

CHETTINADU – A PROMINENT DESTINATION FOR HERITAGE TOURISM IN TAMILNADU

M. S. Raj Mohan¹ , Dr. B. Zobedha²

¹(Reg.No.P4746) Part-Time Research Scholar

Culinary Educator and Head

Department of Hotel Management & Catering Science

G.T.N. Arts College (Autonomous)

Old Karur Road, Dindigul – 625 005, Dindigul District, Tamilnadu

²Assistant Professor, Department of Hotel Management & Catering Science

Madurai Kamaraj University College, Alagarkoil Road, Madurai – 625 002.

ABSTRACT

Tourism emerged as the largest global industry of the 20th century and is projected to grow even faster in the 21st century. Indian culture is considered to be the World's oldest, richest and most diverse. Many travellers come here and been enchanted by its natural beauty, splendor, beliefs, philosophies and practices. India is a country most travellers long to see, and having seen it once, would not give up that glimpse for all the wonders of the world. This results in increase in Foreign Exchange Reserves. India has immense possibilities of growth in the tourism sector with vast natural attractions, but comparatively a small role in the world tourism scene. The new tourism policies by the Government added new facelift to Indian tourism. Heritage tourism attracts in-bound and out bound tourists largely that build new strengths and initiatives in Indian tourism development. Karaikudi, a Chettinadu region is a visiting card to Tamilnadu and become the favourite tourism destination in tourist's itinerary because of its architectural monuments, culture and traditional food. The aim of this paper is to analyze the secrets behind the attractions and efforts towards the influence of Chettinadu bungalows and food in Tamilnadu Heritage tourism promotion.

Keywords: Heritage Tourism, Karaikudi, Tourists, Tourism Promotion, Chettinadu Region, Chettinadu Cuisine & Bungalows

OVERVIEW OF INDIAN TOURISM

Tourism is a major industry throughout the world today (Helen Woodruffe, 2000). India has emerged as the fastest growing market in Asia in terms of international tourist spending. Our National Tourism policy of 1982 envisages new initiatives towards making tourism the catalyst in employment generation, environmental re-generation, development of remote areas and development of women and other disadvantaged groups in the country, besides promoting social integration therefore, the tourism sector is vital to our economy. It leads to larger foreign exchange earnings and create conditions for more Foreign Direct Investment.

The Ministry of Tourism envisages a target of 12% growth rate in inbound as well as domestic tourist for the 12th Five year plan period. It is projected that with this growth rate, the sector will generate 2.5 crore additional jobs.

Heritage Tourism is another important milestone in Indian Tourism in respect of protecting Indian monuments and brings out our admirable histories to the generations. **The Government of India,**

of late, has realized what the rural India can offer to the World (The Financial Express 1, 2011). Generally such heritage spots are located in rural background areas thus very helpful for the development and increase the employment opportunities in rural folks. The Tenth plan has identified tourism as one of the major sources for generating employment and promoting sustainable livelihood of people (The Financial Express 1, 2011).

KARAIKUDI – A FAVOURITE TOURIST’S DESTINATION

Karaikudi, a developing urban centre in the backward Sivaganga district in Tamil Nadu, is emerging as a tourist hub in the efforts towards promotion of heritage tourism in the state. Karaikudi’s contribution is vital in total State Tourism promotion and added new spheres to heritage and rural tourism development in the state. Karaikudi situated in the midst of the old Chettinadu region dominated by ‘Nagarathas’, also known as Chettiars, the town has around number of places of heritage interest nurtured by the community in their days of glory.

Government of India has identified 31 villages across the country as tourist spots (The Financial Express 1, 2011). Karaikudi is also one among the other 31 villages identified by the Government of India as tourist spots.

With a royal past, this traditionally prosperous banking community of Nattukottai Chettiars of Karaikudi/Tamil Nadu / India is known for their flamboyant bungalows and mouth – watering cuisine. A visit to this land of hospitality could be best experienced if you check into the private homes turned hotels of the Karaikudi Chettiars. Savour aromatic chettinad curries, lip smacking snacks, intricate wood carvings, chettinadu cotton sarees and jewellery in the comforts of their colonial inspired bungalows enhanced with Burma teaks pillars, stained glass works speaks volumes of Tamil Nadu’s Karaikudi chettaiars’ grand past. (<http://www.fulcrum.in/Karaikudi.htm>)²

