CHAPTER IV

SCENIC ATTRACTIONS IN TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT

Tourism and Tourism Resources

Kalakkad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve offers a range of options for the tourist, from religious places to adventure treks. Here the researcher presents brief description of the important kinds of tourism resources. A useful tool for management is zoning within a park. Sensitive sites are zoned for low levels of use, while hard areas are zoned for intensive uses.

Nature Related Tourist Destinations

These include the various waterfalls, trails and treks and forests which a pickinicker, an adventure tourist or nature lover would like to visit. Papanasam upper dam and Papanasam lower dam have become tourist resources in their own rights. Papanasam Dam is located 49 kms. away from Tirunelveli. Upper dam has a flourishing boating industry, either to ferry people across, so they can visit Banathirtham or just for enjoyment. Hikes and treks have not really been explored as a tourist pastime but there are a number of beautiful treks which are not too tough. The fact that there are a comfortable forest bungalows at the other end, and that many of these are accessible through jeeps and
trucks, means that tourists can expect and will get a level of comfort expected from most operators.

For the nature lover, animal sightings can be a big attraction, tiger sightings are rare but leopards are seen frequently. Ungulates, particularly Cheetah are common. Birds and butterflies are abundant. In fact Kalakkad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve is one of the best bird sanctuaries in the country. The following are the few examples.

(i). Road approaching Nambi koil: goes through good riparian forest and makes for a nice nature walk.

(ii) Talayani Tourist Complex: museum, interpretation centre, dormitory facilities.

(iii) Mudalairippan Water Fall - on the way to Sengaltheri: nice small water falls area.

(iv) Manimuthar Falls: big water falls with bathing area.

(v) Mundanthurai Plateau: Situated at the confluence of the Servalar and Karaiyar rivers, lots of nature walks possible radiating away from the rest house.

(vi) Papanasam Upper dam: View of the Karaiyar dam, take off point to Banathirtham falls.

(vii) Banathirtham: Large water falls at the point of entry of one of the streams bringing in water to the Karaiyar dam.

\[1 \text{Current Science - A Journal, Vol.80, No.3, 10th February 2001.}\]
(viii) Agasthiyar falls: on the Tambiraparani river after lower dam, close to the border of the Papanasam.²

Wild Life Sanctuary

Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve Wild Life Sanctuaries

The Mundanthurai Kalakkad wild life sanctuary in Tirunelveli district is developed as a National Tiger Reserve from the year 1988 with a total area of 817 sq. km. in the southwestern ghat ranges. The nearest stations are Cheranmahadevi and Ambasamudram, which are 20 kms and 15 kms respectively from Tirunelveli. The nearest airports are Madurai and Trivandrum. One can reach this place by road also from Ambasamudram and Kalakkad. Frequent buses are plying from Ambasamudram and Kalakkad to this place. Out of 817 sq. kms. 459 kms. is in core zone and 358 sq. kms. is in buffer zone. The mountainous undulating topography is the characteristic feature leading to tropical dry forest on the lower slopes and tropical wet evergreen forests on the upper reaches.³

The climate is dry, humid and hot, at plains and at pleasant cold in the higher elevations. The reserve is the southernmost habitat of the tiger. Other predators like panthers, jungle cats, civets, dholes, jackals, striped hyenas are also found here.

India is the home of 18 non-human primate species of which five primates occur in this reserve namely lion-tailed masque, slender loris, Nilgiri langur, common langur and bonnet macaque. Other endangered species found here are Nilgiri thar, sloth bear, Indian bison, Indian elephant, Malabar giant squirrel, mouse deer, pangolin. In addition to that sambar wild boar, spotted deer and porcupine and mongooses are also found here.  

We can also come across reptiles and amphibians like king cobra, common krait, russets, viper, dark pit viper, monitor lizard, garden lizard, tortoise, crocodiles and rare species of frogs. Regarding the fauna, there are more than 80 species of birds found in this region. To mention a few spotted frequently here are egrets, herons, jungle fowl, spur fowl, partridge, quails, emerald dove, mini vets, bee caters, sparrows, owls, night jars, kites, paradise flay catchers, and parakeets.

There are 24 identified nature trails, which is spread over the reserve. It gives a thrilling experience to trekkers. This Tiger Reserve is open on all days between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. throughout the year. However the best season is September to January. Forest Rest Houses and dormitories are available at Mundanthurai and Thalayanai.  

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4 Idem.

Many of our wild life sanctuaries are in remote areas. They lack rest rooms and food. So, the Government should take efforts for the setting up of hotels and lodges in these areas. This may be done with the help of interested private parties. The government should take care of providing the infrastructure in accordance with the international standard. This will attract more foreigners to our sanctuaries. Also the standard of our sanctuaries has to be improved. The government has to take special care of the rare varieties of animals.

