Tamilnadu Heritage Tourism: Challenges of Identification and Presentation

P.Nishanthi,
Research Scholar, Centre for Tourism and Hotel Management, Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai,
E-mail- pandian.nisha@gmail.com

Dr.J.Balan,
Head, Centre for Tourism and Hotel Management, Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai, E-Mail-
bjbalan@hotmail.com

Abstract

Tamil Nadu has a very rich history and several monuments from ancient time along with largest collection of heritage buildings in India. Tamil Nadu is the eleventh-largest state in India by area and the sixth-most populous. The state was ranked sixth among states in India according to the Human Development Index in 2011, with the second-largest state economy after Maharashtra.

Tamil Nadu is second largest economy in the country contributing to about 8.37% to India’s average in 2014. Tamil Nadu is the second largest state economy in India with 13,842 billion (US$210 billion) in gross domestic product. Tamil Nadu was ranked as one of the top seven developed states in India based on a "Multidimensional Development Index" in a 2013 report published by the Reserve Bank of India. Its official language is Tamil, which is one of the longest-surviving classical languages in the world.

Tamil Nadu is home to many natural resources. In addition, its people have developed and continue classical arts, classical music, and classical literature. Historic buildings and religious sites include Hindu temples of Tamil architecture, hill stations, beach resorts, multi-religious pilgrimage sites, and eight UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

There are several countries in the world which are smaller in size and population with newer history, but have more heritage sites. This is due to lack of identification and recognition. In Tamilnadu most of old monuments are in shamble condition. The citizens, administrators and policy makers are equally responsible for their pathetic condition. In Tamilnadu, cultural tourism has largest share. Most of inbound & domestic tourists are visiting Tamilnadu to see the uniqueness of culture. So it is very necessary to identify the rich cultural heritage so that they can be preserved and transferred to next generation.

Keywords: - Heritage, heritage tourism, preservation.

Introduction:

Tamil Nadu is a state in the south-eastern part of the Indian Peninsula. One of the four Dravidian states of India, it has had more than 4,000 years of continuous cultural history. Tamil Nadu has some of the most remarkable temple architecture in the country, and a living tradition of music, dance, folk arts and fine arts. Tamil Nadu is well renowned for its temple towns and heritage sites, hill stations, waterfalls, national parks, local cuisine and the fabulous wildlife and scenic beauty. The state boasts the largest tourism industry in India with an annual growth rate of 16%.

Study Area and Research Methodology:

The emphasis of study was to recognize the important of heritage properties in Tamilnadu. They are scattered throughout the Tamilnadu. The present study is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data is based on the authors visit to different places in Tamilnadu. The author, as a student and as a teacher has visited different parts of Tamilnadu several times. The secondary data is collected from the reports of government of Tamilnadu as well as articles published in newspapers and magazines etc. Tamilnadu has widely spread heritage objects. Their plight is observed by all, they get prominent places in newspapers. So, the published articles and news are also main help of this article.

Review of Literature:

N. Kreiner and N. Kliot (2000) in their article titled, “Pilgrimage Tourism in the Holy Land: The Behavioural Characteristics of Christian Pilgrims” have viewed that there is a significant
difference between pilgrims” and tourists” behaviour towards any religious site in spite of the fact that both had three common elements like discretionary income, leisure time and social sanctions. The study also highlighted certain parameters like age, socio-economic status and nationality which are very important for the purpose of studying tourists” and pilgrims” behaviour. It reveals that the persons who belonged to low social-economic group come under the category of pilgrims and those who belonged to high socio-economic group to perceive themselves as tourists. The study has concluded that although various differences are there between tourists and pilgrims, it is very difficult to present those differences.

A. Mehta and R.S. Arora2 (2000) in their article titled, “Tourism Industry in Punjab-An Appraisal of Promotional Activities” have highlighted that the share of advertisement expenditure to total management expenses has decreased. Further, published material of the tourism department is incomplete, unattractive and insufficient for foreign tourists. The study has recommended that the state government must adopt a standardized form of media for the promotion of tourism industry in Punjab.

