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THE FACETS OF CULTURAL TOURISM IN KERALA AND TAMIL NADU

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Kerala Tourism is a global super brand and regarded as one of the destinations with the highest brand recall. Cultural tourism helps a great deal in recapturing the values of Kerala Culture by a subtle process of (as K.M. Munshi puts it) re-interpretation, re-integration and adaptation. The state’s tourism agenda promotes ecologically sustained tourism, which focuses on the local culture, wilderness adventures, volunteering enterprises, and personal growth of the local population. Efforts are taken to minimize the adverse effects of traditional tourism on the natural environment, and enhance the cultural integrity of local people.

By 1986, tourism had gained an industry status in Kerala. Named as one of the ten paradises of the world by the National Geographic Traveler, Kerala is famous especially for its ecotourism initiatives, its unique culture and traditions, coupled with its varied demography, that has made the State one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world. Growing at a rate of 13.31 %, the tourism industry is a major contributor to the state’s economy. Aggressive marketing campaign launched by the Kerala Tourism Development Corporation - the government agency that oversees tourism prospects of the state – laid the foundation for the growth of tourism industry. The tagline God’s Own Country is adopted in its tourism promotions and became synonymous with the state.

Kerala’s culture is mainly Dravidian in origin, deriving from a greater Tamil – heritage region known as Tamilakam. Later Kerala’s culture was elaborated on through centuries of contact with overseas cultures. Native performing arts are star tourism attractions; which include Koodiyattom, Kathakali and its offshoot Kerala Natanam, Koothu, Mohiniattom, Thullal, Padayani and Theyyam. Other arts are more religion – and tribal – themed and showcased adeptly towards attracting, cultural tourists. These include Chavittu Nadakam, Oppana (Originally from Malabar), which combines dance, rhythmic hand clapping, and ishal vocalizations.

Lawrence Lopez (1988) has proposed an interesting observation on Kerala. “Kerala is a state of paradox, the co-existence of low rate of progress on one hand with
rather high level of social and cultural development on the other”. The model of development adopted in Kerala has become a subject of serious study by the economists all over the world. Lopez has given due credit to the activities of cultural associations of Kerala, for their achievements that helped the state take huge strides towards progress. He is hopeful that the dawn would break the clouds and a new Kerala would emerge through balanced social, economic and cultural development.

K.V. Surendranath (1987) in his preface to the book Kerala Kala Gramam notes that “Kerala had a ‘farm culture’ that nurtured and nourished rural art and heritage. With the depreciation of agricultural lands and practices, we almost lost them.” It is quite interesting to observe that ‘tourism culture’ has replaced the ‘farm culture’ in many destinations of Kerala, for eg:- Waynad. Research works on Home-stay tourism in Wayanad and the increase in resorts at the destination confirm the observations.

Several ancient ritualized arts are Keralite in origin and has been lauded by cultural tourists from across the globe. These include Kalaripayattu, Theyyam, Poorakkali and Kuthiyottam. Kuthiyottam is a ritualistic symbolic representation of human bali (homicide). Folklore exponents see this art form, with enchanting well structured choreography and songs, as one among the rare Adi Dravida folklore traditions still preserved and practised in Central Kerala in accordance with the true tradition and environment. Typical to the Adi Dravida folk dances and songs, the movements and formations of dancers choreographed in Kuthiyottam are quick, peaks at a particular point and ends abruptly. The traditional songs also start in a stylish slow pace, then gain momentum and ends abruptly. Kuthiyotta Kalaris run by Kuthiyotta Asans (teachers or leaders), train the group to perform the dances and songs. In renowned cultural institutions of Kerala, tourists both domestic and tourists falling in the long-term category (i.e. more than a month), or residential tourist category learn, participate and perform, the art forms out of sheer interest. They invest precious time in comprehensively understanding and studying with zeal, the complex art forms. Shows performed by foreigners that depict Kalaripayattu, Kathakali, Mohiniyattom, Koodiyattom, Ottamthullal etc., have become common in the state and abroad.

Kerala is well known for its carvings, especially those done on rosewood and sandal wood. Snake boats are hugely famous for boat races. Tourists are charmed with the offerings of the state like granite idols, coirs, pillars, silk sarees and coconut shell
articles. Elephant pageants and other grandeur festivals are indicative of the richness of Kerala’s cultural heritage. Ayurveda, the millenia old ancient form of treatment is inextricably related to Kerala’s culture. Tourists who arrive in Kerala show a continuing faith in this ancient system of healing. The curative properties of Ayurveda are so well appreciated that Ayurveda tourism as a sub-set of cultural tourism has gained wide coinage and acceptance.

In respect of Fine Arts, the state has an abounding tradition of both ancient and contemporary art and artists. The traditional Kerala murals are found in ancient temples churches and places across the state. These paintings, mostly dating back between the 9th to 12th centuries AD, display a distinct style and a colour code which is predominantly ochre and green. Recognising the potential of tourism in the diversity of religious faiths, related festivals and structures, the tourism department launched a pilgrimage tourism project. The prominent places include Guruvayur, Malayatoor, Synagogue (Jewish), St. Mary’s Forane Church at Kurvilangad built in 105 AD, Attukal Pongala and Chettikulangara Bharani. Pooram is an annual temple festival held in central Kerala after the summer harvest. The most famous of all Poorams is the Thrissur Pooram attended by large number of Cultural tourists. Some other well known pooram festivals are Arattupuzha-Peruvam Pooram, Nenmara Vallangi Vela, Uthralikavu Pooram and Chinakkathoor Pooram.

The initiatives in the sphere of Kerala tourism has won for the state great accolades and distinctions. Thenmala Ecotourism Project is recognized as the first planned ecotourism project of the country. Kumbalanghi rural tourism project is also distinguished as the first rural tourism project with immense potential. Kerala is regularly voted by premier travel magazines and websites within the country and abroad including Conde Nast Traveler, Outlook Traveler, National Geographic Magazine, etc., The state has repeatedly won coveted global awards including the PATA award. Keeping in view the state’s potential for adventure tourism, an Adventure Tourism Project has been established under the aegis of the Tourism Department. Kerala Tourism is noted for its innovative and market focused ad campaigns. Catchy slogans and innovative designs are considered a trademark of brand Kerala Tourism. Celebrity promotions are also used to attract more tourists to the state. The Kerala tourism website is widely visited, and has been the recipient of many awards.
Kerala Tourism stresses on the promotion of local art forms and culture. Kumarakom in central Kerala has a rich cultural heritage with many art forms and cultural troupes. A professional Sinkari Melam Group of Children and Women was formed under the banner of responsible tourism and it became the first such cultural group in Kerala. Yet another cultural group formed is the Suvarna Cultural Group. Performance of these groups are organized in hotels and other places to enrich the experience of tourists. The people of Kumarakom celebrate several fairs and festivals, some of which are of regional and local importance. These events form part of their social life and reflect their cultural identity to the amusement of tourists. The colour and splendor with which these festivals are celebrated is a source of great amazement and attraction. Tourists interested in experiencing local culture are also usually interested in enjoying local ethnic cuisine. The Responsible Tourism (RT) initiative documents all items pertaining to cultural tourism. Another similar initiative is “Journey to the Soul of Nature” at Karimkutty, Kottathara Grama Panchayat. This package offers the royal culture of Kuricians, the warriors of Pazhassi Raja.

The cultural tourism programme, ‘A day with the masters’ which was introduced by the Kerala Kalamandalam Deemed Cultural University is becoming increasingly popular among the foreign tourists, especially among the teachers and students, year after year. Under the package, tourists are taken to various Kalaries (Class rooms), Koothambalam and the art gallery. They are allowed to witness the classes in progress and they can interact with the teachers and the students. Tourists are provided with Kerala traditional meals during their day-long stay at Kalamandalam. Kalamandalam has introduced the programme as part of its cultural tourism promotion activities (Lonely Planet).

Tourism in Kerala is an effective instrument for generating employment, earning foreign exchange, enhancing environment, preserving cultural edifices and thereby facilitating the overall development of the locale (Tapan K Panda, 2007). Tourism has played a major role in reviving and protecting culture in the state. Many a traditional art form would have fast disappeared form the scene, but for the patronage of tourists and tourism agencies. It is also encouraging to note that more young people are rediscovering their heritage and culture due to the efforts of tourism. Annual events like Tourism Week celebrations, festivals and regular programmes in tourist resorts and
hotels also sustain many cultural forms. Many traditional buildings, which are either neglected or discarded, are being rediscovered and put to alternate use thanks to the growth of tourism and the interest foreigners are showing in these products. Handicrafts industry and antique markets in Kerala are also active due to tourism. While almost all the host communities are effected by tourism in one way or the other, there is a general fear, often not unfounded, that tourism can adversely affect the cultural fabric of the host community. Kerala tourism is highly concerned about this aspect and in fact there are a large number of groups within Kerala that are highly concerned about the impact of tourism on culture and keeping a watchful eye on tourism development. Art forms, especially traditional art forms, are not meant to be commercial. They are collective expression of a society, its reflection on the day-today lives of the people and a social form of communication. The greatest fear of purists is that many of the art forms developed and preserved by the people of Kerala due to their sheer love and affection for that art or craft are being turned into gross commercialization. To quote an example, Kathakali, the well known stylized dance drama of Kerala, requires 14 to 16 years of rigorous training to become a Kathakali artist. It requires a whole night to present a Kathakali play. But today people are interested only in understanding the basics of Kathakali and perform in front of foreign tourists for 15 to 30 minutes for making more money (V.C. Pandey, 2004)

Similarly artisans in large numbers started reproducing copies of same artifacts mechanically and are loosing their artistic talents. Another area, which traditionally well patronized in the state is “ayurveda” the Indian system of medicine. Oil massage using ayurvedic herbs have become extremely popular among foreign tourists in Kerala today. Along with that, complaints of misuse of the name of ayurveda for nefarious activities have also come up in the state. The State Government has introduced approval systems for ayurveda centres to overcome this. A distinctive element of Kerala’s tourism policy is that while in the West homestays and house boats might be classified as forms of ‘alternative tourism’, in Kerala they are very much ‘mainstream’. Homestays aim to attract alternative tourists, both international and domestic, who wish to learn about the lives of their hosts and Kerala culture. Tourism in Wayanad district of Kerala is promoted without eroding the cultural base of local people and protecting the natural environment (Equations, 2002). Thus, the fear that increasing tourism will lead directly to cultural erosion are, in theory misplaced in the case of homestays, because here, the visitor has
to adapt. It is excellent for tourists who are genuinely interested in Kerala Culture and lifestyles. At the moment, demand for higher quality homstays comes predominantly from Indian middle class tourists, especially those from other parts of India keen to learn about Kerala Culture (Peter and Marina 2008).

