

CHAPTER III

SECULAR MONUMENTS OF TOURISM IMPORTANCE

Tamil Nadu is replete with innumerable secular monuments. They stand as a testimony to its varied culture and tradition, besides reflecting the most prominent historical events that had taken place in Tamil Nadu. Not only that, it preserves and show case to posterity, its secular character, which is unique to this level of secular tradition.

Gandhi Mandapam

A massive structure, known as the Gandhi Mandapam, in the Orissa style as seen at Bhuvaneshwar has been constructed by the government of India to commemorate the immersion of the sacred ashes of the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi at the Cape in 1948.¹ The place where the ceremonial rites were performed before immersion into the sea, a big hall has been constructed. The particular spot, where the ashes were first kept is indicated by a statue of Mahatma Gandhi. The great engineering skill in the construction of the hall is that in the top of the roof, a hole has been made in such a way that, at mid-day on 2nd October, the birthday of Gandhi the sunrays fall exactly on the forehead of the statue, signifying thereby the emergence of light of independence by the selfless efforts of the Mahatma.²

Thiruvalluvar Statue

The twin sacred rocks in the sea off the coast of Kanniyakumari seem to have been meant only for Swami Vivekananda and the Tamil poet

¹ T.G.S. Balaram Iyar, *South Indian and Important Cities in North India*, Madras, 1994, p.35.

² G.Krishnaswamy, *Kanniyakumari*, Kanniyakumari, 1997, p.4.

Kanniyakumari : Thiruvalluvar Statue



Panchalankurichi : Kattabomman Memorial



Thiruvalluvar. While one of the two rocks houses an impressive memorial for Swami Vivekananda and the other known as the minor rock which is likely to attract world attention as it houses a mammoth statue of Thiruvalluvar.³ This memorial, built by the Government of Tamil Nadu, which would measure 133 feet is an architectural marvel. The dressed granite stones are assembled in an excellent way. The actual height of the statue is 95 feet and the pedestal starts from 38 feet (totally 133 feet) and both are built of granite stones. Its total weight including the pedestal is 1000 tons.

The Tamil poet Thiruvalluvar authored the famous work *Thirukkural*, a masterpiece of Tamil Literature. The *Thirukkural* comprises 133 chapters and hence the height of statue is 133 feet with ten couplets each could be classified into three parts viz., *Aram (dharma)*, *porul (artha)* and *Inbam (kama)*. The Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, M.Karunanithi showed much interest to erect this statute. By constructing this statue at here, he endeavoured to make Kanniyakumari as an International tourist centre.⁴ These secular monuments are world renowned centres.

Ettaiyapuram

Ettaiyapuram is said to take its name from one Ettappa Nayaka, the traditional founder of the family. The place is said by the native historian of the family to have been founded in 1565 A.D. during the reign of Kumara Krishnappa Nayakar, the Nayak ruler of Madurai. Ettappa and

³ *The Hindu*, "Focus on Kanniyakumari District", 8th May 1999, p.8.

⁴ *The Hindu*, "Kanniyakumari", 1st January 2000, p.1.

Ettiaya are equivalent forms.⁵ This is the birth place of the great revolutionary national poet Subramanya Bharathi who is ranked among the best Tamil poets of the modern Era. His patriotic poems were instrumental in arousing a strong feeling of nationalism when the freedom struggle had begun to gain intensity at the beginning of the 20th century. His home has now been converted into a memorial.⁶ It is also protected monument under the Tamil Nadu ancient and Historical moments and Archaeological sites and Remains Act.⁷ Umaru Pulavar *Dhansha* (Tomb) is also located here. Thus it is a centre of political as well as literary eminence.

Panchalankurichi

Panchalankurichi, a small but historical village, is 3kms from Ottapidaram. Panchalankurichi has a large mud fort. Being the headquarters of a Poligar, the whole *palayam* was called by this name. Panchalankurichi, *panchala* means anything pertaining to Panchala, the Doab country of Draupadi, the wife of the five Pandava brothers. Some person interested in the stories of *Mahabaratha* must have given the name to the place. Kurichi, the second portion of the name is one of the many Tamil words denoting a village in a forest or amongst the hills. From here the great warrior Kattabomman known as "Veera Pandia

⁵ R.Caldwell, A *History of Tinnevely* (Reprint), New Delhi, 1982, 113.

⁶ "Tamil Nadu Splendour of India", Department of Tourism Government of Tamil Nadu, Madras, 1993, p.99.

⁷ Government Order, Ms. No.1425, Education, dated 4th August 1979.