R. Mishra (2000) in his thesis entitled “Pilgrimage Tourism - A Case Study of Brajmandal” has stated that with the increased mobility of urban class, more and more people are undertaking weekend trips. The study has also highlighted the main problems regarding poor infrastructure and facilities such as accommodation, quality food, shopping areas, public convenience, and communication and cheating and misguiding etc, faced by. The author has suggested both operational measures like restructuring tourism in accordance with laws, need for systematic approach in managing tourism development, interacting with tourists in a healthy manner and supportive role of non-governmental organizations and operative measures like strategy for tourism development, creation of a Development Board and creation for the region on the line of Vatican City to increase the tempo of pilgrimage tourism.

J.K. Sharma (2000) in his book entitled, “Tourism Planning and Development: A New Perspective” has emphasised on an integrated approach and incremental increase in the quality of service in tourism for an effective management of tourism. He has said that transportation, services, information and promotion, physical environment and tourism organizations are the basic components for planning and developing tourism in a particular region. He has made an attempted to present an alternative plan and development process which is sustainable, for tourism and also suggested for conceptualizing sustainable development the importance of forming concepts.

G.S. Batra and R.C. Dangwal (2001) in their book titled, “Tourism Promotion and Development” have viewed that India has great tourism potential due to its unique cultural and natural attractions. The potential has not been fully exploited and whatever attempt made in this direction has not met the expected”. They have further explored immense vistas in Indian tourism. H. Wilson and J. Venes (2001) in their article titled, “Factors for Success in Rural Tourism Development” have highlighted the role of rural tourism in the economic development of rural community. They have viewed that rural tourism could develop easily with active participation of local government and people. They have indicated several factors namely tourism package, good leadership, support of local government, funds, strategic planning, coordination between local people and technical assistance for tourism promotion and so on which are essential for rural tourism development. The authors have also viewed that rural tourism provides income and employment opportunities to local people in rural areas utilizing huge natural resources.

M.R. Biju (2002) in his article on “Global Tourism: The Evolutionary Process”, has viewed that the main reason behind tremendous growth of travel industry is emergence of railways, shipping, motor car and airplane. Moreover, introduction of paid holiday and mass tourism concept also have encouraged travel habits among the people. Further, due to the development of information technology, people could travel to far off places, which are almost inaccessible a few decades ago. The study has concluded that 43 the advancements made in transport and communication systems are the main reasons behind rapid growth of tourism globally.

V. Caprihan and K. Shivakumar (2002) in their article entitled, “Redefining Tourism Marketing Strategies” have observed that tourists” decisions world-wide are negatively influenced by unfavorable conditions like terrorist attacks, war, epidemics and calamities etc. It reveals that the Indian
Government has adopted various measures like subsidies, tax breaks, and shifts in marketing strategies and increased advertising to minimize negative impact of unfavorable conditions. However, India has adopted age old tourism strategies targeting only two countries U.K. and USA. The author has emphasized on the adoption of innovative and customized tourism strategies by Indian Government.

**Concept of Heritage:**

Heritage is the full range of our inherited traditions, monuments, objects, and culture. Most important, it is the range of contemporary activities, meanings, and behaviors that we draw from them. Heritage includes, but is much more than preserving, excavating, displaying, or restoring a collection of old things. It is both tangible and intangible, in the sense that ideas and memories--of songs, recipes, language, dances, and many other elements of who we are and how we identify ourselves--are as important as historical buildings and archaeological sites.

Heritage is, or should be, the subject of active public reflection, debate, and discussion. What is worth saving? What can we, or should we, forget? What memories can we enjoy, regret, or learn from? Who owns "The Past" and who is entitled to speak for past generations? Active public discussion about material and intangible heritage--of individuals, groups, communities, and nations--is a valuable facet of public life in our multicultural world.

