CHAPTER III

PROFILE OF THE SELECT TOURISM CENTRES
IN MADURAI REGION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Madurai region comprises of seven districts namely, Madurai, Dindigul, Virudhunagar, Thoothukudi, Sivagangai, Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari under Tamil Nadu Tourist Map. In the present study, five important tourism centres namely Madurai, Palani, Kodaiknal, Rameswaram and Kanyakumari in this Madurai region were identified and selected. This chapter presents a birds-eye view of the select tourism centres under study in the Madurai region.

3.2 MADURAI CENTRE

Madurai, the ancient home of Tamil culture is the seat of the famous temple dedicated to Meenakshi and Sundareswarar. A Charming city enriched by the waters of the sacred Vaigai, it is the greatest attraction for every tourist who visits the South.

Glowing tributes have been paid to this city by bards and poets. Here Goddess Sakthi incarnated herself as a mortal, reigned as the Pandyan Princess
and wedded Lord Siva who performed 64 miracles to render succour to His devotees.

MEENAKSHI SUNDARESWARAR TEMPLE

The sight of the magistic towers, a cluster of small and large ones, amidst the venture of the smiling landscape, arrests the attention of the visitor even from a distance.

As it is customary to worship first Devi Meenakshi and then Lord Sundareswarar people enter the temple through the Ashta Sakhti Mandapam on the eastern street.
Ashta Sakthi Mandapam

Over the entrance to the Ashta Sakthi Mandapam is found the sculptural representation of the wedding of Meenakshi. The images of Ganesa and Subramanya are seen on either side. The Mandapam is so called after the figures of eight Sakthis represented on the pillars on the two sides. On the walls are seen paintings and sculptured figures depicting scenes from the Thriuvilayadal Puranam. The figures of the four great Saivite Saints adorn the Mandapam on the eastern end.

Meenakshi Naicken Mandapam

Crossing the Ashta Sakthi Mandapam we come to the extensive Meenakshi Naicken Mandapam, named after its builder. It has five aisles separated by six rows of stone pillars on which are carved yalis and other figures. Connecting this Mandapam with the Ashta Sakthi Mandapam is a hall where the idols of Siva and Parvathi in their manifestation as a hunter and huntress never fail to evoke our admiration. All the western end of this Mandapam is the massive Thiruvatchi containing 1008 brass oil lamps.

Mudali Pillai Mandapam

A splendid Chitra Gopuram invites us to the Mudali Pillai Mandapam, also known as Dark Mandapam. Of the numerous carvings here, the figures of
Bikshadanar, of the infatuated wives of the rishis of Tharugavana and of Mohini, are the most outstanding, and each one has a tale to tell. The images of Muruga and Vinayaka and that of Kandanthai Mudaliar who built this Mandapam are also admirable monolithic pieces of art.

**Golden Lotus Tank**

We pass from the Dark Mandapam to the beautiful sacred Potramarai Kulam (Golden Lotus Tank). According to tradition, Indra bathed in this tank in order to purify himself of his sin and worshipped Lord Siva with golden lotus flowers picked from this tank. The tank is surrounded by spacious corridors. On the pillars of the northern corridor are figures of 24 poets of the Third Tamil Sangam. Figures of Dananjayan, the merchant who discovered the main shrine in the forest Kadambavanam, and of Kulesekara Pandyan who built the temple and the city are also seen on two pillars in this corridor. On the walls of the northern and eastern corridors are numerous paintings depicting scenes from Thiruvilayadal Puranam. From the eastern corridor we can see the golden domes over the sanctum of Meenakshi and Sundareswarar. The verses of Thirukkural are inscribed on marble slabs embedded in the wall of the southern corridor.
Unjal Mandapam

Adjacent to the tank, on the western side is the Unjal Mandapam. In the marble platform the gold images of Sundareswarar and Meenakshi are placed on Fridays for worship. The ceiling of the Unjal Mandapam is richly painted with pictures of Lord Muruga’s six famous temples (Arupadai Veedu). Projecting into the tank, on the western side, is a balcony where the figures of queen Mangamma and her minister Ramappayyan can be seen.

Kilikoottu Mandapam

Adjacent to the Unjal Mandapam is the Kilikoottu Mandapam so called after the parrots kept in cages here. The long row of pillars and the delicately carved figures impart a grandeur to the hall. The sculptures of the Pancha Pandavas, Vali, Sugriva and Drowpathi are marvellously chiselled. Opposite to the shrine of Devi the two large paintings, one of the coronation and the other of the wedding of Meenakshi enhance the beauty of the hall. The mural paintings of the Gods on the ceiling fill us with wonder and admiration.

Meenakshi Shrine

Crossing the Kilikoottu Mandapam, we enter the shrine of Devi Meenakshi. A three storeyed Gopuram stands at the entrance. In the outer prakaram, the Golden flag staff, Thirumali Nayakar Mandapam, brass images of
Dwarapalakas, shrines of Vinayaka and Koodal Kumarar are seen. Thirupugazh stanzas sung by Arunagirinathar are inscribed on the walls of the Koodal Kumarar shrine.

The Maha Mandapam or the inner prakaram can be reached through the doors in the Arukal Peedam where Kumaraguruparar sang his Meenakshi Ammal Pillar Tamil.

In the Maha Mandapam, the shrines of Ayravatha Vinayakar, Muthukumarar and the celestial bedroom can be seen. To the west are the Artha Mandapam and the sanctum sanctorum. We worship Devi Meenakshi, the fish-eyed Goddess, who stands with a parrot and a bouquet, radiating love and compassion. The sublime grace of the divine Mother and Her infinite mercy are beyond words.

**Mukkuruni Vinayakar**

From the shrine of Meenakshi we retrace our steps through the Kilikoottu Mandapam. At the northern end, Mukkuruni Vinayakar, facing south, welcomes us. This eight feet high image of Vinayakar was found when Thirumalai Nayakkar was digging the Vandiyoor Theppakulam.
The shrines dedicated to Gnanasambandar, poets of the Third Tamil Sangam and Nataraja are found in the outer prakaram of the Swami shrine. The famous Kambathadi Mandapam is built just in front of the shrine in this parkaram.

**Kambathadi Mandapam**

Kambathadi Mandapam contains charming statues which are unparalleled in their exquisite beauty and intricate carvings. The golden flagstaff, nandi and balipeedam are at the centre. Lord Siva in His different manifestation is represented on each of the eight ornamental pillars of the mandapam. There are also many images depicting the avatars of Lord Vishnu. Of all these, the finest work is the one depicting the wedding of Meenakshi. This is a striking illustration of the excellence of Dravidian Art. The sculptor’s ingenuity infusing so much life in the stone is quite astounding. Near the mandapam stand the colossal statues of Agni Veerabadra, Ahora Veerabadra, Kali and Siva in Urdhva Thandava pose. Each of these mammoth statues is a treat to our imagination and this mandapam remains a sculptural museum where we are lost in wonder.

