CHAPTER – IV

TOURIST CENTRES IN TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT

Tirunelveli is also known as Nellai and historically (during British rule) as Tinnevelly, is a city in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu. It is the administrative headquarters of the Tirunelveli District. Tirunelveli is located 700 km (430 miles) southwest of the state capital, Chennai and 58 km (36 miles) away from Thoothukudi.

The city is located on the west bank of the Thamirabarani River; its twin city, Palayamkottai, is on the east bank. Tirunelveli is believed to be an ancient settlement; it has been ruled at different times by the Early Pandyas, the Medieval and Later Cholas, the later Pandyas, the Mabar and Tirunelveli sultanates, the Vijayanagar Empire, the Madurai Nayaks, Chanda Sahib, the Carnatic kingdom and the British. The Polygar War, involving Palaiyakkarars led by Veerapandiya Kattabomman and forces of the British East India Company, was waged on the city's outskirts from 1797 to 1801. Tirunelveli has a number of historical monuments, the Nellaiappar Temple being the most prominent.

Industries in Tirunelveli include administrative services, agricultural trading, tourism, banking, agricultural machinery and educational services. The city is an educational hub of southern Tamil Nadu, with institutions such as Tirunelveli Medical College, the Veterinary College and Research Institution, Tirunelveli Law College and the Government College of Engineering. Tirunelveli is administered by a municipal corporation, established in 1994 by the Municipal Corporation Act. The city covers an area of 108.65 km² (41.95 sq mi), and had a population of 411,831 in 2001. Tirunelveli is well-connected by road and rail with the rest of Tamil Nadu.
Tirunelveli was known in Sambandar's seventh-century Saiva canonical work Tevaram as Thirunelveli. Nellaiappar temple inscriptions indicate that Shiva (as Vrihivritesvara) descended in the form of a hedge and roof to save the paddy crop of a devotee. In Hindu legend, the place was known as Venuvana ("forest of bamboo") due to the presence of bamboo in the temple under which the deity is believed to have appeared. The early Pandyas named the city Thenpandiyanadu, the Cholas Mudikonda Cholamandalam and the Nayaks Tirunelveli Seemai; it was known as Tinnelvelly by the British, and Thirunelveli after independence. The word Tirunelveli is derived from three Tamil words: thiru, nel and veli, meaning "sacred paddy hedge".

HISTORY

On acquisition from the Nawab of Arcot in 1801, the British named it as Tinnevelly district though their headquarters was first located in Palayamkottai the adjacent town, where they had their military headquarters during their operations against the Palayakars. Two reasons may be attributed for naming it after Tirunelveli. One is because, it was and is the chief town of the district and the other is that it was already called as Tirunelveli Seemai under the Nayaks and Nawabs. Both Tirunelveli and Palayamkottai grew as the twin towns of the district.

The history of Tirunelveli was researched by Robert Caldwell (1814–91), a Christian missionary who visited the area. Tirunelveli was under the rule of Pandya kings as their secondary capital; Madurai was the empire's primary capital. The Pandya dynasty in the region dates to several centuries before the Christian era from inscriptions by Ashoka (304–232 BCE) and mention in the Mahavamsa, the Brihat-Samhita and the writings of Megasthenes (350–290 CE). The province came under the rule of Cholas under Rajendra Chola I in 1064 CE; however, it is unclear whether he
conquered the region or obtained it voluntarily. Tirunelveli remained under control of the Cholas until the early 13th century, when the second Pandyan empire was established with Madurai as its capital.

The Nellaiappar temple was the royal shrine of the later Pandyas during the 13th and 14th centuries, and the city benefited from dams constructed with royal patronage during the period. After the death of Kulasekara Pandian (1268–1308), the region was occupied by Vijayangara rulers and Marava chieftains (palayakarars, or poligars) during the 16th century. The Maravars occupied the western foothills and the Telugus, and the Kannadigas settled in the black-soil-rich eastern portion. Tirunelveli was the subsidiary capital of the Madurai Nayaks; under Viswanatha Nayak (1529–64), the city was rebuilt about 1560. Inscriptions from the Nellaiappar temple indicate generous contributions to the temple. Nayak rule ended in 1736, and the region was captured by Chanda Sahib (1740–1754), Arcot Nawab and Muhammed Yusuf Khan (1725–1764) during the mid-18th century.

