



Educational tourism and its impact : a case study from Kanchipuram, Chennai, India

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Abstract

Archaeology, the root for the identification of ancient culture and civilization has been playing a most pivotal role in the development of mankind since time immemorial. Kanchipuram, an important heritage site of Southern India reflects its rich ancient glory and popularity for the production of traditional Kanchi Silk Sarees and Water Bird Sanctuary of beautiful natural sustainability. During the time of the Pallavas, it flourished as a port town and a centre of Roman trades carried out from the Bay of Bengal. Kanchipuram has been the source of Educational Tourism and a centre of attraction for the people of India in general and tourists from abroad in particular for its many heterogeneous tourist sites. Mahabalipuram presently known as Mammallapuram and some other relics depict the aesthetic descriptions of the Dravidian temple style of architecture and the Pallava art which have been a religious heritage and a pillar of educational tourism since long back. This paper attempts to study the prospects of the historical and archaeological treasure of tourism so far existed at Kanchipuram and the scruples of Educational Tourism needed for a prosperous living as well as for the betterment of human phylum.

Keywords: Archaeology, tourism industry, temple city, education, kanchipuram..

1. Introduction:

Archaeology is the study of human activity in the past, primarily through the recovery and analysis of the material culture and environmental data that have left behind, which includes artifacts, architecture, biofacts and cultural landscapes (Renfrew and Bahn, 2008)

Since archaeology employs a wide range of different procedures, it can be considered to be both a science and humanity and in the United States it is thought of as a branch of anthropology, although in Europe it is viewed as a separate discipline. It's a discipline concerned with the recovery, systematic description and study of old artifacts. Archaeology and Tourism shares a symbiotic relationship. In India, the demand of Tourism has increased the importance of archaeology as a great source of leisure, recreation and exchange of thoughts and ideas. The 'World Tourism Organization' defines tourists as people "travelling to and staying in places outside their usual

environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes" (Bhatia, 2002).

The state of Tamil Nadu lying in the Southern part of the Indian Peninsula has over 20th centuries of Cultural Heritage and Historical significance. The foremost attractions in the state are its impressive temples that are the true edifices of a great ancient culture being vibrant and lively at present (Mahalingam, 1969). Not only the tallest and alluring temples do it possess, but its rich and alluring scenic beauty of nature in the form of forests, wildlife sanctuaries, hill stations and the long bio-diverse coastlines do have a lot to say and represent its grandness. It provides opportunities for sightseeing, pleasure and leisure to the hanger-on of various rubrics including adventure tourists. So the study of the tourist spots focused and rambled in Tamil Nadu and Kanchipuram is highly nonselective. The analysis of the domestic tourist's inflow to the pilgrim centers

and foreign tourist's to the historical places or sites speaks its rich versatility of esthetical blue-chips. Kanchipuram being a place of great historical and religious importance is visited by a number of domestic and foreign tourists. It has unique diversity of heritage and cultural relics which is not seen anywhere in the world. Students, tourists and researchers who travel kanchipuram acquire a platform to understand and assimilate different cultures of South India.

1.1 Choice of the region

Tamil Nadu, a cradle of ancient Dravidian culture extending from the Coromandel Coast in the east to the forested Western Ghats in the west had a rich cultural heritage and glorious past. At its heart is the fertile Kaveri Valley, a land of rice fields and spectacular temples. This is the land of the ancient and mighty Cholamandalam, where the Chola kings built magnificent temples. These historic sites became a cynosure of all eyes which lured the people to spend their leisure and recreational hours. Various tourism spots with amenities and easy mode of transportation and accommodation urged people to visit such alluring destinations or abodes.

By seeing all these relics and spots of tourism, people are encouraged and acquire information. Their inflow increases revenue in both sectors and generates income to the state and provides employment to rural tourism (a new and upcoming scenario in India). Such heritage sites also help to acquire ideas and knowledge of their art and sculpture, culture, traditions, beliefs and social positions of the mighty rulers beyond their regions (Basham, 1975).