The forest department has to take steps allowing the public to visit these sanctuaries. Sometimes they do not allow the public to visit. So they are disappointed, and they hesitate to visit it again. At the same time, they are also having the responsibility of saving the wild animals from the disturbance by the public. They have to be properly motivated not to disturb the wild animals and the flora and fauna.

There are also entertainments such as theme parks. The interested private operators should be inducted in this entertainment work. If the wild life sanctuaries are be upgraded to the international standard, some international standard hotels and lodges are to be developed to attract the foreign tourists. In many places the
roads are in good condition but the bus services are not regular. If the bus services are made regular and it will increase the tourist inflow.\(^6\)

**Kalakkadu Wild Life Sanctuary**

This sanctuary is very popular with botanists and ornithologists as it has a great variety of fauna particularly the birds life. Among the carnivores of this place are tiger, panther, jackal and wild dogs, while the reptile population includes the king-cobra, cobra, python and several other snakes. The Kalakkadu Sanctuary was declared a forest preserve for the rare lion-tailed macaque, which is easily spotted here. The best season to visit this sanctuary is between March and September. Trekking is allowed here with the prior permission from the officials of forest (Wild Life) Department.\(^7\) Kalakkadu wild life sanctuary harbors a large population of birds include egrets, herons, jungle fowl, spur fowl, partridge emerald spur rows, owls, night jars, kiles paradise catchers and several.\(^8\)

**Shengaltheri**

Shengaltheri is located in Kalakkadu mountain area in Tirunelveli district. It is 20 kms. from Kalakkadu village, and 68 Km. from Tirunelveli. This area comes under Kalakkadu Wild Life

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6 Field Visit on 18th July 2007.
Sanctuary. This place is a popular picnic spot because of its natural beauty and salubrious climate. Manimutharu originates here. The perennial waterfall is an added attraction for tourists. In Shengaltheri, a Rest House and one Watch Tower are the available accommodation facilities. There is another P.W.D. Inspection Bungalow near the bus stop at the junction. The nearest Railway station are Valliyoor and Nanguneri. To go to Shengaltheri, prior permission has to be obtained from Field Director, Kalakkad Mundandurai Tiger Reserve, Tirunelveli.\(^9\)

Many of our wild life sanctuaries are in remote areas. They lack rest rooms and food. So, the Government should make a provision for them in these areas. This may be done with the help of interested private parties. The government should take care of providing the infrastructure in accordance with the international standard. This will attract more foreigners to our sanctuaries. The standard of our sanctuaries has to be improved. The government has to take care of the rare varieties of animals. They have to be maintained in the proper manner.\(^10\)

There are more entertainment modes such as theme parks. These help to attract the tourists. The interested private operators

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should be inducted in this entertainment work. Though the condition of the road is good, there is no frequent bus service to this sanctuary directory from the city. If the bus service is frequent it will also help the tourist to reach this place.\footnote{Field visit on 21st July 2007.}

**Manjolai Hill Station**

Manjolai is 57 kms. away from Tirunelveli and is at an elevation of 1162 sq. metre. There are many tea plantations in and around this place. Bombay, Burma tea estate is famous one in this area. About 4000 people are working in these tea plantations. Manjolai is noteworthy for the climate, scenery and calm atmosphere. This place can easily be compared with Udagamandalam, the queen of Hill stations as far as the pleasing climate and peaceful natural atmosphere are concerned. Just above Manjolai, there are places like Kakkachi and Nalumukka, which are real gifts of the nature. On the way to Manjolai from Manimuthar there is a very beautiful place called Dasan Pool with plenty of fresh water, greens and fine climate.\footnote{V.S. Padmanabha Ayyar, *A Short Account of Tinnevelly District, Palayamkottai*, 1933, pp.12-15.}

Manjolai is rich in flora and fauna. It is an excellent place not only for the tourist but the botanist also. There is lot of potential for tourism. That is mountain climbing, trucking, boating, horse riding. It has also pollution-free environment. The low pollution free is mainly
due to the small population. There are only 5000 people permanently settled and working in the tea plantation. The major part of forest area has converted into the tea plantations.

It is a difficult task to go the Manjolai. First one must get the permission from the forest department. Then one has to get the permission from the BBTC also and there is need to get permission by the Tamil Nadu Electricity Board also. Because the dams are controlled by the EG and the Public Works Department. Another problem is the transportation. There is no frequent bus service available from Tirunelveli or the nearby area. Only Government bus service is allowed. If the bus services are frequent, the potential of Manjolai as the hill resort will improve.