In 1743 Nizam-ul-mulk, lieutenant of the Deccan Plateau, displaced most of the Marathas from the region and Tirunelveli came under the rule of the Nawabs of Arcot. The original power lay in the hands of the polygars, who were originally military chiefs of the Nayaks. The city was the chief commercial town during the Nawab and Nayak era. The city was known as Nellai Cheemai, with Cheemai meaning "a developed foreign town". The polygars built forts in the hills, had 30,000 troops and waged war among themselves. In 1755, the British government sent a mission under Major Heron and Mahfuz Khan which restored some order and bestowed the city to Mahfuz Khan. The polygars waged war against Mahfuz Khan seven miles from Tirunelveli, but were defeated. The failure of Mahfuz Khan led the East India Company to send Muhammed Yusuf for help. Khan became ruler,
rebelled in 1763 and was hanged in 1764. In 1758, British troops under Colonel Fullarton reduced the polygar stronghold under Veerapandiya Kattabomman. In 1797, the first Polygar war broke out between the British (under Major Bannerman) and the polygars (headed by Kattabomman). Some polygars (such as the head of Ettaiyapuram) aided the British; Kattabomman was defeated and hanged in his home province of Panchalaguruchi. Two years later, another rebellion became known as the Second Polygar War. Panchalankuruchi fell to the British, after stiff resistance. The Carnatic region came under British rule following a treaty with the Nawab of Carnatic.

After acquiring Tirunelveli from the Nawab of Arcot in 1801, the British anglicised its name to "Tinnevelly" and made it the headquarters of Tinnevelli District. The administrative and military headquarters was located in Palayamkottai (anglicised as "Palankottah"), from which attacks against the polygars were launched. After independence both cities reverted to their original names, and Tirunelveli remained the capital of Tirunelveli district. A separate Thoothukudi district was split off in 1986

**Transport available in the Tirunelveli District**

The main bus stand (popularly known as the New Bus Stand), opened in 2003, is located in Veinthaankulam and there is regular bus service to and from the city. Other bus stands (for intracity service) are the Junction and Palaya bus stands. The Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation has daily service to a number of cities, and the corporation operates a computerised reservation centre in the main bus stand. It also operates local buses serving the city and neighbouring villages. The State Express Transport Corporation has intercity service to Bangalore, Chennai, Kanyakumari and other cities.

Tirunelveli Junction railway station is one of the oldest railway stations in India. The line from Tirunelveli to Sengottai was opened in 1903;
the connection to Quilon, which was completed later, was the most important trade route to Travancore province in British India. The city is connected to major cities in all four directions: Madurai and Sankarankovil to the north, Nagercoil to the south, Sengottai and Kollam to the west and Tiruchendur to the east. Tirunelveli is also connected to major Indian cities with daily service to Chennai, Tiruchirappalli, Madurai, Kanyakumari, Mumbai, Guruvayur, Howrah, Delhi and Trivandrum. There is passenger service to Madurai, Tiruchendur, Tiruchirpalli and Kollam.

The nearest airport to Tirunelveli is Tuticorin Airport (TCR) at Vaagaikulam in Thoothukudi District, 22 km (14 mi) east of the city, which offers daily flights to Chennai. The nearest international airports are Madurai Airport, 150 km (93 mi) away and Thiruvananthapuram International Airport (TRV), about 130 km (81 mile) away.
TABLE 4.1
TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT ABSTRACT

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Area</td>
<td>6823 Sq.Kms</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Population</td>
<td>3,072,880</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1578595</td>
<td>1554285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>No.of Revenue Divisions</td>
<td>3 - Tirunelveli, Cheranmadevi and Tenkasi</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>No.of Taluks</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>No.of Revenue Villages</td>
<td>559</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>No.of Panchayat Unions</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>No.of Village Panchayats</td>
<td>425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>No.of Town Panchayats</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>No.of Municipalities</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>No.of Corporation</td>
<td>1 – Tirunelveli</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>No.of Parliamentary constituencies</td>
<td>2 - Tirunelveli and Tenkasi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>No.of Assembly constituencies</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>219-Sankarankoil (SC) AC, 220-Vasudevanallur (SC)AC, 221-Kadayanallur AC, 222-Tenkasi AC, 223-Alangulam AC, 224-Tirunelveli AC, 225-Ambasamuthiram AC, 226-Palayamkottai AC, 227-Nanguneri AC, 228-Radhapuram AC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>No. Of Polling Stations</td>
<td>2532</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>No. Of Parts</td>
<td>2532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Voter as on 01.01.2013</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1109926</td>
<td>1111293</td>
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</table>

Source: Tirunelveli District website
Boundaries

The district is surrounded by the State of Kerala, Gulf of Mannar and the districts of Virudhunagar, Thoothukudi and Kanniyakumari.

