

HERITAGE TOURISM IN TAMILNADU: POTENTIAL AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

Tourism is travel for recreational or leisure purpose. Tourism is one of the fastest growing segments which is developing rapidly, not only in Tamil Nadu but all around the world. One of the potential tourism sectors in Tamil Nadu is heritage-based tourism, but promotion for this aspect of heritage tourism is still lacking. Especially the interest of tourist from international destination and from India too, in traveling to heritage destinations has increased recently and is expected to continue. Tamil Nadu has retained first its position in foreign and domestic tourist arrivals for the third consecutive year. In attracting Foreign tourists to see the cultural diversity of Tamil Nadu, hence, several products based on heritage that are of potential are certainly sites which have been recognized by UNESCO as world heritage sites. Among these sites are living Chola temples at Thanjavur, Darasuram, Gangaikondacholapuram, monuments at Mamallapuram and Nilgiris's Mountain Train as world heritage. The purpose of this paper is to highlight the potential of each of these areas or sites can be enhanced by having more vigorous promotions and solid cooperation between the government agencies, travel agencies and non-governmental agencies involved.

Key words: Heritage, Tourism, Chola Temples, Mamallapuram Monuments, Nilgiri Mountain Train.

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is the world's largest industry, and is essential to a community's economic vitality, sustainability, and profitability. Tourism has become a popular global activity. In India, tourism is the largest industry and heritage tourism is its fastest-growing segment. India has very rich cultural traditions. Its rich culture is reflected in the forms of its philosophy, religion, rites, rituals, festivals, languages, literature, art-architecture, music, dance etc. "Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations. Both our cultural and natural heritage is irreplaceable sources of life and inspiration. They symbolize our touchstones, our points of reference, our identity".

Heritage plays a role in everybody's life. It may not equally important for all of us, it is impossible to deny its impact on our present and future. World Heritage sites must be of universal value, but the selection and the nomination of each site is dependent on the national concepts of heritage. Tourism as an International movement can contribute to the development of a global heritage awareness, and a better appreciation of common values.

II. CONCEPT OF HERITAGE

Heritage broadly means as "something transferred from one generation to another". The word heritage includes both cultural and natural facets. In the cultural context, heritage describes both material and immaterial forms, e.g., Artifacts, monuments, historical remains, buildings, architecture, philosophy, traditions, celebrations, historic events, and distinctive ways of life, literature, folklore or education.

In the natural context, heritage includes mountains, landscapes, gardens, parks, wilderness, rivers, islands, flora and fauna. It also has cultural components, since its value is dependent on subjective human assessment. The word "heritage" is applied in a wide variety of contexts and it is used as a synonym for objects from the past or for sites with no surviving physical structures but associated with past events. It is also extended to non-physical aspects of the past, like cultural and artistic productivity. In many countries, "national heritage" has more or less the same meaning as "national cultural".

2.1 Definition and Meaning

The National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States *defines* Heritage Tourism as "travelling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent stories and people of the past and present. It includes historic, cultural and natural resources". It is one of the oldest forms of travel and involves heritages of all kinds like colonial heritage, urban renewal, religious tourism, genealogy, industrial heritage and ethnicity.

III. SIGNIFICANCE OF HERITAGE TOURISM

The important component of the tourism industry is Heritage tourism. This is a rapidly growing niche market. Through heritage tourism a visitor can experience the local customs, traditions, arts, history, sites, and culture that authentically represent a particular place. To the heritage tourist, this culture must be unique and authentic. Heritage is a cultural political and economic resource. Since heritage has value in itself, heritage artifacts are suitable for collection, preservation and presentation. National heritage based on national history "explains the distinctiveness of a nation through time", and thus it is a valuable tool in increasing national unity and pride, or creating a national image. As an economic resource, heritage is used in various forms. The so-called heritage industry is a "major commercial activity which is based on selling goods and services with a heritage component". Tourism and leisure services obviously play a significant role in this Industry, but the manufacturing and sale of heritage products can be considered as equally important. Aspects of heritage can be used for the purpose of creating images for places and for promotion.