**Sundaeswarar Shrine**

Images of Dwarapalakas 12 ft. in height keep watch at the entrance to the Swamy Shrine. In the first prakaram, we can see the Arukal Peedam (pedestal with six pillars) where the Thiruvilayadal Puranam was inaugurated. Two
brass-covered Dwarapalakas stand here. There are shrines dedicated to Saraswathi, 63 Nayanmars, Utsava moorthi, Kasi Viswanathar, Bikshadanar, Siddhar and Durgai in this prakaram. On the northern corridor of this prakaram we see the holy kadamba tree, the Kanaka Sabha, the Yaga sala, and a well which is seen by the side of the Vanni tree.

In the next prakaram is the shrine of Nataraja. This is called Velliambalam and we worship the Lord in the dancing pose with His right foot raised. Passing through a small door we come to the immediate precincts of Sundareswarar in the sanctum sanctorum. This is supported by sixty-four boothaganas, eight elephants and thirty-two lions. The lingam, which bears so many names like Chokkanathar, Karpurachockar inspire a deep devotion.

**Hall of Thousand Pillars**

From the Swami Sannithi we proceed to the Hall of Thousand Pillars, crossing The Kambathadi Mandapam. The equestrian statue of Ariyanatha Mudaliar who built this treasure-house of art, greets us at the entrance. On either side are the statues of Kannappar, Bikshadanar, Chandramathi, Kuravan and Kurathi. As we enter, the Chakram carved on the ceiling, denoting the sixty Tamil years, is astonishing. The 985 pillars in the hall are so arranged that from whichever angle one views, they appear in a straight line. The images of Manmatha, Rathi, Arjuna, Mohini, Kali-purasha, Lady with a lute, are
magnificent carvings. A beautiful image of Nataraja is installed in a mandapam at the farthest end of the hall. An exhibition of many antiques, idols and interesting pieces of art is arranged here. They are worthy of one’s admiration and the time spent here is well spent.

**Mangayarkarasi Mandapam**

South of the Thousand Pillared Hall is the newly built Mangayarkarasi Mandapam which contains the statues of Koon-Pandiyar, Mangayarkarasi, Gnanasambandar and a Lingam.

On the southern side is the Servaiar Mandapam constructed by Maruthu Pandyas. Nearby is the Thirukalyana Mandapam, the ceiling of which is an example of the finest piece of wood-work.

**Towers**

The street surrounding the main shrines is called Adiveethi. It is adorned by four gigantic 9 storeyed towers. The South Tower, 160 feet high, with parabolic curves at the sides, is the tallest. It was constructed by Sevvanthi Chettiar in the 16\(^{th}\) Century. The North tower, otherwise known as Mottai Gopuram, is without any striking artistic work. The oldest tower on the eastern side was constructed in the 13\(^{th}\) Century by Maravarman Sundara Pandyan, and
the West tower was constructed in the 14th Century by Parakrama Pandyan. There are also smaller towers which add to the beauty of the temple.

**Musical Pillars**

By the side of the North Tower there are five Musical pillars each consisting of 22 smaller pillars carved out of a single stone, and producing musical tunes when tapped.

**Puthu Mandapam**

In front of the East Gopuram stands the Puthu Mandapam, otherwise known as Vasantha Mandapam, constructed during the reign of Thirumalai Nayakkar. It is the summer resort of Sundareswarar and Meenakshi. on the granite pedestal at the centre of the hall, the deities are placed during festivals. Wonderful stone images of Thadathagai, Meenakshi’s wedding, Ravana lifting Mount Kailas and the stone elephant eating sugarcane decorate this mandapam. The Nayakkar rulers are immortalised by their statues here.

As we come out of the Puthu Mandapam, the unfinished Raya Gopuram arrests our attention, considering the plinth area, we feel that, if completed, this tower might have been the biggest in India.
Vandiyoor Theppalukam

At the outskirts of the city is the finely constructed Vandiyoor Theppakulam also known as Mariamman Theppakulam, measuring 1000 feet long and 950 feet wide. On the island in the middle of the tank there is a beautiful mandapam surrounded by four smallest ones.

The illuminated floating festival on the Thai Poosam day is an unforgettable sight.
Alagar Koil

19 kilometres east of Madurai, there is a beautiful Vishnu Temple amidst an enchanting mountain. The deity installed here is Sundarajan. For the daily abishekam of the bronze image water from a spring 3 kilometres uphill is used, since any other water blackens the image. On Chithra Poornami day the image of Alagar is taken in a procession to the river Vaigai. This festival is attended by multitude of devotees.

Thirupparankundram

Thirupparankundram, 10 km. south of Madurai, is one of the six famous temples dedicated to Lord Muruga. It is a cave temple. Here Lord Muruga was wedded to Devayanai, daughter of Indra, after annihilating Surapadman. In the temple there are separate shrines dedicated to Siva, Ganapathi, Durgai, Vishnu and other deities. At the entrance to the temple there are 48 pillars with artistic carvings.

Legends around Madurai

Once Indra, the king of Devas, was burdened with the sin of Brahmahathi. To expiate the sin he did penance at various shrines. While traversing near the Kadamba forest of Madurai, he was suddenly purified. On further search, he found
a swayambulingam under a Kadamba tree. He worshipped the deity with golden
lotus flowers, built a vimanam over the deity and returned to Devaloka.

Later a merchant by name Dananjayan, who chanced to stay for a night
near the shrine, found deva poojas being performed at the shrine and informed
King Kulasekara Pandyan who ruled in Manavoor, of this incident. The King
came to the forest and worshipped the Lord. It was he who built the proper
temple and the city of Madurai that became the famous capital of the Pandyas.

After Kulesakara Pandyan, Malayadwaja Pandyan succeeded to the throne.
As he had no children, he and his wife Kanchanamala performed a yagna to get a
child. They were astounded and worried when a three-year-old girl with three
breasts appeared from the yagna-kundam. A divine voice consoled them telling
that her third breast would disappear when she meets her husband. The child,
Thadathagai, was brought up like a prince and she mastered all the arts of war.
Thadathagai succeeded the king and conquered the neighbouring countries and
reached Kailas itself, the abode of Lord Siva. but on the battle field when her
eyes met the gaze of Siva, her third breast disappeared. She realised she had met
her Lord.