C.K. Kareem (1971) glorifies certain aspects of Kerala Culture which befittingly finds a place as primordial elements of the state’s cultural tourism. He states that Kerala has fostered a variety of art forms that have enriched the cultural heritage of India. Music has always had a very high place in Kerala, as it has accompanied the worship in the temples. Kerala’s old temples are valuable specimens of architectural splendor. Several temples and palaces of Kerala are the treasure houses of innumerable great murals that approach the grandeur of the Ajanta Frescoes. The murals found in a cave-shrine in Thirunandikkara and the Nataraja mural painting of Ettumanur are classic creations that attract tourists.

“The elements of Kavu tradition of Kerala like festivals, processions and carnivals have become part of Malayali culture (K.N. Ganesh, 2002).” And these manifestations spearhead the cultural attributes of the state. There exist a strong bond between tourism and festivals and that is culture. The festivals are originated from history, culture and society. Culture is the manifestation of the mind and life of a society at a point in time and recorded in history. All the facets of culture like art, music, dance, theatre, festivals, rites, rituals, and fairs that claim to be in a higher pedestal are defined as cultural symbols. “Kerala encourages cultural tourism mainly because it is more sustainable, responsible, intellectual and brand building” (S.V. Sudhir, 2000).

Four well-conceived remarks made by A. Sreedhara Menon (1996) in his book Cultural Heritage of Kerala sounds very appropriate in the scenario of Kerala's cultural tourism development.

a. “In more modern times, the Keralites have migrated in large numbers in search of employment to several foreign countries in South East Asia as well as to several countries of Africa and West Asia, particularly the oil rich Gulf Kingdoms”. The revolution of ICT has lead to the exodus of Keralites to US, Europe, Canada, and Australia lured by better pasteurs. East Asian countries are also preferred destinations. There are huge immigrant malayali communities in these foreign
lands. The OCI’s (Overseas Citizens of India) and PIO’s (People of Indian Origin) evince interest to see and enjoy the culture and heritage of their motherland. This ethnic market is very important for Kerala Tourism.

b. “In the field of general cultural development, Kerala has been influenced by the rest of India and foreign countries too, but it has not failed to retain its individuality.” Thus Kerala has succeeded in making a signature impression in the foreign tourist generating markets. Tour operators from abroad find it extremely difficult to find an alternative destination to Kerala—neither inside India nor abroad.

c. “The fact that several young men and women who go abroad or to other parts of India in search of employment return home with progressive ideas and a wider outlook on men and things has also tended to produce a new generation of Keralites free from the inhibiting influence of obsolete feudal customs and caste taboos.” It is a definitive cultural impact as it is said that on returning home after seeing the sights of other countries, one may see one’s country through a new vision. The modern outlook imbibed by Keralites post foreign tours have supplemented the process of cultural enrichment.

d. “The integrative and assimilative tradition of Kerala culture is seen to be strong and active in almost all fields of life and activity in Kerala – religious, artistic, social, economic, and political. The message of harmony and reconciliation which is the core of the cultural heritage of Kerala finds a ready echo in the hearts of all those who have an abiding interest in the unity of the country.” Thus, Kerala is truly the microcosm of the Indian macrocosm. By showcasing the core aspects of Kerala culture through tourism, tourists can achieve better understanding and cultural appreciation which would help to break down barriers, reduce suspicion and facilitate mutual respect and friendship.

4.2 CULTURAL RESPONSIBILITY AND TOURISM IN KERALA

James A Rubin in an American view of India’s performing Arts records that, “It has often struck me that the arts of India are very much underpublicized from the tourism standpoint.” Tourists are deeply impressed by the spectacular arts of Kerala according to James A Rubin who states “Once deeply impressed, cultural tourists constitute the major source of expanding interest.”
In his preface to the book, essays on the cultural formation of Kerala, P.J. Cherian (1999) notes that “The definition of culture and the identification of cultural categories need not be specific. These must remain somewhat vague and diffuse. When ‘cultural’ is reduced to the position of the obvious and further reduced to a configuration of stock icons, critical discourse is the casualty. In the present consumer capitalist ethos the term ‘culture’ suggests icons that represent uncritical perception and the latent will of the establishment. To bypass the popularly accepted terminology, would be to expose one to the risk of incomprehension. The transactions of culture today, are promotional in nature- sometimes aggressively so. The multi-colour brochure is the new cultural paradigm that brings together a host of other items. The package, obviously, is an imagined neo-colonialist shopping list. “Strong” opinions, debates and the ever-continuing and necessarily futile efforts at definition have been banished from the terrain of culture. Cultural critique has been orphaned by a skillful coup of its orientation and terms of reference. This seems to be the frightening aspect of cultural imperialism promoted by the capitalist market economy and globalization.” He laments that the modern Malayali has been progressively deprived of his capacity for philosophic theorizing and the terms of culture are secreted by commercial transactions and deeply entrenched by the mass media. He also asserts that the media must be identified as the most powerful single instrument that has successfully suppressed the recognition of genuine social impulses of cultural formation. The problem of commodification of culture not only by media but also through excessive commercialization of cultural tourism practices in Kerala will result in unwarranted cultural degradation and dilution of its ethos.

“The impacts of culture can be both positive – through fostering an exchange of cultures and cultural enhancement, or negative through commodification of culture, deterioration in traditional systems and loss of culture. The nature of tourism is that it gives the tourist the opportunity to be transported into an alien socio-cultural ambience and a chance to appreciate the unique cultural, traditional lifestyles and tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the region. The WTO Global code of Ethics has recognized that cultural resources used by tourists belong to the entire mankind, but that community in whose territories they are situated have particular rights and obligations, that governments and industry must endeavour to protect and preserve tangible heritage, and that tourism must allow cultures to flourish rather than get standardized and die out” (Equations, 2002). Kerala plays a pro-active role in cultural exchange
programme and cultural tourism promotion. The annual film festival IFFK (International Film Festival of Kerala) attracts film connoisseurs and film makers from various countries. Cultural centres like the Russian Cultural Centre located in the capital city of Thiruvananthapuram organizes splendid programmes, seminars and entertainment shows.

“Culture is an experience, not a product. Local culture comprises more than just costumes and dancing. It includes food architectural style, language, local arts and handicrafts and all else that constitutes a way of life” (Equations, 2002). The cultural tourism ideals of Kerala emphasizes the stability of these cultural symbols as many writers have pointed out, yet it is observed that these are some serious short comings in the way of cultural tourism promotion in the state. The major one being commodification. Side by side, there exists negative cultural impacts like drugs and prostitution. The Responsibility Tourism initiatives offset the destructive negative effects of tourism on culture.

Cultural tourism in Kerala provides an opportunity to revive dying arts, crafts and art forms but it also runs the risk of infusing commercialization, standardization, adaptation of tourist demands and monotony into such aspects of local culture. When the artist becomes the artisan, something is wrong in the way culture and tourism interact. Kerala tourism must provide an opportunity to instill pride within communities on the richness and diversity of their culture and it must never become a medium to exhibit or showcase culture. This calls for sensitivity in what tourism promotes, how tourists behave and how the destination is portrayed. Tourism, if promoted sensitivity, Kerala can also help bring back old world charms of community cultural activities.

Cultural tourism is the new growth area globally and Kerala is well positioned to capitalize on this trend. Tourists today look for authentic experiences that help them understand the culture and lifestyles of different nations. This is a great thing, even in foreign policy terms, as it enhances global understanding. So instead of trying to be like other tourist destinations, Kerala should look at highlighting what makes it different. (Jenn Shipley, former Prime Minister of New Zealand).

“A mosaic of varied cultures, Kerala is a storehouse of myriad forms of folklore which represent a repository of the various social products through different stages of
history. That all the classical dance-dramas and theatre forms which burgeoned here over the centuries have drawn substantially from them can be disputed by none. These ritual-oriented ones have been eloquent expressions of the dialogue between man and nature. There is a noticeable decline in the zeal for revival of the classical forms” (George S. Paul, 1990). The efforts pioneered by the cultural tourism managers both in the public and private sectors, focusing mainly at resuscitating most of them in a moribund state, assume relevance when viewed against this backdrop.

“Kerala is a treasure house of outstanding intellectual wealth and wisdom. It is a sad fact that we have lost precious know-how with the passage of time. However in the whole country, Kerala is one state which retains at least some manifests of art due to the vibrant cultural spirit of its people” (V.M. Kuttikrishna Menon, 1957). This holds good even in the second decade of the 21st Century and the dynamics of cultural tourism can only invigorate the zeal and enthusiasm of the people’s outlook towards indigenous cultural assets. In spite of several reforms and radical changes in the societal structure, Kerala still remains a museum of cultures” (K.V. Krishna Ayyar, 1996). The high literacy level and the modern outlook of the people combined with exemplary political temperament have helped the cultural renaissance in many ways.