Administration

The district administration is headed by the District Collector with his office at the district collectorate. The responsibilities of the District Collector include maintenance of law & order, coordinating various development and welfare activities in the district, etc.

**TABLE 4.2**

Details of Other Administrative Setup in Tirunelveli District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Figures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Firkas</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Villages</td>
<td>559</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of village Panchyats</td>
<td>425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of town Panchayats</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Municipalities</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Municipal Corporation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Tirunelveli district website

DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN TOURIST ARRIVALS INTO TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT

The following table clearly exhibits the trends in domestic and foreign tourist arrivals into Tirunelveli district.
TABLE – 4.3
TREND IN DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN TOURIST ARRIVALS INTO TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Domestic Tourists (in lakhs)</th>
<th>Foreign Tourists (in lakhs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>7.18</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>7.44</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>7.71</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>8.46</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>9.40</td>
<td>0.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>10.11</td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>12.25</td>
<td>0.83</td>
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<td>2007</td>
<td>15.83</td>
<td>1.10</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>19.57</td>
<td>1.28</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>24.39</td>
<td>1.48</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>32.19</td>
<td>1.75</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>42.73</td>
<td>2.07</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>57.54</td>
<td>2.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>63.42</td>
<td>2.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>71.09</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Unpublished Records, Tirunelveli Tourism Department

There has been a steady increase of tourist traffic to the Tirunelveli district. During the year 2000, 7.18 lakhs domestic and 0.49 lakhs foreign tourists visited in Tirunelveli district. It’s rose to 7.71 lakhs domestic and 0.50 foreign tourists in 2002. During the year 2009 the corresponding figures for the domestic and foreign tourists is 24.39 lakhs and 1.48 lakhs visited in the state. During the year 2010 domestic tourist arrivals shows decreasing trend, whereas percentage of variation in foreign tourist arrivals shows increasing trend but decreasing rate. During the year 2011-2014 the foreign tourist and domestic tourist arrivals in Tirunelveli district shows the increasing.
MAJOR TOURIST SPOTS IN TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT

Tirunelveli an ancient city is about 2000 years old and is a town of hoary tradition. Tamirabarani River flows here gives pride to the city. Tirunelveli is the capital of Tirunelveli District. This district was formed on 1st September 1790. It is twin city namely Tirunelveli and Palayamkottai. Palayamkottai has been even referred as Oxford of South India. The freedom fighters of 18th to 20th century Veera Pandiaya Kattabomman, Pulithevan Veeran AzhagumuthuKone V.O. Chidambaram Veeran Sundaralingam Subramania Bharathiar and Vanachinathan were born in Tirunelveli District. Hence Tirunelveli District was placed first for freedom struggle to quit the British dynasty. The green paddy fields fed by the Tamirabarani River and the tall palm groves add a verdant dimension to the landscape of Tirunelveli District. This district is famous for palm sugar candy and palm leaf handicrafts.

The following table clearly shows the major tourist spots in Tirunelveli district in Taluk wise.

**TABLE 4.4**

TALUKWISE TOURIST SPOTS IN TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No</th>
<th>Taluks</th>
<th>Tourist spots</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Palayamkottai</td>
<td>Thirupudaimaruthur, Athankarai paliivasal, Robert Caldwell Memorial, Tachanallur temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Kadayanallur</td>
<td>Anjaneyar temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Virakeralampudur</td>
<td>Krishnapuram Vishnu temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Alankulam</strong></td>
<td><strong>Kurukkthurai murugan temple, and Industrial places</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sankarankovil</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sankaranarayanan temple</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sivagiri</strong></td>
<td><strong>Pulithevan palace</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Nanguneri</strong></td>
<td><strong>Thirukurungudi – Vishnu Temple, Mundanthurai and kalakad – Tiger Reservoir</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Radhapuram</strong></td>
<td><strong>Industrial places, Uvari temple, Koonthankulam – Birds Sanctuary</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Ambasamuthram</strong></td>
<td><strong>Sorimuthu Ayyanar Temple, Manimuthar dam, Kadananathi dam and park, Pottalpudur Darga, Agasthiyar falls, Papanasam falls and dam, Ramanathi dam and park, Monjolai Hill stations.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Senkottai</strong></td>
<td><strong>Thirumalai kovil, Vanchinathan railway station, Adavinainar dam and park, Gundar reservoir and falls.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Tirunelveli District website

**Swamy Nellaiapper - Kanthimathi Temple**

Swamy Nellaiapper - Kanthimathi Temple is situated in the heart of the city. This is a twin temple dedicated to Siva and Parvathi. Rare jewels the Golden lily tank, Musical pillars, the hall of thousand pillars and abundance of sculptures in stone and in mortar are worth seeing. Every year Car Festival will be held in this temple. The district administration announced local holiday for this festival.