Lord Siva came to Madurai, married Thadathagai and they ruled Madurai
for a time. Then, after, making their son Ugra Pandyan, an incarnation of
Muruga, as the King, they assumed the divine forms, as Sundareswarar and Meenakshi.

**History of the Temple**

The origin of the temple goes back to legendary times. Only a shrine of Siva and the walls surrounding it were existing in the 7th century A.D. The shrine of Meenakshi was built during the reign of Chadayavarman Sundara Pandyan, in the 12th century. The 9 storeyed towers were constructed between the 13th and 16th century. The reign of the Nayakka rulers for 200 years saw the construction of many mandapams and other additions like the Hall of Thousand Pillars, Ashta Sakthi Mandapam, Puthu Mandapam, Vandiyoor Theppakulam, Nayakkar Mahal.

The greater part of the temple, as it exists today, was built between the 12th and 18th century. In 1877 renovation on a large scale was done by the Nagarathar, especially by the Vainagaram family. During this renovation, many of the fine sculptures in the Kambathadi Mandapam were installed and the unfinished North tower was completed. In 1960-63, a Committee headed by Sri P.T. Rajan undertook a complete renovation of the temple during which the sudais in all the Towers were repaired and remade, and painted with traditional colours. Faded paintings inside the temple were repainted. Many new images depicting scenes from Thiruvelayadal Puranam were also put up on the walls of the inner
parakaram of the Swamy temple. A new mandapam dedicated to Mangayarkarasi was put up with modern materials and technique to commemorate this great renovation.

Festivals

Madurai is a city of festivals. The archakas of the temple take active part in enacting the different Thiruvilayadals of Lord Siva during the festivals. Every month witnesses a festival occasion.

The important festivals are in the months of Chitrai, Avani and Thai. The wedding of Meenakshi on the Chitra Poornami day, and the procession of Alagar to the river Vaigai attract multitudes of people from all parts of the country.

Temple City

Madurai has become the greatest attraction for every tourist who visits the South. It leaves an indelible impression in their minds and enriches their knowledge of Tamilian art, architecture and culture. They cherish sweet memories of their visit, and the soaring towers will continue to attract the visitors again and again to this temple city.
3.3 PALANI CENTRE

Palani is the famous place of pilgrimage, where the temple Lord Skanda is built on the top of a hill. The station itself, Palani by name, is about 20 miles from Dindigul junction, which is on the Southern Railway, between Thiruchirapalli and Madurai. A view from the top of the Hill will at once elevate the minds of pilgrims who approach the Lord with faith and love. In the Puranas the story of this place is narrated as follows:

PALANI

When Lord Skanda and Lord Ganesha were at Kailasa with their Father and Mother, Narada brought a fruit and offered it to Lord Siva. Now, Lord Siva made an offer to His sons to give the fruit to the one who would go round the
whole world and return first. At this, Lord Skanda, riding on his Peacock-Vahana, flew round the world and came back to Kailasa anxious to win the prize offered by his Father. But to his great disappointment, when he approached his Father after his round-the-globe flight, he saw the much coveted fruit in the hands of Lord Ganesha, who was calmly eating it, with a mischievous extra relish.

To add injury to insult, Lord Ganesha laughed at the grand flight of his brother. Skanda enquired of his Father and Mother how Ganesha, who was unable to move about due to his pot-belly, could go round the world as he had done and win the race from him. The parents replied that Ganesha, taking his parents (Lord Siva and Parvati) as the world, had come around them and won the prize. Ganesha explained how the whole world was nothing but their dear Father and Mother in whom everything existed. Thrown into a rage by all this, Lord Skanda threw away all his decorations and, clad only in a Kaupeena and with a stick in his hand, left Kailasa in a huff.

It is told in the Purana that, after travelling for a long time, he settled down on the top of a hill now known as Palani. To pacify their son, Lord Siva and Parvati, with the other Devas, came over to Palani Hills and glorified him. Parvati Devi informed Skanda that, he being himself the sweetest of the sweet fruits to them, there was no reason for him to get annoyed over an ordinary fruit.
Pacified by the sweet and winning words of his Mother, Lord Skanda returned along with them to Kailasa.

The temple has also got another significance of having been the abode of the Great Siddhas of South India. It was one amongst them, Bohar by name, a devotee of Skanda, that had made the image of Skanda now worshipped there, out of Nava Pashanas.

3.4 KODAIKANAL CENTRE

Kodaikanal has a veritable ecotreasure in store for the tourists, which can impart knowledge on the natural and cultural history pertaining to the environment. The rich variety of eco-based natural attractions like Green Valley View, Pillar Rocks and the like are national gifts to Kodai. Some of the important places to visit in and around Kodai are Kodaikanal lake, Coaker’s Walk, Chettiyar Park, Shenbaganur Museum, The Solar Astro-physical Observatory, Kurinji Andavar Temple, Bear Shola Falls, Bryant Park, Pillar Rock, Green Valley View / Alley View Point, Moer Point, Silent Valley View, Fairly Falls, Silver Cascade, Pambar Falls, Dolphin’s Nose, The Perumal Peak, Dolmen Circle, Berijam Lake and Kukkal Caves.
Kodaikanal Lake

The star-shaped deep blue lake amidst the emerald green wooded slopes sparkles like a jewel in the crown. The artificial lake was created in 1863, by Sir Vere Hentry Levinge (1885), the Collector of Madurai, who settled in Kodai after his retirement. The lake sprawls over an area of 24 hectares and is rimmed by a 5 kms. long road. It is the main attraction of Kodai and buzzes with activity throughout the day. The sight of honeymooners and other tourists enjoying boating, kids cycling and fitness buffs jogging around the lake is very common. Levinge also stocked the lake with fish and brought the first boat from Tuticorin. In 1890, a boat club was started here and boating was restricted only for the members of the club. One can also go in for fishing in the lake waters, but with prior permission.
Coaker’s Walk

The scenic hill-edge path way lies towards the southern side of the town about one kilometre from the Kodai lake. It is named after Lt. Coaker, an engineer who prepared the map of Kodai and is said to have identified this pathway in 1872. The path runs along a steep, emerald green wooded slope near the Kodai lake and affords breath-taking view of the Plains below. Entry fee is collected over here.
Telescope House

The Telescope House occupies a fine location on the Coaker’s Walk. One can enjoy panoramic views of the surrounding valley and nearby villages through a telescope installed here. Nominal fee is charged for availing of this facility.