I. OBJECTIVES

- To throw light on Chettinadu region glories
- To make understand how and why the Chettindau regions pillaring the State Tourism development
- To find out and give suggestions to concerned officials, the areas to be taken in consideration
- To give awareness as Karaikudi, a prominent Heritage Tourism destination of Tamil Nadu
- To understand the level of foreign tourists visitation in Heritage spots
- To know State Tourism department initiatives in Heritage Tourism promotion
- To know and create awareness on splendor of Chettinadu Cuisine and Mansions

CHETTINADU BUNGALOWS AND ART

Over the passage of time, Karaikudi has emerged as a heaven for antique stuff of the region and an antique enthusiast would find them very interesting and appealing. Presently most of the Chettinadu Mansions at Kanadukathan have been turned into a heritage resort with air-conditioned

double rooms. Each room provided with all facilities befitting the cherished lifestyle and furnished with original handpicked Chettinadu pieces.

The palatial mansions, arts and crafts embellishing their homes reflect a conglomeration of architecture and building styles. Places like Pallathur, Kothamangalam, Devakottai and even Karaikudi stand testimony to more such lavish houses. Chettinadu Mansion in Kanadukathan is very unique for its sheer size and features, typical of a bygone era of a gracious living. The Burma teak motif, marble, handmade tiles, stained glass windows, elaborate chandeliers and intricate carpentry are ingredients of the Manisons. The high ceilings, the inner courtyards built with classically and beautifully carved granite or teakwood pillars where the family ceremonies were performed are sure sights for enjoyment. The architecture of a typical home is a statement of living in harmony with nature and replica of joint family system in those days. The arts and crafts are the artifacts which embellish in their homes and temples would be interest more. The Chettinadu Baskets especially carry intricate patterns as fine as embroidery made with the help of date – palm leaves. Other items of interest include the handloom sarees, silver wares, brass vessels, wood carvings and the tiles from Athangudi.

CHETTINADU CUISINE

Another identity and attraction of Chettinadu region is its traditional food, the secrets behind the taste of preparations are still wanted one in the culinary world. High defined use and blend of spices and homely divine taste are the unique reasons, the Chettinadu Cuisine still remaining remarkable position in tourist heart. The Chettinadu people are very much renowned for the hospitality attitude that also another reason for adding the taste to this cuisine. The Chettinadu style food is equally famous for its varied spicy varieties, vegetarian and non – vegetarian delicacies. The snack items are delicious and colorful. Items like Ukkarai, Kandarappam, Karuppati Paniyaram, Kavanarisi, Pal Paniyaram, Kummayam, Thenkuzhal and Seepu Seedai are but a few that leave lasting taste for food lovers.

TOURIST VISITATIONS

The rich cultural heritage of the state is one of the important tourists' attractions. The State Government has already declared 49 places in Tamil Nadu as Heritage Places. The tourists, particularly the foreigners have special liking for Tamil Nadu because of its art, culture, architecture, traditional crafts, cuisine etc. and said things are abundantly available in Chettinadu region of Tamil Nadu.

By the advent of technologies, nowadays promotions can make easy and tourist were familiar and aware of the tourism destinations in India. In respect of popularization of Indian heritages, culture, architecture and traditional food, the reputation of Heritage tourism flutters high. Heritage Tourism is commonly known as rural tourism among foreign tourist mainly the tourist interested to enjoy home away from home atmosphere. Foreign tourist chooses India because of the economical aspect and also the age and relationship between the tourists are another prime in choosing heritage tourism in their itinerary. Dance, fine arts, architecture, traditional food, agriculture and Handicrafts are the main perspective of the tourist when they thought about heritage tourism.

Most of the foreign tourist came to know about the rural or heritage tourism destination Karaikudi through internet, tour planners, friends and relatives. Glossy attractions of the chettinadu region make the foreign tourist to include heritage tourism destinations in their itinerary.

STATE INITIATIVES IN HERITAGE TOURISM PROMOTION

The Chettinadu region still suffers from an economic backwardness. The cinema industry tried to shoot films in the mansions but could not sustain for long as the owners preferred to preserve them. To promote the region, the State Government has taken the initiative to harness the rich potential for tourism, combining the heritage and pilgrimage and developing karaikudi at the centre as it is located equidistant from Tiruchi, Madurai and Tanjavur.