IV. IMPACTS OF HERITAGE TOURISM

Heritage tourism protects historic, cultural, and natural resources in towns and cities by involving people in their local community. So they can relate to their personal, local, regional, or national heritage, people are more often motivated to safeguard their historic resources. It educates residents and visitors about local and regional history and shared traditions. Local residents through their involvement and exposure to local historic sites become better informed about their history and traditions. Knowing the importance of one's heritage provides continuity and context for a community's residents, and it strengthens citizenship values, builds community pride, and improves quality of life. Heritage tourism can promote the economic and civic vitality of the community or region.

Heritage tourism is vital for many countries due to the large inflow of foreign and local money. The creation of new jobs in the travel industry at cultural and historic attractions and in travel related establishments. It increases the revenues and taxes. Economic diversification in the service industry like restaurants, hotels/motels, bed and breakfasts, tour guide services, manufacturing like arts and crafts, souvenirs, publications, and agriculture like specialty gardens or farmers markets. It encourages creative entrepreneurship and local ownership of small businesses and investment in historic properties and subsequently increased property values.

According to various estimates, heritage tourism contributes more than 60% to the overall share of tourists in India, both domestic and foreigners. 80% of the foreign tourists are interested in visiting rich heritage sites like Delhi, Jaipur and Agra. This comes as a surprise considering places like Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh. They have so many beautiful heritage monuments. This vouches for the amazing heritage tourism opportunities. Rajasthan has always been systematic in promoting its heritage sites globally.

V. HERITAGE TOURISM IN TAMILNADU

Tamil Nadu is located alongside the coastline of Bay of Bengal, and offers breathtaking sights of the Western Ghats. The state is also home to the rarest confluence of the three oceans, namely Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal. The state is highly industrialized and has the metropolitan state capital of Chennai which is now the best-sought destination in India for its state-of-the-art healthcare units, IT, and biotechnology and is adjudged as the automobile capital of the country. The state of Tamil Nadu is also known for its excellent temple architecture. Kancheepuram, also called the "Golden City of Temples", was once a proud capital of the Pallavas, Cholas and Vijayanagar Kings.

Dravidian style of temple architecture is visible in most for the temples of Tamil Nadu. These temples are huge in size and sometimes encompass entire townships. Many of the temples are huge with towering structures called *gopurams*. Bharatanatyam is one of the oldest dance forms of India that originally performed in temples as part of the religious ritual. The classical dance of the 'devadasis' (temple dancers) is now famous throughout the world. Bharat Natyam combines melody, rhythm, facial expressions, hand gestures, and postures of the body to portray narratives of devotional themes.

5.1 Tamil Literature

Tamil Language and literature have greater antiquity than other of the Indian languages including Hindi. The Sangam literature from the 2nd Century BC to the 2nd Century AD is considered a landmark in the literacy and cultural history of Tamils. The greatest literary work of the Sangam age is Thiruvalluvar's *Thirukkural*, composed with 1330 couplets dealing with morality in public and private life. Even after the end of the Sangam age, Tamil writers continued to produce excellent literary works under the patronage of royal dynasties. *Silapathikaram* (200-300 AD) by IlangoAdigal and *Manimekalai* (200-300 AD) by Sathanar are such treat Tamil epics. The South produced great poets like Kamban who composed the Tamil version of the Ramayana, over the ages.

5.2 Sculpture

In Tamil Nadu, the history of architecture and sculpture begins with the Pallava Temples, the specific Dravidian Style. UNESCO declared monuments like living Chola temples at Thanjavur, Darasuram and Gangaikondacholapuram, monuments at Mamallapuram and Nilgiris Heritage Train as World Heritage Sites. Tamil Nadu has 1050 km of the coastline which is 14 percent of India's coastline. The vast coastline of Tamil Nadu has many silvery beaches like the Marina, Elliots, Thiruvanniyur, Tiruchendur, Rameshwaram and Kanniyakumari. The temples of Tamil Nadu reverberate with spirituality and music, Madurai, Rameswaram, Kumbakonam, Chidambaram, Thanjavur and Tiruchirappalli have innumerable temples with different deities. The finely hewn magnificent sculptures reflect artistic excellence and cultural splendour.