If the Manjolai hills are converted into tourism spot, it should have some basic amenities like hotel, accommodation and sanitation. If any building is built that will affect the natural vegetation, hence judicial conversion to tourism spot must be followed.\(^\text{13}\)

Even though Manjolai has the potential of a hill resort it requires protection from environment degradation. The public should be sensitised in this direction.\(^\text{14}\)

\(^\text{13}\) Field visit on 23rd July 2007
\(^\text{14}\) Idem.
Places of Interest in Manjolai

- Manimuthar on the way to Manjolai
- Kakkachi
- Nalamukku
- Kuthuraietti
- Darsan Pool (Manimuthar)
- Water Falls (Manimuthar)
- Kodaiyar
- Roadway (From Kodaiyar to Peachiparai Dam coming under the control of E.B.)
- Mini Golf Coarse

Accommodation

- The Guest House of Travancore

General Information\(^\text{15}\)

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\(^{15}\) Pamphlet: "State Department of Tourism, Tirunelveli District".
Season : June to September,

Languages : Tamil, Malayalam, English

Nearest Railway Station : Tenkasi - 8 Kms.

Nearest Airport : Madurai - 160 Kms.

**Birds Sanctuary at Koonthankulam**

A tiny village in the far south, Koonthankulam in Nanguneri Taluk of Tirunelveli District is emerging as a new favourite of the migratory birds. It is just 38 kms. away from Tirunelveli and is in the nearby Nanguneri Taluk. It may soon be catapulted into the list of popular water bird sanctuaries in the country. This village is sparsely populated. Migratory birds start coming by December end and fly away to their northern homes by June or July after they lay eggs, hatch them and the young ones grow old enough to fly with the older ones. About 35 species of birds visit this calm but congenial village for breeding. The birds called painted strokes are coming from North India and East European Countries to this place. Similarly the flamingoes, which flew in mainly from the Rann of Kutch have hatched and reared their young ones in the village.16

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It is one of the famous and most important Bird's Sanctuary among not only the lovers of birds but also to the researchers. Even though, it is a famous spot among the scientists and bird watchers throughout the world it is not popular even among the locals of the district. The efforts are to be taken to focus and create awareness about the importance of the great birds sanctuary.

There is no direct bus service to the place from Tirunelveli. If one wants to go to the bird's sanctuary one has to get down in the village called 'Munanjipatti'. From there no transportation facility is available to the sanctuary, which is nearly 5 kms. from the small village. In that village there is only an old and rusted sign board to show the way leading to the birds sanctuary. The authorities have to install clear sign boards at appropriate places.

The birds sanctuary is situated in the rear side of the village. The birds are nesting on the local neem trees even in the terrace of the houses. The local people never disturb the birds at any cost. The birds sanctuary consists of a small pond thorny bushes. During the season (January - April) birds from various countries like Pakistan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, USA, Australia migrate here and when the season is over the birds return.  

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17 www. Indiain infoweb.com/tamilnadu/Tirunelveli
**Courtallam**

Courtallam, the 'spa of the south' is situated at an elevation of about 167 meters on the western ghats in Tirunelveli District. It is an excellent health resort. The waters of Courtallam is believed to have medicinal qualities as it flows through forests of herbs. Courtallam is 160 Kms from Madurai, 137 Kms from Kanyakumari and 112 Kms from Trivandrum. The nearest airports are Madurai and Trivandrum. The nearest railway station is Tenkasi, which is just 6 Kms from here. Season starts in the month of July and ends in September.

Of the nine waterfalls, the one in the village itself is the 60 metre high Main Falls. Its sheer rock face is carved with old Hindu insignia that is visible only during the dry months of January and February. Other falls, mostly accessed by shuttle buses, are at a distance of eight kilometers.

**Main Falls**

It is in Courtallam town itself.

**Tiger Falls**

It is at a distance of 2 kms. away from the bus stand.

**Chitraruvi (Little Falls)**

Chitraruvi is situated near the Main Falls. One has to buy a ticket to take bath here.
Five Falls

It is 4 Kms away from Courtallam. Buses and rental vans are available in plenty.

Old Courtallam

This falls is at a distance of 6 Kms from Courtallam. Town bus or rental vans can be used.

*Then Aruvi (Honey Falls)*

It can not be reached by vehicles. One must be prepared to walk in the forest for nearly 2 hours up in the hills. It is tedious to reach to reach the place. People beyond middle age and women are not advised to go. On the way to this *Then Aruvi*, one may take bath in Shenbagadevi falls, but it is not safe to take bath here.

New Falls

Perched at an elevation of 1000 feet, and 2 kms from the Main Falls is the new falls amidst a sylvan landscape of wild forest. The panoramic view from this spot offers a beautiful sight of the entire town below.
Old Falls

About 7 kms from the Main Falls and connected by a motorable road is the Old Courtallam falls. It is the important water falls of Courtallam.

Courtallanathar Temple

Temples are the mainstay and backbone of the Hindu religion. It is the dwelling place of god, which serves the purpose of housing His/Her image. To a Hindu the temple is an abode of god.\textsuperscript{18} Its Tamil equivalent is \textit{kovil}. A temple in the Indian context is an abode of gods, a place of worship for devotees, a centre of socio-cultural festivities and a place of philosophical discourses. So a satisfactory definition of a temple must take into account not only a society's religious interests but also its cultural, political and economic institutions.\textsuperscript{19} Worshipping gods in temple infuses divinity and purity in the heart of the devotees.\textsuperscript{20} It provides a link between man and god and the earthly life and divine life. It is applicable to Courtallanathar temple also.