“Kerala has had a liberal outlook in the sphere of art and culture. The art forms which were screened religiously inside the temples and other prescribed venues are now presented in appropriate places” (N.P. Vijayakrishnan, 2000). This aspect is quite encouraging for the development of cultural tourism in the state. The vast and profound contributions of Kerala to Indian culture is laudable. Kerala has made its notable contributions in the field of painting, architecture music, theatre, sculpture, and handicrafts. Kerala has its own festivals and festivities which invest the State with a unique atmosphere of gaiety and charm. The temple at Oachira, dedicated to Parabrahmam is the venue of the Oachirakali. Among the temple poorams Thrissur Pooram is the most famous consisting of processions of richly caparisoned elephants from all neighbouring temples. The people of Kerala have given special attention to the development of physical culture and martial art forms from very early days. Apart from Kalaripayattu, the Parisakali of the Mappilas of North Kerala and Velakali of South Kerala are great cultural attractions. Kerala has a folklore which is unique in its richness and variety. Innumerable are the traditions which are current in Kerala. Each temple in
Kerala has a Sthalapurana on its origin which throws light on some aspect or other of early Kerala culture. The state has its own folk tales which deal with certain interesting personalities and their lives (A Sreedhara Menon, 1998). This signifies the firm base of the rich Kerala culture and its multi faceted strongholds. The secret of the vitality of Kerala culture, as of Indian culture, lies in its catholicity and versatility. The history of the growth of Kerala culture according to A Sreedhara Menon (1987) is one of racial fusion, social assimilation and cultural synthesis. “Unity in Diversity” is the hallmark of Kerala culture as of Indian culture in general. This is evident in all fields of cultural expressions such as art and architecture, religion and philosophy, and language and literature. This also serves as the hallmark of cultural tourism promotion of Kerala.

The indigenous aspects of Kerala culture practised by the tribal communities remain untapped as regards cultural tourism. The devotional songs, ritual songs, lullabies, unique musical instruments like Charal Mattalam, ritual dances like Matattom, Selambadi Kali, Kanniyyattam etc. have all the charm to captivate cultural tourists. Seelia Thomas (2004) states that exposure to outside culture could hamper the traditional aspects of tribal culture. This confirms the fact that a very sensitive and balanced approach is utmost essential in the promotion of cultural tourism involving tribals or in tribal regions as the authenticity of tribal traditions ring the risk of being lost for ever. “Thottam Pattukal’ dots the first place and is extremely popular among cultural tourists to Kerala as a great ritual song. In this, Theyyam-Thira songs have special significance” (M.V. Vishnu Namboothiri, 1999)

As N. AjithKumar (2005) asserts, the folklore of Kerala is intertwined with nature and its manifestations. The folksongs while glorifying the mystique of Kerala’s enchanting forests and rivers and its calming attributes, despise illegal and immoral activities that cause irreversible negative impacts on the environment. The cultural components as one understand for the benefit of cultural tourism management is very sensitively linked to natural creations. This is especially beneficial to sustainable development – one of the primary goals of tourism.

“Improvisation”, holds the key in the presentation of folk dramas of Kerala. Audience participation is the hallmark of folk art culture in the state since its introduction (A.K. Nambiar, 1989). Interaction with audience has great advantages. In Theyyam, for instance, the performer representing god or goddess approaches the spectators in
appealing costumes and bless them with all earnestness. Performances used to take place in agricultural lands, open grounds, premises of houses or even in the village streets. ‘Identification’ is what happens during folk art performances, and it is to the credit of the state that the themes of folk art forms are very simple and catchy.

“In Malabar region a form of fertility play called Kothamuriyattom is still prevalent”, according to M.D. Raghavan. A.K. Nambiar (1989) has underscored the importance of ritual arts in the cultural development of the state. His work analyses the role of superstitions that were instrumental in the perpetuation and acceptance of ritual art forms. The need of the hour is to preserve these folk art forms through cultural tourism in the perspective of the cultural transformation and its impact on the social life of Kerala.

Kerala is the land of Kathakali for foreign tourists. The creative synchronization of music, gracious dance movements and songs are truly a remarkable experience for the viewers. The literary form of kathakali is Attakatha, which is written to suit the dramatic flavour of the dance. Owing to the untiring efforts of Mahakavi Vallathol and Mukunda Raja, the great cultural institution that patronized Kathakali was set up in 1930. The role played by many amateur Kathakali clubs is very significant for the sustenance of the great dance form of Kerala (Panayur C. Sankaran Kutty, 2004). Cultural tourism has to have a niche position in the promotional aspects of Kerala tourism that could do a world of good to classic art forms of the state like Kathakali. Kathakali is conceived by Marthanda Varma Elaiya Raja as “The poetry of words translated into the poetry of movement”.

Koodiyattom is a classic art rooted in tradition. Kathakali, too, did not arrive out of the blue. These art forms underwent lot of observations and experimentations before gaining its identity. It is said that the classical art tradition derived from Natyasastra assimilated with the finer aspects of folk arts to shape Kathakali. Great art forms of Kerala namely Kathakali and Theyyam stand out for its secular mould (Sasidharan Clary, 2004).

Mohiniyattom has got immense possibilities for attracting cultural tourists. Kerala Kalamandalam promotes this classical dance form (N.P.Vijayakrishnan, 2006). “The Thillana” and “Saptam” elements of Mohiniyattom considered to have perished some years ago have been brought back to Mohiniyattom through blessings of connoisseurs
and due patronization” (Kalamandalam Kalyanikutty Amma, 1989). This validates that by giving proper attention and motivation the subtle and striking cultural elements could be brought to fore. The efforts of cultural tourism developers should be in that direction.

G. Venu (1990) states that “the arts of the rural folk of Kerala express the dreams, hopes, joys, griefs, beliefs and aspirations of that folk in easily intelligible but amazingly attractive forms”. They also carry the traditions that originated in the primordial past to the living present. Their distinguishing features are spontaneity and vigour. They have been making their journey through centuries, carrying with them the rhythms of the ages in which they sprang as well as the imprints of the social environments in which they took their shapes and structures. Naturally their relevance is perennial. To preserve them is as necessary as to preserve our environment to ensure the balance and harmony of nature. They are to be lovingly cherished and kept alive, since they possess the power to uplift the soul of man caught in the cobweb of quotidian interests and pursuits. The source of this power is in their perfect attunement to nature. They embody the beauties of nature and the varying and never-ceasing dynamics of the seasons. Genuine cultural tourists to Kerala as evident from the functioning of centres of learning and cultural organizations catalyses the preservation efforts as regards rural folk art and classical arts. “Kerala can justly be proud of its rich theatrical tradition, of the volume, and variety of its performing arts” (G. Venu). This serves as a great opportunity for cultural tourism stake holders of the state, as in every nook and corner of God’s Own Country one can find multitude of folk forms, all of them intimately related to the sense of beauty of the common people, realities of social life and rites and customs of the communities. Side by side with these simple art forms there are also highly sophisticated classical arts such as Koodiyattom, Kathakali, Mohiniyattom, Krishnanattam etc. “The people of Kerala have always been quite liberal in organizing all sorts of festivals. There are thousands of temples and shrines, big and small, scattered all over the land. The state spends so much of its resources on festivals” (G. Venu, 1990). Festival tourism though very active in the state right from the time of its formation has established itself as a sub-form of cultural tourism after grandeur events such as Thrissur Pooram started to hog the limelight among cultural tourists from abroad.

In recent times there have been rapid changes in the life of the country side of Kerala. Patterns of life have changed and consequently many of the art forms that
enjoyed high patronage and promotion have become victims of indifference. Some of them have gone obsolete or extinct. As G. Venu (1990) asserts “we have to think realistically of practical means to arrest their decay. This demands immediate action.” In sync with the reviews of cultural tourism in the earlier chapters, this form of tourism has the potential to generate interests among the practitioners and promoters and also the tourists, whereby the old charm of such art forms could be brought back. At a higher intellectual pedestal, cultural tourists attempt to comprehend the nuances of the art forms and tries to learn some that pulls their mind. Thiruvathirakkali is one of the oldest forms of group dance in which women belonging to all age-groups participate shedding their differences of caste. Its social, religious and entertainment aspects appeal to all sections of society. But regional differences in the style do exist. While this is presented as a performing art in the southern parts of Kerala, in the northern regions it has a ritualistic appeal (The Hindu, July, 28, 1989). There used to be workshops related to studies of this art attended by exponents. Such efforts are highly desirable for the growth of art forms that appeal to cultural tourists.

“Folk songs of Kerala undoubtedly create a certain positive vibes in the minds of the listeners. The folksongs of the farming communities of south and north Kerala are treasure houses of information pertaining to the seasons animal behavior and nature’s fury.” (K.K.Marar, 2008). This facet of Kerala culture is yet to be tapped for the purpose of cultural tourism promotion. “Art forms such as Padayani, Kothamuri and Kakkarissi offer a unique cultural feast to incoming tourists to Kerala” (K.K. Marar, 2008)

“The traditional assets of Kerala namely Koodiyattom, Krishnanattom, Kathakali, Mohiniyattom and Thullal are not bonded with the common people to the effect it had in the past” (V. Kaladharan, 2002). Cultural tourism has the capacity to revitalize and strengthen the bond in various dimensions as regards local domestic and foreign tourists. “Art forms of Kerala are getting universal recognition which is a huge thing for the promotion of cultural tourism in the state. The varied and unique depictions, customs, and practices are key factors that gave vitality to withstand the test of time. At the same time it is important that wherever it is stage, the art forms must keep up its genuine attributes and identity” (Thiruvattar Sukumaran Nair, 2007).

The contributions of common people of Kerala at various stages in history have to be structurally studied for comprehensively grasping ‘today’ and for effectively planning...
‘tomorrow’. One aspect is the tribal myth. Such studies would find answers to the evolution of a broader outlook which was always imbibed by the people of Kerala. This would by all means complement the theories of cultural tourism in Kerala.