1.2 Location

The Kancheepuram district was initially known as Chengalpattu District. It was bifurcated on 18-11-1997 into Kanchipuram and Thiruvallur districts. Kancheepuram is known as city of Thousand Temples and the town is the headquarter of the district. It is situated at a distance of 76 kms from Chennai and well connected by road and rail services with the adjoining urban centers, viz Arakkonam, Chengalpatu, Arcotana Vandavasi. The Chengalpatu Arakkonam broad gauge railway line passes through this town. Apart from this, the great Western Trunk Road from the Chennai to Bangalore also passes through the Local Planning Area.

It lies between 11 00' to 12 00' North latitudes and 77 28' to 78 50' East longitudes. The district has a total geographical area of 4433 Sq.kms and Coastline

of 87.2 kms. The town has an average elevation of 275' (83-82m) M.S.L. The district is situated on the Northern side of the east coast of Tamil Nadu. It is bounded on the east by Bay of Bengal, Chennai City and Thiruvallur District on the north, Vellore and Thiruvanamalai Districts on the west and Villupuram District and Union territory of Puducherry on the South. The temperature throughout the year is high, reaching a maximum of 37.50 C average in the month of April to July and recording of minimum average of 20.5 C temperature during the months of December to February. The prevailing wind direction is South West in the morning and South East in the evening. The town gets rainfall from both the South West and North East monsoon. Average annual rainfall of the Local Planning Area is 40" or 1125m.m. The river Palar is the main river in the district which is not perennial. Cheyyar and Vegavathy rivers are tributaries of Palar and join it at Thitumakkudal. Predominant soils found in the area are Black, Redloom, Clay and Sand. The town has natural slope from West to East with a fall of 42ft.

The Kanchipuram district has been divided into 3 revenue divisions comprising of 10 taluks with 1214 revenue villages. For development reasons, it is divided into 13 development blocks with 10 municipalities, 24 town panchayats, 13 panchayats unions and 648 village panchayats. (Census of India 2001, Temples of Tamil Nadu, Kanchipuram District, C.ChandraMouli. P. No.105).

2. Objectives of the study

This study aims to capture results that help in identifying and understanding the historical and archeological tourism with its educational and commercial value which is considered one of the most important forms of tourism in Tamil Nadu. The study seeks to examine the reality of historical and archaeological tourism in Tamil Nadu taking Kanchipuram as a case study, with a future plan to develop this type of tourism based on the needs of the country.

3. Need and significance of the study

India has a rich and deep historical background. Each and every stone in India has a story to tell about its past. Indian historical tourism sites are a timeless sojourn back in the bye lane of the time to unravel the untold miseries of the past and explore the rare jewels of the glorious past of India. Exploring the forts, pillars, temples and other monuments built by the various rulers have stood the vagaries of time to tell

the story of their inception, beauty, grace, love and passion.

Kanchipuram is so versatile in her historicity and aesthetic specimens of architectural style that it has a lot of possibilities to promote for further development if more researches are carried out and awareness programmes are done from intervals to intervals. The artistic temple styles speaks its rich glory and grandeur that flourished in the land of the Dravidians and the antiques so far preserved and exhibited in the National Museum inspires the people to have a sense of innovations and trading concept with the western world.

It lacks any research literature on kanchipuram as an important source of Educational Tourism which justifies the significance of the study.

4. Methodology

The methodology is the Field Study under the category of Descriptive Survey method to collect the relevant data and information for the study. The investigator utilized Questionnaire, Interview and Observation as the tools and techniques to collect first hand data and information. The relevant secondary data and information has been collected from various books, theses, journals and colloquies.

5. Assumptions

The archaeological remains of Tamil Nadu are definitely an area of research as it has been contributing immensely to the promotion of tourism in the state and the country as a whole. The findings of the research will contribute to the knowledge and will be an eye opener to the future researches in this field. The findings will help the concerned authority to take appropriate measures for the preservation and conservation furthermore development of tourism and heritage institutions in Tamil Nadu.

6. Results and discussions

On the basis of the investigation, observation, discussion and analysis, it can be estimated that Kanchipuram, previously known as Conjeevaram and also as the City of Thousand Temples is classified as a rich heritage city. Kanchipuram, a big and old religious centre of south India from 3rd century BC, has played a major role in the cultural and political history of the region and became the capital city of the Pallavas. Due to its rich tales and heritage it has an ample evidence of the religious plurality as early as the 7th century. Kanchipuram is also known for its world famous and well known crafted silk Sarees,

which is a traditional home industry.