**Uvari**

It is located on the seashore of the Bay of Bengal. It is on the way from Tiruchendur to Kanyakumari. 40kms from Kanyakumari, 43kms from Tiruchendur and 72kms Tirunelveli. It is twin village namely Nadar Uvari and Anthony Uvari. Nadar uvari on the highway has Lord Siva temple of Suyambulingaswamy. After visiting Tiruchendur Temple so many tourists are visiting this temple and week-end and holidays the tourist flow is high.
Krishnapuram Vishnu Temple

It is 13kms on the way to Tiruchendur. The temple here is dedicated to Lord Vishnu and the presiding deity is Thiruvenkatanathar. A number of the life size minute carved stone sculptures with intricate workmenship adorned. One should not miss to visit this temple since this temple is a treasure house of temple arts. Sthalapuranam of this temple goes back to the Kumarappa Krishnappa Nayak’s regime, who ruled this part of the country as a chieftain in 18th century. The minute carved stone sculpture found in Thirumanamandapam and Argamanadapam are superb. Elephant and cow with one face, karnan, Arjunan, Bheema, Dharma, Manmathan with sugarcane bow having tiny hole in curved rock pipe, Rathidevi, veera bathrar standing in single leg etc. the Important is each and every sculptures are made in monolithi. Every stone is a live art work.

Thirukutralanathar Temple at Courtallam

This temple contains many inscriptions about Chola and Pandya kings. Less than a half kilometer from here is a small temple called Chitra Sabha (Hall of Pictures) dedicated to Lord Nataraja and decorated with paintings of rural deities and devotees, puranic stories and religious events. The sabha is one of the five sabhas where Lord Nataraja performed the cosmic-dance. The Pandya kings used worship here.

Kurukkuthurai Murugan Temple

Lord Muruga temple here on the bank of the Tamiraparani river is beautifully carved out of a rock known as Thiruvuvamalai. It is said that the same rock was used for carving the temple of Lord Muruga at Tiruchendur in 1653. Vaikasi Visakam (may-June) is a popular festival
celebrated here. The lakhs of domestic tourists congregate to witness the festival. Many marriages are solemnized here even now.

**Tenkasi**

It is 54kms from Tirunelveli and 5km from Courtrallam. Sri Lokambika Kasi Viswanatha Swamy temple is situated in the heart of the town, built in 15th century. It is known as South Varanasi. This temple rich in inscriptions, and remarkable excellent minute stone carved life sculptures. Shenbaga tree is the sithala Vriksha of the temple. The temple is 554 feet in length and 318 feet width, 172 feet temple tower was built in 1456 by king Parakirama Pandian. Then the temple tower was damaged in 1924 due to thunder and it was rebuilt by Sivanthi Adithan with height of 163 feet.

**Thirumalai Kovil**

The Murugan temple is situated on a small hill surrounded by western ghats in the border of Kerela state. at panpoli, The presiding deity of the temple is called as Thirumalaikumarasamy. There is one more goddess temple within this temple called Thirumalai Amman. This hill temple is surrounded by lot of coconut plantations and small village, so the view from the top will be great. It is 12km from Tenkasi and 7kms from Senkottai.

**Tirukkurungudi**

It is 45kms from Tirunelveli, 10kms from Valliyoor, 12kms from Nanguneri A famous Vishnu temple here is a treasure house of temple arts and architecture. There are numerous minutely carved stone sculptures and panels. The preseding deity is Sri Azhagiyanambi. Malainambe temple which is 8kms from Thirukkurungudi and it is a fine picnic spot. Falls here attract pilgrims throughout the year. The presiding deity of the hill temple is Thirumalainambi.
**Thirupudaimarudur**

It is 40 Kms from Tirunelveli. Athalanathar temple and Narumpoonathar temple on the banks of river Tamiraparani, attracts tourists mainly because of scenic beauty. The stone sculptures are legend of the temples are interesting. The four styled of temple architecture viz. Pandiya, Chera, Chola and Vijayanagara beautify the glorious temple.