Kattabomman" raised his voice against the British regime in the later half of the 18th century AD.⁸

The Kattabomman memorial Fort was constructed by the Government of Tamil Nadu, in 1974. While the original fort, now in ruins is under the protection of the Archaeological survey of India. Sri Devi Jakkammal Temple, the hereditary goddess of Kattabomman, is located near the fort. The cemeteries of British soldiers are seen near the fort. Within the memorial Hall, there are beautiful paintings on the walls depicting the heroic deeds of the Saga.⁹ The tourists can get a good idea about the history of the momentous period from the monuments of this place.

Gandhi Museum

Gandhi Museum symbolises Gandhi's work and sacrifices made for the cause of Indian unity, communal harmony and National Independence struggle. One week after Gandhi's demise the Indian National Congress met in New Delhi on 6th February 1948. The main aim of the meeting was to try and find ways to perpetuate the memory of Gandhi and to carry on the work, which he had started to uplift the masses. Another aim was to create a National Trust in the memory of Gandhi to be called ***Gandhi Smarak Nithi*** or Gandhi Memorial Trust.¹⁰ In order to implement the decision a eleven member committee was set up headed by Rajendra

⁸ S.Sivaramakrishnan, *The First Patriot Varapandya, Kattabomman*, Madras, 1980, pp.6-7.

⁹ **Pamphlet**, "Tirunelveli - The Splendour of Tamil Nadu, Department of Tourism, Government of Tamil Nadu, Chennai, 1990.

¹⁰ ***Gandhi Smarak Nidhi***, "Dead of Declaration of Trust and Regulations", New Delhi, 1951, p.1.

Madurai : Gandhi Museum



Chennai : Government Museum



Prasad, the then President of India. He made an appeal to the nation to help to enlarge the memorial fund. Within one year, the total collection was amounted to Rs.10,98,29,106.95.¹¹ With this amount Gandhi Samarak Nidhi was formed on 15th April 1949 and subsequently a trust was created. The memorial trust authorized to start Gandhi memorial museums at Rajghat, Wardha and Madurai respectively.¹²

Kala Sahebkar, the Director of the *Sangrahalaya* committee visited Madurai on 21st August 1954 and finalised the Mangammal Palace at Tamukkam to install the museum. K.Kamaraj, the then chief minister of Tamil Nadu state government, gave his approval to construct the museum at Mangammal Palace with the surrounding land of Tamukkam. The construction came to completion in 1958, and Jawaharlal Nehru the then Prime minister of India inaugurated the Gandhi Memorial Museum at Madurai on 15th April 1959.¹³ A government museum is also situated with in the Gandhi Museum complex. It was established during the 5th world Tamil Conference, which was held in January 1981.¹⁴ Thus Kudal i.e. Madurai, a renowned city of temples also became a centre of significant historical monuments which offered the becoming of this place as a popular centre of tourist attraction.

The Fort Museum

¹¹ *Gandhi Smarak Nidhi*, "In Memory of Mahatma Gandhi", New Delhi, 1976, p.1.

¹² *Report of Activities of all Sengrahalayas upto 1958*, Correspondence file, Madurai, Gandhi Museum, No.VIII, p.1.

¹³ Information Stone Found on the Front Portion Entrance of the Gandhi Museum, Madurai, 15th April 1959.

¹⁴ **Pamphlet:** Gandhi Memorial Museum", Madurai, 2000.

The Fort Museum within the St. George Fort at Chennai is a treasure house of history, housing fascinating exhibits that narrate much of the story of the East India Company's activities in the South. It was built in the 1780's. The sections devoted to armour, costumes, coins, medals a painting of King George III and Queen Charlotte, and Chinaware are of special interest. Old parchment letters and manuscripts connected with the Fort are preserved there.¹⁵ It is also another centre of tourist attraction in Chennai, known for its beaches, palaces of the Nawab of Arcot etc.

National art Gallery and Government Museum

The National Art Gallery is located in the Pantheon Complex and it was built before 1789. The building itself is a fine specimen of the Indo-Saracenic style of Architecture. It constrains an impressive collection of old paintings and modern art. There are also some rare paintings in the Rajput, Moghul and 17th century Deccani Art. There are displays of bronzes belonging to the 10th and 13th centuries and Indian handicrafts from the 11th and 12th centuries.¹⁶

Next to the National Art Gallery is the Government Museum established in 1851. This museum boasts of an interesting collection of objects, has the national history, comparative anatomy and antiquities. Among its notable collections is a section

¹⁵ *Census of India, 1981*, Tamil Nadu District Census Handbook, Madras District, Series - 20, Parts XIII - A & B, p.31.