K.N. Panikkar (2001) indicates that ‘cultural engineering’ has the power to transform indigenous cultures. This aspect of cultural tourism i.e., the prospect of cultural engineering could necessarily benefit tourism promotion taking into account the indigenous people of Kerala. According to Kavalam Narayana Panikkar “A rich and varied heritage of artistic culture in Kerala had been preserved well through the ages and practised either as ritual or performing arts. The folk arts of Kerala have great vibrations. Kerala offers a living tradition, long and continuous and strikes a sense of balance between down-to-earth materialism and very high spiritualism. A process of subtle and sensible demystification, without loss of philosophic outlook, and imaginative spiritualization, without risking practicality, is on the move in the assessment of tradition. Kerala being a repository of diverse and rich folk culture with tremendous performing potential and experience can meaningfully help any discerning truth-seeker from home and abroad.” Cultural interaction achieved through cultural tourism widens the thought process and outlook towards life. The underlying spiritual influence of cultural tourism is prevalent in the Kerala perspective by all means.

According to G. Krishnan Nadar (2001) “Kerala is blessed with archaeological source materials like dolmens, menhirs, port-hole cists, Kodakallu or Umbrella stones, Topikallu or hat stones, rock cut caves, relics discovered from different places, stone images, temples, churches, mosques, synagogues, palaces, forts, historical sites, coins of various countries and an abundance of inscriptions.” The recent excavations carried out in ‘Patanam’ affirms the importance of archaeology as a symbol of Kerala’s cultural tourism.

Venugopal (2004) stresses the need to examine and promote the rites, rituals, customs, and beliefs of Kerala, especially the ones associated with temple traditions. Attukal Pongala attracts scores of pilgrims including foreigners who wish to witness as well as participate in the rituals.

“Poorakkali is a distinguished art form of north Kerala. This art form is associated with ritualistic beliefs and envisages the meaningful elements of folk culture of the
Poorakkali is the north Kerala edition of the world wide celebrated spring festival” (K.K. Karunakaran, 1999). The potential of Kerala in the realm of cultural tourism is reiterated by such eminent writers whose researches unveil exemplary art forms and practices paving the way to the making of a cultural calendar for the state featuring an exhaustive list.

Chummar Choondal (2003) argues that the folk culture of Kerala must break the confinines of the state as the art forms and cultural expressions have universal appeal and the entire world can relish them. Chakkkiar Koothu could be enjoyed and comprehended by audience in any part of the globe. Choomar’s comments on cultural limitations as an absurd idea substantiates the vast appeal of Kerala culture promoted through cultural tourism. He cautions against dilution of culture during acculturation.

“The myths of Kerala should be regarded as a cultural force. They have to be considered as ‘pure culture’ and not as mere stories” (M.V. Vishnu Namboothiri, 1997). There are of course enough cultural expressions and experiences in Kerala to be proud of, and when shared for the benefit of cultural revitalization or enrichment, the values actually multiply.

“Countries with rich culture and tradition is often seen as promoting dance performances using masks. Spain, China, Japan and some African countries vouch for that. In people’s art forms of Kerala the use of masks have a significant place in dance shows” (Choomar Choondal, 1971). It could be inferred that cultural expressions may have common roots and only the method changes. Kerala’s initiatives to exploit this dimension of culture by intensively promoting cultural tourism through cultural institutions and associations would be fruitful.

4.3 CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS OF KERALA

A number of cultural institutions were established in the 19th century which has an important place in the cultural life of Kerala. One of the earliest in the field is the Thiruvananthapuram Observatory founded in 1837 by Swathi Thirunal (1829-1847). Thiruvananthapuram Museum, one of the most important of its kind in the country, was started in 1853 during the reign of Uthradam Tirunal. It came to be accommodated in the present building named the Napier Building in 1880 towards the end of the reign of Ayilyam Tirunal. The reign of Sree Mulam Tirunal saw remarkable progress in the
A department for the publication of oriental manuscripts was started and it developed into the Oriental Research Institute and Manuscripts Library. A Department of Archaeology was also started with a view to giving impetus to historical research. The Travancore Archaeological Series which are of great value to students of Kerala History were published under the auspices of the Department. The Archaeology Department has today under its control the Padmanabhapuram Palace in Kanyakumari District, Art Museum at Kayamkulam, Thrissur, Ernakulam and Kozhikode and an institute of Folklore and Folk Arts at Mannadi. The Sree Chithra Art Gallery which came into existence at Thiruvananthapuram in 1935 during the reign of Sree Chithra Tirunal Balarama Varma is a treasure house of paintings. It is noted particularly for its valuable collection of the paintings of Raja Ravi Varma.

With a view to promoting the cause of general cultural development, many institutions were started in Cochin. The Museum, Zoo and Botanical Gardens were started in Thrissur in 1885. The Government set up in 1925 the Rama Varma Research Institute at Thrissur to undertake the publication of manuscripts of historical importance and to carry on research in Kerala History. The Kerala Kalamandalam was founded at Cheruthuruthi by poet Vallathol in 1930 and it was taken over by the erstwhile Cochin Government in 1942. It is the leading institution in the State for giving instructions in the classical arts like Kathakali and attracts students from all over India and even from abroad. The three Academies viz, the Kerala Sahitya Akademi, the Sangeeth Natak Akademi and the Lalitkala Akademi which function under Government auspices with their head quarters at Thrissur have done much in promoting the cause of cultural advancement in recent years.

Some of the learned societies which sprang up as a result of private initiatives have also been active in the cultural field. The Samastha Kerala Sahitya Parishad was founded after the All Kerala Literary Conference held at Edappalli in 1927. Some of the writers with progressive views founded the ‘Jeeval Sahitya Samiti’ in 1937 and it eventually came to be known as the ‘Purogamana Sahitya Samiti.’ The Sahitya Pravarthaka Sahakarana Sangham’ (SPCS), Kottayam, which had its origin in 1945 is also an important cultural organization. It is an organisation of the writers of Kerala organized on a co-operative basis.
Soorya is a leading stage and film society, functioning with its head quarters in Thiruvananthapuram. Soorya has chapters in 20 countries. The main activities of Soorya includes screening films of artistic excellence, presenting film directors and holding their retrospectives, organizing seminars and discussions, conducting festivals of music and dance, video, theatre, painting and photography. Soorya stands for all the best in Kerala culture and for the promotion of cultural tourism at local, national and international levels.

Suryakanti is a not-for-profit trust engaged in promoting fine arts. Particularly painting and sculpture. It has been successful in setting up a permanent art gallery in Thiruvananthapuram. This organization make the subtle nuances of different artistic styles more accessible to cultural tourists.

**Kerala Grandhasala Sangam**

This institution has played a significant role in setting up libraries and undertaking literacy campaign in every nook and corner of Kerala. ‘Grandhalokam’, a journal published by Grandhasala Sangam, is a cultural asset to Malayalam literature.

**Kerala Kalamandalam**

This important academy of arts, 32 km north east of Thrissur at Cheruthuruthy was founded in 1930 by the late poet Vallathol Narayana Menon and his associate Manakkulam Mukunda Raja. The present site was begun in 1973 and today the Kerala Kalamandalam is a campus of many aesthetic buildings in classical Kerala style (including a theatre that can accommodate an audience of 250) set in nine hectares of beautiful surrounds.

It is hard to overestimate the contribution that this organization has made to the renaissance of traditional folk art in Kerala. Full time students undergo intensive training in Kathakali. Mohiniyattam, Koodiyattam and Thullal courses are also available in institution along with percussion, voice and violin.

**ENS Kalari Centre**

This centre 8 km east of Kochi at Nettoor, established in 1954, offers training and demonstrations in the ancient martial art of ‘Kalarippayat’. Students from many countries
come here to learn the art. The centre also has facilities for massaging and a library for research.

**Natana Kairali Research and Performing Centre**

This is another important cultural centre in Thrissur district. The centre offers training and discourses in a wide range of traditional arts including dance and some rare forms of puppetry. The centre hosts a 12 day annual festival beginning in the first week of January. Performances, usually in the evenings, are often preceded or followed by discussions (in Malayalam and English) on technique and meaning. Short appreciation courses are available to foreigners.

**The Malayala Kalagramam Centre for Arts**

This is an important institution primarily for local people founded in 1993. It offers courses in dance, music, sculpture and painting – both contemporary and classical forms. Foreigners are welcome to attend forums on issues related to art, politics and philosophy. Poetry readings, dance performances and art exhibitions are regular events.

**The National Cultural Institute**

The National Cultural Institute is built under the People’s Plan campaign, at the Asan Memorial, Thonnackal in Thiruvananthapuram. The institute promotes research on such subjects as the cultural history of the state. The campus is being developed as a cultural pilgrimage centre. Besides the museum, there is an ecological park featuring medicinal plants and other attractions. The landscaping done on the existing campus is fantastic. Every plant, mentioned in Kumaran Asan’s poems would find a place here.

**Travelogues**

In the eighteenth century Thomma Kathanar wrote the first travelogue in Malayalam, Mana Vikraman Ettan Thampuran’s ‘Kashiyathra’ is the second book.

In 1915 Kesava Menon wrote ‘Bilathivisesham’, N.G. Nair’s ‘Ente Bhoopradakshina Vruthantham’ (My travel round the world), K.M. Panicker’s ‘Perilous journey’, Mannathu Padmanabhan’s ‘F.M.S. Journey’ are early travelogues.

It is S.K. Pottekad who enriched the branch of travelogue in Malayalam. He had written spicy accounts of his travel in Africa, Indonesia, Bali, England and many other

Joseph Mundasseri’s and K.C. Peter’s travelogues have an individuality of their own. Veerendra Kumar – an astute politician and media person was honoured with the Kendra Sahitya Academi award for his travelogue ‘Haimavathabhoovil’. The work was based on his travel experiences in the destinations located in the foothills of Himalayas.

4.4 GOVERNMENT’S ROLE IN PROMOTING CULTURE

The Department of culture deviated from the conventional path and gave a new direction to its activities. Though the department has only a few employees under it, many institutions that cover the entire aesthetic life of the society, function under this department.

Theatre and Dance

The International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK) is conducted every year under the auspices of the Government.

