Chapter – IV

PROFILE OF THE STUDY AREA

Tiruvarur district, along with the Nagapattinam district was part of the Thanjavur District before 1991. After that, the present Taluks of Tiruvarur district and Nagapattinam district were separated from the Thanjavur District, and formed the Nagapattinam district. The present Tiruvarur district was formed in 1997 by trifurcating the then Thanjavur District. Tiruvarur district is one of the 32 districts in the Tamil Nadu state of India. The district occupies an area of 2161 km². It lies between Nagapattinam district on the east and Thanjavur District on the west, and is bounded by the Palk Strait on the south. The district headquarters is at Tiruvarur town.

The District of Tiruvarur was carved out as a separate district by detaching Valangaiman Taluk from Thanjavur District and Tiruvarur, Nannilam, Kudavasal, Needamangalam, Mannargudi, Thiruthuraipoondi Taluks from Nagapatinam District on 01.01.1997. There are 2 Revenue Divisions, 7 Taluks, 10 Blocks, 4 Municipalities and 7 Town Panchayats in Tiruvarur District.

The administration of Tiruvarur was given over to English fully under the Treaty of 1799. The ruler of Thanjavur was allowed to retain the fort of Thanjavur with very limited powers. When the ruler died in 1841, without heir, the Thanjavur fort was also annexed by the British. Thanjavur remained under the British rule until 1947 when India attained freedom.
Before India was occupied by British people, Thanjavur was ruled by Early Cholas, Kalabhras, Pallavas, Medieval Cholas, Later Cholas, Later Pandyas, Delhi Sultanate, Madurai Sultanate, Vijayanagar Empire, Madurai Nayaks, Thanjavur Nayaks, Thanjavur Marathas, Company Raj and the British Empire. It has been a part of independent India since 1947.

Roadways are the major means of transportation, while the town also has rail connectivity. The nearest airport is Tiruchirappalli International Airport, located at a distance of 100 km. The nearest seaport is Nagapattinam and Karaikkal.

The historic name of the town was Aaroor (Arur) and it finds mention in the 7th century saiva canonical work, Tevaram. The term Thiru is added to all temple cities that are mostly revered by the verses of Tevaram, which is the case of Arur becoming Tiruvarur. Another name of Tiruvarur is Kamalayaksetra, meaning the "holy place that is an abode of lotuses"; the town is also referred so due to the presence of the Kamalayayam tank and the temple deity, Kamalambigai. During the British Raj, the town was termed Tiruvalur, Tiruvaloor and Thiruvalur. As per the district and municipality websites, the district has the spelling "Thiruvarur", while the town has it as "Tiruvarur".

4.1 History of Tiruvarur:

As per folk legend, Tiruvarur is mentioned as the capital town of a legendary Chola king, Manu Needhi Cholan, who killed his own son to provide justice to a cow. His name is commonly used as a metaphor for fairness and justice in Tamil literature and Tamil culture.
Tiruvarur was one of the five traditional capitals of the Chola empire and the history of town revolves around the Thygarajaswamy temple. Tiruvarur is mentioned in the saiva canonical work, Tevaram by Thirugnana Sambanthar, Tirunavukkarasar and Sundarar, the foremost Saivite saints of 7th–8th century CE and classified as Padal petra stalam. Tirunavukkarasar mentions several traditions of the temple like Marghazhi Aathirai Vizha, Panguni Uttirai Perunaal and Veedhivitakanin Veedhi Panni. The granite structure of the temple was first constructed by Aditya Chola I (871–907 CE) in the 9th century CE and revamped during the reign of Rajaraja Chola I (985–1014 CE). The temple was upgraded and rebuilt with stone by Rajendra Chola I (1012–44 CE). The temple has inscriptions from both the emperors, later Cholas and Pandyas. The temple is believed to be an inspiration for Rajaraja Chola to build the Brihadeeswarar Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Inscriptions from the temple indicate Tiruvarur as the capital of Kulothunga Chola I (1070–1120 CE), during which the town emerged a centre of saivism. After the fall of Cholas during the reign of Rajendra Chola II in the 13th century CE, the town was caught under a power struggle between Pandyas and Hoysalas. The royal patronage continued and the town flourished as a cultural centre during the rule of the Nayaks, Vijayanagar kings and Marathas. During the period of Marathas, the town became a temporary home to the Nataraja of Chidambaram temple. The town was briefly captured by French troops lead by Lally (1702–66 CE) in 1759 CE. The Thyagarajar temple was ransacked in a failed attempt to discover hidden treasure. During the attempt, six Brahmins of the temple, suspected to be spies of the British, were killed in an encounter. The province and Tanjore were annexed by British after
the failed attempt of the French to attack the King of Thanjavur. After independence, Tiruvarur continued to be a part of the Thanjavur district and Nagapattinam district till 1991 and 1997 respectively. Tiruvarur was made the headquarters of Tiruvarur district when it was carved out of Nagapattinam district in 1997.

4.2 Geographical Data:

Tiruvarur is located at 9.28°N 79.3°E. The town is bounded by Sukumar river in the north, Valaiyar river in the south while the Odambokki river flows through the centre. The town has an average elevation of 3 m (9.8 ft) from the sea level. The municipality covers an area of 10.47 km² (4.04 sq mi). Tiruvarur is situated at a distance of 300 km from Chennai, 24 km (15 mi) from Nagapattinam, 40 km (25 mi) from Karaikkal, 40 km (25 mi) from Mayiladuthurai and 56 km (35 mi) from Thanjavur. The town along with the district receives an annual rainfall of 1,260 mm (50 in). The town experiences tropical climate during summer; from March to May. The proximity to sea results in high humidity throughout the year and peaks 70% from August to May. The town has a plain terrain of alluvial soil consisting of sand, silt and clay. Vennar and Vettar, the tributaries of river Cauvery are the major water bodies around the town. Surface water canals contribute 89% to irrigation, while the rest 11% is accounted by dug wells and tube wells. Paddy is the major crop while the others being black gram, green gram, ground nut and gingely. The tributaries of river Cauvery, namely, Arasalaaru, Noolaru, Odampokki, Vettar, Vennar, Mudikondan, Nandalar, Nattar, Thirumalairajan, Koraiyaru, Valavaikkal, Kaattar, Pandavaiyar, Arichandranathi, Mullaiyar and Baminiaru flows through the entire district.
4.3 Demographics:

During 1901, the population of the town stood at 15,436. According to 2011 census, Tiruvarur had a population of 58,301 with a sex-ratio of 1,053 females for every 1,000 males, much above the national average of 929. A total of 5,779 were under the age of six, constituting 2,888 males and 2,891 females. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes accounted for 14.35% and 66% of the population respectively. The average literacy of the town was 82.%, compared to the national average of 72.99%. The town had a total of 14997 households. There were a total of 18,953 workers, comprising 672 cultivators, 960 main agricultural labourers, 318 in household industries, 15,596 other workers, 1,407 marginal workers, 47 marginal cultivators, 261 marginal agricultural labourers, 52 marginal workers in household industries and 1,047 other marginal workers.

The population growth rate was higher during the decade of 1981–90 due to increased provision of social, economic and recreational facilities that caused the rural population to migrate to urban areas. The overall growth rate had declined over the last two decades due to poor returns in agriculture and increased migration of agricultural labourers to other urban centres. The population density of the town is high in the centre and low in the peripheral regions.

The town has 55% employed people; 12.7% are involved in primary occupations like agriculture, 2.8% in secondary occupations related to industries and 85% in tertiary occupations such as agricultural trading and tourism. About 33% population of the town is involved in agriculture and most of them are involved in trading activities. As per a survey conducted in 1997 by the Tamil Nadu Urban and
Town Planning Department, 30 slums were identified in the town constituting 41% of the total population of the town.

4.4 Economy:

Tiruvarur lies in the Cauvery River basin and the main occupation of the inhabitants of the town and surrounding regions is agriculture. More than 70% of the work force is involved in agriculture; 14% being cultivators and rest are agricultural labourers. Paddy is cultivated in three seasons namely Kuruvai (June–August), Samba (August–January) and Thaladi (January–March). The daily wages of the agricultural labourers is more than the rates fixed by the Tamil Nadu government, but due to the decline in number of days of work, the income levels are lower. As of 1998, the male labourers were employed 150 days a year, while the female labourers for 120 days. A government report in 2006 put these numbers at 120 and 100 days respectively. Due to the discontinuity in the working days, the labourers migrate to other states like Gujarat and Kerala. They also shift to other professions like construction industry in the urban centres and textile industry in the district. There are no industrial estates in the town and the district – as of 2012, a government proposal is formulated to develop one at Vaippur village. Modern agricultural tools like hullers have replaced labourers and reduce the profit margin of small traders and labourers. There are no co-operative societies who acquire the farm products and the District Purchasing Centre, operated by the government of Tamil Nadu is the major procurer.

Being an agricultural town, the predominant industries are agriculture based like modern rice milling, palm oil refinery, poultry, live stock and coir based. Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation operating a modern rice mill and South India Edible Oil involved in refining oil are the large scale industries in the town. There are small
service enterprises involved in automobile servicing, hotels, hospitals, boat repairing and nylon fishnet repairing. There is a weekly market at Thanjai Salai and a daily market maintained by the municipality, where vegetables and fish are sold. There is no separate market for flower merchant, but the flower merchants spread in and around the town.

All major nationalized banks such as State Bank of India, Indian Bank, Central Bank of India, Punjab National Bank, Indian Overseas Bank and private banks like ICICI Bank, City Union Bank have their branches in Tiruvarur. Kumbakonam Co-operative Bank, Tiruvarur Co-operative Bank and Primary Agriculture Bank are the cooperative banks that have their branches in the town. All these banks have their Automated teller machines located in various parts of the town.

4.5 Transport:

Tiruvarur municipality accommodates 94.06 km of roads: 54.9 km of BT roads, 10.91 km of metal roads, 9.48 km of cement roads and 18.75 km of highways. Tiruvarur is connected by three national highways, NH 45A to Villupuram, NH 67 to Coimbatore. Tiruvarur is connected with Chennai, Coimbatore, Tiruchirappalli, Karaikkal and other major towns of Tamil Nadu through the state highways SH 23 from Mayiladuthurai to Thiruthuraipoondi, SH 67 from Thanjavur to Kodikkarai, SH 65 from Tiruvarur to Kumbakonam, SH 66 from Kumbakonam to Adirampattinam, SH 67 from Nagore to Nachiyarkoil, SH 146 from Mannargudi to Sethubavachatram, SH 147 Kumbakonam to Karaikkal, SH 151 Kilvelur to Kachanam. The Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation operates close to 175 daily services connecting various cities to Tiruvarur. Most of the buses via Tiruvarur are operated by the corporation ply between Tiruchirappalli and Vailanganni. The corporation operates a computerised
reservation centre in the municipal bus stand of the town. It also operates 25 town buses satisfying the local transport needs of Tiruvarur and the neighbouring villages. The State Express Transport Corporation operates long distance buses connecting the town to Bangalore, Thiruvananthapuram and Marthandam.

Tiruvarur railway junction is a four way junction connecting Thanjavur in the west, Mayiladuthurai in the north, Nagapattinam in the east and Thiruthuraipoondi in the south. Gauge conversion between Mayiladuthurai and Tiruvarur was completed in August 2012 and the inaugural train ran from Bangalore to Nagore via Tiruvarur. There are passenger trains to Tiruchirappalli, Thanjavur, Mayiladuthurai, Karaikkal, Mannargudi and Thiruthuraipoondi. Gauge conversion between Tiruvarur and Karaikudi is in progress and there is only partial connectivity in the segment connecting Pattukkottai, Thiruthuraipoondi and Karaikudi. There is a daily express train to Chennai via Mayiladuthurai and Ernakulam. The are two trains from Mannargudi to Tirupathi and Vailanganni to Goa, operated three times a week that pass through Tiruvarur. The nearest airport to Tiruvarur is Tiruchirappalli Airport located 110 km (68 mi) from the town.

4.6 Education and utility services:

As of 2001, Tiruvarur has a lower literacy rate compared to other part of the state. There are three government high schools out of a total of 15 schools in the town. The Central University of Tamil Nadu, established by an act of parliament in 2009, provides collegiate education in the fields of arts and science. There are five other arts and science colleges, one teacher training institute, three polytechnic colleges, two Industrial training institutes (ITI) and one Medical college in the town.
Electricity supply to Tiruvarur is regulated and distributed by the Tiruvarur circle of Tamil Nadu Electricity Board (TNEB). Water supply is provided by the Tiruvarur Municipality from Odambokki river; the distribution through water tanks.

Tiruvarur comes under the Tiruvarur Telecom circle of the Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL), India's state-owned telecom and internet services provider. Apart from telecom, BSNL also provides broadband internet service. There are three government hospitals in the town; the largest of them is the District Headquarters Government Hospital. There are 11 private hospitals and numerous medical shops catering to the health care need of the town.

4.7 Revenue details:

There are 7 taluks in Tiruvarur District. Namely, Tiruvarur, Nannilam, Kudavasal, Valangaiman, Mannargudi Needamangalam and Thiruthuraipoondi.

There are four municipalities, namely Tiruvarur, Mannargudi, Koothanallur and Thiruthuraipoondi in the district, town panchayats 7 are in the district.

The ten panchayat unions namely, Tiruvarur, Kudavasal, Koradacherry, Nannilam, Valangaiman, Mannargudi, Kottur, Needamangalam, Thiruthuraipoondi and Muthupettai in the Tiruvarur district.

There are 430 revenue villages and 573 village panchayats in the Tiruvarur district. Thiruthuraipoondi, Mannargudi, Tiruvarur and Nannilam are the legislative constituents of Tiruvarur district and there is no direct parliamentary constituency for Tiruvarur district. Any have Thiruthuraipoondi, Tiruvarur and Nannilam legislative constituents fall in Nagapattinam parliamentary constituency and Mannargudi falls in Thanjavur parliamentary constituency.
Thyagarajar, Muthuswami Dikshithar, Syama Sastri, Ananda Vikatan S.S. Vasan, veteran film Director K. Balachandar, Musician T.R. Pappa, T.N. Rajarathinam Pillai, and the former Chief Minister of Tamilnadu Dr. Kalaignar M. Karunanidhi are some of the popular persons of Thanjavur District.

4.8 Music, dance and literature:

Historically Tiruvarur has been a centre of eminent people in religion, arts and science. Sundarar, an 8th-century Saivite saint, mentions "I am the slave of all those born in Tiruvarur" in his works in Tevaram. Two of the 63 nayanmars of Saivite tradition namely, Kalarsinga Nayanar and Tandiyadigal Nayanar were born in Tiruvarur. The Periyapuranam, a 12th-century Saiva canonical by Sekkizhar, dedicates a chapter to those born in Tiruvarur including these two saints. The town was a traditional centre of music and dance – the inscriptions from Rajaraja Chola associates a large body of dancers associated with the temple. Tiruvarur is home to Trinity of Carnatic music namely Thyagaraja (1767–1847 CE), Muthuswami Dikshithar (1775–1835 CE) and Shyama Shastri (1762–1827 CE). Muthuswami Dikshithar has sung eulogies of the temple deities of the Thyagarajaswami temple. There was large influx of the acumen of South Indian culture to the town during the 17th century CE due to the political unrest in Thanjavur and increased patronage of the Maratha kings to Tiruvarur, resulting in developments in music and dance. A unique musical instrument called Panchamuga Vadyam with each of its five ends ornamented differently is used in the temple. A type of nadaswaram (pipe instrument) called Barinayanam is also a unique instrument found only in Tiruvarur.
4.9 Temples:
In Tamilnadu 35,600 temples including small deities temples. Tiruvarur district has a number of temples. Every big temple, the Gods are decorated by flowers every day.

4.10 Tiruvarur, Thyagaraja Temple:
The ancient Thyagaraja Temple at Tiruvarur is dedicated to the Somaskanda aspect of Shiva. Thyagaraja is the iconic form of Somaskanda and is believed to have spread widely from the 10th century CE, the period coinciding the reign of Raja Raja Chola. The temple complex spanning over an area of 20 acres (81,000 m²) has shrines dedicated to Vanmikanathar, Thyagaraja, Kamalaamba and numerous other deities. Vanmikinathar is believed to have arisen from an anthill and from the trumpet flower, Bignonia Chelenoides. The Kamalalayam temple tank covers around 33 acres (130,000 m²), making it one of the largest in the country. The temple chariot is the largest of its kind in Tamil Nadu. Thyagaraja is believed to have performed 364 miracles in Tiruvarur similar to the 64 performed at Madurai Meenakshi Temple. Pilgrims take a holy dip in the tank during Hindu auspicious occasions like equinox and eclipse. The temple is also classified as Saptha Vidangam, meaning the seven temples having unique dance moves by Thyagaraja. The Chola inscriptions refer Thyagaraja as Vidhividangar and the name "Thyagaraja" is believed to have emerged during the 15–16th century CE.

4.11 Chariot Festival:
Kulothunga Chola II (1133–50 CE) enlarged the temple ritual to have fifty six festivals, some of which are followed in modern times. The annual chariot festival of the Thyagarajaswamy temple is celebrated during April – May, corresponding to the
Tamil month of Chithirai. The chariot is the largest of its kind in Tamil Nadu weighing 300 tonne with a height of 90 feet. The chariot comes around the four main streets surrounding the temple during the festival. The event is attended by lakhs of people from all over Tamil Nadu. The chariot festival is followed by the "Theppam", meaning float festival. The Carnatic music festival celebrated every year also garners large audience. The town has 10 parks, with the Somasundaram Park at Panagal Road and Municipal Park at Thendral Nagar being the most prominent of them.

4.12 Guru Temple:

Alangudi is popularly known for being the place to worship Guru, one of the navagrahas. The shrine for Guru is located within the Arulmighu Abthasahayeswarar temple. Alangudi is situated on the Kumbakonam–Valangaiman road. It is 8 km from Valangaiman and 16 km from Kumbakonam.

According to Hindu mythology, the great rishis including Aghasthiar and Adi Shankara had worshipped Guru Bhagawan (zodiac sign of Jupiter) in Alangudi. Every year during the Guru Peyarchi when the sign from its present location innumerable devotees visit this temple.

4.12.1 Koothanur Saraswathi Temple:

It is situated 21 km from Tiruvarur, Koothanur lies on the Mayiladuthurai–Tiruvarur road. Koothanur is located near Poonthottam, famous for the Arulmighu Maha Saraswathi Amman temple. It is only here in Tamil Nadu, there is a separate temple especially constructed for the Saraswathi, the Goddess of learning. The great saint poets Kavichakravarty Kamban and Ottakkoothan offered their prayer in this temple. Devotees from all over India participate during the Navarathiri festival in this temple.
4.12.2 Enkan Murugan Temple:

On the Tiruvārur–Thanjavur road, 1 km north of Mukundanur and 3 km south of Kappanamangalam on the Tiruvārur – Kumbakonam road is the village Enkan where the Arulmighu Subramanya Swamy temple is located. Raja Raja Cholan I created a permanent endowment for the requirements of the daily poojas and festivals. In praise of the glory of Lord Subramanya, the saint poet Arunagirinathar dedicated his famous hymns of Thiruppugazh. The divine sculpture of the presiding deity Lord Arulmighu Arumuga seated on his peacock inside the sanctum sanctorum in this temple is a marvelous work of art. The Thaipoosam festival celebrated in the middle of January in this temple attracts devotees in large numbers every year.

4.12.3 Valangaiman Pettai Maha Mariamman:

Valangaiman Varatharajan Pettai Maha Mariamman temple is situated just 9 km from Kumbakonam on the Mannargudi Road. This temple is popularly known as Paadaikavadi Mariamman. During the Tamil months of Avani (Aug-Sep) and Panguni (Sep-Oct) festivals are celebrated in this shrine.

4.12.4 Kudavasal Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple:

The Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple in Kudavasal, Tamil Nadu, India is a Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Srinivasa, a form of Lord Vishnu. Kudavasal is a small town located in the Tiruvarur district, in between two distributaries of Cauvery river, Kudamurutti and Chola Choodamani. Lord Srinivasa appears with his consorts Sridevi and Bhoomadevi. Kudavasal temple's speciality is that it has the only north-facing sanctum of Lord Srinivasa in the World.
4.12.5 Thirukollampudur Vilvavaneswarar Temple:

One of the Pancha Aranya Sthalam known to be “Vilvavanam” the Fifth in order (holy places of five jungles). Arthajamam (Pooja performed in the Night) is very famous in this sthalam.

Once Sampanthar visiting the panchaaranya Sthalam in order he got late to get here. To reach this temple he has to cross the river. As the river was flooding, the coracles man left the place early. Thirugnanasampanthar was struck and got worried that he can’t reach the temple for Arthajama pooja, hence he prayed Lord shiva and took a coracles by himself without pedals and sung hymns. The coracle reached the next bank itself and he got the dharshan of the lord. Still today at the month of Aippasi (in Tamil) the Oda Thiruvizha celebrated here.

During the period of king Rajarajan III, the sanctum reconstruction has been done. In 1974 PR. Raman Chettiar and PR. Lakshmanan Chettiar family, the ardent devotees had spent more than 45 lakhs for the renovation and done kumbabishekam on 1.7.1979. Hence we can see the six feet statue of Chettiar brothers opposite to Ambal Shrine.

4.12.6 Srivanchiyam Vanjinathaswamy Temple:

Srivanchiyam, is a small Village in Tiruvarur district of Tamil Nadu, between Mudikondan and Puttar rivers. The presiding deity here is Vanchinathan and His consort is Mangalambika. The Shiva Lingam is a Swayambhu (self manifested) and faces both West and East; hence pooja is performed here in both the directions. There are two Nandhis in this temple, one on the East and one on the West. This Lingam is supposed to have existed even before the pralaya (the Great Deluge) and was facing
west when Suryan worshiped him. The Shivalingam here is considered to be the oldest among all the swayambhu Lingams in the world. Sandalwood is the sthala vriksham here and sandal leaves are used to perform the pooja to the Lord. Brahmandam, Skandam, Samboban and Agneya Purana talk about this sacred place.

There is a separate shrine here for Yama Dharmaraja. He is given preference in daily worship. Legend has it that, Yama Dharmaraja was very worried and felt overwhelmed with all the sins accumulated in the course of performing his duty. He wanted a solution for this. As per the advice of Brahma, Yama went to a place by the banks of the Cauvery, where he could find Gandharanyam (Sandal Forest), and propiate to Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva was pleased with his devotion and instructed Yama to have a temple built Him at here. He also wanted Yama to be His vehicle. Accordingly, Yama stayed at this temple which he built at Sri Vanchiyam. The Lord also granted Yama’s wish for a shrine for himself at Sri Vanchiyam. Usually, Vinayagar is the first deity to be worshiped in all Shiva temples, but here at Srivanchiyam, Yama is worshiped even before prayers are offered to Vinayagar. The Sannidhi to Lord Yama is in the first Praharam (circumambulatory path). Those who pray here are considered to be free from the sufferings preceding their death.

4.12.7 Thiruthuraipoondi Piravi Marundeeswarar Temple:

Piravi Marundeeswarar Temple is dedicated to Shiva and Goddess Parvathi. Shiva is worshipped in the temple as Marundeeswarar and Gajasamhara Moorthy. Goddess Parvati is worshipped as Periyanayagi.

A unique aspect of the temple is that Shiva moorthy faces West. It is said that worship of Shiva here helps in attaining moksha on earth – escape from cycle of birth
and death. Self realization dawns on a person and he sheds ignorance. Piravi means birth. Worship here is to put an end to the suffering of birth - life - death - birth.

4.12.8 Thiruveezhimizhalai Veezhinathar Temple:

The name Thiruveezhimizhalai is said to have come from two legends that took place here. The place was once a forest full of Sandhanam (Sandalwood), Senbagai, Pala (Jackfruit), Vila which is called Veezhi in Tamil. Also there is a plant by name Veezhi which grows in abundance at this place. Hence it is called Veezhi Kaadu (forest). Secondly there was a hunter by name Mizhalai Kurumbar who lived here. He used to offer Vila fruit to Lord Shiva daily. Seeing his bhakthi, Lord Shiva gave dharsan to him. Lord Shiva + Veezhi Plants + Mizhalai Kurumbar = Thiruveezhimizhalai

When Sambandar and Thirunavukkarasar visit this place, there was a severe drought all around. They prayed to Lord Shiva who gave Padikasu (Gold Coin) one each every day to both of them. Sambandar gets Padikasu at the Pedam in front of Mahamandapam. Navukarasar gets gold coin in the Pedam in Merkku (west) prakaram (closed precincts of a temple). Using these gold coin, they offered food to the needy people.

4.12.9 Tirukannamangai Bhaktavatsala Perumal Temple:

The Bhaktavatsala Perumal Temple has a 5-tier Raja Gopuram and a vast temple complex. The prime deity, Bhaktavatsalar has an imposing image. The temple tank is situated right opposite to the temple. This shrine is also referred to as Saptamrita Kshetram (seven celebrated elements of nature), referring to seven of its elements such as Vimanam, Mandapam, aaranyam, theertham, kshetram, river and town.
The temple is revered in Nalayira Divya Prabandham, the 7th–to-9th-century Vaishnava canon, by Tirumazhisai Alwar in one hymn. This temple is one of the Panchakannya (Krishnaranya) Kshetrams. Kannan refers to Krishna, the avatar of Vishnu, while pancha means five and Kshetrams refers to holy places. Four of the five temples are situated in Chola Nadu, in modern times, in the region surrounding Kumbakonam and Nagapattinam and one of them in Nadu Nadu (Middle country). Krishna is not the presiding deity in any of the temples. The processional deity, Krishna, led to the derivation of the names of these places. There are five similar temples located in North India, called Pancha-dvarakas.

4.12.10 Mannargudi Rajagopalaswamy Temple:

Mannargudi is nothing but the combination of the temple and the temple tank. Shri Raja Gopalaswamy temple is considered as the king of the temples in the state. This temple is also known as the Kulothunga Cholan Vinnagaram, in memory of its builder. The Shri Raja Gopalaswamy shrine is famous for having a graceful deity, a sacred sthalam, and holy theertham. Its Rajagopuram (main tower) is 154 feet high and inside the temple, there are 16 gopurams or towers, 7 mandapams or halls, 24 sannathi or thresholds and 18 vimanas. Festivals are celebrated around the year in this temple. The presiding deity is Rajagopalaswamy, a form of Lord Krishna. The temple is spread over an area of 23 acres (93,000 m²) and is one of the important Vaishnavite shrines in India. The temple is called Dakshina Dwarka (Southern Dwarka) along with Guruvayur by Hindus.

The image of the presiding deity is 12 feet (3.7 m) tall. There is a big tank at the entrance of the shrine where rain water is collected. The temple complex has 16
gopurams (tower gateways), 7 prakarams (outer courtyard), 24 shrines, seven mandapams (halls) and nine sacred theerthams (temple tanks). The utsava (festival deity) is a bronze figure from the Chola period. It shows keshabanda type of coiffure and restrained ornamentation, atypical of the Chola bronzes of the 11th century. The temple tank is called Haridranadhi, 1,158 feet long and 837 feet broad, making it one of the largest temple tanks in India.

The temple was first constructed by Kulothunga Chola I (1070-1125 A.D.), with bricks and mortar, indicated by various stone inscription found in the site. The place Mannargudi is termed Sri Rajathi Raja Chathurvedhi Mangalam and the town started to grow around the temple. Successive kings of the Chola empire, Rajaraja Chola III, Rajendra Chola III and kings of Thanjavur Nayaks, Achyuta Deva Raya expanded the temple. The temple contains inscriptions of the Hoysala kings and some Vijayanagara grants, and many records of the later Nayaks and Marathas. The current temple structure, hall of 1000 pillars, main gopuram (temple gateway tower) and the big compound wall around the temple was built by the king Vijayaraghava Nayak (1532-1575 A.D.). Raghunathabhyudayam, a doctrine by Nayaks explains the donation of an armour studded with precious stones to the main deity by the king. He erected the big tower in the temple so that he can view the Srirangam Ranganathaswamy temple from the top of Mannargudi. The Nayaks were specially interested in music and it was promoted in both the temples. Instruments like Mukhavina, Dande, Kombu, Chandravalaya, Bheri and Nagaswaram were commonly used in the temple service.
4.12.11 Vaduvur Kothandarama Swamy Temple:

It is said that after 14 years in the forest (Vanavaasam) and defeating Ravana, Sri Rama was returning back to Ayodhya. During his return, he stayed at the hermitage/ashrama of many rishis (sages). During such stay, the sages/rishis prayed in earnest, asking them to stay forever. As Sri Rama need to return back to fulfill promise made to Bharath, his brother, he called up Vishvakarma and sketched his enchanting divine form as an idol, and left it outside the ashrama. The rishis who came to see them the next day were spellbound and mesmerized by the beautiful statue. The sages agreed for Sri Rama to leave for Ayodhya, on one condition that leave the statue with them. Sri Rama, with a smile, agreed to their request and left the statue behind.

Years rolled by and it was the time when King Serfoji II (September 24, 1777 – March 7, 1832) ruled Thanjavur. One day, Lord Rama appeared in the king's dream and told him to unearth the idols from Thalai Gnayiru ((Thalanayar in Nagapattinam District, Tamil Nadu) under the auspicious Arasa Maram (Ficus religiose or Bodhi Sattva tree). He asked the king to establish and worship the deities. The king woke up in a state of shock and later, with his entourage, went to Thalai Gnayiru and unearthed the idols. When the king and his entourage were preparing to leave from Thalai Gnayiru, on their way to Thanjavur, the natives of the place prevented the king from taking the idols. The king managed to convince them and as compensation left the statues of Lakshmana and Bharata behind with them. (Now worshipped as Rama and Lakshmana at the temple there) He took possession of Rama, Sita and Hanuman statues and on his way rested at Vaduvur.
The people of the Vaduvur village, known for their unity, came to know about the idols and pleaded with the king to install the deities in their Rukmani-Sathyabhamam samedha Sri Gopalan temple. Initially, the king refused but when the villagers threatened to jump from the tower of the temple and commit suicide, he relented. He allowed them to install the idols and since then Rama has been the main deity in the Gopalan temple. Later, the statue of Lakshmana was also sculpted by the people of Vaduvur. It appeared like a woman and so the villagers established it as Sundari Amman and built a separate temple for Her. They sculpted the statue of Lakshmana again and today Rama with Sita and Lakshmana stand majestically to bless the devotees.

It is interesting to note that Saint Thyagaraja lived during the same period (May 4, 1767 - January 6, 1847). Serfoji Maharaja came to know about the Saint and invited him to visit the temple to be rewarded, but Saint Tyagaraja rejected the offer, singing "Nidhi caala sukhama?" in kalyaani, which means "Does abundance of wealth bring happiness"? The king realized his mistake and visited the saint-composer, who also later cured him of his illness.

4.13 Muthupettai Dargah:

The seven hundred year old dargah here has various glorious aspects and traditional background. This dargah known as Andavar Shahul Dawood Khamil Oliyullah had been built using Maharatta architecture. People irrespective of caste, creed and religion visit this holy place of worship.

4.14 Muthupettai Mangrove Forest:

The marshy land in Muthupettai is the main tourist attraction in this area. This scenic spot is always evergreen with mangrove forest trees, in a sprawling area of 120
square km. It is a wonderful sight for the tourists to see the wide expanse of backwater and the mangrove forests dotting over the entire area. Along with the deep-rooted mangrove trees the other kinds of trees like Thandal, Thillai, Narikanthal, Neermulli also grow and add to the beauty of the lagoon. This lagoon has seventy-three colourful varieties of fish. Tourists can reach the Thalaimunai Mangrove Forest in a motorboat. It is an hour’s from the Jambavanodai point near Muthupettai.

A wooden pathway 162 m long has been built for the benefit of the tourists to enjoying the mangrove forest. During the monsoon season November-January, a large number of birds migrate here from all over the world. Eighty different species of migratory birds congregate here having travelled a long distances. The birds come from Siberia, Russia, Iran, and Europe. Among them the notable species of birds are the heron, egret, flamingo, the painted stork, pelican, teal and tern. The migration of these birds is an extraordinary sight that adds to the beauty of this district.

One can visit the mangroves from Thanjavur (65 km), Tiruvarur (60 km), and Nagapattinam (70 km). The best time to visit Muthupettai is from November
to February as the mangrove forest gets their new foliage and a large number of water birds congregate from difference parts of the world.

4.15 Udhayamarthandapuram Birds’ Sanctuary:

This sanctuary was created in the year 1998 in a sprawling area of 46 hectare. The sanctuary is a 150 km from Tiruvarur by road. More than 10,000 migratory birds congregate in this sanctuary during monsoons. Notable among the migratory birds are painted storks, Grey Herons, White Ibis, Open bill storks, White Heron etc. The most suitable time to visit this sanctuary is November and December and between February and March. The sanctuary also has beautiful water lilies and tall cane reeds.

4.16 Vaduvur Bird Sanctuary:

The Vaduvur Bird sanctuary is located in the Vaduvur Lake 25 km from Thanjavur and 30 km from Tiruvarur. It was created in the year 1999, the sanctuary attracts more than 40 species of water birds like the White Ibis, Painted stork, Grey Pelican, Pintails, Cormorants, Teals, Herons, Spoonbills, Darters, Coots, Open bill Storks, Pheasant–tailed Jacana etc.
The Sanctuary is a favourite spot for the migratory birds and during the months of November and December more than 20,000 winged visitors reach this area. The sanctuary has basic facilities for tourists to stay overnight and enjoy watching the birds from the two watchtowers.

In front of these temples, there are some flower merchants are selling flowers, garlands. These temples flower merchants selling poojas things including coconut, incentive stick, banana along with flowers.

In these temples religious functions and yearly functions are celebrated in grand manner. In these times the flower sale is going very high. More temple special functions are celebrated in summer period.