The Pallavas was succeeded by Cholas were mighty builders as well. The Dravidian style was almost perfected under them. The best example of this style is the great Brihadeswar temple built at Thanjavur by the great Rajaraja Chola. Chola art is characterized by massive grandeur. The huge structures were decorated with minute sculptures, those involved immense labour. The Cholas also contributed significantly elevated the arts of bronzes. The Cholas bronzes speak volumes about the artistry and skill of the carvers with which they were made. Nataraja, the dancing Shiva at Chidambaram is a classic example of Chola craftsmanship. The Pandyas of Madurai also contributed their significant share to the temple heritage. The temples of Madurai are suitable examples of Pandya style of temple architecture. As Tamil Nadu has its unique culture and abundant tourism potential, tourism from within the country and abroad through the tourism spots throughout the year. The spots get over-crowded during the peak seasons.

Aggressive promotion and marketing campaigns through print and electronic media at the domestic, national and International levels and creation and up-gradation of basic amenities and infrastructure at tourism spots have resulted in the increase of tourism arrivals to Tamil Nadu as furnished below.

Year	Domestic	Foreign	Total	Growth Rate Per Cent
	(In Lakh)			
2011	1367.51	33.08	1400.59	22.00
2012	1841.37	35.62	1876.99	34.01
2013	2442.32	39.90	2482.22	32.24
2014	3275.55	46.58	3322.13	33.84

TABLE 5.1: TOURIST ARRIVALS TO TAMIL NADU

In the year 2013, 2482.22 Lakh tourists visited Tamil Nadu. During the year 2014, the tourist's arrival was 3322.13. When compared the tourist's arrival for the above two years, it has recorded an increase of 839.91 lakhs in the year 2014.

VI. POTENTIAL OF "UNESCO" WORLD HERITAGE SITES IN TAMIL NADU

1. Nilgiri Mountain Railway (NMR)
2. Mahabalipuram
3. The Brihadeswara Temple

6.1 The History of Nilgiri Mountain Railway

Udhagamandalam, the Queen of Hill stations, popularly called as Ooty is a major tourist attraction. The beautiful botanical gardens, the Ooty Lake, the Children's lake garden near the railway station, Doddabetta, Coonoor and Kotagiri are some of the many scenic spots on the blue hills. From the year 1854 onwards, various proposals were mooted to build mountain railway from Mettupalayam to the Nilgiri Plateau. All the proposals had faced either a technical or financial problem. One of the early project proposals even suggested the use of heavy water carriers to counter the weight of the train on the slope, and another suggested a ropeway in the steeper part of the terrain. Finally, a Swiss engineer named N. Riggenbach who thought of rack rail system at an estimated cost of 1,32,000 pounds, which was deemed to be too costly and dropped. Meanwhile, the Madras Railway Company opened the Madras-Coimbatore-Beypoor(Calicut) railway line for traffic in 1862. And in 1873, opened the 26 mile long beach line between Podanur and Mettupalayam, which made Mettupalayam the foot hill point for anybody going to the hills.

The renewal of various plans for a mountain railway finally ended in 1885, with the Nilgiri Railway Company being formed with a capital of Rs.25 Lakhs. And in August 1981, the first sod of the line was cut by Lord Wenlock, the then Governor of Madras Presidency.

After many problems and change of hands, the line was ultimately completed and opened for public traffic on 15th June 1899 by the Madras Railway. The line was extended to Ootacamund from Coonoor, sometime in 1908 on the same gauge over a distance of 11 and 3/4 miles at a cost of Rs.24,40,000. Bragging of the only rack and pinion system in the whole of Asia, the unique rack section of the Nilgiri Mountain Railway starts at Km. 7/8-9 beyond Kallar Down Top Point and ends at Km. 26/8-9, a little yard before the Coonoor up Home Signal. The average gradient on the rack section is 1 in 15. The rack rails consist of two toothed steel bars laid in a double row at 44mm apart and 64mm above the running rails. So that the tooth of one is directly opposite the gap of the other to make ensure that the engine pinions do not work off the racks when negotiating curves. The entry to the rack is affected through a specially designed entry tongue laid in special channel finally to the rigid bars. The maximum permissible speed on Mettupalayam – Kallar and coonoor – Udhagamandalam "Non-rack" systems is 30 KPH while between Kallar and Coonoor "Rack" section the maximum permissible speed is 13 KMPH.