Heritage is a contemporary activity with far-reaching effects. It can be an element of far-sighted urban and regional planning. It can be the platform for political recognition, a medium for intercultural dialogue, a means of ethical reflection, and the potential basis for local economic development. It is simultaneously local and particular, global and shared. Heritage is an essential part of the present we live in--and of the future we will build.

**There are several types of heritage:**

A. "Natural heritage" is also an important part of a society's heritage, encompassing the countryside and natural environment, including flora and fauna, scientifically known as biodiversity, as well as geological elements (including mineralogical, geomorphological, palaeontological, etc.), scientifically known as geo diversity.

B. Cultural heritage split into two groups of Tangible and Intangible heritage.
   a. Tangible; which can be seen, touched and felt, e.g.; forts, palaces, temples, sculpture etc.
   b. Intangible: This cannot be touched but can be felt, e.g. religion, mythology, rites, rituals, traditions, music & dance etc.

**World heritage movement:**

Significant was the Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage that was adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO in 1972. As of 2011, there are 936 World Heritage Sites: 725 cultural, 183 natural, and 28 mixed properties, in 153 countries. Each of these sites is considered important to the international community.

The underwater cultural heritage is protected by the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage. This convention is a legal instrument helping states parties to improve the protection of their underwater cultural heritage.

In addition, UNESCO has begun designating masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights sitting as part of the United Nations Economic and Social Council with article 15 of its Covenant had sought to instill the principles under which cultural heritage is protected as part of a basic human right.

**Heritage Properties in Tamilnadu:**

In India, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is responsible for all historical and heritage objects. It was established in 1861. It is a functionary body attached to the Department of Culture. Its main activities are: maintenance, conservation & preservation of centrally protected movements/sites and remains; conducting archaeological explorations and excavations, chemical preservation of monuments and antiquarian remains, architectural survey of monuments, development of epigraphical research; setting up and re-organization of site museums in India, development of environment at centrally protected monuments and training in archaeology. At present the ASI has declared 3598
monuments of national importance in the country which includes 23 world heritage moments and objects (India 2007). Out of which 413 ASI has declared monuments in Tamilnadu which includes 5 world heritage moments.

Properties which are inscribed on the world heritage list (5 items):

<table>
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<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Name of the Monument</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>District</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Great Living Chola Temples (Sri Brihadeswara Temple)</td>
<td>Thanjavur</td>
<td>Thanjavur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Great Living Chola Temples (Sri Brihadeswara Temple)</td>
<td>Gangaikondacholapuram</td>
<td>Ariyalur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Sri Airavateswara Temple</td>
<td>Darasuram</td>
<td>Thanjavur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Nilgiri Mountain Railway</td>
<td>Coonoor</td>
<td>Nilagiri</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Other heritage objects which are not less important but due to sheer negligence of government, lack of awareness among local citizen and lack of publicity they could not get their proper place. There are a number of such natural and cultural heritage objects. Few of them are mentioned here. (Based on the ‘Little Known Treasures’, published by D.O.T., Govt. of India).

A) Natural Heritage:-
   i) Hill stations like Coonoor, etc.
B) Cultural Heritage:-
   i) Temples Rameshwaram, Madurai, and Sri Rangam Temples of Tamilnadu.
   ii) Ram setu bridge, Rameshwaram-sent to UNESCO.

Problems of Tamilnadu Heritage Properties:

At the national level, the heritage properties, recognized by the ASI are also facing several problems which are creating danger of extinction.

1. Lack of Master Plan:

   It seems that Indian lack the concept of master plan. Except the world heritage sites other heritage sites are facing negligence of local or state administrations. They are victims of haphazard growth. In the absence of any proper planning several beautiful structures have lost their charms. As mentioned earlier, if the temples were surrounded with landscaped 130 grassed flowered parks, then their beauties might have enhanced several times, is also surrounded with unplanned houses and narrow lanes.