**Thiruvenkatanathapuram (Mela) Vishnu temple**

The mela Thiruvenkatanathapuram temple’s sanctum sanctorum has Lord Srinivasa deity. It is located 10km south west of Tirunelveli in the banks of river Tamirabarani. This temple place is also called Thirunankovil.

**Sri Sorimuthu Aiyanar Temple (KaniKudyiruppu)**

This temple situated at Karayar near Papanasam presiding deity is Sorimuthu Aiyanar. Bommakka, Thimmakka and Boodhathar. It is in 60kms from Tirunelveli. Nearest Railway station is Ambasamudram. This temple is under the control of Zamin Singampatti samasthanam. Adi Ammavasai is celebrated in a grand manner, thousands of people gathered here.

**Sankarankovil**

This temple depicts the concept of Hari and Hara being one God. There is a deity by the name Sankara Narayanan, which are half Lord Shiva and the other half Lord Vishnu. Also, there is another deity, named Avodai ambal or Gomathi Ambal. The sacred sand available in Gomathi Ambal temple, which is believed to cure the diseases. Twice in a year sun rays fall in the pedestal. The 125 feet temple tower has minutely carved stone sculptures. There is a famous festival Adi Thabasu in the month of June which is observed in this temple. This temple was built by Ukrama Pandiyan in 900 AD. It is 56kms from Tirunelveli.
Ayikudi Sri Balasubramaniasamy temple

This temple is situated in Thenkasi Taluk, on the banks of Hanuman Nadi near Kutralam is Ariyar kudi or Arya Kuti – 'the abode of noble people', popularly known as Ayikudi, is this beautiful temple for Young Bala Muruga Peruman,. Utsavar Murthy of this temple is Muthukumaraswamy, standing next to a peacock on a Padma peetam. Both the Moolavar & Utsava Murthys are so beautiful that the darshan of Karunamurthi Bala Muruga is a treat to all the bhaktas who visit this temple. Skanda Shashti Soora Samhara festival, Chithirai Vishu, Vaigasi Vishakam, Masi Makam, Thaipusam are special festivals of this temple.

Holy Trinity Cathedral

The Holy Trinity Cathedral a small, elegant and beautiful Church was built in 1826 by Rev Rhenius and opened to public for worship on 26 June 1826. This small church with an oblong edifice measuring 64 ft. by 30 ft still serves as a nucleus for this massive Cathedral which developed in later years. Venga Mudaliar had donated 168 acres of punjai land for the maintenance of this Church. Many renovations and additions were made to this structure. In the year 1845, a tall stately steeple of 158 feet soaring into the skies was added by Rev. Pettilt and has made the church a landmark all over the district. This church is locally well known as "Oosi Gopuram" as a landmark. The resonant bell gifted by friends in England and installed in 1850 has unfailingly chimed the hours, calling the faithful to worship over the years and the clock set in the tower is relied upon by the entire town as its beloved Big Ben. Many improvements, extensions and renovation works have taken place subsequently. In 1940 Bishop Stephen Neil raised its status as the Holy Trinity Cathedral. Painting, flooring and other extensions were made in the following years. This Church is involved in many social services like paying visit to hospitals. This Church plays a vital role not only
in spiritual upliftment of its people but also in the material upliftment like providing education, distributing free food and clothing and helping them in the construction of their houses etc.

**Kappal madha church or Selva Matha church Uvari**

A small church for St. Mary which was under the control of pastors of Goa mission existed 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 Mary to the people of Uvari. Due to sea erosion the old church got damaged. Therefore the people decided to construct a new church for which the foundation stone was laid down by Fr. Thomas in 1970, 25th January and the work was finished on 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.

**Athankarai Pallivasal**

The pilgrim centre, Athankarai Pallivasal is located in between Thiruchendur and Kanyakumari on the coast road, about 46kms from Thirunelveli. The shrine has two domes of Sufi saints who were believed to grant all desires of devotees. One dome is dedicated to Syed Ali Fathima and another to Hazrath Sheik Mohammed. During the festival held in September, thousands of devotees gather here to pay their homage and seek blessings.
Pottalpudur Dargha

The centre of attraction of this place is the oldest dargha built around the year 1674. This dargha attracts not only the Muslims but Hindus and Christians also in equal numbers. This has been built adopting Hindu temple pattern. If the prayers of the pilgrims are answered, they pay their offerings, through the dargha in large numbers during Kanthuri festival with great reverence. In this dargha 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 Ravanasamudram, 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 Dargah 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.