Trains are operated on the Nilgiri Mountain Railway on the absolute black system. Engines are attached always at the Mettupalayam end of the formation, to push the loads while going up. Each of the coaches and wagons are provided with a brakeman who independently operates the hand brakes and the "rack" brakes on whistle codes obtained from the driver. The "X" class locomotives used on this railway are tank engines of '0-8-2' type with 4 cylinders of compound type, so that the high pressure cylinders work the adhesion wheels while the low pressure cylinders working on the exhaust steam of the first two cylinders work on the rack system.

6.2 Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram)

Mahabalipuram was a 7th century port city of the South Indian dynasty of the Pallavas located at around 60km south from the city of Chennai in Tamil Nadu. It is believed to have been named after the Pallavas King Mamalla.

6.3 Rock Sculpture at Mamallapuram

The monuments are mostly rock-cut and monolithic. It constitutes the early stages of Dravidian architecture wherein



Buddhist elements of design are prominently visible. They are composed by cave temples, monolithic *rathas* (chariots), sculpted reliefs and structural temples. The Pillars are of the Dravidian order and the sculptures are the outstanding examples of Pallava art of highly skilled sculptors.

VII. SOME IMPORTANT STRUCTURES

Thirukadalmalai, the temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu. It was also built by Pallava King in order to safeguard the sculptures from the ocean. It is told that after building this temple, the remaining architecture was preserved and was not corroded by sea.

Descent of the Ganges – a giant open – air bus

relief.

Arjuna's Penance – relief sculptures on a massive scale extolling an episode from the Hindu epic – The Mahabharata. In the 7th century Varaha Cave Temple is a small rock-cut temple. The Shore Temple is a structural temple along the Bay of Bengal which has the entrance from the Western side away from the sea. Recent excavations have revealed new structures here. This structural temple was reconstructed stone by stone from the sea after being washed away in a cyclone. PanchaRathas (Five Chariots) are five monolithic pyramidal structures named after the Pandavas (Arjuna, Bhima, Yushishtra, Nakula and Sahadeva) and Draupadi. An interesting aspect of the *rathas* is that, despite their sizes they are not assembled each of these is carved from one single large piece of stone.

7.1 Thanjavur Big Temple

The Thanjavur “Big Temple” (PeriaKovil) now turned one thousand years old. RajarajaChola I commissioned this greatest edifice of Tamil history and performed the sacred dedication of the temple in the year 1010, the 25th year of his reign. It was the jewel-in-the-crown of Rajaraja, a true devotee of Siva and an extraordinarily powerful king, a grand monarch with a style of his own, a conqueror who also understood art and architecture. It is a matter of pride that a Tamil King Rajaraja built the finest examples of Tamil architecture, stupendous in proportion, yet simple in design. In this temple Siva is known as *Brihadisvara* - the Lord of the Universe and a gigantic stone “lingam” fills the sanctum sanctorum, sheltered by a vimanam (towering roof) which pierces the sky at 216 feet tall. One can view with awe at this majestic structure from a distance as one drives towards Thanjavur.

7.2 Craftsmanship

The detail of the stone work of this imposing vimanam is representative of the masterly craftsmanship of South Indian artisans. The shilpi (sculptor) and the sthapati (architect) came together to create their fantastic abode for Shiva. Naturally, the shape had to imitate Mount Kailash itself. In its perfect geometry and distinct clarity of lines, made this tower unbeatable. Every single feature of the temple is larger than life, the monolithic Nandi, the gigantic (12 feet high) Dwarapalakas (guardian deities) and the sculptures in the niches around the central shrine. They are distinguished by elegant simplicity in lines and ornamental work. The faces of the figures like Dakshinamurthi and Yogalakshmi are ecstasy in essence. There is a hidden corridor surrounding the sanctum inside the vimanam. Rarely open to visitors, this is a treasure trove of Chola painting and sculpture and the walls of this cave-like corridor were plastered with lime and used as a large canvas for the paintings.