2. Encroachment

   Whenever and wherever visitors start to visit a place, several types of encroachment develops. These growth are very haphazard. These encroachments are done by local shopkeepers, souvenir sellers, local residents or government. These structures can be wooden – brick & stone built temporary or permanent structures which are not fit with architecture of monument or environment. They are soaring to eyes. The bazaar in and around the Meenakshi Temple (Tamil Nadu) is one example where the souvenir sellers have covered the carvings of beautiful granite pillars with their partitions, lightening and selling objects. In the front of temple, the shopkeepers have covered the monuments with sheds, tarpaulin cover etc. They have tied ropes with sculpted horses and beautiful statues.

   This case is common in Rameshwaram, Kanchipuram and several other temples of Tamilnadu. Several times such encroachments are done by local priests and their families who began to live within the precinct of temples. They expand their rooms and other structures. Similar structures of ticket house and offices are common everywhere.
The approach road to Meenakshi temple in Madurai etc. are blocked with haphazard growth. The tourists cannot take a long view of these temples. Even they cannot stand to see the marvel of architecture.

3. Irresponsible Visitors:

The heritage sites are great attractions for tourists; both, Indian and foreigners. Some of them are very popular, while several other are not so crowded. In such case the ill effects of mass tourism are evident. The biggest problem is the lack of civic sense among Indian visitors who try to inscribe their names on historical monuments. One can see the names of people on the painting, monuments (throughout the country) and natural places. Such ugly evidence of irresponsible behavior can be seen anywhere. Besides scratching, the visitors throw the packing wrappers, water bottles, cold drink packs etc. wherever they like. They seldom bother to think of the proper disposal. In few days there are several heaps of plastic bottles, canes, polythenes wrappers etc. which increases visual pollution at historical places, forts, palaces, temples, river banks, national parks & zoological gardens. It is very difficult to depute guards everywhere. There is need to educate the people. This subject should be essential part of course curricula of students so that they become responsible citizen. Then the people will feel pride to visit heritage sites. They can protect the heritage objects as real inheritor of our rich treasures.

4. Environmental Pollution

There are several types of environmental pollutions which are killing the heritage properties. These pollutions are creations of natural reasons such as sand & soil deposits, rainfall and humus formation etc. but, maximum pollutions are created by visitors and locals, who due to their apathy, negligence and lack of civic sense throw several types of biodegradable and non-biodegradable materials everywhere. The authorities also do not care proper disposal due to lack of interest, fund or priority. The main types of pollutions which are affecting the monuments are:-

i) Air Pollution –

In India industrial activities and vehicular movements are major reasons of air pollution. There are many types of pollutants such as carbon dioxide, sulphur dioxide, fly ash, lead, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides etc. which mixed with water vapor, become acid, then they are very harmful for plant and animal as well as several rocks,. The environmentalist groups with the help of Supreme Court banned emission of these polluting agents. Similar case was found near some other monuments which are located in other cities.

ii) Water Pollution –

Due to lack of stringent actions and proper implementation by Civic authorities, industrial and household affluent are directly dumped into rivers, lakes and even underground waters. Thus, several rivers which were cradle of Indian civilization e.g. the Ganges, Yamuna etc. are dying in several sections.

iii) Noise Pollution –

After crossing limits the noise is not only harmful to man and animals, it also becomes harmful for monuments, criticized by environmentalists due to its high volume of music.

iv) Land Pollution –

It includes bio & non-biodegradable materials which are thrown away by the visitors and locals. Sometimes uncivil sense also makes sad conditions, e.g. there was a vegetable market in south-east of Meenakshi Temple (Madurai) which causes heap of vegetable wastes and cow dung. The throwing of polybags, bottles, pack of eatables can be seen everywhere from interior parts of the Himalayas to Kanyakumari. Sometimes it is due to lack of civic sense of visitors, sometimes it is due to apathy of local administrators who do not provide dustbins or proper cleaning facilities.

v) Visual Pollution –

There are fixture of large hoardings along the national parks, hill stations, beautiful lakes which negates the beauty of places. Sometimes it may be so large, or so aesthetically fit that it kills all charm of background, e.g. there was a large hoarding on the south-east corner of Hussain Sagar in Hyderabad, which was larger than nearby buildings.