As Kanchipuram falls in the religious route of Thirupathi- Thiruvanamalai, it can be said as it falls in the religious centre for Hindus too. According to the general classification of tourist places based on flow of tourists, kanchipuram can be grouped as of international, national, and regional level of Educational tourism importance.

The sites that are taken as area of study like Manamathi, Amur, Siruthaoor etc. have tremendous potential of being tourist spots. The Siruthaoor Megalithic burial site belongs to the Iron Age and early historic culture. Kanchipuram was and still now a center of learning for people and priests of different religions and philosophic traditions including Jainism, Buddhism, Vaishnavism and Shaivism. The Monuments speak of the rich glory and artistry of the state and dynamism of the rulers. The findings (monuments) are often designed to convey historical and political information. The Megalithic burial site of Siruthaoor has been dated back to 20,000 years.

The study has revealed that kanchipuram has been a major seat of Tamil learning as well as an important place of Pilgrimage Tourism for the Buddhists, Jains and Saivite and Vaisnavite followers. Apart from its temples, this small town also produces local handicrafts silk saris, known as "Kanchi Silk" which is a means of generating income and foreign exchanges. The temple festivals held throughout the year and apart from the temple car or the Ratha festivals held in January, April and May provide the tourist an ample source of Education and Enlightenment regarding religion and local cultural identity, practices, rituals, lifestyles, languages and food habits. There are other days when the idols are taken out in procession on their respective Vahanas or Vehicles.

Such Educational Tour inspires a lot to the Student Community, Researchers, Social Activists and general people who get a platform to understand and assimilate the different cultures. The Overseas and national tourist who visit to Kanchipuram are benefitted and refined into a better human being. Kanchipuram possesses matchless varieties of aspects of relics and it favors tourists to gain advanced knowledge and motivations by witnessing the land of this glorious site of World Heritage.

6.1 Problems

Similar to other monumental heritage of our glorious archaeological land, Kanchipuram also has been facing some problems like negligence from the

governmental and non-governmental agencies and organizations, lack of public awareness, inadequate infrastructural facilities and inappropriate roadways, etc., since its beginning. After the independence of India, various legal and administrative measures have been taken by the Government, but to no avail. Time and again the Government has failed in their every effort to restoring India's rich cultural glory. Therefore, it is the first and foremost duty of each and every citizen including the Archaeologists to educate himself/herself in keeping the historic environment of this country, Kanchipuram in particular, intact by preserving and conserving these sites for all times to come.

6.2. Suggestions

As a result of the investigation of the sites the scholar came to know about the educational and commercial value of these sites, e.g. how they will promote tourism commercially, develop rural tourism so that the local people can generate an income and are gainfully employed for further increase of foreign exchanges. The educational value can be understood through the medium of monuments, temples and Megalithic burial sites. The goal of archaeology is to understand how and why human behaviour has changed over time. It helps the next generation to search for ways to predict in a better way how cultures will change including our own and put forward and execute a plan for the future. The archaeological

findings will not only study the broad issues but also provide a history and heritage of many cultures since their inception. To conserve and preserve the sites selected for the purpose of study, conservation and preservation should be carried out as part of a research work. The Role of government and non-governmental organizations for developing the heritage sites is necessary including public awareness and role of media.

7. Conclusion

Tourism and Archaeology are two different disciplines, which are intertwined and cannot be separated. Both are centred on archaeological monuments. The pragmatic goal of tourism is to increase the revenue of the state exchequer. On the other hand primary goal of Archaeology is to conserve and preserve the cultural properties for posterity and promoting educational tourism. Tamil Nadu is a state in the southernmost tip of Indian peninsular studded with innumerable monuments. Each and every monuments are important both from historical and archaeological points of view. The proper execution and exploitation of monuments in Tamil Nadu would certainly increase the revenue of the state. Under this circumstance, a pragmatic study for the optimum usage of cultural properties for the development and promotion of educational tourism has become requisite. The results of the research paper would certainly benefit to the tourism and society.

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