Courtallam - Spa of South

Courtallam is the most famous tourist spot in the district. The natural water falls, pleasant weather and intermittent drizzling really gives an unusual charm to the visitors. The rapturous scene of the falls gets heightened by cool breeze. Usually, the season is in between May to September. The water falls down in eight places with varying force depends on the height of the cliff.
Main Falls
Small Falls (Citharuvi)
Five Falls (Iyentharuvi)
Kundaru falls
Tiger Falls (Puliyaruvi)
Old Courtallam Falls (Palaiya Coutralam)
SenbahaDevi Falls (Senbakadavi)
Honey Falls (Theanaruvi)
Milk Falls (Paalaruvi)

The Tamil Nadu Tourism Department has arranged facilities for the visitors to take baths at any time. All the falls, except Honey falls, have been properly illuminated. One can bathe at anytime during the day. The water is said to possess medicinal qualities of the herbal plants grown in this mountain. Those suffering from rheumatic pains, chronic headache, and nerve disorder get cured by a long stay at Courtallam.

Boating

Every year during the season (June – September) Tamilnadu Tourism Development Corporation arranges boating in the Melavannamadai lake near Five falls road.

Agasthiyar Falls

Papanasam Falls, 42 km west of Tirunelveli, lies on the Tamiraparani River. The falls, also called Agastya Falls, is believed to be located at the place where Shiva and Parvati appeared before the sage Agastya. Papanasam means absolution of sins. It is an important pilgrim center, where people
take bath in the waters to relieve themselves from sins. Papavinashweshwara (Shiva) Temple is nearby.

**Manimuthar Waterfalls**

Manimuthar Falls is natural water falls flowing throughout the year situated above the Manimuthar dam. Driving there by bike will be adventurous. The falls nearby has a pond which has a depth of 90 feet (27 m). It is a picturesque place. It is in 35 km from Tirunelveli city. There are some public transport service to go this place on regular intervals from Kallidai Kurichi, the nearby town. Above this fall’s the pleasant tourist spot Kothaiyar is there.

**Wild Life Sanctuary**

**Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve**

The Mundanthurai-Kalakad wildlife 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 south most western ghat ranges. The nearest stations are Cheranmahadevi, and Ambasamudaram which are 20kms and 15 kms respectively from Tirunelveli. The nearest airports are Madurai and Trivandrum. One can reach this place by road also from Ambasamudaram and Kalakad. Frequent buses are plying from Ambasamudaram and Kalakad to this place. Out of 817 sq. kms.459 sq.kms is in core zone and 358 sq.kms. is in buffer zone.

The mountainous undulating to topography is the characteristic feature leading to tropical dry deciduous forest on the lower slopes and tropical wet evergreen forests on the upper reaches.

The climate is dry humid and hot at plains and 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 macaque, slender loris, Nilgiri langur common langur and bonnet macaque. Other endangered species found here are Nilgiri tahr, sloth bear, Indian bison, Indian elephant, Malabar giant squirrel, mouse deer, pangolin etc. In addition to that sambar wild boar, spotted deer, porcupine and mangooses are also found here.

This place can also come across reptiles and amphibians like king cobra, common krait, russels, viper, darkpit viper, monitor lizard, garden lizard, tortoise, crocodiles and rare species of frogs. Regarding avifauna there are more than 80 species of birds found in this region. To mention a few spotted frequently here are egrets, herons, jungle fowl, spurfowl, partridge, quails, emerald dove, minivets, bee eaters, sparrows, owls, night jars, kites, paradise flycatchers, and parakeets etc.

There are 24 identified nature trails which are spread over the reserve. It gives a thrilling experience to trekkers. This Tiger Reserve is open on all days between 6 a.m. to 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.

Koonthankulam

Koonthankulam Bird Sanctuary or Kunthankulam is a 1.2933 km² (0.4993 sq mi) protected area declared as a sanctuary in 1994. It adjoins the tiny village of Koonthankulam in Nanguneri Taluk of Tirunelveli district, Tamil Nadu, India. It is just 38 km away from Tirunelveli (a bustling town on the banks of the Tambaraparani River). 8.58102°N 77.76123°E It is composed of Koonthankulam and Kadankulam irrigation tanks,
conveniently linked by tar road. This is the largest reserve for breeding water birds in South India. International name: Kunthangulam Bird Sanctuary.