Courtallanathar temple is one of the fourteen places of Siva Worship in the Pandya territory. Courtallam is known for its antiquity, picturesque location, sacred water, panoramic beauty and also for its

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{The New Encyclopedia Britannica}, Vol.XXVI, Delhi, p.459.
\textsuperscript{20} P.V.Jagisa Ayyar, \textit{South Indian Shrines}, New Delhi, 1983, p.11.
The deity Courtallanathar enshrined in the Courtallanathar temple is in the form of the Linga (Phallus, representation of Siva). Siva the cosmic dancer and destructive force, is raised as the primary deity with great power of sustained energy to protect people from the natural calamities. The goddess of this temple is locally called as Kulalvayamoli Amman. The Sakthi shrine in the temple complex is known as Meru pitham popularly called Dharani pitham or Parasakthi pitham. Champaka Devi one of the guardian deities of this temple is seen at the height of 2 kilometres from the foot of the Trikuta hill, near Champaka falls. It is one of the temples connected with Courtallanathar temple.

**Brief History of Courtallanathar Temple**

Courtallanathar temple has had a continuous history from 7th century. The earliest part of this temple complex seems to be single stone shrine facing west. At present it is called the Soma Linga shrine. It contains the vestiges of a few vatteluthu (8th century A.D.) and Tamil Inscriptions on the outer side of the back wall. There are nearly ten inscriptions of Parantaka Chola - I (dated 907-955 A.D.)²² who seems to be the greatest builders of this temple complex. Donations from the Cholas to this temple continued during the period of Rajaraja

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²² A.R.E., Nos. 438 and 441 to 445, 447 and 448 of 1918.
the great. The two inscriptions of Rajaraja\textsuperscript{23} record his donations of lands for daily puja\textsuperscript{s} and cows for burning perpetual lamps to this temple and revenue to undertake repair work at the central shrine of Courtallananthar temple. Many little shrines belong to 16th and 18th century A.D. and their donors are not known. The poligars of Vadakarai (10 kms from Courtallam) Chinnancha Thevar and Rajagopala Thevar were the important donors of this temple. They built Kolumandapa, Trikaceta mandapa, teppakulam (sacred tank) and sheds for temple cars.\textsuperscript{24} Both of these donors are seen standing in anjalihasta (hand pose in which both the hands are clasped together in the form of worship) in the muhamandapa (front hall) of the Courtallananthar temple.

In the 18th century the administration of the temple was brought under the control of Thiruvadaduthurai Mutt.\textsuperscript{25} As per the Eleventh Regulation Act of 1817 formulated by the British Government, the temples of South India came under the direct control of the Government.\textsuperscript{26} At present this temple is under the control of the Commissioner of Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment Board.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{23} H.R.Pate, (Ed.), \textit{op. cit.}, p.250.
\textsuperscript{24} E.M.Subramania Pillai, \textit{Nellai Mavatta Koil Varalaru} (Tamil), Madras, 1962, p.123.
\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Travancore Archaeological Series}, Vol.I, p.150.
\textsuperscript{26} H.R.Pate, (Ed.), \textit{op. cit.}, p.78.
\textsuperscript{27} \textit{Idem.}
In 1925 Kulavaymoli Amman temple was remodelled and *Kumbhabhishekam* was performed in 1933. Courtallanathar temple was renovated recently and *Kumbhabhishekam* was held on 5.4.1996 under the auspices of the Gurus of Thiruvavaduthurai and Dharmapuram Mutt. So the temple is in a good condition. Courtallanathar temple is one of the fairly rich temples in Tamilnadu. This temple possesses both moveable and immoveable property. This temple has got more than 170 acres of wetland and 23 acres of coconut and mango groves. Besides these the temple possess a flower garden in 2 acres 4 cents. Flowers from this temple garden are used for daily puja in the temple. In addition to the above lands the temple owns lodges, shops and *Kalyana mandapa* (Marriage Hall). Holy ornaments of gold and silver worth about Rs.51,500 grams are temple's possessions. Temple has various kattalaigal (donors) for conducting daily pujas and annual festivals.

The *Sthala viruksha* (sacred tree) of this temple is *kurumpala* (Jackfruit). The great Saiva saint Thirugnana Sambandar has written

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28 Tablet found in the temple complex.
29 Tablet in the temple entrance.
30 “*Alaya Sothu Pathivedu*” (Temple Property Register), Courtallam, 1959, p.18.
Thirukurumpala Pathigam. It is the only temple where the Sthala viruksha has been praised in separate verses. The sacred theertha of the temple is Sivamadhu Gangai, which is called Honey falls. It is believed to be the Ganges of south and is considered as a sacred one.