Chettiyar Park

The beautiful and well maintained park lies towards the north-eastern side of the town, on the way of Kurinji Andavar temple. The amazing purple bloom of the Kurinji Flowers can be seen here once in every twelve years.

Shenbaganur Museum

The flora and fauna museum is 5.5 kms from the lake and is well maintained by the Sacred Heart College – a Theological Seminary founded in 1895. The archaeological remains and the flora and fauna of the hills are preserved and exhibited over here. The museum also has one of the best orchidariums in the country and has over 300 species of orchids. A Spanish Father Ugarthe, contributed his major collections to the museum. Besides floral collection there are several stuffed birds and butterflies. Also, worth seeing are the tools and burial urns of the Paliyams, the ancient original inhabitants of the hills.
The Solar Astro-physical Observatory

The observatory was built here in 1889, atop the highest point (2347 metres) of the area. It is located 3 kms., uphill from the Kodai Lake. Normally visitors are not permitted to enter the observatory. But, they can visit a small museum here which is open from 10 a.m. to noon and from 2 p.m. to 5. p.m.

Kurinji Andavar Temple

This small but famous temple is named after the unique ‘Kurinji’ flower and is dedicated to Lord Muruga. In Tamil literature kurinji means hill region and Andavar stands for God. Thus the temple name also refers to Lord Muruga as the ‘God of Hill’. The shrine was built in 1936, by an European lady who adopted Hinduism and re-christened herself as Leelavati Ramanathan. It enshrines the statue of Lord Muruga, seated on his peacock and an idol of his brother Lord Ganesha. The temple affords a fine view of Palani, the famous Pilgrim centre and Vaigai Dam.
Kodaikanal, the land of pristine beauty is full of exotic flora and fauna. The most important and unique plant species found here is Kurinji, which blooms only once in 12 years. The blooming Kurinji flowers literally engulf Kodaikanal in a violet hue and every other colour is subdued in front of this “Blaze of Purple”. Kodai is a sight to behold during this time and visitors come here
especially to witness this miracle. The last blossom of Kurinji was in the year 2006. It is said that the honey produced during the blossoming of this amazing flower is sweeter, tastier and very good for health. This rare phenomenon is certainly a sight not to be missed.

**Bear Shola Falls**

The falls 1.6 kms. from the lake get the name from bears who used to frequent this place in the past. A reservoir has been constructed now to serve the growing population of Kodai. The falls can be reached through picturesque rugged hill path and is an ideal picnic spot.

**Bryant Park**

The beautiful park lies on the eastern side of the lake, near the Coaker’s Walk. It was built by a Britisher, named Bryant and is actually a botanical garden. The park is noted for its exquisite flowers, hybrids and grafts. There is an excellent glass house, protecting rich variety of floral species. Cut flowers are exported from here. An annual flower show is organised in the park during the Summer Festival held in May.
Pillar Rock

The excellent viewpoint is about 7.4 kms. from the Kodai lake and is one of the most popular attractions of Kodai. There are 3 granite formations over here measuring 400 feet (122 metres) in height. One can also see over 100 dolmens and other megalithic remains dating back to second century. A mini garden has also been developed here.
Green Valley View / Alley View Point

The lovely site is about 5.5 kms. from the lake near the Golf Club. The view point was earlier infamously named as ‘suicide point’ because it is believed that many heart broken lovers have jumped from its steep cliff side. It affords a panoramic view of the Vaigai Dam.

Moer Point

It is yet another excellent view point, located at a distance of about 3 kms. on the Pillar Rock – Berijam Lake Road.
Silent Valley View

This viewpoint on the Pillar Rock- Berijam Lake road is truly breathtaking and awe-inspiring. Kids should be taken care of over here.

Fairly Falls

It lies 5 kms. from the Kodai lake amidst scenic surroundings. The falls are a popular picnic and excursion site.

Silver Cascade

The silvery falls are located 8 kms. from the town on the Ghat road leading to Madurai. The overflow of Kodai Lake gracefully plunges down over here from a height of 180 feet.
Pambar Falls

The beautiful falls 4 kms. from Kodai, cascade down over a series of rock formation.
**Dolphin’s Nose**

This flat protruding rocky outcrop resembling a Dolphin’s Nose is about 8 kms. from the lake. It overlooks a deep gorge and provides a panoramic view.

**The Perumal Peak**

The towering 2,440 metres high peak is about 11.3 kms. from Kodaikanal and is ideally suited for trekking. Trekkers scale the peak from the Neutral Saddle point near Perumal Malai village.

**Dolmen Circle**

This pre-historic site is about 18 kms. from the lake. The burial urns excavated in this region and models of dolmens are exhibited at Shenbaganur museum.

**Berijam Lake**

The beautiful lake beyond Pillar rocks is about 21 kms. from Kodai. The lake set amidst picturesque surrounding supplies drinking water to Periyakulam town and is an excellent picnic spot. The panoramic view of the lake and its surroundings can be enjoyed from Berijam Lake View, located 19 kms from Kodai.
Kukkal Caves

The ancient caves 40 kms. from Kodaikanal are located at an altitude of 1500 metre. These were once the earliest settlements of Paliyan tribals and are now a favourite camping site of the trekkers.
3.5 **RAMESWARAM CENTRE**

Rameswaram is an island situated in the Gulf of Manner at the very tip of the Indian peninsula and is a very important pilgrim centre of the Hindus. Rameswaram is the place from where Lord Rama, built a bridge across the sea of rescue his consort Sita, from her abductor, Ravana. This is also the place where Rama worshipped Lord Shiva to cleanse away the sin of killing Ravana. Both the Vaishnavites and Shaivites visit this pilgrimage which is known as the Varanasi the south.

Rameswaram is significant for the Hindus as a pilgrimage to Benaras is incomplete without a Pilgrimage to Rameswaram. The presiding deity is the
Linga of Sri Ramanatha, which happens to be one of the 12 Jyothilingas of India. Rameswaram is also popularly referred to as the ‘Benaras of the South’. In order to attain Moksha it is believed that the visit to Rameswaram is mandatory.

The religious island is spread in an area of 61.8 square kilometres and happens to be in the shape of conch. The Ramanatha Swami Temple occupies major area of Rameswaram. The masterpiece of Dravidian architecture boasts of the largest temple corridor in India. Different rulers built the Ramanatha Swami Temple over a period of time starting from the 12th century. The temple comprises of twenty-two wells where the taste of the water on each well is different from the other.