National Dance Festival at Palakkad and Bharatotsav at Thiruvalla and Pathanamthitta have been conducted in association with South Zone Cultural Centre. The National Drama Festival conducted in Kozhikode was a great success. The World Dance Forum held under the aegis of Guru Gopinath Dance Academy and Museum is Thiruvananthapuram is a grand cultural event.

S.P. Nayar (2004) records some important Music Festivals in Kerala that are of great interest to cultural tourists. Noted artistes of the state pay musical tributes to the memory of Swathi Thirunal on the occasion of Swathi Thirunal Sangeetha Aradhana held at Sri Padmanabha Swamy Temple Complex. During the Navarathri festival, the Navarathri Mandapam in Thiruvananthapuram, comes alive turning the city into a philharmonic capital. The Navarathri Mandapam presents the most lively model of a stage for conducting carnatic music concerts. Palakkad has been the nursery bed of music and the cradle of percussive art. Great musicians have hailed from Palakkad and its suburbs. ‘Swaralaya’ the cultural institution is doing laudable service to the
musicscape of Kerala. Yet another music-fest is Swathi Sangeetholsavam held at Kuthira Malika, constructed by Swathi Thirunal. This building showcases architectural grandeur in an intriguing simplicity of Kerala style. The fore court provides an excellent open-air theatre and forms the venue of the Swathi Sangeetholsavam. The Chembai Music Festival at Guruvayoor is also an exciting cultural event. It synchronises with the famous Ekadasi Festival of Guruvayoor temple. The Chembai Music Festival of Guruvayoor temple has become the star-attraction of the Guruvayoor Ekadasi Festival, and it has been growing in importance, as a musical odyssey. This event as S.P. Nayar (2004) notes is the longest (spanning two weeks) and the most glamorous one in Kerala.

The Malabar Mahotsav of Kozhikode is a veritable feast – a week long fiesta of artistic events, with a mosaic of dance, music, folk-arts and all the pageantry of musical entertainments. Top artistes from all over the country participate in the event. There is a literary festival too to make the event densely literary and artistic. The city of Kozhikode virtually comes under a musical, literary and cultural siege for a few days. It is incomparable in its range and richness. This event has a unique place in the cultural history of Kerala.

S.P. Nayar (2004) in his masterpiece work Musicscape of Kerala is evocative about certain classical art marvels of Kerala. He notes that “Krishnanaattam is a vintage art form in which more importance is given to dance than music. Attempts have to be made to make it a popular art or present it on the ‘world-stage’. He further states “No other place in the world may have such a vast collection of percussion instruments with such a vast decibel range as Kerala. And no other state can feel so proud of having so many geniuses in the percussive art. In the world of percussion, Kerala deserves a high seat at the grandstand. On Ottan Thullal, S.P. Nayar’s observations are “It is not burlesque comedy. It is a thought-provoking, highly entertaining art form. It has high potentials to make it musically spiced up. It is a sugared spoof of some event or someone, or a scathing attack or criticism on something. Ottan Thullal has a telling effect. And it is a unique art-form.” As regards kathakali, the highlighted points are “If this is the essence of art, then there is no other art form, as virorous, and vibrant as Kathakali. It is the ultimate in audio-visual art and it reflects the creative mind of the artist, on the stage, and the receptivity of the audience. It is not a mere pantomime. The present day music in Kathakali is sweet and sublime.” S.P. Nayar’s recommendations
on reviving Pulluvan Pattu, Kaalan Pattu and Vedan Pattu, are really valid. He has also emphasized the prospects of Kerala as a destination for music therapy.

**Programmes for Development of Culture**

The Government of Kerala organizes programmes such as ‘Keraleeyam’ which is a week long celebration organized on the banks of Bharathapuzha, for recollecting the traditions of Kerala. The Government has also resumed interstate cultural exchange programmes.

The Archives Department has conducted various exhibitions of historical documents. Workshops were also conducted for researchers and those involved and interested in the maintenance of historical documents. The State Institute of Languages endeavours for the upkeep of the originality and development of Malayalam language. The Institute published a series of popular books and also books for specialized fields like agriculture, co-operatives, environment etc. The Institute is also engaged in a dictionary project, books on computers, development of Kerala, knowledge to 21st century, encyclopaedia on world classics, comprehensive study on Kerala history, principles of Indian Literature, etc. The State Institute of Encyclopaedic Publications is also contributing a lot for cultural and literacy development in Kerala.

‘Lasyotsavam’ held in Thrissur district portrays spectacular feats of leading practitioners of various Indian classical dances. A treat for cultural tourists, the festival is organized by Lasya Academy of Dance (Based on ‘The Hindu’ dated 18/02/2011).

‘Village Fairs’, immensely popular, particularly among foreign tourists are held every year in January at Kovalam. The Department of Culture, in the direction of promoting and publishing its activities has displayed floats during Onam festival and similar occasions in various avenues.

The Department of culture, publishes books on art, history, literature and biography, and also give financial assistance to authors for publication of research materials. The Government has created a State Film Academy, making films a popular medium, spreading a film appreciation culture among people, conducting film awards, etc. The following institutions- the Kerala Sahitya Academy, Kerala Sangeet Nataka
Academy, Folklore Academy, Fine Arts Academy and Kerala Kala Mandalam are very much vibrant with cultural activities.

The write up which appeared in ‘The Hindu’ dated 18/02/2011 titled ‘Show of Technique and Histrioinics’ features the three-day Kathakali festival at Changampuzha park in Edapally, Kochi. It reports that the festival stood out for its selection of plays, actors, singers and instrumentalists. Further, it states that with the exception of carnatic music, perhaps, other highly evolved art forms in Kerala have at least for over a decade, been confronted with sparse audiences at venues on the premises of temples and public spaces. The Changampuzha park at Edappally in Kochi is perhaps one of the few cultural spaces in Kerala that can boast a fairly stable group of spectators, when it comes to traditional performing arts. The well-promoted, well-packed three-day Kathakali festival is bound to click the register as regards cultural tourists’ itinerary. This visual and musical treat is organized in memory of art aficionado Godavarma.

Activities have begun to develop the indigenous system of Ayurveda, linking it with tourism. Strict conditions and criteria have been insisted to ensure the qualification of persons working in this field. As a part of ‘Ayurvedic Tourism’ development, a monsoon tourism development project is implemented. Tourism department participated in ITB Fair in Berlin, Trade Fair (WTM) in London, Arabian Travel Mart and National level India Tourism expos.

Cultural extravaganzas such as ‘Utsavam’ and the Nishagandhi festival lure tourists to visit God’s own country. The connoisseurs of dance, music and other art forms enjoys the performances of the finest artists from across the country in various venues in the state. Utsavam is part of Kerala Tourism’s initiatives to project the state as a cultural destination and thereby attract tourists. Besides, traditional art forms, dance and dance-based programmes are promoted. The event comes as a big morale-booster to the artistes who present traditional and temple art forms as it offers them a venue, lends financial support, and promotes the art forms. The DTPC’s have been entrusted with the responsibility of organizing the event. Lecture-demonstrations are also organized as part of the event.

The week-long festival of Nishagandhi has found a place in the cultural calendar of the country. It is the winter programmes started in the 1980s by Kerala Tourism that
got transformed into the Nishagandhi dance festival, later into the Nishagandhi dance and music festival. Reputed artists from across the country presented Kathak, Bharat Natyam, Mohiniyattom, Carnatic percussion ensembles, Hindustani vocal jugalbandhis, Vilasini Natyam, Odissi, Manipuri dance and fusion music in the 2010 edition. Kathakali and Koodiyattom festivals are held along with this on all evenings. The rich heritage of arts and crafts is showcased on the Crafts Mela organized at the Sooryakanthi exhibition grounds on the Kanakakunnu Palace premises. This is part of Kerala Tourism’s endeavour to preserve and enhance traditional crafts sector. As part of marketing these two cultural events, Kerala Tourism makes available the brochures of Utsavam and Nishagandhi festival to India Tourism Offices in the country and abroad. Website promotion is also intensified to project the cultural events (The Hindu)

The Government of India has identified ‘Aranmula’ in Kerala as one of the rural tourism destinations in the country for promoting the Gurukul concept as part of its cultural tourism promotion programme. As Louba Schild who started the Vinjana Kala Vedi (VKV) way back in 1976 points out “Nowhere in the world could one see such a sublime culture as in Kerala that holds in its fold the richness of family values, simplicity of life style and a mental frame that makes the people here see a divine touch in anything. The state should provide enough opportunities and facilities for the foreign tourists to interact and understand better the rich culture and tradition prevailing in the country side, instead of organizing stage managed festivals and shown in the name of tourism promotion”

It is worth noting that the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) has recognized Aranmula as a Cultural Heritage village. The Vasthu Vidya Gurukulam, a state run autonomous institution under the Cultural Affairs Department for the promotion of traditional architecture and mural paintings is also located in Aranmula.

The State Government is embarking on programmes to showcase the rich cultural heritage of Kerala and market it as a tourism product. The Keralam Museum of History and Heritage, a joint venture of the departments of Tourism, Archaeology and Museums is conceived as an arena to exhibit historical artefacts that were confined to storage because of lack of facilities for display. The Muziris and Thalassery Heritage projects have taken off and hold the heritage tourism promotion in good stead. Heritage projects of Wayanad and Alappuzha are on the anvil. The Keralam Museum featuring a mix of
traditional and colonial styles of architecture, tells the story of Kerala’s antiquity. The exhibits in the museum take the visitor across different periods in the history of the state through the Paleolithic, Neolithic, Megalithic and Mesolithic periods. The museum uses modern display techniques such as touch screen counters and multimedia systems to explain the artefacts arranged in different galleries and to screen narrative documentaries on the distinctive facets of Kerala’s cultural history. The galleries feature a rich array of rock paintings and engravings, sculptures, idols and tools in stone metal and wood, ancient frescoes and murals and different art forms. A royal horse cart and two ancient cannons are displayed at the entrance to the museum. A souvenir shop and mini seminar hall have also been established as part of the project. (based on the write up titled ‘Template for Showcasing History in ‘The Hindu’, dated 17/02/2011).

