



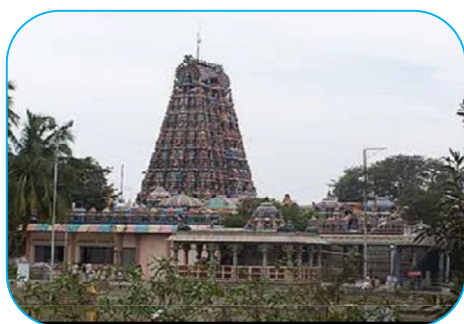
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HERITAGE TOURISM AROUND KARAİKUDI - A STUDY

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ABSTRACT:

Karaikudi is a municipal town located in Sivaganga district of the state of Tamil Nadu. The place is the most famous in the entire municipality because it is also the largest town in the district. It is part of the Chettinad region that includes a total of 75 villages. The town is on the highway that connects Trichy and Rameshwaram. It is a well-known town in this southern state of India mainly because of the style

of houses that is unique to the place. The houses in this town are constructed using the limestone that is called "karai veedu" in local language. Some people also believe that the town got its name from the plant of karai, which is found in abundance in the place. Karaikudi was earlier counted in the Ramanathapuram district and achieved the status of a municipality in 1928. Chettiars And Karaikudi It is a well-known fact that the family of Chettiars was instrumental in developing the town of Karaikudi. They have helped shape the town and brought it into prominence by building educational institutes, funding banks, constructing temples and celebrating festivals in the traditional ways. They have also taken upon them the onus of bringing social reforms. To make Karaikudi self-sufficient in every way, Vallal Alagappan, who belonged to the Chettiar family, established the Alagappa University in the place and this university has a good nationwide ranking. Tourist Places In And Around Karaikudi The places worth visiting at Karaikudi are Kannudayahayagi Temple, the Koppudai Amman Temple, the Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple and the Chettinad Palace. Tourists are attracted to the place because of the lip-smacking dishes that are part of the local cuisine of Karaikudi. The famous classification of local cuisine, Chettinad, derives its name from the Chettiar Kings who played an important role in the establishment as well as development of the town. The other name for Chettinad cuisine is Karaikudi cuisine.

KEYWORDS: Karai Veedu, Chettiars, Nationwide Ranking, Local Cuisine, Karaikudi Cuisine.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism today has become a larger giant in terms of employment, investment, output and value. It is one of the world's fastest growing and oldest industries. With the advent of industrialization

people started moving in large numbers to places away from their usual places of residence and work with the view to seek change.

This trend continued until tourism became a great mass phenomenon. This phenomenon is a visible result of the great technological developments which have changed the social geography of the world since the

nineteenth century.

Tourism:

The word "Tourism" is related to "Tour" which is derived from the Latin word "Torn us". It means a tool for describing a circle or "Turners wheel".

Tourism is the temporary short term movement of people. To destinations outside the places where they normally. Live and

work and their activities during the stay at these destinations; it includes movements from all purposes as well as day visits or excursion.

Heritage Tourism:

Tourist visiting heritage centers are normally made up of people who would like to visit monuments.

Cultural heritage tourism is a branch of tourism oriented towards the cultural heritage of the location where tourism is occurring.

Sivaganga District:

There are number of heritage sites in various districts of TamilNadu. One among them was Sivaganga district is not for its great heritage of culture, art, architecture. Cuisine, tradition, e.t.c.,

There are several places in Sivaganga district are noted for various attractions but in particular the places around Karaikudi city were noted for the unique heritage tourist destinations .Such as

Chettinad Palace	-	Kanadukathan
Chettinad Museum	-	Karaikudi
Karpaga Vinayagar Temple	-	Pillaiarpatti
Lord Murugan temple	-	Kundrakudi
Sowmiya Narayanan temple	-	Thirukostiyur
Birds Sanctuary	-	Vettangudi
Sacred Heart Church	-	Idaikkattur

There are several tourist places in and around Karaikudi .some of the popular tourist destinations are the most popular tourist places which has the traditional reflection such as Chettinad palace, Chettinad museum, Chettinad mansion, Karpaga vinayagar temple, lord murugan temple and soon. These places have structural reflections, holistic reflections, and aesthetic reflections of chettians.

As chettinad is a region of the sivaganga district of southern Tamil nadu, India, Karaikudi and 74 others villages. Chettinad is the homeland of the nattukittai chettians (Nagarathar) a prosperous banking and business community many of whose members migrated to south and south east. Karaikudi is one of the most important cultural heriage alone in tamilnadu karaikudi8 has otherwise called as “The Land of heritage and devotion”. Karaikudi which is now a international tourist spot is an example of one each of one such region. The under developed regions of the country can greatly benefited tourism development. The development of tourism will celebrate the charm of the heritage value of seminars and festivals. Most of the promoting activities can followed the state and central government to development the chettinad region, karaikudi, has one of the most famous cultural and heritage city of the world.