**Mythological History**

According to the Great Indian Epic Ramayana Lord Rama went to Sri Lanka from Rameswaram to rescue Sita from Ravana, the King of Sri Lanka. Rama invoked the Sea-God to provide away to trespass himself and then with the help of Sea-God built a great bridge along the paths away. By means of big rocks which enables them to reach Sri Lanka. On this return from Lanka with successive reassuring of Sita.

Rama worshipped Lord Siva to absolve himself for crime vanishing the demon king Ravana. For which he rushed up Hanuman to fetch a Linga from Mount Kailash. Since Hanuman did not return within the time, Sita Devi
prepared a Linga out of sand which later becomes compact and concrete due to her divine touch. In the mean time, Hanuman returned with a Linga and he was so disappointed to see that sand Linda. He tried to uproot that with his tail but failed. Rama at once pacified Hanuman and installed that all pujas should be subjected to Hanuman’s Linga only at first rather than the other. That Linga brought by Hanuman is referred to be ‘Viswalinga’ and Sita Devi’s Linga is ‘Ramalinga’.

**Ramanathaswami Temple**

Ramanathaswami temple was built in the 17\(^{th}\) century A.D. situated close to the sea on the eastern side of the island, this temple is famous for its 1200 gigantic granite columns. The 130 feet tall Raja gopuram (Main tower), 1220 metres of magnificent corridors and the flamboyant columns embellish and render fame to the temple. The water in each of the 22 sacred wells in the temple tastes different.

Normally people enter through the east tower. They offer prayers to Lord Hanuman smeared with sindhoor. Then comes the Nandhi Mantap, which houses the flag staff and the Nandhi. The stuccoed massive image of the bull is made of lime stone, measuring 17.5 feet high, 23 feet long and 12 feet wide. Next we should enter the sanctum, we worship Sri Ramanathaswami that is Ramalinga made of sand by Devi Sita. The Linga is decorated with silver Kavacha. It is
customary to offer to the Lord with holy Ganga water. Sri Parvathavardhini consort of Lord Ramanathaswami and is enshrined separately to His right. There is a Sri Chakra installed inside.

In the first inner corridor, devotees offer worship to the venerated Spatika Linga, installed by Vibhishana (Brother of Ravana). This Linga is the southernmost among the 12 famous Jothilingas in the country.

The temple will be kept open for devotees from 5 am to 12 noon and 4 pm to 10 p.m.

**Agniteertham**

The Ramanathaswami temple faces east. The sea here, about 100 metres from the main entrance of the temple is very calm and therefore ideal for bathing. The water of this place is considered sacred and known as Agnitheertham, where Rama worshipped Lord Shiva, to absolve himself from the killing Ravana. There are as many as 22 Theerthas, most of them wells, within the temple itself.

**Gandamadana Parvatham**

The imprint of Lord Rama’s feet placed on a Chakra (wheel) is found in this shrine, which is at the highest point on the island at 2 km. from Ramanathaswami temple. From here one can get a fine view of this island.
Sri Kothandaramaswami Temple

This beautiful temple is situated 7 km. from Ramanathaswami temple. Legend has it that Vibhishana surrendered to Rama at this place and Lakshmana performed the preliminary Patabhishekam for him. Here we can see the idols of Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, Hanuman and Vibhishana.

Dhanushkodi

Dhanushkodi, at the eastern end of the island, is located 18 km. away from Rameswaram temple. Pilgrimage of Kasi will be completed only after worship at Rameswaram besides a holy bath in Dhanuskodi (Sethu) at the confluence of Mahodadhi (Bay of Bengal) and Ratnakara (Indian Ocean).

Sethu is a Sanskrit word to denote a bridge or cause way. It has now acquired special significance to mean the bridge across the ocean constructed and used by Rama to reach Sri Lanka. It is said that, at the request of Vibhishana and Ally of Rama, Rama broke the Sethu with one end of his bow and hence the name Dhanuskodi (Dhanus – Bow, Kodi – End) has come. Sethu Theerta is a 3 km from Dhanuskodi bus stand. There is also available local van. A dip in Sethu is considered very holy.
Tirupullani

Outside the island, there are three other sites traditionally connected with Sri Rama’s expedition to Sri Lanka. This place is 10 km. from Ramanathapuram. There is a Vishnu temple, here dedicated to Lord Adi Jagannathaperumal. Sri Rama is said to have worshipped the deity and secured to bow to fight with Ravana. It also said that Rama lay on Dharba (grass) bed for 7 days in order to invoke the sea god for safe passage to Sri Lanka.

Uthirakosamangai

16 kms. southwest of Ramanathapuram stands the renowned Shiva temple of Utharakosamangai. Manikkavachagar has sung of it. The Lord is Mangaleshwara and the Goddess Mangaleswari. The temple has inspired many Tamil works of devotion. So, of course, has the Ramanatha temple in Rameswaram. Here Lord Nataraj made of Emerald stones.

Devipatnam or Navapashana

This beautiful coastal village is 15 km from Ramanathapuram. Here Sri Rama had installed nine stones in the sea to worship Navagraha (Nine planets). Devotees offer worship to the nine planets here.
3.6 KANYAKUMARI CENTRE

Kanyakumari district enjoys an important place in terms of tourism potential. It can boast of several places of religious, social, cultural, historical and environmental significance in the district. The presence of ancient temples with architectural marvels, carvings, paintings and towers attract a steady stream of tourists throughout the year. The present study is undertaken with a focus on the environmental significance of the tourist spots in particular.¹

¹In and around Kanyakumari Tourist Guide Book. Published by District Collector, Kanyakumari District, Nagercoil, Co-ordination – Tourist Officer, Kanyakumari, July 2003, pp.2-21.
The land’s end of India or the point where the three seas meet, is called otherwise with the enhancing nomenclature of Kanyakumari or Cape Comorin. It is one of the most popular tourist spots in the State and indeed, in the country. Part of the fascination is, of course, the fact that it is the very tip of the Indian Peninsula and marks the unique confluence of the Bay of Bengal, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. One would love to see Cape Comorin during the sacred Chitra Pournami (full moon day in April), when the sun and the moon come face to face at the ends of the horizon. On other full moon day: also one can see the sun set and the moon rise almost simultaneously, as if by prior arrangement.

**Sunrise and Sunset**

This is the most popular tourist spot in India from where both sunrise and sunset can be seen. The time of sunrise is around 6 to 6.30 a.m. and that of the sunset is around 6 to 6.30 p.m. though there timings are subjected to some variations depending on the time of the year. However, from April to October sunset cannot be seen from here. Moonrise and set also can be seen. The sunset and the moonrise on full moon day is an experience that lives in one’s memory for life. On such occasions one can see the full-fledged golden disc of the moon emerging from the eastern sea when the sun plunges into the western sea. This is an exhilarating scene to watch.
Light House

From the top of the lighthouse in Kanyakumari at a height of 125 feet one gets a bird’s eye view of Kanyakumari, which is surrounded by the sea on three sides and green coconut groves with the tail end of Western Ghats jutting out on the northern side.