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.

The birds coming to their backyards for five generations are protected vehemently by villagers and regarded as harbingers of luck. The excreta of birds – ‘guano’ is collected by villagers in summer along with silt to use as fertilizer in their fields. From children to grannies in the village all protect them, their nests and fledgelings. Chicks fallen are taken care of in the rescue centre till they are able to fly on their own. Anybody troubling the nests are punished in their own methods of shaving the head, or making the procession on donkey.

Tirunelveli District Navakailaya Temples

Nine Lord Siva shrines highlight as Navagrahas which gives health and wealth to the Pilgrims. Among the nine temples four are situated in
Tirunelveli district and rest of them in Thothukudii district. The following are referred as Navakailayam shrines.

**Papanasam**

It is 45km from Tirunelveli jn. Presiding deity of the temple is Pabavinasar alias Kailasanatha and Mother goddess is Ulagammai. River Tamirabarani is river view of this temple. A good Picnic spot. From here just 2km a famous Agasthiar Falls is located.

**Cheranmahadevi**

It is 22km from Tirunelveli presiding deity of the temple is Sri Ammainathar alias Kailasanathar and Goddess Awoodainayaki. It is also located on the bank of river Tamirabarani. Frequent city buses are available to this place from Tirunelveli junction.

**Kodaganallur**

It is 15km from Tirunelveli on the way to Cheranmahadevi and the temple is located near Nadukallur village. Presiding deity is Kailasanathar and Goddess Sivakamiammai. City buses are available from Tirunelveli Junction Bus stand.

**Kunnathur**

It is 2km from Tirunelveli Town railway station. And also very near to Thiruvengadanathapuram Kunnathur is located in small hillock. Presiding deity is Kothai Parameswaran. Goddess Sivakamasundari.

**Murappanadu**

It is 17km from Tirunelveli and 40km from Thoothukudi on the National Highways. It is also situated on the banks of river Tamirabarni. Presiding deity is Kailasanathar Goddess Sivakamiammal.
Srivaikundam

It is 30km from Tirunelveli and 40km from Thoothukudi it is also located on the river Tamirabarni. Presiding deity is Kailasanathar Goddess Sivakamiammai. The first Navathirupathi temple is located here.

Thenthirupperai

It is 38km from Tirunelveli on the way to Tiruchendur. Presiding deity is Kailasanathar. Goddess Allakiyaponnamal One of the Navathirupathi temple also located here.

Rajjapathi

It is 38km from Tirunelveli on the way to Tiruchendur near Thenthirupperai. Presiding deity is Kailasanathar Goddess Alagiyaponnamal and Sivakamiammai.

Senthapoomangalam

It is 20km km from Thoothukudi on the way to Tiruchendur near Athoor and Punnakayal. Presiding deity is Kailasanathar Goddess Sivakami Ammai. City bus available from Thoothukudi old bus stand.

Robert Caldwell Memorial

English protestant missionary Bishop Robery Caldwell’s house at Idaiyankudi, a small hamlet situated about 70kms from Tirunelveli, is now a memorial. The 19th century house has been renovated by the state Government.

V.O.C.Manimandapam

V.O.Chidambaran has the towering personality of freedom movement. Tamilnadu has who pulled cooking oil extractor (Chekku) in
Coimbatore jail, where he was imprisoned for fighting against British imperialism. V.O.C was born at Ottapidaram in Thoothukudi District. Tamilnadu Government built a manimandapam at Tirunelveli. There is a meditation hall. In this hall 6.5 feet height V.O.C statue is installed. There is also a model oil extractor in stone, which remind the V.O.C sacrifices for national liberation task.

**Vanchinathan**

He was popularly known as Vanchi as an Indian Tamil independence activist. He is best remembered for having shot dead Ashe, the collector of Tirunelveli on 17th June 1911 and having later committed suicide, in order to evade arrest. Vanchinathan was born in senkottai to Raghupathy iyer and Rukmani Ammal. The railway station has since been renamed VanchiManiyachi

**Va.Ve.Su.Iyer**

Vanchi was a close collaborator of Va.Ve.Su.Iyer, another freedom fighter who sought arms to defeat the British

**Adavinainar Dam and Park**

The adavinainar reservoir is located at the foot of the Western Ghats in Mekkarai village of Shenkottai Taluk in Tirunelveli district. It is located near courtralam and Achanikoil in Kerala state. Courtrallam visit tourist are also pay visit this dam. Here, a small falls is available.