4.5 TOURISM POLICY (DRAFT) 2025 – A VISION

The Tourism Policy (Draft) has given importance to Kerala’s cultural heritage and has mentioned the need to preserve and protect the rich traditional resources of the state. The Draft also assign a significant role to the Cultural Tourism Products; and urges the major players of tourism in both private and public sectors to make the maximum use of them to increase employment opportunities and revenue and thereby contribute to the overall benefit of the state. The Kerala government has worked on a long term planning system to sustain the present improvements made in the field of cultural tourism and have given due importance to it in the tourism policy that is estimated for a period of 25 years. The Government has planned some midterm projects to determine the level and quality of development activities that is required for different areas and to monitor periodically the development taking place in the respective areas.

An evaluation of the past trends in tourism has brought to light the considerable damage caused to different cultural products like monuments, etc, owing to the excess of tourists. As part of policy planning the Government has decided to introduce a legal control on tourism in fragile areas. Another major decision in this direction is to include the local population in all stages of developmental activities. It is also mentioned in the tourism policy that conducting a pilot study on how tourism development in a particular area will affect the ecology of that place is of utmost importance. The Department of Tourism is trying to enforce strict measures to make sure that only those units which have got its recognition will be allowed to operate in the tourism field. The Department
will also encourage these units to improve the quality and take measures to ensure that they are abiding by the rules and regulations formulated by tourism authorities.

The Government of Kerala will be playing a facilitation and encouragement role and leave all the activities to the private sector in a competitive environment. They have also introduced a single window system to sanction different tourism projects. Separate cells will be constituted in Financial Institutions like KSIDC and KFDC and importance will be given to tourism department through those cells to give approval to different tourism projects. Special publicity campaign is proposed to be conducted by the Government to invite NRI's to invest reasonably in the tourism industry. To achieve the goals and objectives, the Tourism Department has given priority to law making and implementation. Tourism conservation and preservation law will be implemented to ensure the standards of tourism services. The Tourism Policy thrust is also to identify new locations from where more tourists can be received by the state. China, which has now become a significant global economy will be a major country targeted. Marketing campaigns also targets domestic tourists and tourists from other Asian countries.

Co-ordination with cultural organizations like SPIC-MACAY, INTACH, Art and Heritage Commission, etc will be very much necessary to enhance the performance of cultural tourism, and thrust has been given to that factor in the tourism policy. Law making and implementation will also be introduced to preserve and maintain the cultural symbols and archaeological resources of the state. The Tourism Policy has also projected the need to educate the tourists as well as the locals regarding the importance of preserving and protecting cultural heritage.

### 4.6 IMPACTS OF CULTURAL TOURISM IN KERALA – A CRITIQUE

The complaint against cultural tourism is that owing to the promotion of culture for tourism the host culture becomes a degraded and commercialized form of entertainment for tourists. There are many examples for this kind of impact. In the Kerala context one is seen in the Kathakali performances arranged for tourists in capsule form not complying with the traditional norms and only stage-managed like artificial show business. The tendency towards imitation which can affect the ambitions and values of the host population may also affect their culture. Members of the host population can become attracted towards the culture of the tourists at the expense of further developing
an interest in their own culture. This process is known as ‘cultural drift’ because it involves one culture drifting into another.

All over the world, traditional arts and crafts are dying out, as generations of people with particular skills are replaced by generations who do not learn these skills because they are thought to have become irrelevant to their modern way of life. In Kerala, the popularity and performances of so many art forms like ‘Ottanthuttal’, ‘Chakkiarkoothu’ etc are in a pathetic condition due to this negative attitude and response. The ‘Aranmula Kannadi’ which is unique to Kerala is not getting the fame it once enjoyed mainly because of the disinterest shown by the present generation. The ray of hope is becoming evident because tourism creates an interest in these particular forms of culture and it can help in preserving traditional arts and crafts from being lost altogether. The traditional art forms in Kerala have been given a new lease of life through tourism.

The culture of a host population is often an important factor in attracting tourists to a particular destination. Many tourists are interested in experiencing a culture which is different from their own. Statistical informations pertaining to tourist arrivals to Kerala show that tourists in large numbers have come to Kerala in the past years mainly from European countries with a predominant cultural motivation; a few staying back to learn performing art forms like ‘Kathakali’, ‘Mohiniyattom’ and also the martial art form ‘Kalarippayattu’. The culture of a host population can take many different forms, but most examples fall into one of two categories

1. Customs which have been created by the host population,
2. Aspects of the host populations’ everyday life, their history and religion.

Faking cultural expressions could be disastrous to the state in the long run. The stakeholders of tourism must be aware of the negative word of mouth publicity happening due to the mushrooming of centres claiming to promote culture, but not keeping up with the paradigms expected by the tourists. A possible response of the host population to tourists is that of imitation, the resultant of demonstration effect. Tourists can appear wealthy, successful and sophisticated, which may have the effect of causing younger members of the host population; who want to be more like the tourists. They try to achieve this by imitating the tourists’ ambitions and values. This can have a positive and beneficial impact when the host population may be inspired by their successful careers
and independent thinking and may in turn develop greater ambitions for themselves and a determination to work harder in order to achieve these ambitions. The attempt to imitate the tourists also creates problems for the host population, when some of them get enchanted by seeing the life style of tourists. Consequently many of them will want to migrate to affluent societies thereby causing disintegration in the traditional and strong family set up.

In Kerala, there exists both Xenophelia the love of foreigners and Xenophobia i.e., the fear of foreigners. Xenophobia arises among the host population due to certain misconceptions which prevails in Kerala society. These misconceptions or wrong notions can be abolished only in the wake of promoting awareness campaigns by knowledgeable persons. There in lies the important role to be played by intellectuals, writers, academicians, et’al

In one way or other Kerala has been singularly fortunate in getting international reputation from time immemorial. Nature has endowed her with lavish splendour of scenic beauty. Some of Kerala’s beauty spots have become international tourist centres. Thus, Kerala keeps up its long tradition of attracting people from far and wide. The other side of the picture is not so attractive. Kerala with its dense population and high literacy is seething in low standard of living and acute unemployment. Major industrial undertakings especially in the IT and tourism field can alone face the challenge. The rays of hope are now showering liberally and graciously, putting Kerala culture in perspective.

The culture of Kerala is generally a composite and cosmopolitan culture to which several people and races have made their significant contributions. The same composite character is the strength of Kerala culture. This culture is a fusion of old tradition and new values in every sphere of human thought and endeavour. The ‘Unity in diversity’ which is an integral character of India is applied to this southernmost state. The Kerala culture is marked by the virtues of unity and cohesion in every sphere of life and activity. Kerala from the very beginning of its history tended to develop its own outlook and way of life, art and architecture, language and literature and economic and social institutions, which, in spite of some similarities with those in other parts of India, have retained their own distinctive characteristics. The culture of Kerala is distinguished
by unbroken continuity in spite of the diverse influences that have gone into its making at various stages of its long and chequered history.

Kerala culture has persisted through the ages mainly because of its antiquity, unity, continuity and universality. The culture of Kerala must be adjusted to be one characterized by richness and variety of a high order. All through its history, the genius of Kerala has blossomed forth in all its vigour and vitality and has helped its people to reach the peaks of excellence in all their endeavours. The broad and eclectic outlook developed by the people of Kerala over the centuries, which is reflected in the long tradition of inter-religious harmony and cooperation is the best guarantee for the survival of Kerala culture into the future in the midst of varying vicissitudes. There has been age long and continuous interaction between Kerala culture, Indian culture and World culture over a wide spectrum and this has produced significant results in all areas of cultural development. Considering the sum total of the achievements of Kerala in the fields of culture through the ages, it is a foregone conclusion that the horizons of Kerala culture would continue to expand steadily in the years to come, and that in the process, the greater Indian heritage itself would acquire added variety, strength and vitality, provided occidentalisation is positively checked, and cultural pride is further strengthened for a win-win situation for both the hosts and the tourists.

4.7 CULTURAL TOURISM IN TAMIL NADU

Tamil Nadu has rich cultural heritage including folklore rooted to traditional values and beliefs. S.M.L. Lakshmanan Chettiar (2002) records the treasure-trove of the state in a lucid style that configures – the songs, dramas, dances, social and religious customs, oral literature etc. The exemplary cultural products of Tamil Nadu depicted in the work speak volumes about the prospects of cultural tourism in the state.

Tamil Nadu is the top state in attracting the maximum number of foreign tourists in India. Archaeological sites with civilization dating back to 3800 years are found in Tamil Nadu. With more than 3400 temples, this state also holds the credit of having the maximum number of UNESCO heritage sites in India which includes the Great Living Chola Temples and Mahabalipuram. Tamil Nadu has some great temples like Madurai Meenakshi Amman Temple, Tanjore Brihadeswara Temple, Srirangam Ranganathaswamy Temple, and all the above mentioned temples have world class
architecture that mesmerize utterly. Velankanni Church and Nagoor Dharga are visited by people of all religions.

It is indeed to the credit of the state that a calendar year is dotted with really colourful and culturally important festivals aplenty. The traditions of olden times are still very much prevalent in Tamil Nadu and the incredible festivals stand testimony to that. The amount of culture that is displayed in these festivals make them very special. Most of the festivals in Tamil Nadu are Temple festivals (Tamil Nadu Tourism). Almost every temple has its own festival(s) or fair(s). Dance festivals like Mamallapuram Dance Festival, Natyanjali Dance Festival, etc are considered to be new pull factors as regards cultural tourists. Tamil Nadu is home to perhaps the largest number of temples in the country and almost every temple has their own festival or fair. Most of the temple festivals fall between September and November, and between March and June. Every corner of Tamil Nadu is sprinkled with pre-historic cultural legacy. Festivals such as pongal, karthigai deepam and lot more describe the mystique belief of people of Tamil Nadu. Cities like Chennai, Madurai, Trichy and Coimbatore attract cultural tourists all the year round because of its holding famous art and music festivals (for eg:- Thyagaraja Music Festival) and other cultural events. Besides, the popular dance form ‘Bharat Natyam’ talks a lot about the vibrant Tamil Nadu culture. This state in South India is a land of rich history and tradition. It is the land where traditions and culture combine to live in harmony. Tamil Nadu abounds in ancient monuments and temples, which reflect the religious, artistic and cultural accomplishment of the state.