Church

On the eastern side of the coastal line of Kanyakumari there is a beautiful Church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary known for its intricate architecture. The 153 feet high central tower of the Church was constructed in 1956. The altar and sanctuary of the old Church dates back to the times of St. Xaiver who visited this place in 1543 A.D.²

Kumari Amman Temple

Situated overlooking the shore, this temple, is dedicated to the Virgin Goddess, Devi Kanyakumari, a symbol of sanctity and liberty of womanhood. According to a legend the Devi did penance to marry Lord Siva once upon a time. However, owing to some misfortune, the wedding could not take place and she vowed to remain a virgin (Kanya) sticking on to her decision, despite all appeals. The legend says one can even see the footprints of Devi Kanyakumari on a rock

called “Sri Paadha Paarai” in the Vivekananda Rock Memorial Complex. The legend of the place has it that Devi was wearing earnings set with rubies, which were so bright that they could be seen from far at night. Some ships sailing in the sea, mistaking this for the lighthouse, went off course and hit the rocks nearby, and were wrecked. It is in view of this incident that the eastern gate of the temple is kept closed permanently. Male tourists who enter the temple should remove their upper garments, in homage to the female deity.

Mosqueu

Jamiah Masjid in Kanyakumari is sacred to this mithons of Muslims visiting this place.

Triveni Sangamam

Triveni Sangamam is another very important tourist spot at the Cape. Tourists both national and international, visit this place to see, how the Bay of Bengal the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean meet. Further, this place is noted for its multicoloured sand which, noted for its chemical historical composition and significance.
Kamaraj Memorial

Regarded as the ‘King Maker of India’ Kamaraj influenced many political events in the country. From a humble background he rose to the position of the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu through sheer hard work and political acumen. As a tribute to the freedom fighter and ‘Perunthalaivar’ (meaning great leader) this memorial was constructed where his ashes were kept for the public to pay homage before immersion into the sea.

Gandhi Memorial

A memorial named Gandhi Smarak Mandir in the Orissa style costing nearly Rs.3 lakhs was constructed on the golden sands of Cape Comorin in the year 1956. It commemorates the immersion of the ashes of the Father of the Nation on 12th February, 1948 at the confluence of the three seas.

At the place where the urn containing the sacred ashes was placed, a big hall has been built. Its central shape is 79 feet high representing the age of the Mahatma. A striking feature of the massive structure is that it is so constructed that, every year on Gandhi’s birthday on 2nd October, the sun rays fall on the exact spot where the urn was displayed before immersion.
Vivekananda Memorial Rock

There are two rocks projecting out of the Ocean. One is 1600 feet away from the southern most end of our holy motherland. This memorial was built in 1970. It is dedicated to Swami Vivekananda, the greatest modern social reformer and saint, India produced in the twentieth century. On 25th December, 1892 Swami Vivekananda swam across the sea and sat in deep meditation on the rock. In this a memorial has been constructed in honour of Swami Vivenakanda in the year 1970. A meditation hall is also attached to the memorial. Ferry service is available to reach the memorial.

The Vivekananda Rock Memorial complex consists of four mandapams namely, Sree Pada Mandapam, Vevekananda Mandapam, Subha Mandapam and Dhyana Mandapam.

Thiruvalluvar Statute

A novel grandeur carved out of a hoary tradition namely 133 feet tall granite statue of Thiruvalluvar, has come up recently almost in mid-sea off the shore of Kanyakumari. It is to be highlighted that nowhere in the history of world architecture, such a standing human form fully made of granite has ever been attempted and that too in the midst of the sea waves. The statue is an embodiment of the essence of Tamil Classic “Thirukkural” a collection of pithy verses
authored by Saint Thiruvalluvar, which marks the quintessence of the Tamil spirit. The statue located at the confluence of the three great seas, also depicts the great tenets of the Thirukkural namely, virtue, wealth and love.

The imposing 133 feet high statue was erected on a minor rock in mid-sea by Dr. Ganapati Sthapati and his team of around 500 shilpis and other technicians and engineers. The statue is fully made up of granite stones, weighing 7000 tonnes, comprising 3681 pieces of granite boulders, each weighing 3-8 tonnes. The statue proper stands 95 feet tall on a pedestal of 38 feet in height and the whole structure has been designed based on the spirit of the poet’s great work, “Thirukkural”. In the design of the statue, the 38 feet high pedestal depicts the first 38 chapters which deal with the virtue and the statue proper of 95 feet depicts the rest of the 95 chapters, which deal with wealth and love.

There is also a striking feature in this monument which deserves note by modern technicians. The height of the statue is 133 feet, for which a scaffolding work had to be attempted up to a height of 150 feet. In this scaffolding work no steel fabrication was used except the traditional casuarina posts right from the beginning to the end of his mammoth project. The ferry that goes to Vivekananda rock first arrives at Thiruvalluvar statue. After seeing Thiruvalluvar Statue tourists take the next boat to go to Vivekananda Rock.
Boat Jetty

In Kanyakumari there is also a natural boat jetty which has been in use for centuries. All the mechanised boats used for deep-sea fishing are docked here. Tourists who are interested are taken in boats meant for pleasure at a reasonable and affordable rate. Hence, tourists from far and near throng around the boat jetty almost every day.

Suchindrum Temple

It is a famous pilgrim centre, situated about 13 kms from Kanyakumari. The Thanumalayan temple here is a veritable repository of art treasure. The temple has unique, beautiful carvings and sculptures which are rarely to be found elsewhere. The corridor in the Suchindrum temple is one of the biggest corridors in South India. Musical pillars and a huge 18 foot high Hanuman Statue offer ample proof of the artistic skill of the artisan of the past centuries. Inscriptions said to be of the 9th century AD are also found in this temple. The gigantic images of Nandi locally known as “Makkalai” considered the second biggest in India can also be seen here. This unique temple is dedicated to Trimurthy Vishnu,
Siva and Brahma. The purpose of ones visit to Kanyakumari district will not be accomplished until or unless one visits this temple.\(^4\)

**Circular Fort (Vattakottai)**

This 18 century fort was built by the Dutch. Overlooking the sea, it is a fine tourist spot. The sea is generally calm here and is suitable for bathing.