Dharani Pitham

The Dharani Pitha is dominant in the outer periphery on the left side of Courtallanathar shrine. It is popularly called Meru Pitham or Parasakthi Pitham. Here Sakthi is in the form of three-dimensional Srichakra. It is one of the sixty four Sakthi Pithas. This temple might have been constructed during the time of Nayaks. Generally Sakthi is seated on the pedestal (Pitha), but here the Pitha is sanctified as Sakthi. It is believed that this Pitha was installed by Sivalaya Muni. This Pitha is rightly named as Arul Parasakthi Pitha, Yoga Pitha and Meru Pitham. In Thirucourtalla Thalapuranam the worship of Dharani Pithas and the benefits were beautifully carved in a niche by the writer.

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33 Thirukurumpala Pathigam, vol.3.
34 H.R.Pate, (Ed.), op.cit., p.23.
35 E.M.Subramania Pillai, op.cit., p.34.
36 Kasthuri Nagarajan, Thirucourtalla thala Varalaru (Tamil), Thiruvavaduthurai, 1996, p.3.
37 H.R.Pate, (Ed.), op.cit., p.50.
38 E.M,Subramaniya Pillai, op.cit., p.223.
39 Kasthuri Nagarajan, op.cit., p.65.
40 Idem.
41 Tirucourtalla Talapuranam, Parasakthi Pitha Charukkam, v.4.
Pujas and Festivals

Pujas form the daily principal ceremony in the temples. In Courtallanathar temple, pujas are performed nine times daily by qualified priests. Pujas are conducted in Courtallanathar temple according to Makutagama and hence pujas are offered to Lord Vinayaka first and then to Lord Nataraja. Monthly and annual festivals are celebrated in the temple regularly. Three major festivals of ten days each are celebrated in a year. They are: Chitra-Vishnu festival (April), Aipasi Vishnu festival (October) and Arudra festival (December-January). A special feature of this temple is that during Arudra festival, Thandava Deepa aradhana representing the cosmic dance of the supreme being is offered daily to Lord Nataraja both in the morning and in the evening specially on the Arudra day. During the other two festivals this offering is made on the 7th day of the festivals. This offering is a very interesting and picturesque sight would arrest the attention of the worshipper reverting his mind with feelings of piety and emotion. During Courtallam season (June - September) and Lord Ayyappa season (December - January) the temple is crowded with devotees/tourists.

42 Tirucourtallak Kuravanchi, V.36.
43 Tirucourtallanathar Ula, 1.203.
Chitra Sabha (Portrait Hall)

**Chitra Sabha** one of the five dancing halls of Lord Siva, is situated on the northern side of the Courtallanathar temple. It is dedicated to Lord Nataraja and decorated with paintings of rural deities and devotees, puranic stories and religious events. It was built by Parakrama Pandya, the builder of the famous Tenkasi temple.\(^{44}\)

Parakrama Pandya built the entire superstructure out of wood and had them all painted in luxuriant colours with lackquer paintings. The poligars of Vadakarai Chinnannacha Thevar covered the roof with copper plates.\(^{45}\) Copper plates were fixed on the *Chitra Sabha* with 1008 copper nails. *Pranava mantra om* was engraved at the top of nail.\(^{46}\)

The paintings done into a number of panels on the walls of the *Chitra Sabha* include the various forms of Lord Siva and Mother Goddess. The whole structure is provided with an additional frontal *mandapa* by Chinnancha Thevar of 18th century.

Lord Nataraja is in *Thirupurathandavam* posture in *Chitra Sabha* was beautifully painted.\(^{47}\) In the right side of Lord Nataraja Srichakra is painted in light blue and red colour. It is like a full-blown

\(^{44}\) H.R. Pate, (Ed.), *op.cit.*, p.35.
\(^{45}\) *Tirucourtalla Kuravanchi*, V.51.
\(^{46}\) E.M. Subramaniya Pillai, *op.cit.*, p.189.
\(^{47}\) *Tirupathur Puranam*, Gowri Thandava charukam, V.13.
white lotus. Sakthi is in the form of *Sakta Pitha* in *Chitra Sabha*. She is worshipped by the people. In this way the symbolic representation of mythological studies in paintings and sculptures in temples served as visual feast to the uneducated.\(^{48}\) In front of this copper roofed *Sabha* a lily tank, with a heavily ornamented *gopuram* is situated. It is the sacred tank of Courtallanathar temple. Every year in the Tamil month of *Thai* (corresponding to January-February) the floating festival of Courtallanathar temple is held in this tank.

**Ivory Palanquin**

The ivory Palanquin of Courtallanathar temple is a masterpiece of art. The god and goddesses mount on separate replica of the bulls, Goddess Kali.\(^{49}\) Lord Nataraja and the figures of Dwarapalakas are rare pieces of art made in ivory. They are engraved in the wooden chassis of the palanquin. The colourful painted figures of Kulavaymoli Amman with the Kurumpalanathar are beautifully engraved in ivory. Inside the Palanquin, figures of Lord Nataraja and goddess Sivagami Amman on one side and the figures of dancing Kali, Bhairava, Virabhadrar on the opposite side are engraved in ivory.