The most important aspect of Tamil culture is the architectural heritage of the state. Tamil Nadu is also called the cradle of South Indian temple architecture and is a living museum of architectural styles that originated in the 7th century and culminated in the huge temple complexes studded with towering gateways called “Gopurams”. The finest example of sikhara and gopuram architecture is the Brihadeswara temple at Tanjavur. Such numerous temples and religious places make Tamil Nadu home to some important pilgrim tourist centres. Some of the world famous pilgrim centres of Tamil Nadu are Mamallapuram, Kanchipuram, Chidambaram, Kumbakonam, Rameswaram, Palani, Srirangam, Tiruttani and Kanyakumari.

Tamil Nadu is a unique state from the tourism point of view. The immense tourist wealth of Tamil Nadu is one of the greatest assets of the State. Nature has bestowed
Tamil Nadu with countless number of tourist spots such as hill stations, beaches, wild life sanctuaries, bird sanctuaries, zoological parks, etc. The long and rich history of the Tamil language and society is marked by temples, pilgrim centres, historical and heritage monuments, etc. Tamil Nadu, the gateway of South India, has emerged as the hub of tourism for West Asia and South East Asia.

4.8 CULTURAL ACTIVITIES FOR TOURISM

Tamil Nadu has a long tradition of venerable culture. Tamil was the very first language to be recognized as a classical language of India. Tamil people regard their language as a very important part of their cultural identity. Throughout its history, Tamil literature has sought to inform and inspire, educate and entertain. Tamil poetry has universal appeal as evidenced by many examples. Tirukkural, which was written nearly two millennia ago portrays a universal outlook.

The first Tamil printing press was established at Tarangambadi by the Danish missionaries. During the Indian freedom struggle, many Tamil poets and writers sought to provoke national spirit, social equity and secularist thoughts among the common man, notably Subramanya Bharathy and Bharathidasan. Even today Tamil Nadu is home to creative writers like Vairamuthu, Jayakanthan and Indira Parthasarathy.

Chennai city has many beautiful parks to its credit. The Corporation of Chennai has given a facelift to many of these parks in the city and has made them green by providing lovely lawns and attractive fountains. To patronize the folk arts and entertain the local population in the evening hours, it was decided to conduct a cultural show every Saturday in parks (in rotation) with the caption “Poongavil Poonkatru”. This programme has promoted cultural tourism apart from providing a platform for promoting youth talents. Tamil Nadu Tourism is providing avenues for creative tourism (which has existed as a form of cultural tourism) in the annual Trade Fair, by facilitating the students of Government Fine Arts College to participate in painting portraits of visitors to the fair. “Chithira Santhai” was conducted in 2009 for the display and sale of paintings by eminent artists. A colourful “Coffee Table Book” named “Thoorigaiyil Thamizhagam” has been produced with public-private partnership, depicting art forms and cultural dimensions of Tamil Nadu and important tourist places. This coffee table book with beautiful paintings by eminent artists of Tamil Nadu has versions in Tamil, English,
French and German with concise information on the paintings and their significance in Tamil Nadu context. Chennai bustles with a number of cultural activities during December and January every year, especially Chennai Sangamam. This great event has contributed significantly for the regular revival of folk art forms. The entire atmosphere was surcharged with the festive mood.

The “Semmozhi Sirpa Poonja” is a sculpture park at Mamallapuram where sculptures of architectural splendor have been installed. The tourists get a glimpse of the rich culture of Tamil Nadu from these scriptures.

Temple festivals are not just religious occasions but also cultural and commercial landmarks. All Hindu festivals are occasions of great feasting, dance, music and love. One of the most well known fairs in Tamil Nadu is the Pollachi fair, which takes place on Thursdays. On these days, the fair is practically bursting at the seams. The Pollachi fair is the place for items from the Annamalai hills, Palaghat area and the Pollachi valley. The merchandise sold includes clothing, coconuts, nuts oil, fruits, vegetables, hides and skins and poultry.

The culture of Tamil Nadu reverberates in the movies. The Tamil cinema industry is called Kollywood and is the second biggest movie industry in India after Bollywood.

The Government of Tamil Nadu has declared 48 towns as Heritage Towns for conservation and preservation of their priceless heritage value. These Heritage Towns are developed by obtaining funds from the Town and Country Planning Development. The countryside of the state is dotted with various sites known for their own particular craft, such as the paintings of Tanjore, the mats of Pattamadai, and wood carvings of Chettinad. Tamil art has also found its way into Tamil celebrations. Dolls are often made in preparation of the Navaratri celebrations.

A study conducted by Equations (1997) advocate against the cultural tourism promotion practices in Tamil Nadu. “The intrinsic value of cultural symbols for the community is overlooked and they are denigrated to the level of showpieces. Tourism cultures is a myth created to legitimize consumption of cultural symbols by tourists.” (An excerpt from the book). At the same time a status report of Equations highlights the Tamil Nadu Governments policy decision to propagate cultural tourism intensively by conducting various festivals. In this connection various reviews assert that a full fledged
calendar needs to be drawn as regards the fairs and festivals of Tamil Nadu, for the benefit of foreign tour operators and agents who co-ordinate the cultural tourism activities.

Tamil Nadu has a rich tradition of making metal objects which are used for both religious and secular purposes. A wide variety of objects includes standing lamps, aarathi, deepalakshmi hand lamps and chain lamps. Shallow dishes in circular, hexagonal, octagonal and oval shapes are widely used in Tamil Nadu and are made out of bronze or sheet brass. The popular Thanjavur plates are characterized by designs of deities, birds, flowers and geometric patterns beaten out from the back of copper and silver sheets and subsequently encrusted on a brass tray, Kudam or Panchpaatra. Metal toys are also popular and are sold at various gift outlets in various towns and cities of the state.

Tamil Nadu is famous for its artistically created baskets and fiber products which are of great demand both in India and abroad. While palm has become a major source of raw material for basketry and related products, bamboo, cane, grasses, reeds and fibres are also used in making baskets, ropes, mats, and many other items. The places famous for these arts are Salem, Dharmapuri, Coimbatore, South Arcot and Tiruchirappalli districts.

Stone carving is yet another popular form of art that continued to exist over centuries. The craftsmen apply their creativity in making sculptures of various forms and structures. Granite and marble carving are confined to the areas around Mamallapuram and Chingleput. Pottery is also an important craft of Tamil Nadu. The state is famous for its manufacture of the famous Ayyannar horses. The horses are said to protect each village from evil. The large terracotta horses of Salem and Pudukottai are very much popular and are of great demand.

The Kolam in Tamil Nadu is given a great recognition and is also given more importance during the Margazhi season which is one of the finest Tamil seasons. The Kolam has lots of aspects that are medically more helpful. Kolam also enhances the creativity of the people apart from reflecting the glory and splendour of Tamil culture and tradition.
Tamil Nadu Tourism Department highlights certain potential cultural tourism destination in its packages. The important ones are reviewed as follows. Sirkazhi is renowned in Tamil literature as the birth place of Thirugnana Sambandar, the Tamil saint. The saivite temple is dedicated to him. Tourists gather in large numbers to witness the Tirumalaippal festival celebrated in April. Vaitheeswaran koil, too, draws steady stream of cultural tourists from all parts of Tamil Nadu and other states. There is a large and important Siva temple. Vaitheeswaran is the healer of all diseases and it is believed that a bath in the holy water of the Siddhamritham tank situated within the temple complex, cures all ailments. Gingee or Senji is a historical place, blending history and architecture. It has an interesting tale of historical value and verocity.

The greatness of Poompuhar was brought out in some of the poems in Sangam literature and also by Silapathikaram and Manimekalai, the Tamil epics. The life and time of the Tamil classic ‘Silappatikaram’ has been recreated at Poompuhar to the immense pleasure of cultural tourists. In order to conjure up the decorative ornamental scenic beauty of Poompuhar, the whole Art gallery is made to present the environment and atmosphere of the 2nd century A.D., by the creation of Illanji mantram, Pavai mantram etc.

Very close to the five falls in Courtallam is an enchanting cultural tourism destination in Chithra Sabha (Hall of paintings) where Lord Siva’s cosmic dance poses are depicted. According to Sthala Purana, this Chithra Sabha is one of the five sabhas consecrated hundreds of years ago. The paintings vividly portray various anecdotes from Siva Puranam.

Rameswaram is a highly acclaimed tourist centre considered to be a national pilgrim centre. The ‘Kasi of South’ located in the Gulf of Mannar is a sought after destination by cultural tourists.

Kanyakumari – the tri sea confluence is a cultural tourist’s delight. The cultural tourism package comprises exquisite places namely Padmanabhapuram Palace, Chitharal, Suchindrum, Vattakottai, Thiruvattar and Vivekananda Rock Memorial.

Madurai-the cultural capital of Tamil Nadu is famous as a centre of literary achievement and learning. Madurai was home to the Tamil Sangam which attracted literary personages who flourished under royal patronage. Many literary masterpieces
were penned which survive to this day. There are ample tourist spots for cultural tourists such as Madurai Meenakshi Amman Temple, Thirumalai Nayakkar Mahal, Gandhi Museum and Mariamman Tappakulam.

Trichy, a renowned cultural tourism destination is a fine blend of tradition and modernity built around the Rock Fort. The Srirangam temple which stands as the biggest temple complex in the country attracts large scale tourist influx. Thanjavur, is an engineering marvel and is renowned for Dravidean Temple Architecture. In ancient days this place had been a center for learning art and culture. The Brihadeeswar temple, a World Heritage site – also finds a place among the must see cultural spots.

