pacific Award of Merit 2017. This paper tries to find out the tourist importance of Srirangam and the heritage importance of this place by studying the festivals and rituals performed in this temple.

Scope of the study:

This paper covers the aspect of Heritage Tourism with special reference to Srirangam Sriranganatha Swami Temple. Since temples and the festivals conducted speak the volumes of heritage of the locality, an attempt was made to study the festivals celebrated in the temple. India is a land of diversified culture and attracts lot of foreign travellers throughout the year.

Methodology:

It is a descriptive study, the researcher gathered the information from the temple authorities and the pundits in the temple. Books published by the temple and other historical writings were referred for detailed information. Daily newspaper which carries the day today activities of the temple also referred for writing the article.

Historicity of Srirangam:

In Hinduism there are two division of faith, namely, Saivism and Vaishnavism. For the Vaishnavites, Lord Vishnu is the God and a lot of temples for Lord Vishnu is built by various kings at various times. Among the temples of Lord Vishnu, Srirangam is the first one and it is the first one in the 108 DivyaDesams. It is otherwise called as BhoologaVaukuntam. It is one of the important temples in Tamilnadu not only in the religious point of view but also in the tourism point of view.

S – Srirangam is the foremost among the 108 Divyadesams

R – Ramanuja the great Philosopher saint and reformer streamlined the temple administration of Srirangam

I – Is situated between two rivers namely Cauvery and Callaroon

R – Rama the great worshipped Lord Ranganatha and gave it as a gift to Vibheeshana

A – All the Azhwars except Madhurakavi have sung in praise of Lord Ranganatha in their sacred hymns.

N – Nameperumal is the name of the UtsavaMoorthy and he adorns the RathnaAngi during VaikuntaEkadasi

G – Garuda brought the Srirangavimana from Satyaloga to Ayodhya

A – AlinadanThiruchutru (built by ThirumangaiAlwar) is the fourth Prakara among the Sathprakaras of Srirangam

M – Many kings of different dynasties built the various mandapas and sannidhis and established endowments for conducting festivals.

Such a famous, traditional and a popular temple has a long history both mythological and religious. The Golden Rangavimana came from Satyaloga from God Brahma to Ishvahu and it was passed to somany Ishvahu rulers and finally it came to Ayodhya which was ruled by Rama, the successor of Ishvahu and one of the incarnations of Lord Vishnu. He presented the Rangavimana to Vibeeshana and Lord Ranganatha wants to reside in the banks of the river Cauvery, since he earlier promised the deity of Cauvery that he will reside in the banks of her. This is the reason why this temple is installed here by Vibeeshana and later it was renovated and extended by many rulers from various dynasties like Cholas, Pandyas, Pallavas, Nayaks and the Alwars.

Constructed in the Dravidian style of architecture this temple is glorified in the Divyaprabandha, the early medieval Tamil literature. It is the largest worshipping temple in India covering 250 hectares on an island between the rivers Cauvery and Caleroon. It is rich in legend, History and culture. It is the seat of a school of philosophy of the outstanding leader and famous Vaishnava Teacher, Sri Ramanuja. The mandapas of Srirangam was constructed and extended by various kings at various times. They have also donated gold ornaments, diamond ornaments etc to the temple which everyone see in the inscriptions of Srirangam.

This temple is only one of its kinds in India with seven enclosures. The main entrance known as Rajagopuram and the temple consists of seven enclosures one within the other. Rajagopuram of Srirangam is the second tallest temple tower in Asia with a height of 236 feet. Thousand pillar mandapa is the Darbar Hall of the deity during the annual VaikuntaEkadasifestival.

Prakaram -1 is called asSatyalogam, 2 is named as Thapologam, 3 is named as Janalogam, 4 is named as Maharlogam, 5 is named as Swarlogam, 6 is named as Bhoovarlogam and 7 is named as Bhoologam. There were 24 pillars inside the first prakaram, where Lord Ranganatha in his sleeping posture is residing. This 24 pillars denote the 24 letters in GayathriManthra. With the golden Rangavimana and other magnificent structures the temple is the largest religious complexes in the world.

Festivals at Srirangam

Culture expresses itself through language, art, philosophy, religion, social habits, customs, political institutions and economic organisations. Culture is the totality of the experiences of the various aspects of

life in society. Festival is one of the important aspect of our religion and religious activities is not a meaningful one without the performance of festivals. Srirangam is famous for its festivals. It is a place where festivals are celebrated all over the year. During the festivals Lord Ranganatha used to come across the streets of Srirangam like kings used to come and this is known as PerumalPurappadu. Every Tamil month a special festival is conducted here and each festival has its own significance. The Alangaram, dress, ornaments, prasadam, songs everything differ from one month festival to another month. It is very interesting to note the different ornaments and the rally of elephant carrying water from Cauvery river everyday especially in the month of Iyypasi which is known as Thula month. The following part of the paper clearly describes the festivals conducted in the Tamil months.