**Nagaraja Temple (Nagercoil)**

It is the Capital of Kanyakumari district. It is situated 19 kms from Cape Comorin. The Nagaraja temple situated here is unique in many respects. Though Nagaraja (Serpent God) is the presiding deity, the images of the Jain Theerthangaras Mahavira and Parsuanathar are found on the pillars of the temple. The Nagaraja is installed on the ground where it was originally found and the sands are scooped out and given as prasadam to the devotees. The entrance to the temple is reminiscent of the Chinese architecture of a Buddhist Vishara. This is one of the important pilgrimage centres in Kanyakumari district.\(^5\)

\(^4\)S. Padmanabhan, *In and Around Kanyakumari*, Kumar Pathippagam, Nagercoil, p.34.
\(^5\)Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation, Kanyakumari, The Land End, Madras, may 1982.
Bay-Watch

It is a water theme amusement park, located at a distance of 2 km on Kanyakumari- Kovalam Road. It is very near to the bus stand. This park has been promoted by Sree Bhadra Parks and Resorts Ltd., Thrissur, Kerala, Crazy Chairs, Flying Elephants, Hot tea cups, Cape train, Multiple splash, Milky way, Crazy Cruise, Aqua shuttle, Family Pool, Wave Pool, Sky train etc., constitute some of the main tourist attractions here.

Kids Park

It is located at a distance of 1 km from Kanyakumari near new Bus Stand on Kovalam Road. Aquarium, Dashing Car, Video games, Skill games, Caterpillar, Columbus ship, Baby train, Aqua dance, Swimming pool, inflatable balloon, Swing Zizag etc., are all spots which attract tourists to the place.

Merry Go Round

It is located in the Tourist office premises on beach road where children can play freely under the care of their parents.

Government Fruit Farm

It is 2 km from Kanyakumari on Nagercoil road (NH-47). Variety of fruits of hundreds of plants and different species of trees are nurtured here in a well-maintained nursery here.
St. Xavier Church

St. Xavier, an outstanding and dedicated priest, visited the coastal areas of Tamil Nadu from Goa. He visited Kottar in Kanyakumari district which was a celebrated commercial centre at that time. During his stay at Kottar he used to worship St. Mary in a small church. While he was at Kottar he averted the invasion of Padagas on the people of Venad an incident which was highly appreciated by the King. In recognition of Xavier’s services, the King allotted a land to him for the purpose of constructing a Catholic church at Kottar. Interestingly, there was already a church in 1544 in the same place where St. Xavier’s church stands now.

The church records show that the church was built in the year 1600 AD. In the year 1865, the church was enlarged and in 1930, the church was raised to the status of a Cathedral. In 1955, the church was further extended. The church of St. Xavier enjoys repute as a place of miracles for centuries. The annual festival of the Church is celebrated during the month of November/December lasting for 10 days.

Udhayagiri Fort

Built during the regime of King Marthanda Varma (1729-1730 AD) this fort also had a foundry for casting guns. De Lennoy’s Tomb is in the fort. He was
one of the 24 European prisoners taken by King Marthanda Varma in 1741 when he
defeated the Dutch at Colachel. He joined Ki Marthanda Varma and became a
trusted general. He trained soldiers European method of combat. Presently, the
District administration, with the help of the Department of Forests has set up a
Bio-Diversity park also here.

**Thirparappu Water Falls**

Thirparappu means a pavilion of beauty and sacredness. The panoramic
view of Lord Mahadevar temple (Lord Siva) built at a site with green hills and the
perennial river Kodayar running in front, presents fascinating and attractive
scenery from the shrine. The Kodayar makes in descent at Thirparappu and the
sparkling water fall makes a rich feast for the eyes of visitors. A Children’s
Swimming Pool has also been recently constructed here.

**Padmanabhapuram Palace**

Padmanabhapuram (City of Lord Vishnu), the ancient historical town is
situated 37 kms from Kanyakumari. It was the ancient capital of the erstwhile
Travancore (Venad) State from about 1555 AD to the latter half of the 18th
century. King Marthanda Varma, the maker of modern Travancore (AD 1729-
1758), after ensuring the autonomy of the State Constructed temples, palaces and

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6 *Padmanabhapuram Palace – An Authentic Tourist Guide*, M/s. Sree Krishna
forts. As a part of his enterprise, the mud fort around Kalkulam palace was
demolished and a granite fort was built with four bastions in four corners. In 1744
AD, Kalkulam fort and palace were renamed Padmanabhapuram fort and
Padmanabhapuram palace respectively.

The palace is situated at the very centre of the Padmanabhapuram fort with
an area of 186 acres of land amidst Veli hills, dales and rivers. The exterior of
palace is simple and unpretentious like other secular and religious architectural
specimens of Kerala. The interior is enriched by wood carvings and conspicuous
murals. The palace consists of 13 important portions including Mantrasala
(council chamber), Manimalika (Clock Tower), Uttupura (Dining Hall),
Thaikottaram (Mother palace), Uppirikka Malika (Four storeyed building),
Anthapuram (Lady’s chamber), the long corridor, Indravilasam Palace, Navarathri
Mandabam and Archaeological museum etc.

Apart from them, there are many temples inside the fort, among which Sri.
Ramaswamy temple, Sr. Subramaniya temple and Saraswathy temple are centres
of worship. In the Ramaswamy temple, scenes from Ramayana have been carved
on wooden panels.
**Mathoor Thottipalam**

The Mathoor rough is the tallest as well as the longest through bridge in Asia, built at an altitude of 115 feet. Constructed in 1969, this bridge has become a place of tourist attraction. The bridge has been constructed at mathoor across the river Parazhiyar and the trough canal on the bridge carries water for irrigation from one side of a hill to the other side of a hill. The trough is 384 meters long, with walls 7 feet high, and width of 7 feet 6 inches. The canal is being shouldered by 29 huge pillars. The district administration has created adequate infrastructure facilities for tourists coming over here. It is 60 kms from Kanyakumari.

**Petchiparai Dam**

It is nearly 62 kms from Kanyakumari and 43 kms from Nagercoil. This dam was built during the days of the Maharaja Sri Moolam Thirunal across the river Kodayar. The dam is 425.1 m long, with a catchment area of 204.8 sq.km. The location of the dam is quite pleasant. it is a fine centre for tourists and can boast of a pleasure boat service too. The dam is surrounded by dense forests with valuable trees, wildlife etc.