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\(^{49}\) E.M..Subramania Pillai, *op.cit.*, p.156.
Unique Feature

The researcher found an important copper plate in the storehouse of the Courtallanathar temple. It was dated 1700 in Saka era corresponding to 1778 A.D. This records the donation given by some Muslim merchants for three specific purposes. (1) The performance of daily rituals (2) the conduct of annual festivals; and (3) for providing ornaments studded with diamond for the deity. For these purposes the Muslims set apart specified portions of the Mahamai (cess collected by the merchants from the buyers who buy articles of religious nature collected from their trade marts or markets at Tenkasi, Shenkottah, Puliyarai, Kadayanallur, Sivaramapettai and Surandai. All these places are around Courtallam.

Probably these merchants belong to the famous guild of merchants called the Anjuvannathar. This record does not make any mention of the later Pandya rulers of this region. From this plate it is known that names of the important trade centres of this region belong to 18th century. Though belonging to Islam, these Muslim traders display a great sense of catholicity towards Hinduism, which is contrary to the belief that Muslims are iconoclasts, and intolerant towards other. If only such tolerance prevails among all the peoples of different religion today National Integration and harmony shall not be a far off dream.
Mounaswami Mutt

The Mounaswami Mutt is situated on an important trunk road very near to the main Falls in Courtallam. It was established in 1909 by His Holiness Late Sri Siva Chidananda Saraswathi who is popularly known as Sri Mounaswami on account of vow of silence, till he attained his Siddhi. The mutt contains shrines of several deities relating to Siva, Sakti and Vaishnava cult. Swamigal installed the Sri Siddheswari Pitha and various images such as Vinayaka, Dattatreya, Sri Rama, Lakshmana and Sita, Krishna, Anjaneya, Narasimha and Kameswara. This mutt shrine has become a famous one.

Prithiyankara Devi

Prithiyankara is one of the malign forms of Sakti. Her shrine is in the mutt. In the southern Tamilnadu, Mounaswami mutt is the only shrine, which is having Prithiyankara shrine. Every Tuesday during Rahukalam (inauspicious) hours 3-4.30 p.m. a special ablution and puja is conducted by the mutt authorities. Devotees from various parts of South India participate in this puja to get the blessings of the deity. Prithiyankara is worshipped by the people mainly for the destruction of enemies and success in life.

Festivals

The Navaratri Festival (September - October) is celebrated with great pomp and show. Nearly one thousand people are fed on the Mahanavami day. On the tenth day evening of the festival a procession of the deity is taken round the garden of the mutt premises, which is about 30 acres. In the premises Tirumala Tirupathi Devasthanam constructed recently a free Dharmasala and placed it at the disposal of the Peetadhipathi of this mutt to provide accommodation to the pilgrims. The mutt has got several buildings of its own to give shelter to the devotees of the mutt. The mutt has been so created on strong religious foundations that one can easily prophesy that it sustains and works for the upliftment of humanity for centuries to come.

Mosque

There is a Jumma mosque on the Five Falls road just opposite to the Forest Department Office. It is situated on a strategic location. Main Falls and Chitraruvi are very year from here. Five time prayers are held here. On Fridays congregational prayer is held at noon. Muslims gather in large the number to offer namaz. There are rooms available for tourists in the mosque complex. Muslim families come and stay in these rooms. As halal food is available to Muslims in nearby hotels, Muslims feel at home in staying here. There is a large
demand for rooms during season. In order to meet the demand, the mosque authorities are expanding the buildings. Keelakarai people are contributing a lot for the development of this mosque complex.\footnote{Field study done by the researcher on 23.04.2004.}

**Church**

Church of South India (C.S.I.) was established in Courtallam in 1944 by S.C.Neel Bishop. It is called Rock Hall church since the church is built on the rock. This church celebrates 'Harvest Festival; in the month of October every year. It is attended by nearly 15000 people from all over Tamilnadu.\footnote{Information given by Rev. Peter Devadas, Pastorate Chairman, Tenkasi on 21.08.2003.} During this festival, the church authorities provide free food to the poor people. In addition to the harvest festival, the church celebrates Christmas and New Year regularly. Moreover the Youth Camp, Teachers camp, Bethel camps are also conducted. Pastorates numbering 148 of this region conducted their retreat meetings in this church.\footnote{Personal Interview with Father Ebenesar Devaraj, Pandaram Chettivalai Church, Udangudi on 21.8.2003.} This church is under the control of Tirunelveli Diocese. Propagation of Gospel is the noble service of the church.\footnote{Information given by Mr. P.Barnabas, in-charge of Christukula Ashram, Courtallam on 22.08.2003.}
Museum

The State Government Museum in Courtallam has an assorted collection of interesting items. It was established in 1981. It houses a rare collection of sculptures from 8th to 18th century A.D. Besides, a burial urn of first century A.D., microliths, different tools of Neolithic culture, two copper plates in Tamil, one copper plate in Telugu, Sati stones, stumpages, Nayak paintings, coins, utensils used by tribal people of various parts of the state are also preserved in this museum. Government publications of books on Archaeology, Numismatics and Epigraphy are also available in this museum for reference and sales.

Among all these waterfalls, Five Falls is very good since it is less crowded than the main falls, and will be more pleasant than any other falls.

Pothigai Hills

Pothigai Hills is one among India's Heritage Hills rich in herbal plants. Pothigai Hill is important as a pilgrimage centre due to the saint Agathiyar Shrine. Among the deep slopes of scrod forest, valleys of dense tropical rainy forest and jagged peaks, Agathiyar malai stands sentinel. It has a distinct conical profiles i.e. really identical from both the eastern and western sides. Though there are

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higher peaks in the same range like Doddabetta, there is something about *Agathiyar malai*, its profile bears an uncanny resemblance to Tibets mound kailas. This mountain has been revered as a secrete mountain associated with sage Agathiyar. These Hills are home to the *Kanies*, an indigenous forest dwelling communities. Since they know the hills, they serve as the best guides of Tiger reserve areas.\(^{57}\)

**Kurtralanathar Temple**

It is dedicated to Lord Thirukutralanathar (Siva). This temple contains many inscriptions about Chola and Pandya kings. Less than a furlong from here, is a small temple called *Chitra Sabha* (Hall of Pictures) dedicated to Lord Nataraja. This temple is decorated with paintings of rural deities and devotees, puranic stories and religious events. The *sabha* is one of five *sabhas* where Lord Nataraja performed the cosmic dance.\(^{58}\)

The very location of the Courtallam Reserve in the Western Ghats, one of the most important biographical zones in India, is unique in the tropical forest conglomerations and very rich floral faunal biodiversity and species endemism.

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\(^{57}\) [www.my tour snap photos.com](http://www.my tour snap photos.com).

\(^{58}\) *Ibid.*
A wide variety of habits are in the Courtallam forest ranging from low elevation scrub and deciduous forest to humid evergreen forest and grasslands.

Temperature is 24° C as minimum, 38° C as an average and 44° C as maximum. The south-west monsoon usually comes in the first week of June in the interior ghats and continues to the end of August. The early break of the monsoon in the catchments area of Chittar, accounts for the flow during the July and August.

Just alight from the Bus entering in the Tenkasi one may feel the placid breeze of the whole western ghats doted with so many water falls. Tourists from across the country and abroad make a beeline to this nationally acclaimed waterfalls town during the season.

It is an excellent health resort. The pictures and the surroundings with the backdrops of cloud cupped spurs of the western ghats lend an unusual charm to the falls. The rapturous scene of the falls gets lightened by the cool breeze that wafts during seasonal months (due to August) along with intermittent drizzle and sun light. There are eight places where water pours down torrentially with varying of velocity and force according to the height of the falls.

Visitors to this place like to have bath in these falls from dawn to dusk. One can have bath at any time in a day and one would not got sneezing or cold as the water is said to possess medicinal qualities of
the herbal plants in the mountain. Those suffering from rheumatic joints, chronic headache nerve disorders get cured by a length of stay at Courtallam.

Courtallam is the most important Tourist centre in the south India. During the season times, people from all over Tamil Nadu and Kerala come here to enjoy their life. It is unfortunate that there is no sanitary arrangements for the floating population during season time.  

**General Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area</td>
<td>40 sq. kms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altitude</td>
<td>40 MSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate / Summer</td>
<td>Max 40°C Min 30°C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter</td>
<td>Max 25°C Min 20°C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season</td>
<td>June to September</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages</td>
<td>Tamil, Malayalam, English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nearest Railway Station</td>
<td>Tenkasi = 8 Kms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nearest Airport</td>
<td>Madurai 160 Kms.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

59 Field visit on 2 August 2007.

60 Pamphlet: "State Department of Tourism, Tirunelveli District", *op.cit.*
There is one boat house in Five Falls road. During the season time the Government has arranged boating.

Every year 'Saral Vizha" has been celebrated by the Government for one week. Courtallam is called as "Poor man's Ooty".