5. Light & Sound Shows –
The Tamilnadu Tourism Development Corporation started light and sound programmes at several places. Its main purpose was to highlight the historical glory through light and sound medium. Such programmes became very popular among the tourists wherever it was introduced. It needs feature of high voltage lightings, sounds systems. Most of the old monuments are houses of bats, birds several animals which are disturbed by intense light, high pitch sound system. The vibrations create cracks. The heat by light also harms the plaster works and colors of monuments. In brief, there are several problems which have created a danger to the monuments. Each of monuments is facing a different type of threat.

**Suggestions:**
There can be several ways to overcome the problems. Some of the suggestions are general in nature but can be applied to all heritage properties.

**Public awareness** –
There is need of general awareness among the people. Indian citizens lack self esteem, self respect and national proud of their glorious past. In 2007, there was a worldwide campaign to include some heritage sites in modern ‘seven wonders’. From India only Taj & Meenakshi Temple (Madurai) were selected, while United Kingdom tried its best to include the Stonehenge. We have better caves of that age (or thousand times better and older than Petra of Jordan, which is included in seven wonders), but due to lack of awareness very few people participated in this campaign.

The students can take a major proactive role. It should be included in their curriculum. The students are citizens of future. They should be made responsible citizens, with feeling of proud & sense of belongingness. There should be proper signage at the entry of Heritage sites. At ticket counter some brief literatures should be given so that the tourists can carry the information as souvenir to their homes.

**Law & Administration** –
It is a major issue for protection of heritage sites. Most of monuments are located in far flunged areas which are far from populated areas. In such condition, the safety of monuments and visitors is a major problem. The unscrupulous elements, snatchers and teasers are disturbing the visitors within the monument areas. Any mishappening with tourists is taken very seriously, that’s why though these states are rich in tourist’s resources, they receive very few domestic and international tourists.

**Deployment of Tourist Police** –
There are several states and destinations where tourists polices have been deployed e.g. Goa, Delhi, Varanasi, Andaman etc. These have very positive impact on tourism. It gives a feeling of Safety.

**Sell of Souvenirs** –
Tamilnadu has a large number of beautiful heritage sites with beautiful and unique sculptures which tourists would love to see, but all places donot have souvenir shops. If they are, then they lack good photographs or replica, where tourists can’t take photographs, but they do not get any booklet or photograph on rare collection. Whatever is available are old aged prints neither clear, nor coloured.

**Regular programmes on print & electronic media** –
The programmes should give knowledge about different gems of Tamilnadu heritage treasure. It will create a feeling of pride, confidence and belongingness. The citizens of India will become aware about their local and national heritage, culture and value. Then they will become guardian of heritage.

**Sponsorship from industries** –
For all above said purpose there is need of funding. Industries and corporate sector should come forward to adopt monument for maintenance and renovation of monument. This practice has been done at several places in India. But most of the industries prefer those places which are very popular. However, we cannot leave them totally on marketers otherwise they may harm conservation. The Government of Tamilnadu during Investor submit 2015 have acquired huge amount of funding for tourist Industry from Corporate world and also attracted Tourism investor summit 2016.

**Conclusion:**
Tamil Nadu is prominent heritage tourist destination for visitors to travel in India. It offers the charm of culture, history, traditions, customs, notion and life of the country that is unique. However, pollution from the indiscriminate disposal of waste, hazards, malefaction, loss of authenticity, lack of information, and lack of facilities and tourist accommodations in the state are several factors that can affect and challenge the progress of as a tourist destination. Irrespective of all the negatives Tamil Nadu as a state have its own culture and charm and it will definitely results in improving the inflow tourists.

References: