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CHAPTER – I

DHANUSKODI AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

Vibhisana, the brother of Ravana made a request to Rama after the war that, “You please see that nobody enters Lanka, the abode of our dynasty, with the help of this bridge because they may cause anxiety to me”. Rama responded to

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this request and walked on the Sethu (bridge) to a distance of few yards. He stopped in the middle of the Sethu, took the bow from the hand of Lakshmana and pierced the Sethu with the end of the bow (Koti). The place where he cut the Sethu with the end of the bow (Koti) is from then onwards began to be called Dhanuskodi. Rama explained to his followers the greatness of Dhanuskodi and its capacity in extinguishing the sins of persons who make a dip into the Punya theertha called Dhanuskodi. Every year this place is visited by thousands of pilgrims from various parts of Indian sub-continent.

Kodiakkarai is situated just one kilometer away from Vedaranyam. But one can reach the bathing place at Kodiakkarai only via road traveling about 8 miles (13kms). According to Sthalapurana of Thiru Kodi Kuzhagar temple evidences, Lord Rama first took the decision to build a bridge only at Kodiakkarai. But after discussing with the vanaras, Rama changed his mind and went to Dhanuskodi and built a bridge there. During the months of Aadi, Thai and Amavasai days people from various parts of Tamilnadu visit Kodiakkarai for performing rituals, and pujas to appease the ancestors.

Dhanuskodi is surrounded by small islands such as Krusadai Island, Pumurichan Island, Manali Island, Musal Theevu, Valai Theevu, Talaiari Theevu, Appa Theevu, Poovarasanhalli Theevu, Kachcha Theevu, Balayamunai Theevu, Anaipar Theevu, Nallathanni Theevu, Upputhanni Theevu, Palk Bay and the Gulf of Mannar. Kodiakkarai and Dhanuskodi are considered as a sacred place because

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27 Thiru Kodi Kuzhagar temple in Kodiakkarai is situated about nine kilometres from Vedaranyam. Sri Ramar Padam is seen in the temple.

of *sagara-sangamam* i.e. two seas Mahodadhi (Bay of Bengal) and *Rutnakara* (Indian Ocean) meet. So the people are visiting this place from every nook and corner of India. Moreover, the island is situated in between Sri Lanka and India, a vulnerable point in Indian Ocean.  

The forgotten city of Dhanuskodi is situated in close proximity to historically important places such as Ramesvaram, Thangachimadam, Akkalmadam, Pamban, Kundugal, Ganthamadanaparvatham, Krusadai Island and Mandapam. All these places are associated with the Ramayana epic. Especially Dhanuskodi played a vital role in the history of South India for it has served as a port. During the British rule in India, they utilized this port to reach Sri Lanka and extended their trade activities.

Ramesvaram island is the largest of the islets. It is a low sandy foot-shaped island separated from the main land by the Pamban Channel. It is at extremity of the Adam’s Bridge, extending east and west between Sri Lanka and the south-eastern coast of the peninsula at the entrance of the Palk Strait and forming the northern boundary of the Gulf of Mannar.

The eastern half of the island which is almost under the ownership of small land-lords is well surrounded with groves of Odai and cocoanuts. Along the coast, however, is a narrow strip of bare sand about 20 miles kilometers approximately in length lying from south-east to north-west and in link with the Mannar Island with which it is united by a bank of sand. This was once connected with the main land.

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29 *The Hindu*, 15 June 2002  
30 *General Information Guide*, Department of Tamilnadu Tourism, Chennai, 1985,p.vi  
31 A.Ramaswami, *Tamilnadu District Gazetteers, Ramanathapuram*, Madras,1972,p.15
In Ramesvaram island, there are 16 islands of the Ramanathapuram District coast. Of these, the Krusadai Island, Muyal Theevu and Nallathanni Theevu are most important. Other islands are of very little importance. The soil is sandy and barren with low bushes here and there.

A Fisheries Research Centre has been established on the Krusadai Island. Coconut and other fuel trees (Country woods) flourish on the Muyal and Nallathanni islands. The depth outside this chain of islets and shoals are tolerably regular with overfalls in places, but a $2^{1/2}$ fathom shoal lies at about 4 miles south-south-eastward of Mulli Theevu.\(^{32}\)

From the western end of the Ramesvaram island, an extensive sand bank, known as Horse Shoe Bank in which the depth do not exceed 6 feet, extends in a south-westerly direction as far as Pumurichan Island. Pearl and chank fisheries and fishing are carried on an extensive scale on these coasts.

**Ramesvaram**

The place name Ramesvaram is a mixer of two syllables. **Rama** and **Isvaram**. Here Rama, the hero of *Ramayana* created Iswara in the Linga form and worshipped it. Hence it is called as Ramesvaram.

According to *Ramayana*, Ravana, the king of Ceylon kidnapped Sita, the wife of Rama. Rama invaded Ceylon and killed Ravana. Thereafter Rama returned to this place, where the Brahma Rishi advised Rama to create a Linga and worship it to purge himself of the sin of **Brahmahatya** (Brahminicide) committed by slaying Ravana who was the son of a Brahmin by a Rakshasa woman.

Consequently Rama fixed an auspicious time to install the Linga. He sent Hanuman to mount Kailas to bring the Linga. But Hanuman could not come with Linga within the auspicious time. So, Sita installed a Linga made up of sand on

\(^{32}\) *Ibid.* pp.15-16
the coast. Rama worshipped this Linga in the specified time. That Linga is now called **Ramalinga, Ramanatha** and **Ramesvara**. Hence this place is known as Ramesvaram and the whole Island called after the God.³³

**Ramesvaram Island**

Ramesvaram island is located between Adam’s Bridge and a narrow strip of land of the mainland. It is covered with shrub and stunted bushes. Coconut trees are placed towards its north-western end where a broad peninsula extends in a north-easterly direction.

**Devipattinam**

Devipattinam derives its name from *Devi* in Sanskrit meaning Goddess and *Patnam* also in Sanskrit means city. There is an old *Amman* temple south of the village dedicated to **Mahishassuramardhini**. She is also called as **Lokanayaki** or **Devi**. The village came to be known after this Goddess. All sea ports are named as Pattinam and this place also has the same name. This place is also called as **Navapashana** in Sanskrit, meaning nine stone representing the **Navagraha** or nine planets (graham). These nine stones are 40 yards inside the sea.

It is one of the holy bathing places in South India. The nine stone signifying nine planets were said to have been installed and worshipped by **Rama** on this way to **Lanka**. This place attracts large pilgrims from all over India, Nepal etc. Nearly 10,000 pilgrims visit this place every year. There are on the sea shore, two *mandapams* called Ramanathapuram Samasthanam Theertha Mandapam and Sankalpamandapam.³⁴

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³³ *Ibid.* pp.945-946

Devipattinam is named after the Queen of Rajaraja Chola I namely Lokamahadevi, during 10-11 C.E. So its original name was Lokamahadevi Pattinam later on shrinked as Devipattinam.\(^{35}\)

This port is situated mid-way between Tondi (22 miles to the north) and Pamban (25 miles to the south). To the north of the port there is a point called Kana Mondel, which extends about 1\(^{1/2}\) miles seawards. It is only beyond this point that loaded vessels can safely pass.

**Kothandaramar Temple**

The *Kothandaramar* temple is built on a sandy mound. It is dedicated to Lord *Rama* and it enshrines *Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, Hanuman* and *vibishna*. *Vibishna* is said to have surrendered before *Rama* at this place.\(^{36}\) The temple was also devastated during the 1964 cyclone. Kothandaramaswamy Temple was reconstructed and renovated by the Ramesvaram Ramanathaswamy Temple Devasthanam. This Temple's Kumbabhishekam was held on 21 November 1962.

Lakshmana, brother of Sri Rama coronated Vibhisana as the king of Srilanka. The *Ramalinga Pradhistai Festival* is being celebrated during the months of June and July every year for three days.\(^{37}\) The first day *Ravanavatham* is celebrated at *Thittakudi*, a place at Ramesvaram bazaar. The second day Vibhishana's *coronation ceremony* is celebrated at the Kothandaramaswamy Temple and the third day Ramalinga *pradhistai* festival is celebrated at Ramesvaram main temple. People from different parts of India visit this temple.

\(^{35}\) S.I.L./8/404.of 1937.

\(^{36}\) Ibid.p.902.

\(^{37}\) Field visit conducted by the researcher on 04.07.2013
before going to Dhanuskodi. This temple attracts heavy crowds during Saturdays and Sundays.  

**Akkalmadam and Thangachimadam**

Kilavan Sethupathi was succeeded by Thiru Udaya Devar who was an able administrator. He was very pious too. He constructed several irrigation tanks for the development of agriculture and laid roads and built choultries for the convenience of the pilgrims to Ramesvaram. He appointed his son-in-law as the officer-in-charge of pilgrim welfare. The son-in-law levied an unauthorized tax on the pilgrim and laid the roads between Ramesvaram and Pamban with that money.

Knowing all this, the king ordered to execute his son-in-law. His two daughters pleaded for their husband’s life but failed and they performed ‘Sati’ on his death. Later, two choultries were constructed over their ashes in memory of them. These choultries stand even today as Akkalmadam and Thangachimadam and located on the way to Ramesvaram.

**Pamban**

Pamban is situated in the island of Ramesvaram at a distance of forty two kilometres to the east of Ramanathapuram and twelve kilometres to the west of Ramesvaram. It connects the Palk Strait on the north with the Gulf of Mannar. Pamban derives its name from the Tamil word *Pambu* meaning 'Snake'. Through the channels of Adams Bridge the ships pass from the Gulf of Mannar to Palk

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40 A.Ramaswami, *op.cit*, pp.930-931
Strait, takes a tortuous course like a snake; hence the name. It is also stated that some foreign traders had settled in this region.

According to another version, Pamban is a corruption of the term, Vamban which means a stranger. The island of Pamban is part of the Ramnad Estate in the Madura District of Madras State. Its central point is in 9°16' North and 79°18' east and lies between the main land of Madura District on the west Ceylon on the east, being separated from the former only by a narrow passage of channel which opens on the north into the waters of Palk Strait and on the south into the Gulf of Mannar.41

**Pamban and Raja Bhaskara Sethupathi**

The period of Raja Bhaskara Sethupathi (1889-1903) witnessed the return of Ramanathapuram and Ramesvaram to the limelight in the history of Tamil Nadu.

Bhaskara Sethupathi, the Raja of Ramanathapuram, was instrumental in sending Swami Vivekananda to Chicago, U.S.A to attend the World Congress of Religions. Swami Vivekananda was given a warm welcome by the Raja at Ramanathapuram on his return from Chicago.

**Light House in Pamban**

A light house was constructed at Pamban in 1846. The light is exhibited on an elevation of 94 feet. The tower is 67 feet in height. It is an automatic lighting system and is visible for about fourteen miles is circumference.42

**Kundugal**


42 A.Ramaswami, *op.cit*, p.20.
According to *Ramayana*, Hanuman sat on his calf muscles and leaped to Lanka in a fashion called Kundugal or Kuttukal in Tamil. So, this place is called as Kundugal. It is a low sandy point with coconut plantation. It extends northward and north-eastward and a beacon stands on the spot which extends southward of Kundugal point. The tidal stream sets through Kundugal channel in a westerly direction on which are located the Pumurichan Theevu and Krusadai Theevu.

**Uppur**

Uppur is a coastal village. It lies 28 miles away north-east of Ramanathapuram and 16 miles south of Tiruvadanai. A few buses are running from Tiruvadanai to Ramanathapuram through this village.

The sea at this place is called *Lavanasamudram* is Sanskrit. Consequently the village was also called as Lavanapuram. *Lavanam* in Sanskrit means salt and in Tamil *Uppu*. Hence the village is called Uppur meaning salt village.

There is a temple without roof enshrining *Veyyil Ugantha Vinayagar*. As the name of the God implies, *Vinayagar*, pleased with the offerings of Sun God, desired to remain in open so that the sun’s rays may ever be falling on him. The temple is said to have been built by *Veeman* who was childless and had a son born to him as a result of his prayer to this God. *Lord Rama* is said to have worshipped here before proceeding to Lanka. *Vinayaka Chathurthi* festival attracts a large numbers of Nattukottai Chettiar who have built a chattiram for the convenience of the pilgrims.

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43 *Ibid.* p.21


**Kodiakkarai**

Point Calimere, also called Cape Calimere and Kodiakkarai is a low headland on the Coromandel Coast, in the Nagapattinam district of Tamil Nadu. It is at the apex of the Cauvery river delta, and marks a nearly right-angle turn in the coastline.\(^{46}\)

The depth of the ocean between Dhanuskodi and Talaimannar is on an average three fathoms, while the depth between Point Calimere and Kankesanturai is over eight fathoms. Only a lower sea level by over 8 meters would have connected the land between Bharatam and Sri Lanka through this route.

The coast from Pamban gap to Kodiakkarai is in the sandy shallows of Palk Bay. This ancient light house at Kodiakkarai is said to have been built by a Chola Kings about 1000 years ago. The ancient name of Kodiakkarai is Tirumaraikadu, (Vedaranyam). The forest (Kaadu) commences From Agastiyam Palli in Vedaranyam.\(^{47}\)

Point Calimere, another name of Kodiakkarai is associated with Ramayana. At the highest point of the cape, at an elevation of four meters, is Ramarpaadam, meaning Rama’s Feet in Tamil. A stone slab which bears the impressions of two feet, and it is presumed to be the place where Lord Rama stood and reconnoitered Ravana’s Kingdom in Srilanka, which lies 48 km to the south.\(^{48}\)

**Valinokkam**

\(^{46}\) Point Calimere Wildlife and Bird Sanctuary - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

\(^{47}\) Team of Experts, Difference Between Rama Setu and Terraces Near Kodiakkarai in http://kalyan97.wordpress.com,2007, p.31

\(^{48}\) Ibid. p.3
Valinokkam lies 26 miles south-east of Mudukulathur. From Mukkaiyur, a coastal village of Mudukulathur Taluk, it is 12 miles east. It could be reached either by a jeep or a bullock cart as it is not connected by a good road. In the earlier records (Manual of the Administration of the Madras Presidency published on 1893) the name of the village is mentioned as Valimookham meaning the face of Vali, the king of monkeys whom Rama killed. Valinokkam is a corruption of Valimookham.49

**Uttirakosamangai**

Uttirakosamangai is said to be Sri Desam, a subdivision of Sembinadu.50 It is eleven miles west south-west of Ramanathapuram on the road to Mudukulathur. Buses are plying to this place from Ramanathapuram and Mudukulathur. A railway station is located four miles north of this village.

The name is derived from Uttram meaning answer, Cosa meaning Veda and Mangai meaning woman. It is connected with a legend which says that Siva was teaching Veda to Parvathy, in the guise of a bee. Siva was enraged and cursed Parvathy to be born as a girl and Subramanya as a fish. Siva appeared on earth in the form of a young man, married her and taught her Vedas at this place hence it is called as Uttirakosamangai. It is also known by twelve other names.51

**Thiruppullani**

Sri Rama stayed along with Sugriva, Hanuman, Vibeeshana and other Vanara senas and discussed with them as how to free Sita from Lanka. Rama stayed in this Pullani sthalam and did tapas in Sayana Kolam on Dharbai (the

49 A.Ramaswami, *op.cit*, pp.996-997.
51 A.Ramaswami, *op.cit*, pp.994-995.
grass) for seven days without eating anything. Because of doing tapas on the grass and showed his sayana kolam on the ‘Pull’ (grass), this sthalam is called as Thiruppullani. The temple now called as Jagannatha was in ancient times known as Devaccilaiyar temple.\(^{52}\) Kambar the author of the work *Ramayana*, mentions about thiruppul (sacred grass), in the following manner:

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**Gandhamadana Parvatham**

Gandhamadana Parvatham is a single storeyed building constructed on a sand hill about 1\(^{1/2}\) miles northwest of Ramesvaram. A black top road leads from Ramesvaram to this temple. Bullock carts and jutkas area also available.\(^{54}\)

‘Gandha’ in Sanskrit means fragrance and ‘Mad’ in Sanskrit means intoxicate. *Gandhamadhana Parvatham* means a place of high fragrance. It is

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52 R.Nagaswamy and N.S.Ramaswami, *op.cit*, p.122.
54 A.Ramaswami, *op.cit*, pp.879-880
about 100 feet high. The place is important for the temple. On the surface of the rock two feet are carved. Hanuman is said to have surveyed from this spot the area he has to cross before taking his leap to Lanka. The remains of old palace and a fort to Sethupathi are located near this place. From the top of the Mandapam one can have the full view of Ramesvaram. It is natural scenery and the splendor of the setting sun.55

**Adam's Bridge**

Adam's Bridge is a narrow strip formed out of sand. It connects Mannar Island. It is mostly composed by drifting of sands with intricate channels between them. The Adam's Bridge separates Ceylon from India.56 The Pamban is situated on the south eastern part of Tamilnadu. Dhanuskodi is situated on the eastern point of Pamban. From Dhanuskodi to Talaimannar, sea water level is very low and its depth is only one metre. Hence this place is not fit for ferrying. Because of the formation of coral reefs it was called Adam’s bridge during the colonial Period. Also called as Palk Strait and Palk bay in memory of Robert Palk (1755 A.D - 1763A.D) who was the then Governor of Madras Presidency.

However, Hindu tradition says that the bridge was made by Hanuman, the monkey-god and his army of monkeys, to convey Rama across to Ceylon in his expedition to recover Sita, whom Ravana, the ten-headed demon-king of that island had carried off.57

**Krusadai Theevu**

This island is situated twenty-three kilometres away from Ramesvaram. The island, since time immemorial, belonged to the Raja of Ramnad known by the

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55 N.Vanamamalai Pillai, *The Setu and Ramesvaram*, Madras, 1929, pp.36-37
56 Ibid., pp.53-54
57 Hunter, *op.cit.*, pp.239-240.
title ‘Sethupathi’ (Sethu for Ramesvaram), who sold it to then British Indian Government of the Presidency of Madras for less than Rs.6000/- in 1914, largely through the efforts of James Hornell.\textsuperscript{58} The finding of Krusadai is rather difficult on an ordinary map of peninsular India. Krusadai theevu is situated in the Gulf of Mannar (lat.9°14’n and long. 79°13’E) near Ramesvaram and Dhanuskodi in Ramanathapuram district. The distance to the island from Mandapam mainland is 6 km and from Pamban Island is 4 km. This island has a length of 2050 meters and width of 700 meters and is spread over an area of 67 hectares.\textsuperscript{59}

The rich biological diversity prompted James Hornell, the then Director of Fisheries Department of the Government of erstwhile Madras Presidency in the year 1914 to recommend the establishment of a Marine Biological Station on the Krusadai island. The station was established in 1914 with no modern amenities like potable water, electricity etc. Besides founding the station, a pearl oyster farm and later a fish-farm were also established in the island. The station had a museum, (later came to be known as James Hornell Museum) a library, two laboratories an aquarium and a photographic room, in addition to store rooms and quarters for the staff.

During the last five decades or so, the old Marine Biological Station has remained closed and the James Hornell Museum and the laboratories stand as mute testimony to their hoary past. The other two buildings namely Krusadai Biological Station and the Rest House which were constructed. Due to inadequate maintenance they are now in a dilapidated condition.\textsuperscript{60} The island has coconut,


\textsuperscript{59} Ibid. p.64

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
Palmyra and casuarina groves in abundance. Large trees like Margosa (neem), banyan and gooseberry are also found in the eastern part of the island.

The fauna on land is represented by beetles, butterflies, moths, dragonflies, red-cotton bugs, ants, termites, snakes, lizards, scorpions, centipedes and spiders. The following birds reside permanently on the island; the spotted owlet, the house and jungle crown, the king crows, the skylark, the sun bird, the myna and the grey partridge. The black rat (*Rattus rufescenes*) and the white rat (*tateta cuvieri*) are the mammals found in this island.\(^6^1\)

**Mandapam**

Mandapam is a peninsula and a port which is thirty eight kilometres south east of Ramanathapuram. Mandapam means "Hall". The village is named after a stone mandapam built on the southern coast to which, in former days, Ramanathaswamy from Ramesvaram was brought and taken back annually for worship of the people.

An Indo-Norwegian project in Mandapam was established in 1961 to promote fishery development in Ramanathapuram area. The Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute of the Government of India is located here. Presently, a boat ride to Krusadai Island is arranged from here.\(^6^2\)

**Pumurichan Theevu**

Pumurichan Theevu lies about 25 miles East-South-East of Ramanathapuram and 4 miles south-West of Pamban.\(^6^3\) Pumurichan is the name of a fisherman and the island is called after his name. It consists of two islets separated by a small channel called ‘Pumurichan’, the western islet being very

\(^{61}\) *Ibid.* p.65  
\(^{62}\) Ajay Verma, *Impact of Tourism in South India*, New Delhi,1997, p.74  
\(^{63}\) A.Ramaswami, *op.cit*, pp.26
small. The larger island on the eastern side is called ‘Pallivasal Theevu’. Only few
yards of shallow water separate Pumurichan Island from Krusadai Island. The local
fisher folk call Pumurichan Pallivasal theevu as Peria theevu being the largest
among the four islands, namely Shingle, Krusadai, Pallivasal and Pulli (theevugal)
islands.

The origin of the name Pullivasal is traced to the fact that there was a
mosque in this island. Pumurichan Theevu (Pallivasal and Pulli islands) is a part of
the coral reef extending from Ramanathapuram to Tuticorin.\textsuperscript{64} It is inhabited and is
full of jungle shrubs and trees.\textsuperscript{65}

**Manali Theevu**

Manali theevu lies 4 miles south of the Mandapam Camp. Manali fish
abounds in large numbers around this island. The coral stone deposits all around
the shores of the island and the irregular shoals along the coast have influenced
fishermen to fish by means of a special procedure by planting rectangular bamboo
hedges in the sea. This method of fishing is called as Kalanghatti fishing.\textsuperscript{66} Only
shrubs and low jungle abound in this island.\textsuperscript{67}

**Musal Theevu**

Musal Theevu lies 6½ miles South-West of Mandapam Camp. From
Ramanathapuram, it is 19 miles South-East and from Pamban it is 12 miles South-
West. ‘Musal Theevu’ means ‘Hare Island’. Plenty of hare are found in this island,
even today. The entire island is on lease to a private person. He has planted trees of

\textsuperscript{64} M.Rajasejara Thangamani, *Pandyar Varalaru*, (in Tamil), Madras,1978, p90
\textsuperscript{65} *Ibid.*, p. 27
\textsuperscript{66} Somalay, *Ramanathapuram Mavattam*, Chennai, 1972, p.299
\textsuperscript{67} M.Rajasejara Thangamani, *op.cit*, p.90
all sorts including coconuts and Palmyra. He also rears sheep and cattle on this island. A trigonometrical station is situated at the northern point of the island.\textsuperscript{68}

**Muli Theevu**

Mulli Theevu lies 18 miles south-west of Pamban and 6½ miles south of Pudumandapam. It is situated between Valai Theevu and Musal Theevu at a distance of 6 miles west of Musal Theevu. It is a barren island. Hence it is called Muli Island. It is uninhabited.\textsuperscript{69}

**Valai Theevu**

Valai theevu lies 7 miles south-west of Pudumandapam and 20 miles from Pamban in the same direction. From Ramanathapuram it is 15 miles South-East. It is 1½ miles West of Muli theevu. The name of the island is derived from ‘Valay’ in Tamil, a fish so called, wallagoattu. This kind of fish is largely available in this island. There is also a tradition that *Vali of Ramayana* came to this island and hence it was named after him.

The island is also called Kittoriamman Island because there is a Kittoriamman Roman Catholic church. The fishermen of Periyapatnam, a coastal village on the mainland, five miles north of this island who come here for fishing, pray at this place during their halt in this island.\textsuperscript{70}

**Talaiari Theevu**

Talaiari island lies ½ a mile west to Valai theevu, 9 miles south-west of pudumandapam and 10 miles south-east of Kilakarai. As this is the end of the long stretch of coral reef on which the two islets valai Theevu are and Talaiari Theevu. This portion is called Talaiari meaning “End”.

\textsuperscript{68} Somalay, *op.cit*, p.299

\textsuperscript{69} A.Ramaswami, *op.cit*, p.28

\textsuperscript{70} Somalay, *op.cit*, pp.299-300
A small channel separates Valai theevu and Talaiari theevu which dries up during low tide presenting the appearance of a single island. This island is similar to Valaitheevu in all respects. There is no habitation but fishermen and labourers who are mostly Muslims visit this island on Friday. Salt pans exist in this island.\(^71\)

**Appa Theevu**

Appa Theevu lies 5 miles south-east of Kilakarai and 5 miles west of Talaiari Theevu. It is situated 13 miles south of Ramanathapuram.\(^72\) The island is about 12 feet high from the sea level. The total distance between Appa Theevu and Vaalai Theevu is 8 KM (kilometers) and 587.58 meters.\(^73\)

The name of the island is derived from the plant that grows in this island called “Appam” in Tamil which is Cissampelelospareira linn. There is also another version that because of the mosque of Sheramudilli Appa in this island, it derived the name Appa Island.\(^74\)

**Poovarasanhalli Theevu**

Poovarasanhalli Theevu lies 5½ miles south-west of Kilakarai and 4½ miles west of south-west end of Appa theevu. It is the tiniest of all the islands of the Ramanathapuram district coast. The island is so named on account of the poovarasan trees and the shrubs on it. It is a barren and an uninhabited island with low shrub jungle.\(^75\)

**Kachcha Theevu**

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\(^71\) A.Ramaswami, *op.cit*, p.29

\(^72\) Ibid. p.30

\(^73\) www.Wikimapia.com

\(^74\) A.Ramaswami, *op.cit*, p.30

\(^75\) M.Rajasejara Thangamani, *op.cit*, p.91
Kachcha theevu lies 10 miles north-east wards of Ramesvaram. The Raja of Ramanathapuram was leasing this island to private persons before the abolition of the Zamindari system. Fishermen frequented this island for fishing. The island is so named because of the Kachcha (Dirty) water in it. There is a Roman Catholic Church on the island and the priest of Thangachimadam pays a visit and conducts the mass in the church. This island was within the jurisdiction of the Karnam of Ramesvaram before it was given away to Sri Lanka.  

**Balayamunai Theevu**

Pillayarmunai Theevu also known as Balayamunai Theevu lies ¾ miles west-south-west of Poovarasanhalli Theevu. This island is named after the point (in Tamil Munai) on the mainland opposite to the island.

**Anaipar Theevu**

This is situated two miles west of the Pillayarmunai Theevu. The name is attributed to the rocks on the island. In all the four islands there is no habitation and they are barren with shrub jungle and low bushes here and there. They are also of very little importance.

**Nallathanni Theevu**

It is so named because fresh water is found within a depth of 3 to 5 feet. It is situated five miles west-south-west of Valinokkam. It is about two miles in

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76 Somalay, *op.cit*, pp.301-304  
77 A.Ramaswami, *op.cit*, p.30  
length and 1½ miles in breadth. The soil is sandy. The island is planted with casuarinas and coconut trees.  

**Upputhanni Theevu**

It is 2¾ miles west–south-west of Shulitheevu and 2½ miles south of Mukaiyur. The soil is sandy. The name of the island is derived from ‘Uppu’ in Tamil meaning salt and ‘Tanni’ meaning water. Only saltish water is found in the island. There is no habitation or cultivation.  

**Palk Bay**

Palk Bay, named after Sir Robert Palk (1717-1798) the then Governor of Madras Presidency (1755-1763), is situated in the southeast coast of India encompassing the sea between Point Calimere (Kodiakkarai) near Vedaranyam in the north and the northern shores of Mandapam to Dhanuskodi in the south. The Palk Bay itself is about 110 km long and is surrounded on the northern and western sides by the coastline of the State of Tamilnadu in the mainland of India. Palk Bay is about 1.2 km wide and 3 to 5m deep that separates the Island of Ramesvaram from the mainland. The Palk Bay waters merge with those of the Bay of Bengal in the northeast and the Gulf of Mannar in the south.

The Palk Strait is just 35km of water that is narrower than the English Channel and separates the northern coast of Sri Lanka from the southeast coast of India. Therefore the international boundary line is close to the shores of both the countries. The boundary is only 6.9 km away from Dhanuskodi, 11.5 km away from Ramesvaram, 15.9 km away from Point Calimere, 23 km away from Vedaranyam and 24.5 km away from Thondi. Palk Strait lies northeast of Palk Bay between the State of Tamilnadu in India and the island nation of Lanka and the width of Palk

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79 *Idem.*

80 Somalay, *op.cit*, p.300
Bay ranges from 64 to 137 km. Palk Bay at its southern end is studded with a chain of submerged islands or shoals which appear to connect Dhanuskodi on Ramesvaram islands in Tamilnadu and Thalaimannar on the Mannar Island of Sri Lanka. This apparent bridge is also known as Ramasethu.

The coastline of Palk Bay has coral reefs, mangroves, lagoons and seagrass eco systems. The fishing season starts in October and lasts till February. Peak fishing season is during December to January. The annual average fish production is around 85000 tones.  

**Gulf of Mannar**

Lying at an average distance of 8 km from the shore and running parallel to it are situated 20 islands of limited extent between 8°47’N Lat-78°12’E Long and 9°15’N Lat-79°14’E. The Gulf of Mannar appears to be a unique zone for fishing activities and in respect of the general fishing potential. Fishermen living in the villages along the coast of the gulf eke out their livelihood by fishing considerable quantities of fishes by brick fishing throughout the year. The Gulf of Mannar is the portion of the Indian Ocean lying between the western coast of Sri Lanka and the eastern coast of the Madras State. Its northern limits is the chain of islets and rock called Adam’s Bridge which extends from the western extreme of the Mannar Island at the north-eastern end of the Gulf for about 16 miles in a west-north- westerly direction to the Ramesvaram Island. The gulf abounds in dangerous shoals and rock at the northern extremity and is exposed to the fury of both the monsoons being quite open towards the south west and only partially protected by the Sri Lankan coast on the north east. The table furnished in the subsequent pages provides information pertaining to the location of the islands mentioned in the earlier pages.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No</th>
<th>From</th>
<th>To</th>
<th>Direction</th>
<th>Kms / Miles</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pamban</td>
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<td>Southwards</td>
<td>3 ½ Kms</td>
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<td>Krusadai Island</td>
<td>Shingle Island</td>
<td>Westwards</td>
<td>1 ½ Kms</td>
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<td>Pamban</td>
<td>South – East</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kundugal Channel Point</td>
<td>Shingle Island</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Pumurichan Island</td>
<td>Pamban</td>
<td>South – West</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Manali Island</td>
<td>Mandapam Camp</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>4 Miles</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Musal Theevu</td>
<td>Mandapam Camp</td>
<td>South – West</td>
<td>6 ½ Miles</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ramanathapuram</td>
<td>Musal Theevu</td>
<td>South – East</td>
<td>19 Miles</td>
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<td>Direction - Direction 2</td>
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<td>Pudumadam</td>
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<td>Musal Theevu</td>
<td>West</td>
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<td>Pudumadam</td>
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<td>Valai Theevu</td>
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<td>Kilakkarai</td>
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<td>19.</td>
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<td>Talaiari Theevu</td>
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<td>22.</td>
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<td>Kilakkarai</td>
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<td>23.</td>
<td>Poovarasanhalli Theevu</td>
<td>Appa Theevu</td>
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<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Kachcha Theevu</td>
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<tr>
<td>25.</td>
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<td>27.</td>
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<td>Valinokkam</td>
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<td>Shuli Theevu</td>
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