The District administration has taken a positive interest in promotional activities. More houses are getting converted as ‘Bed and Breakfast’ boarding facilities to attract more foreign tourists. The Chettinadu Bungalow at Karaikudi town is noteworthy, among them. The State administration organize continuous ‘Chettinadu Festival’ including cultural dance such as Karagattam, Mayilattam and more to create awareness through interested sources. In the private sector, many hotels and restaurants have started emerging. The Tamil Nadu Tourism development Corporation has taken the initiative to market the Chettinadu heritage abroad through participation in International conferences on Tourism. **Public Private Partnership (PPP)** introduced by the **Tamil Nadu Tourism Development (TTDC)** is a joint venture initiative with any like minded private agencies for developing and marketing the State Tourism. Under the PPP model, the TTDC enhance the infrastructure facilities with Industry, various tourism promotion activities and a major corridor for new projects set up.

“**Vision of Tamil Nadu – 2023**” the document released by the Honorable Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu on 22.3.2012 and it is mentioned that the estimated total investment in various projects relating to tourism infrastructure amounts to Rs.10000 crore and it is expected that the foreign tourist inflow would be 1.5 crore by 2023.

II. SUGGESTIONS

- At present most of Chettinadu bungalows remain deserted inorder to revive and preserve the heritage colour the concerned authorities would release such houses for exhibition and best could converted as tourist stay.
- Hotel facilities, transportation facilities, rest room and food were considered to be important for Heritage Tourism destination.
- It is recommended to the officials of tourism department to enhance tidiness and cleanness of the heritage spots, also to train the tourist guide properly in order to provide authentic hospitality experience to tourist.
- It is suggested to the officials of tourism department to include Karaikudi as heritage tourism in the itinerary of inbound tourist
- It is suggested to promote Food Tourism in the Chettinadu region
- It is suggested to celebrate the Tourism Day in Schools and Colleges, atleast in Heritage rich destinations.

- It is suggested to provide adequate information centres in tourist populated areas and seasons

III. CONCLUSION

“Old is Gold” is a say, Heritages are eyes of one nation especially heritage filled country like India which speak out our pride and fame to our generations. India’s heart lives in its villages and most of our heritage spots are located in rural areas. Developing and promoting heritage tourism destination will definitely fetch foreign exchange and thereby improve the economy of a developing country like India and helps for sustainable livelihood of rural people. There is a significant scope for Karaikudi as a successful heritage tourism destination because of its architecture, culture and traditional cuisine. Chettinadu Bungalows and Cuisine is the longstanding ambassador to height the pride of Karaikudi region. This paper depicts the heritage tourism promotion, suggestions based on tourist anticipation, Government initiations on development and then conservation of antique. Satisfied inbound tourists may disseminate positive word of mouth about Karaikudi and act as an unpaid brand ambassador.

IV. REFERENCES

- [1] A Study on the Attitude of Foreign Tourists Visiting India about “Rural Tourism” with reference to Karaikudi/ Tamil Nadu – R.Renganathan and A.Sabari Samundeeswari
- [2] Woodside, A and Lysonki. S (1989), ‘A general model of traveler destination choice’, Journal of Travel Research, 27, 8-14.
- [3] Tourism and Culture department – Tourism Policy Note 2013 – 2013
- [4] The Traditional Reflection, Tourism in Sivagangai District, District Collector, Sivagangai District, 2008.

WEBSITES

- [1] <http://www.financialexpress.com/news/rural-tourism-its-a-niche-that-india-can-offer/112913/0> (The Financial Express,9 Nov 2011)1
- [2] <http://www.fulcrum.in/karaikudi.htm2>
- [3] www.districtsivaganga.com
- [4] <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chettinad>
- [5] http://www.shanlaxpublications.com/wp-content/uploads/COM_V7_N3_013.pdf
- [6] <https://acadpubl.eu/jsi/2018-119-7/articles/7c/65.pdf>
- [7] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334811075_HERITAGE_TOURISM_AROUND_KARAIKUDI_A_STUDY
- [8] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334811075_HERITAGE_TOURISM_AROUND_KARAIKUDI_A_STUDY
- [9] https://www.ijhss.com/files/E_m8u9067e.-Iniyan.pdf
- [10] www.tourism.gov.in; www.incredibleindia.org3
- [11] <http://www.europeanjournalofsocialsciences.com>

[12] www.thehindu.com/theheritageofchettinadu