7.3 Magical Pull

One can spend a whole day in the Big Temple, and still want to come back to wonder at every detail of its beauty. Many kings had built temples to Shiva on the banks of the *Kaveri* and many saints have sung in praise of these deities. But there is only one temple to *Brihadisvara*, and it stands tall a thousand years after a devotee-king climbed a ladder with a copper pot (*Kalasam*) smeared with holy water from all the sacred rivers, to dedicate it to history.

VIII. CHALLENGES

The heritage sites development to Tourism will do a world-of-good to the development of tourism in the state. The possibilities are listed below.

1. Cultural heritage attractions are unique and fragile by nature, it is fundamental that tourism authorities study how to best develop these cultural heritage sites while protecting and preserving them for the long-term and to ensure that their values are safeguarded amidst a rapidly changing and globalized world.
2. It is important to raise awareness of the importance of the preservation, valorisation and reuse of cultural heritage sites and to highlight the contributions of cultural heritage to society, economy, cultural creation and education.
3. It is recommended that the Government concentrate to promote a citizen-centred approach, disseminating innovative models of cultural heritage management and highlighting its inclusive role.
4. Introduce of Heritage tour circuits instead of the locations based tour. For example Chola circuit (Trichy – Thanjavur – Gangaikondacholapuram – Trichy) and world heritage tour circuit (Chennai – Mamallapuram – Thanjavur – Ooty – Chennai), can be introduced to highlight dynastical importance instead of just monuments.
5. Cultural and heritage tourism should be expanded further. India has a rich resource of both tangible cultural heritage in its monuments and sites and also an intangible cultural heritage in the form of its architecture, music, dance/drama, local rituals and traditions and other folk arts. An integrated circuit linking heritage monuments with culturally rich villages and towns around them should be formed to enable and strengthen the development of cultural tourism in India.
6. To encourage community involvement in the planning of social activities focused on its cultural heritage will also enrich the cultural calendar with fairs, festivals and theatrical performances for the enjoyment and education of not only tourists, but local residents as well. When local people are active participants in all of these activities they will develop a personal stake in the development of long-term sustainable tourism through the conservation and maintenance of the authentic cultural heritage of their community.
7. It is important to Conduct Tourism Impact Assessment studies under multi-disciplinary agencies to assess the socio-cultural, economic and political impact of tourism on the heritage site as well as the host community.
8. Cultural and heritage tourism should be expanded further. India has a rich resource of both tangible cultural heritage in its monuments and sites and also an intangible cultural heritage in the form of its architecture, music, dance/drama, local rituals and traditions and other folk arts. An integrated circuit linking heritage monuments with culturally rich villages and towns around them should be formed to enable and strengthen the development of cultural tourism in India.

IX. CONCLUSION

The people by and large lead a very relaxed and peaceful lifestyle. They have deep interest in music, literature, and dance. Music and festivals are a daily occurrence in Tamil Nadu and residents spend a great deal of time with family and friends celebrating their culture and heritage. The people here also spend time making some of the most exquisite handicrafts, which

include intricate carved designs in wood, stone, and metal. Heritage tourism has given a tremendous boost to the revenue in the state. It has also helped in the increase of employment opportunities in the state. It has also brought an increase in the foreign exchange earnings. Tamil Nadu is a fascinating destination with an outstanding mix of ancient monuments; scenic, virgin beaches, calm backwaters, delightful jungles, thrilling wildlife sanctuaries, colourful folk and classical dances, and above all hospitable people. Since the recent trend of global tourism indicates a shift towards experimental, ethnic, cultural, heritage and eco-tourism, Tamil Nadu has an opportunity to capitalize on its rich products composition and attract a higher proportion of international tourism.

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