CHETTINAD PALACE:

Chettinad palace located at kanadukathan, built in 1912, symbolized the exquisiteness of architectural marvels wood work and ancient lighting besides the cultural ethos of this region. All homes have one to three pillar courtyards. Italian glossy tiles have been used on walls and ceilings. Burma teak, granite pillars, stained glass and artistic grills are some of the important materials used in the buildings. In this house are numerous windows and very high ceilings.

The huge threshold to the houses, with a high arch resembles the gateway of temples in India. The spacious rectangular mutram, the central portion of the house is open to sky for free aeration. Thinnai, a raised platform serves as an accommodation for travelers and visitors.The inner courtyard has special significance .lined with beautiful pillars made of Burma teakwood or granite; it serves as the venue for ceremonies and family engagements.The floors are covered with Italian glossy tiles. The walls are smooth and made of special plasters that contain powdered shells, lime, spices and gall-nut. This technique keeps the house cool and even in hot summers.¹.

In 18.10.05 the governor of TamilNadu visited this palace and he wanted to preserve the chastened heritage, because it has ancient culture. Now it has received international recognition. The

TamilNadu government is taking necessary steps to develop the palace and awarded a reward named "Heritage town". Department of state tourism and TIDC proposed to introduce circuit tourism covering Chettinad state. The administration has allotted a sum of Rs. 3.25 cores to uplift Chettinad. TTDC has taken efforts to create awareness about the hidden treasures of Chettinad which include its rich culture heritage mansion and temples. The seven action plan introduced by the chief minister in 2003 stresses the need to develop this place in to a tourist centre. Accordingly the TTDC has taken several steps to given world wide publicity to the heritage value of Chettinad with this idea in mind. A seminar and a festival were conducted at Karaikudi on 3rd and 4th march 2005. The event included audio visual presentation of heritage and cultural programmes both domestic and international tourist participated in the festival TTDC has been taking steps to developing the infrastructure and amenities and taking up development works in the Chettinad village. This palace has attracted the film industry and they have been selecting this spot for their films.

The pacific area travel writers association (PATWA) , a well know body in the field of world tourism, has awarded the prestigious International award to TTIC (TamilNadu Tourism Development Corporation) for promoting Chettinad heritage tourism this award was received by TamilNadu tourism during the International tourism Bourse, Berlin, held in march 2005.²

CHETTINAD MUSEUM:

At Chettinad, the house is converted to museum next door to the raja's palace. Among the kitchen tools the best is the traveling lit. No self - respecting chattier would eat out, so an elaborate basket housed everything from masala dabbers and coopers to live bens and ladle sets. Then there's traditional jeweler and clothing, huge copper water vats and grain bins... everything items that trace the chettiars way of life. The labeling list too good and a guide come in hand so far entrance is free. Chettinad museum is a heritage home bringing to these privileged clients the living style of the chettiars. The various kinds include lime mortar, marble, athangudi tiles anai adikallu, etc. pressed metal plates have been fired in many palaces as living for the top ceiling.³

KARPAGA VINAYAGAR TEMPLE:

The best known of the Nagarathar clan temples was Karpaga vinayagar Temple at pillaiarpatti. Pillaiarpatti temple is a rack- cut temple located about 12kms from Karaikudi on the road to Madurai. It attracts visitors in large numbers from all parts of India and from abroad. Karpaga Vinayagar is a huge bas-relief in a cave hewn out of a hillock and is a splendid example of the south Indian sculpture. It was built after hewing a hillock by the early Pandya kings and the image of Karpaga vinayagar and that of a Siva linga were carved out of a stone of by a sculptor called ekkattur Koon peruparanam who put his signature on a stone inscription found even today in the sanctum. He put his signature in Tamil language which was in use between 2nd and 5th century A.D. It can be concluded that the icon of Karpaga vinayagar must have been carved around 4th century A.D the 6 feet tall sculpture is dated to the 5th century A.D the Rajagopuram towers over the eastern entrance and rises in five storey's. The temple is rich in stone and terra cotta sculpture. There are 30 bronzes in the temple dating from the 10th century. This temple is 1600 years old. The 14 stone inscriptions found in this temple, dated between 400A.D and 1238 AD reveal that the place was known as ekkattur thiruveengaikudi maruthankudi raja narayanapuram before it come to be called pillaiarpatti. The celebration at vinayagar chaturthi festival birth of lord vinayagar is well known here.⁴