**Uvari Beach Resort**

A small church for St. Mary, which was under the control of Pastors of Goa Mission exists here. In course of time, in 1903, this church was converted into a school. On important occasions as per the wishes of the people, festivals were conducted and prayers were offered to her. There was a custom among the young maidens to go to the nunnery in the night and sleep there. On one such occasion they saw a bright light surrounding this Selvamatha statue even though nobody lit a candle. Many people of Uvari witnessed this light, which was there for over an hour. This incident occurred on 18th September, which is celebrated as a festival. People used to keep this statue in a chariot and come around this town to bestow the blessing of many to the people of Uvari. It is due to sea erosion the old church was damaged. Therefore the people decided to construct a new church for which the foundation stone was laid down by Fr. Thomas on 25th January 1970 and the work was finished in 1974. This church designed as a ship, is called *Kappal* matha church after its design. It is a beautiful church facing the blue sea. The waves rolling near this
church gives us an impression that this ship shaped church is sailing on the sea which is a feast to eyes.\textsuperscript{61}

'Uvari' is one of the famous fishing villages in Tirunelveli. It is not only famous for its fishing business but also for the Anthoniyar Church and the famous Kappal Matha Church. There is a great potentiality for the beach resorts. If it is created, it will be the only beach resort in Tirunelveli District. There is a long beach, which can be converted as a beach resort. The presence of Anthoniyar Church and the Kappal matha Church in the seashore is a beautiful symbols of the beach resorts. But the condition of the beach is not good. It is due to the ignorance of the people about the importance of their own beach they pollute the beach in various ways. So an attempt has to be made to create awareness and make the beach clean. To attract the children there should be theme park and water parks in Uvari. There is no such type of entertainment. The entertainment section and cleanliness of the beach will boost the beach resorts in Uvari.\textsuperscript{62}

**Pottalpudur Dargha**

The centre of attraction of this place is, the oldest *dargah* built around the year 1674. This *dargah* attracts not only the Muslims but Hindus and Christians also in equal numbers. This has been built

\textsuperscript{62} Field visit on Uvari, 4 August 2009.
adopting Hindu temple pattern. If the prayers of the pilgrims are answered, they pay their offerings, through the *dargah* in large numbers during *Kanthuri* festival with great reverence. In this *dargah* where the Lebbais act as priest, customs almost similar to that of Hindus are followed in the rituals. Here holy ashes obtained from tamarind bark, ghee, and flowers called *nerchai* are distributed to the devotees. For this Andavar, sheep and fowls are brought by all the classes of people and sacrificed before him as they do before the local Amman deities. Now refined people offer fruits for their worship rather than fowls and sheep. Sandal paste is prepared in a pot on a large scale during the time of the *Kanthuri* and is sent to the Hindu village of Ravanasaumudram, from where it is brought back to this *dargha* with great pomp. This is offered to the Andavar. Afterwards this sandal paste is distributed to the eagerly awaiting crowd without discrimination, as to caste, creed or religion. This stands as an example of communal harmony and secularism. This *dargha* is considered as a pious and a sacred one equal to the Nagore *dargha* and only next to Baghdad, by the people of this place.\(^{63}\)

Table -1 list the approximate areas, locations and impact caused by each enclave. A total of 28 enclaves have been identified within the Kalakkadu Mundanthurai Sanctuary of these, 4 are Electricity Board

(EB) camps, 1.B.B.T.C. (Bombay Burma Trading Corporation) is leased, 4 are temple complexes and 19 appear to have pattas. Sixteen have been dealt within this chapter and 12 could not be located because of the lack of revenue maps.\(^{64}\)

**Table 2**

Visitors to the Temples\(^{65}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Places of worship</th>
<th>Pilgrims on routine visits</th>
<th>Pilgrims during festivals</th>
<th>Total person days/yr</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Person days/years Ha.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dohnavur Fellowship</td>
<td>30/day (2 months)</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>15.98</td>
<td>113</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golaknath</td>
<td>25/day</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>24,000</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>42,857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nambikoil</td>
<td>10/day</td>
<td>750/month</td>
<td>12,600</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>5,080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sorimuthaianar Koil</td>
<td>30/day</td>
<td>5,00,000</td>
<td>50,800</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>23,981</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Local Day Tourists**

They are normally interested in boat trips or visits to waterfalls. They can be a major cause of disturbance. The day tourists are more on week ends and compose mainly of small groups. The groups arrive mostly in summer. Their awareness of conservation and bio-diversity

\(^{64}\) Data collected from the Forest Department of Kalakkad - Mundanthurai Sanctuary on 15th January 2008.

\(^{65}\) *Current Science, op.cit.*, Vol.80.
is very low. Efforts should be made to sensitize this group through the information displayed at the visitor centre.

**The Visitors Needs**

The needs of the visitors can be described in terms of:

1. Recreational Requirements such as
   a. Packages of activities (eg.), nature walks, treks, boating etc.
   b. Access to information through visitor centres.
   c. Eating areas - restaurants or cafeterias.

2. Stay related requirements such as
   a. Food
   b. Toilet facilities
   c. Bedding etc.
   d. Accommodation and type which could range from tents to forest quest houses

3. Access to facilities such as
   a. Transport
   b. First aid
   c. Communication

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66 Interview with Visitors of Kalakkad Mundanthurai Sanctuary on 14 January 2008.
Having been endowed with rich fauna and flora, Tirunelveli district has got the distinction of attracting the tourists towards its lush green forests, hillocks, waterfalls and bird sanctuaries. Besides, the places of worship of different communities of historical importance offer opportunities to participate and enjoy the multifarious religious activities of those places.