Kanchipuram is the temple town of India. It is one of the seven holy cities of the country. It is here that the Pallavas, Cholas and Vijayanagara rulers paid obeisance to their gods by constructing marvelous, wonderfully sculpted temples. All the temples are notable and visited by tourists to Kanchipuram. Culture and heritage are a natural part of the landscape in Kanchipuram’s area – be it writing, fine arts, music or dance. The Kanchi Mutt established by Adi Sankara has a modern centre of learning. The Kattaikuttu Kalai Valarchi Munnetra Sangam – the Sangam to promote the interest of theatre closely linked with contemporary village life; Koothu – p- pattarai which recognize the traditions of native folk arts and communicate them to the audience in a contemporary idiom, and the Shakunthala Jagannathan Museum of Folk Art are spectacular cultural tourism spots of Kanchipuram.

4.9 CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS OF TAMIL NADU

Cultural Institutions in Chennai include the Madras Music Academy, devoted to the encouragement of Carnatic Music. The Kalakshetra is a centre of dance and music, and the Rasika Ranjini Sabha, in Mylapore encourages theatrical arts.

The Rukmini Devi Cultural Centre founded in March 1999 by the trustees of the Rukmini Devi Arundale Foundation and Trust is situated in West Mambalam, Chennai. This cultural institution offers courses in Bharatha Natyam, Carnatic Music, Fine Arts and art appreciation.

The Thanjavur Maharaja Serfoji’s Saraswati Mahal (TMSSM) Library, Thanjavur is one of the few medieval libraries that exist in the world. It symbolizes a priceless
repository of culture and time defying treasure house of knowledge, built by the successive dynasties of Nayaks and Marathas of Thanjavur. The Library was made a public library in 1918 by the Madras Government and was registered on 9 July 1986 as a society under the Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act. At present, the TMSSM library is jointly administered by the Government of India and the Government of Tamil Nadu. The Library has 46,695 manuscripts in Sanskrit, Marathi, Telugu, Tamil and other languages in both palm leaf and paper form. More than 35 volumes of descriptive catalogues for these manuscripts have been brought out. Miniature paintings, colour drawings, atlases, maps, charts and rare prints in their collections are very attractive and reflect the Thanjavur School of Paintings. Besides, it has 47,100 books in Indian languages covering various disciplines and a rare collection of about 4,500 books in European languages collected by Raja Serfoji. The Library published more than 360 books from the unpublished manuscripts. It also publishes a quarterly journal Kalakshetra literally means a ‘Holy place of Arts’. The centre is modeled on the concept of a ‘gurukul’, where music, dancing, painting and crafts are taught to students from India and other parts of the world. Special cultural programmes are arranged to help the students in appreciating true art and the rich cultural heritage of India. The curriculum of the dance students includes classes on dance theory, which is based on the work Abhinaya Darpana, and selected portions of other ancient texts on art and literature. Music is a subsidiary for all dance students. The art of Indian make-up, traditional costumes and theatre craft are learnt gradually by the advanced and post graduate students through participation in the various Kalakshetra productions. Kalakshetra produces and presents many dance dramas as part of its efforts to make available to the public and cultural tourists the best of Indian classical arts.

The Kalai Kaviri college of Fine Arts is the first of its kind in Tamil Nadu offering degree courses both in Dance and Music. Kalai Kaviri is dedicated to reach the people with spiritual, social development and human values, and to promote the cultural arts. The professional dance troupe acts as ambassadors of love, peace and Indian cultural arts. This cultural institution now stands as an embodiment of cultural tourism promotion.

Tamil Nadu Eyal Isai Nataka Manram is a cultural organization executing several schemes from the grants sanctioned by the state government. The main activities of the
Manram consists of exchange of cultural troupes, upliftment of indigenous artists, conferring the State Award of ‘Kalaimamani’ on the artists for their yeomen service to the enrichment of performing arts, publication of books in the fields of art and culture and encouraging research on folk arts and traditional classical arts.

By bringing the art institutions and organizations under one umbrella, a separate directorate namely, the Directorate of Art and culture was created by the Government of Tamil Nadu. Its aim is to implement schemes for development of arts. The administrative office, namely, the Directorate of Art and Culture is functioning in Chennai and the Regional Cultural centres are functioning at six places, namely, Kanchipuram, Salem, Thanjavur, Tiruchirappalli, Madurai and Tirunelveli. This officer co-ordinate, guide and inspect the cultural activities at district level and assist in carrying out the cultural policies of the government.

The Tamil Nadu Jawahar Siruvar Manram established at Chennai aims to give cultural training and develop the art talents of the children in the age group of five to sixteen years. The Tamil Nadu, Ovia Nunkalaikuzhu was established by Tamil Nadu Government for preserving, promoting and propagating fine arts such as painting, sculpture and graphics, and for encouraging the artists, and to work in co-ordination with the Lalit Kala Akademi. ‘Kalaichemmal’ awards are conferred on the eminent artists in recognition of their meritorious services in the fields of traditional and contemporary arts. State level exhibitions are also organized.

Dakshina Chitra in Tamil Nadu is a center for the living traditions of art, folk performing arts, craft and architecture with an emphasis on the tradition of South India. A project of the Madras Craft Foundation (MCF), the centre attracts cultural tourists from different parts of India and abroad. It is located on the East Coast Road to Mamallapuram. The South Zone Cultural Centre in Thanjavur offers cultural programmes and artistic performances from various regions, and different artistes from all over the country and it provides a spectrum of events to the commoners and connoisseurs of art and culture. Cultural events of popular taste are fostered and strengthened by this organization. The centre conducts cultural programmes on every 2nd and 4th Friday at the Brihadeeswara Temple, Thanjavur. Both the artists and audience share moments of absolute bliss.
4.10 CONCLUSION

Kerala owns a rich and ever-flourishing culture. Kerala prides over its cultural diversity with people from different ethnic groups and different religious faiths populating it. This state is indeed a melting pot of cultural multiplicity. In its entirety, Kerala culture epitomizes the triumph of its people in preserving its wealth encompassing its art, architecture, dance, education or its multifaceted religions. The present culture of Kerala is the consequence of the unique blend of cultural fusion and communal adaption. Thrissur located in the central region of Kerala enjoys the distinction of being the cultural capital of Kerala, highlighted by the Tourism Department of Kerala. This destination is replete with a rich history and culture (indiasite)

The rich culture of Kerala reflects from every part of the state and it is this culture that makes Kerala a popular tourist destination. The monuments, festivals, music and dance forms, cuisine – all are intrinsically related to Kerala’s culture. Tourists have plenty of opportunities to enjoy the treasures of Kerala. The Kerala costumes are indeed very special. “Kasavu Mundu” is quite popular. On the other hand Kerala cuisine is a mix of variety. Most of the dishes are prepared from rice and coconut, for example, puttu. The music of Kerala also have something special imbibed in its very essence. Panchavadyam and Nadanpattu are few of the music forms that have made their presence felt.

Tamil Nadu is a land of ancient temples. The architecture and sculptural features of these temples are examples of the artistic abilities and advanced civilization of the ancient Tamils. The fine arts such as paintings, dance and music play a significant role in the day-to-day life of people by providing them with happiness and mental peace. Cultural tourists appreciate the ancient cultural roots through the Tamil musical traditions left behind by the great musicians of yester years. The fine arts were patronized by many Tamil emperors, chieftains, intellectuals and landlords. This is very well proved through the sources of edicts and excavations in several parts of the State. Tamil Nadu is famous for archaeological sites with civilization dating back to 3800 years.

The State has been taking various steps to protect and propagate ancient traditional art forms among the people. The State also plays a role in encouraging artists through the conduct of art festivals and award functions and also protect their livelihood.
through distribution of old age pensions. The native art forms of Tamil Nadu are also disseminated through various institutions including the colleges of music, fine arts and sculpture, the Tamil Nadu Iyal Isai Nadaka Mandram, Tamil Nadu Ovia Nunkalai kuzhu and Tamil Nadu Jawahar Bala Bhavan.

The excavations at the historically important places have been carried out and valuable antiquities have been unearthed and preserved in archaeological site museums situated in various districts of the State. The government records and other manuscripts are preserved on scientific lines in the State Archives.

The museums, being a treasure house of the national heritage, are dedicated to help the public to understand and appreciate the natural world and the history of the State. The museums also collect and exhibit articles that reflect the artistic, scientific and technological achievements of the people of the State.

Within the state, an established caste system exists and is more strictly followed than in most other parts of India. Gypsies have held a long lasting position in Tamil culture, and the Badaga, Kota and Toda tribes inhabit the Nilgiri Hills.

The state has been vigorously pursuing a three pronged strategy of attracting more tourists to Tamil Nadu, making them stay for a longer period in the State, and providing them with world class infrastructure facilities in order to boost the tourism sector. There are three types of tourists visiting the state and separate strategies have to be designed to attract and retain each category. With Chennai becoming a global metropolis, and the growth of various industries such as automobiles, software, telecom and banking, Tamil Nadu is fast becoming a favoured destination for business travelers. National tourists i.e., tourists from the rest of India spend time in exploring the state in detail, especially the zoological parks, pilgrimage centers, amusement parks, shopping malls etc. On the other hand, foreign tourists are more interested in visiting historical monuments, heritage sites as well as understanding the ecological and cultural resources.

Tamil Nadu is in the forefront in the fields of music, dance, art and culture. Tamil Nadu is well known for its rich cultural heritage both within and outside the country. Music, dance and drama form an integral part of the lives of people in the State. Here religion and culture are strongly intertwined. Even small temple festivals are earmarked
by music, dance and drama programmes. Such festivals attract people of all age groups and walks of life. It is proposed to popularize and fully exploit the tourist potential available in fairs and festivals particularly the Pongal Festival, Natyanjali Festival and Bhagavata Mela Utsav at Melattur in Thanjavur District, both in the domestic and international tourism market.

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