**Thiruvattar**

The temple here is dedicated to ‘Adi Kesava Perumal in the Ananthasayananam posture and is considered one of the 13 scared places for the
Vaishnavas. The inscriptions found in the temple fix its age to the 12th century. Remains of old mural paintings belonging to a period not later than the 17th century are seen on the walls of the inner shrine. Wood carvings of exquisite workmanship adorn some of the structures in the temple. It is about 11 kms north of Thuckalay on the Nagercoil- Kulasekharam road and 46 kms from Kanyakumari.

**Mandaikadu Bhagavathi Amman Temple**

Mandaikadu is situated on the seacoast 4 kms north-east of Colachel port. This place is famous for its temple dedicated to Bhagavathi Amman. The Amman is in the form of an Ant Hill, about 12 feet in height and with five heads believed to be growing daily. The annual festival called Mandaikadu kodai is celebrated with great enthusiasm and fanfare in March for 10 days.

**Velu Thambi Dalawah Memorial**

Thalakulam is a hamlet located in Kalkulam taluk of Kanyakumari district, 30 kms away from Kanyakumari. This place is historically important since it marks the birthplace of the great revolutionary Velu Thamby Dalawah, a Dewan in the former Travancore State who resisted the British. His ancient home at Thalakulam village was once destroyed by the British. Later on, the house was
rebuilt by his nephews, in which some of his personal belongings and personal weapons employed in his battles against the British are kept.

**Peer Mohamed Dargah at Thuckalay**

There is a dargah named “Peer Mohamed Oliyullah Dargah” at Thuckalay, named after the great Philosopher Mohamed Appa, who was born in Tenkasi of Tirunelveli district. After spending sometime in spiritual pursuits in Peermedu of the Kerala State, he came and stayed at Thuckalay. Being a tamil poet of great eminence, he wrote several books on philosophy. It is said that he laid the foundation stone here for the Padmanabhapuram granite fort. The anniversary of the great philosopher poet is celebrated every year on a grand scale on a grand scale on full moon day in the month of Rajap. Both the people of Kerala and Tamil Nadu attend the celebrations regardless of their caste, creed and religion.

**Chitharal**

Chitharal is a small village situated at a distance of 7 kms from Marthandam and 45 kms from Kanyakumari. It is famous for the rock-hewn temple. The hillock at Chitharal has a cave containing, rock-cut reliefs of sculpturesof Thirthankaras and attendant deities inside and outside the care dating back to 9th century AD. It was converted into a temple for Bhagavathy in the 11th century AD. Cars and Vans can reach up to the foot of the hill. Visitors walk for
about 10 minutes to reach the temple. The Jain images have been preserved by Central Archaeological Survey of India.7

Thus, Kanyakumari district occupies a place of extraordinary significance as far as its natural environment and history are concerned. The scenic beauty of this unique district has been a major lure for thousands of tourists from far and near. International tourists very often feel drawn towards these places as the exquisite beauty of the landscape here cannot find a match anywhere. An attempt is made in this chapter to give a vivid portrayal of some of the beaches which have been a major lure for the local and national tourists.

**Beaches**

Kanyakumari district is noted for its natural beaches too. The following are the most sought after tourist havens.

**Sothavilai Beach**

This beach is 12 kms from Nagercoil and 12 kms from Kanyakumari on the West Coast Road. It lies in Puthalam Town Panchayat and constitutes one of the best natural beaches of the district. Soft waves of shallow water with lovely sand dunes attract hundreds of domestic tourists here. It is an ideal, idyllic for

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7In and Around Kanyakumari Tourist Guide Book, Published by District Collector, Kanyakumari District, Nagercoil, Co-ordination Tourist Officer, Kanyakumari.
holiday lovers in the tropics. The district administration has provided the necessary basic infrastructure facilities like drinking water, shadow shelters, view tower, children’s play and toilet facilities here.

**Sanguthurai Beach**

It is a beautiful beach which is very easily accessible for the local population of Nagercoil. The beach lies in Rajakkamangalam Panchayat Union. It is 13 kms from Nagercoil and 15 kms from Kanyakumari on the West Coast road. There is a convenient bus service to this spot from Nagercoil. The district administration has also provided basic infrastructure for tourists here.

**Thekkuruchi Beach**

Thekkurichi, a tiny village with lovely clam seashore lies on the west coast road. It is a lesser known sea shore of Kanyakumari district lying in the jurisdiction of Rajakkamangalam Panchayat Union. It is a calm seashore village, surrounded by shady thickets of casuarinas creating a spell-binding atmosphere. It is a fine picnic spot and a tourist centre. Coir making is a major small-scale business of the villagers here. This village is situated a distance of 10 kms from Nagercoil and 29 kms on the west coast road from Kanyakumari.
Muttom Beach

Located at 16 kms from Nagercoil and 32 kms from Kanyakumari. Muttom is a delightful place on the coast of Kalkulam, taluk, attracting people desirous of a seaside holiday. The seashore here looks majestic because of the mammoth rocks jutting out right into the sea. The waves dashing against the rocks and falling in huge cascades of water crystals create a mystic atmosphere. Muttom is also a renowned shooting location for both Tamil and Malayalam movies.

This seashore has a rich heritage on account of its ancient lighthouse, originally erected by the British in 1875 and subsequently improved in 1909. The sunset viewpoint here is one of the most enthralling in the world. The district administration has developed the basic infrastructure facilities like shady shelters, benches, car parking, solar lighting and risk-free fencing on the rocks here.

Thengapattinam Beach

Thengapattinam situated on the west coast near Painkulam village in Vilavancode taluk has a fine beach adorned with coconut groves. As coconuts are abundant in this place, the place owes its name Thengapattinam to the coconuts growing in abundances here as coconut is known as ‘Thengai’ in Tamil. In ancient times this village had direct trade relations with foreign countries like Arabia. There was a busy direct cargo boat service between Thengapattinam and foreign
maritime towns. Copra, dry fish, coir and shark fin were the main products that were exported from here.

Thengapattinam has also the estuary of the lovely river Tamiraparani aiming with its non-salty water from the inlands. The back waters in the place are surrounded by breath-taking by dense coconut groves. Boat rides on the river backwaters is really a very pleasant experience. It is 35 kms from Nagercoil and 54 kms from Kanyakumari.

Thus, it can be seen that Kanyakumari district abounds with tourist places of scenic splendor, historic heritage and environmental significance. Kanyakumari district, located at the very tip of the land’s end of this Indian Peninsula has a tremendous tourist potential. The entire place can look forward to the arrival of an enormous traffic of tourists both national and international, in the years to come.

3.6 SUMMARY

This chapter presented a birds-eye view of the five select tourism centres under the study.