**Gadana Nathi Dam & Park**

Gadana Nathi Reservoir is located at the foot of the western Ghats in sivasailm village near Alwarkurichi which is one of the important tourist places of Tirunelveli district. Now a days many tourists visit the dam and
park. During the courtallam season and sabarimalai season more number of tourists visit this place.

**Manimuthar Dam**

Manimuthar Dam is around 47 km west of Tirunelveli and is an ideal picnic spot. It is a half mile-long dam and the water is held on three sides by mountains.

**Ramanathi Dam & Park**

Ramanathi reservoir is located at the foot of the Western ghats in Kadayam village of Ambasamudram Taluk in Tirunelveli District. It is one of tourist place in this district. Now a lot of tourists are visiting the dam and park.

**Gundar Reservoir and Falls**

It is 70kms from Tirunelveli. The Gundar Reservoir is located at the foot of the Western Ghats near the towns of Courtrallam and Senkottai. It is an important tourist place in Thirunelveli District. A large number of domestic tourists on the way to Courtrallam visits this dam and park. This dam site is noted for its salubrious climate and atmosphere. Just 1 km from Gundar Dam to Western Ghats, a beautiful falls is there. To reach this particular falls, only four wheel drive vehicle is suitable.

**Papanasam Dam**

Papanasam Dam is located in Tirunelveli District of Tamil Nadu. It was built during the British rule and is 5.4 m wide, 265 m long and 240 m high. The Papanasam dam is also known as the Tambiraparani River Dam and has a total catchment area of 147 sq km. Boating is possible in the lake but swimming is strictly prohibited as it is populated with crocodiles. At the end of the lake there is a tunnel through which water flows to another river.
and another new dam. The dam is around 10 km west of Ambasamudram and is an hour’s drive from Courtrallam.

**Manjolai - Hill Station**

Manjolai is 57 km away from Tirunelveli and is at an elevation of 1162 sq. metre. There are many tea plantations in and around this place. Bomabay Burma Tea Estate is famous 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 Udhagamandalam, the queen of Hill stations as far as the pleasing climate and peaceful natural atmosphere are concerned.

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. Just above Manjolai, there are places like Kakkachi and Nalumukka which are real gifts of the nature. Other important tourist spots near Manjolai are the Kakkachi and Nalumukku.

**Krishnapuram Sculptures**

The Venkatachalapathy temple at Krishnapuram village on the Tirunelveli-Tiruchendur main road about 12 km from Tirunelveli is one of the few specimens depicting the architectural marvel and grandeur. It is indeed a treasure house of stone sculptures. Many rare intricately carved sculptures made of granite stone are fine exhibits of architectural skill. This temple is dedicated to Lord Venkatachalapathy with his consorts Sri Devi and Bhu Devi on either side. The temple is complete in itself, since it is following the temple agamas.

It is said that Krishnappa Nayakkar of Nayak dynasty had commissioned some famous sculptors from Vijayanagaram and they have
left behind a wonderful collection of sculptures that tell us tales of heroic love and tragedy.

**Pulithevan Palace**

Nelkattumsevval or Avudaiyapuram, situated in Sankarankoil taluk is to be written red letters in the history of the Freedom Movement of India for it was the headquarters of Pulithevar, the first chieftain in Tamil Nadu to resist the British. The author of the Tirunelveli District Gazetteer, H.R.Pate, observes as follows:

"Nelkatumseval is chiefly memorable as having been in the eighteenth Century stronghold of the redoubtable Pulithevar, who figured for many years as the leader of the Marava Confederacy against the troops of the Nawab and the Company. He had a shrewd insight into the political situation of the time and was a veritable thorn in the side of the Nawab's agents".

Pulithevar remains one of the illustrious figures in the chequered history of palayakkars. The vivacity of his character gave him an ascendancy over the western palayakkars, while his determined resistance to the Nawab's overlordship made him a potential enemy of the Wallajahs. He was in fact the principal architect of the coalition of the palayakkars organised against the Nawab. The Nawab acknowledged his victory by presenting him with a gold plate and sword.

Pulithevar is regarded as the first south Indian ruler, who sowed seed by his gallant resistance to expel the foreigners from the soil. His services to the nation are honoured in many respects and the government of Tamilnadu has erected a memorial for him in Nelkattumsevval where there are the remnants of his palace.

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