To promote Infrastructure facilities at pillaiarpatti in sivaganaga District. This popular temple attracts lakhs of tourist. In view of its ancient value and tourist arrival Rs.25 lakhs has been sanctioned to provide tourist amenity. This sum of amount was allotted by the department under the state funded schemes (2007-2008).⁵

LORD MURUGAN TEMPLE :

Lord Murugan temple is also called as Arulthiru Shanmuganathan temple .It is situated at Kundrakudi. Kundrakudi is located 11km west from Karaikudi. This temple is located on a small hill and

is famous for its ancient cave temple. This temple was built around the year 1000; lord shanmuganathan is the presiding deity and the History referred mayuragiri puranam. It is also a place of considerable historical interest. On the western side of the hill are three excavated caves at a ground level. These are in line and adjacent to one another. Later structures have been added to these shrines in the front. The temple is stunning with four Teppakkulam on all the four sides of it. The carvings of 9th, 10th and 12th century are also seen in the temple. Marudhu pandya kings of Sivaganga renovated the temple in their days. Important festivals include Thaipusam in January, Panguni Uthiram in March, Thirukarthikai in November, and kandhashasti in November. It is believed by people that prayers in temple bring relief from diseases and mental worries. The devotees are blessed with good children.⁶

Kundrakudi is a popular pilgrim centre, which attracts numbers of tourists. In view of tourist arrival; Rs 43.45 has been sanctioned to provide tourist amenities. This fund was provided to improve facilities, the department of tourism by the government of TamilNadu under part II schemes (2007-2008)⁷

SOWMIYA NARAYANAN PERUMAL TEMPLE:

Sowmiya Narayana Perumal is situated at Thirukostiyur. It is located 10 km southwest of Tiruppathur on the Sivaganga- Tiruppathur highway. This temple is one of the important of 108 Vaishnava temples. This temple is also a famous vaishnavite pilgrim centre. The Alwar ramanujar had visited Thirukostiyur and prayed to god Sri Vishnu in the temple here. The name of presiding deity here is "Sowmiya Narayana perumal". This temple is popularly called as south Tiruppathur (or) ThenThirupathi. The destitute present in the temple were built by kings from of pandya, Vanathiya and Nayak of tanjore. The most important festivals celebrated in the Sowmiya Narayana perumal temple are Masi Pournami Theppa Thiruvizha and Panguni Uthiram Unjal Thiruvizha. These are celebrated in the last two Tamil months and large number of people take part in the festivals.⁸

VETTANGUDI BIRD'S SANCTUARY:

Vettangudi bird's sanctuary is a natural habitat of winter migratory and residential birds. This sanctuary attracts a number of migratory birds such as white Ibis, open billed stork and night heron besides endangered species such as painted stork, gray heron, darter, little cormorant, little egret, intermediate egret, cotton teal, spot bills, pintail and flamingos flock. It is a safe place for breeding and feeding for birds with considerable diversity in nesting and feeding behavior. This place is 8km from thiruppathur and 51km from Madurai. Vettangudi bird sanctuary is stretched over an area of 39.9 Hect, tanks of vettankudi, Periakollukudi and chinnakollukudi villages. The sanctuary receives nearly 20,000birds both local and migratory.

SACRED HEART CHURCH, IDAIKATTUR:

This Church was built 120 years back. An Anglican lady named Mary Anne from France gave full donation for the construction of the church as a token of her gratitude to the sacred heart of Jesus for having got cured her from an incurable heart ailment after a long prayer to the sacred heart of Jesus. Rev. Fr. Ferdinand cello S.J., a French priest who was the parish priest of Idaikkattur received the money from her and built this church at Idaikkattur. The church is a sacred heart shrine built in gothic architectural style on the model of the RHEIMS cathedral of France in France. As an astonishing engineering marvel, this church has a foundation of only three feet in depth and it is a wonder that the church has stood on it for the last 120 years.⁹The exquisite statues in the church were brought from France to Idaikkattur 110 years back. It is only in this shrine that there are the relics of 40 saints kept on the main altar. Secondly, it is believed that 110 years back when this church was built, 9 choirs (hundreds) of angels appeared and solved a great problem of the people. The location of shrine is 36 kms away from Madurai on the way to Rameswaram main road stop at muthanendal. Lot of foreign tourists visit this shrine. First Friday of every month lot of pilgrims participated in prayer. Idaikkattur is located at a distance of 37kms towards the east of the temple city Madurai on the Madurai to Rameswaram national highway.

CONCLUSION:

Heritage tourism in India has registered an immense growth in the last few years ever since additional initiative were taken by the government of India to boost India's image as a destination for heritage tourism.

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