Chithirai:

In the month of Chithirai which is celebrated as Tamil New year by Tamilians, Parvothsavam, Namperumalpurappadu, Thirumanjanam, GajendraMoksham and Ramanavami festivals are celebrated. On the Telugu new year day only they read the new Panchangam of the year and on the Tamil New year's day Thirumanjanam was conducted. Ramanavami is also celebrated in this month. KodaiThirunal or ChithraPournami festival is celebrated in this month for eleven days. In this time GajendraMoksham is depicted in the river banks of Cauvery. The significance of this event is that god released the king elephant (Gajendra) from the grip of the crocodile and blessed him with moksha.

Vaikasi:

In the month of Vaikasi, Vasanthosthavam is conducted for Lord Ranganatha and Ranganachiyar. This is the festival of sporting in water. This festival is celebrated for the deity in the Vasanthamandapa in a trench of water surrounding the sanctum sanctorium. This festival lasts for 9 days. On Vaikasi only Lord Ranganatha returned to Srirangam after Malik Kafur conquest. The deity was taken by the devotees and secured from the king and after a long time it was returned on that day only. So, this day was also important in Srirangam.

Ani:

In the month of Ani Jeshtabisheham is conducted. At that time the deity in the sanctum sanctorium is covered by Thailakappu and the other deities also covered by Pachaikarpoomam. For applying thailakappu the ornaments of the deity are removed and weighed and if needed repairing the ornaments are done. After 40 days the deity is offered 1,698 padi rice and that is known as Thiruppavadai. After remeasuring the ornaments before the officials and the temple authorities it is again worn to the deity.

Adi:

In this month on the Barani star day celebrations start for Andal. On the 18th day AdiPadminettamperukku festival is celebrated. On that day the deity is taken to the banks of the river Cauvery. This festival is meant for thanks giving for the river Cauvery. The newly married couples gather in the river banks and offer poojas to the river Cauvery.

Avani:

Sri Jeyanthi or Gokulashtami is celebrated in this month. During this festival the idols of Lord Krishna and Lord Ranganatha are taken in procession. Children enjoy this festival very much.

Purattasi:

Thiruppavithrothsavam and Navarathiri festivals are celebrated during this month. The word Pavithram means clean. This festival lasts for 9 days. Poochandisevai in which the UthsavarPeriyaperumal shower his blessings to the devotees. Paddy measurement(Nellalavai) is done in front of the Uthsavar. Thiruppavadaikappu for Ranganachiyar is done on the same month. Navarathiri festival is celebrated for 9 days which is celebrated for Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswathi. From the period of Nayaks this festival is celebrated in Srirangam. On the navarahtri days the temple elephant play mouth organ and dance before the deity Ranganachaiyar and Golu is arranged in the thousand pillar mandapa.

Aippasi:

During this month everyday Cauvery water is brought in a gold vessel on the temple elephant with gold samara. This incident is mentioned as Thulasnanam. In the same month Dolosthavam is conducted that is UnjalThirunal. This festival is also for 9 days and during these days PeriyaThirumozhi and PerumalThirumozhi. The deity is kept in the Unjal and the hymns are recited then Dosa and other

Prasadams are offered to the deity. On the seventh day the deity inspects paddy measurement and on the ninth day Theerthavari is conducted.

Karthigai:

KaisikaEkadasi is celebrated in the month of Karthigai. According to Koyilolugu, ThirumangaiAlwar is said to have attained Gnanam only after witnessing karthigai festival. The significance of this function is sending Thirumugapttayam by Lord Ranganatha to Nammalvar to attend Adyanotsavam. This festival falls on the full moon day to propitiate agni (fire). Thousands of lights are lit in the temple and also in all houses, in addition to the lights, blaze fire or Chokkapanai.

Margazhi:

The most important festival celebrated in the month of Margazhi is VaikuntaEkadasai. This festival is called as Tamil festival, because Perumal hears NalayiraDhivyaPrabandham, which is written in Tamil by Alwars. This festival is celebrated for 20 days, first 10 days as Pagalpathu and the next 10 days as Raapathu. This is the festival which details how athma goes to vaikuntam and Lord Ranganatha he himself enacts how an athma enters into vaikuntam. In all twenty days Uthsavar is decorated with different ornaments, variety of food materials are given as parasadam and hymns are recited in front of the deity. During the ninth day Lord Ranganatha was decorated as Nachiyar and that decoration is called as NachiyarThirukolam or MohiniAlangaram. The next day VaikuntaEkadasi festival is celebrated during that day the devotees do not sleep on the whole night and they cross the ParamapadhaVasal with Lord Ranganatha. At that time the deity is decorated with RathnaAngi and Parrot garland. On that day lakhs of devotees from all over India visit the temple. On eighteenth day of this festival the deity is taken in golden horse which is called as Vedupari. This act denotes the story that the king of Thirumangai come with his soldiers and take away the belongings of Namperumal. After that he was caught by the member and he was blessed by Lord Ranganatha and made him as his devotee and renamed as ThirumangaiAlwar and he has written some portions in NalayiraDhivyaPrabandham. On the last day the deity is taken for Theerthavari which happens in the Chandra Pushkarani, the tank inside the temple complex. On the last day NammalvarMoksham is depicted in which the saint Nammalwar enters the feet of Lord Ranganatha.

Another important festival which is conducted in this month is for Andal and daily in the morning Thiruppavai is recited and the meaning of the hymns are depicted in the Andal shrine every day.

Thai:

In this month Brahmotsavam or Bhoopathithirunal is celebrated. Car festival is conducted on this month and the deity is taken in Garuda Vahana which is also peculiar in this month. In this car festival Lord Ranganatha with Upayanachiyars come for procession. It is also a nine days festival.

Masi:

Teppathirunal comes in the month of Masi. Teppam is inside the temple complex and this was constructed by KooranarayanaJeeyar who recovered the tank from the magicians who has done some negative pooja.

Panguni:

In this month only Vibheeshana celebrated Adhibrahmotsavam in Srirangam. Vaiyali is also happening in this month. Other than that on PanguniUthiram day Lord Ranganatha come to Nachiyar's place and they shower their blessings together. On that day only both are together and an interesting information is that Ranganachiyar never go from her place to Lord Ranganatha, because she is known as PadithandaPathini, which means she never get out of her place and this incident is known as SethiSevai.

Srirangam as a vaishnavite pilgrim centre attracts people from all over the world and this is because it is the largest temple complex with lot of inscriptions, sculptures and festivals which bring out the life of the people, their customs, rituals and practices. Each and every festival celebrated in this temple depicts the real incidents with religious faith.

Conclusion

Srirangam the Vaishnavites pilgrim centre is known for the extraordinary nature of its construction and the town planning. The temple is famous for many aspects starting from the deity, the deity is known as PeriyaPerumal and the Goddess is known as PeriyaNachiyar. That is here everything is known as Peirya which means big, the festival is known as PeriyaThirynal. The large temple complex with its inscriptions, sculptures, architectural features and festivals attract a large number of tourists inside and outside India. The sculptures depict the social life of the people and the inscriptions say about the voluminous contributions

given by kings of various dynasties and they are even today used for festivals. The state government provides annadhanam for the whole day and the late Chief Minister Dr. J. Jeyalalitha has implemented a lot of welfare programmes to this town. Recently this temple received the award from UNESCO the UNESCO Asia Pacific Award of Merit 2017. The great manual effort made and the process of renovation and restoration of the temple by the local craftspeople competed with nine countries. Finally the temple received the UNESCO Asia Pacific Award of merit 2017. The renovation and restoration progress started in June 2014 by Former Chief Minister Jayalalitha. She was elected from the Srirangam constituency in 2011. The massive project was executed through the Government and private partnership has helped to win this award. The kumbabisekham was performed as two sessions in September and November 2015. Government and Donors contributed the budget of the project. It consumes 25 crores. This project considered conservation projects among 10 countries in Asia pacific region. It also contains four awards of merit from a jury contains nine international conservation experts. The renovation work was done by the experienced craftspeople under the guidance of archaeology experts with principle of ancient building and sites. Traditional construction materials and techniques are used for the renovation of the temple. It shows our tradition and culture of Tamilnadu, UNESCO jury praised the temple especially in the architecture of the temple revealed original shrines. Not only the natives but also the foreigners who come to Srirangam admire the art and architectural beauty and the grandeur with which the festivals are conducted to preserve the traditions of the hoary past. The temple administrations offered all the facilities to the devotees, especially during festival occasions all the facilities are available in the temple complex itself. The foreigners and the visitors of this temple definitely carry with them in their memories the cultural significance of the temple.

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