¹⁶ "Tamil Nadu Splendour of India" Government of Tamil Nadu Publication, Chennai, 1993, pp.26-27.

Chennai : Anna Square



Chennai : M.G.R Square



containing rare second century sculptures recovered from the site of the Buddhist stupa at Amaravathi. There are also fine specimens of sculptures belonging to the periods of early rulers such as the Pallavas, the Cholas and the Pandyas. The Bronze collection at the museum is perhaps the best found anywhere in the country due to its richness and variety.¹⁷

Anna and M.G.R. Memorial Tombs

Marina beach is the pride of the tourist spots at Madras. It is the second longest beach in the world. Anna square lies at the northern end of the Marina beach, where C.N. Annadurai known as Anna and M.G.Ramachandran (People called MGR) *Samathis* (Tomb) are available. They are memorials of two former Chief Ministers of the Tamil Nadu state. They are located in the centre of a beautiful park, the entrance of which have a spectacular arches. They attract thousands of people regularly.¹⁸ They too serve as centres of tourist attraction now along with the added attraction of the Marina Beach.

Sriperumpudur

Sriperumpudur, one of the religious and historical centres of Tamil Nadu is the birth place of the great Vaisnavite, philosopher, Ramanuja born in 1017 AD.¹⁹ A temple was built here

¹⁷ *Census of India, 1981*, Tamil Nadu District Census Handbook, Madras District, Series - 20, Parts XIII A & B, p.31.

¹⁸ www.tamilnadutourism.org.

¹⁹ *Census of India, 1981*, Tamil Nadu District Census Handbook, Chengalpattu

Sri Perumbudur : Rajiv Gandhi Memorial



Chennai : Valluvar Kottam



for Adikesava Perumal which is the presiding deity along with Sri Ramanujar. The temple was built by Vijayanagar Kings. Since 24 May 1991, Sri Perumpudur becomes a memorable name throughout the country after the assassination of the late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.²⁰ A memorial is built at this spot where hundreds of people pay visit every day. On the anniversary, thousands of people pay homage to the departed leader. This is an unique tourist centre having political, secular and religious monuments.

Valluvar Kottam

The *Valluvar Kottam* is a memorial to Thirvalluvar, the author of Thirukkural. The *Kottam* comprises a shrine, with a statue of Thiruvalluvar installed there along with a large auditorium. The shrine partly built in stone and partly in concrete has been fashioned after the temple car of Thiruvarur. The auditorium has been built with grid type roofing to eliminate pillar support for its 64 metres length and 30 meters width. The auditorium is said to be one of the biggest in Asia. *Valluvar Kottam* combines the latest in engineering techniques with the traditional skill of the sculptures.²¹ As it is a monument for an eminent Tamil poet, the structural plan captivates the attention of the tourists.

²⁰ K.S.K. Velmani (ed.), *Kanchipuram, District Gazetteer*, Madras, 2001, p.1751.

²¹ *Census of India, 1981*, Tamil Nadu District Census Handbook, Madras, District, Series - 20, Part XIII - A & B, p.31.

Fort St. George

The first factory within the fortified enclosure was completed on St. George's Day, 23 April 1640 and was named as Fort St. George. This was the East India Company's Principal settlement until 1774 A.D., when Calcutta, now Kolkatta, was declared as the seat of the government.²² It also served as a trading centre of the British East India Company, and in due course became a strong hold of British power in India and stands today as an important monument for the visitors to commemorate the British era. Within the Fort there are the old barracks, the original officer's quarters and two houses of historical interest. Among them one was occupied by Robert Clive and the other by Col. Wellesley, the two stalwarts who founded and enlarged the British possessions in India. Today a part of the Fort is used to accommodate both the House of the Legislature and the Secretariat of the Government of Tamil Nadu and is as much a hive of political activity as it was centuries ago. The flag staff near the eastern gate is the tallest in India.²³ This fort of political significance comprises of an archives as well as museum. Hence it is an attractive tourist spot in the capital city of Tamil Nadu.

St. Mary's Church

St. Mary's church was built between 1678 A.D. and 1680 A.D. within the Fort St. George by Streynsham Master, the then

²² Madhulita Mohapatra and others (Ed.), *op.cit.*, p.560.

²³ *Census of India, 1981*, Tamil Nadu District Census Handbook, Madras District, Series - 20, Parts XIII - A 7 B., p.30.

Governor of Madras.²⁴ It is also to be considered as a historical monument for various reasons. It is the first Christian church built by the English in India. The large painting of the *Last Supper* above the alter, supposed to have been done by a disciple of Raphael, is the most captivating and inspiring piece of art. According to the legend, the painting was brought to Madras from Pondicherry after the British captured that place in 1761.²⁵ Robert Clive was married to Margaret Maskalyne in this church in 1753.²⁶ This monumental church also adores the Fort St. George, Chennai.

Vivekananda Rock Memorial

This rock memorial located at Cape Comorin is dedicated to Swami Vivekananda, the greatest social reformer, saint and one of the illustrious sons of Modern India. Swami Vivekananda was supposed to have meditated on the rock where the memorial stands today at the end of the year 1892 before his departure to Chicago to participate in the World Religious Conference held in 1893. An impressive memorial to Swami Vivekananda has been erected on a rock situated some 200 meters offshore. V.V.Giri, the President of India, inaugurated the memorial on 2nd September 1970.²⁷ It is an Indian architectural masterpiece. The entire memorial *mandapam* is similar to that of Sri Ramakrishna Temple located at Belur and

²⁴ Madhulita Mohapatra and others (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.560.

²⁵ *Census of India 1981*, Tamil Nadu District Census Handbook, Madras District, Series - 20, Parts XIII, A & B., pp.30-31.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.31.

²⁷ M.Gopalakrishnan, *Tamil Nadu District Gazetteers*, Kanniyakumari, Madras, 1995, p.1175.

Kanniyakumari : Swami Vivekananda Rock Memorial



Poompuhar



the entrance is designed on the models of Ajana and Ellora cave temple style. Below the dome, in the main hall there is a life-size bronze statue of Vivekananda standing in *parivrajak* posture. Adjoining the main hall is the *Dhyana mandapam*, (Hall of meditation) where devotees can sit and mediate in a calm atmosphere.

The rock on which the memorial stands has a Puranic tradition, and it is known as the *Shripada Parai*. In Tamil it means the rock that has been blessed by the feet on the Goddess. On this rock there is a small projection resembling the human foot, which has been revered as a symbol of the *Shripadam*. According to a legend, it was on this rock, the Goddess Kanniya did Her penance. The special significance and sanctity attached to this rock might have prompted Swami Vivekananda, an ardent devotee of Kali / Durga, to venture across the sea for his long meditation amidst the everlasting curious music of the rippling waves of the seas. Through the ferry services 844185 domestic tourists and 4683 foreign tourists visited to this rock memorial in 2003.²⁸ This monument dedicated to a saint is a marvellous depiction of India to the world.

Manora

Manora fort is located in the village Sethubaba Chattiram near Cuddalore. The fort facing the Bay of Bengal, is an eight storied victory tower built by the Maharaja Serfoji, the then ruler of

²⁸ Department of Tourism, Government of Madras, Tamil Nadu, 2001.

Thanjavur, in 1814 A.D. to commemorate, the victory of the British over Napoleon Bonaparte in the battle of Waterloo. This place is presently under the care of the Central Archaeological Department as a protected monument.²⁹

Poompuhar

Poompuhar, which was in the historical times known as Kaveripoompattinam was the capital of the Imperial Chola kings.³⁰ It was also an important sea port of the Chola kingdom. The original city port was submerged in the sea and at present there is only a small village. It is a sacred bathing place, being the confluence of the river Cauvery with the sea. The place is also the birth place of saint Pattinathar, the poet and Kovalan and Kannagi the hero and heroine of *Cilappatikaram*. This place also mentions various Tamil Literature like *Ahananuru* and *Purananuru*.³¹ The temple of Pallavaneeswara, immortalised by the hymns of saint Sambandar is situated here.

Excavation at Poompuhar, which has been progressing from 1910 has revealed several beautiful structures and things. A Buddha Vihar, Buddha *Padam* or feet and various holy symbols like the *Poornakumbam* and *Swastika* were unearthed. Roman coins also excavated and it suggests trade relations with Rome. As a

²⁹ *Census of India, 1981*, Tamil Nadu District Census Handbook, Thanjavur District, Series - 20, Part XIII-A, p.36.

³⁰ [www. tamilnadu tourism. org](http://www.tamilnadu tourism. org).

³¹ *Census of India, 1981*, Tamil Nadu District Census Handbook, Tanjore District, Series 20, Part XIII-A, p.37.

remembrance, the ancient glory of the place has been reviewed, renovated and several monument erected, by the Government of Tamil Nadu, based on the evidences collected from excavations.³²

An art gallery depicting scenes from the Tamil Epic, *Cilappathikaram*. Kannagi and Kovalan was opened in 1972. Monuments on the *Nedungal Mandram*, the *Pavai Mandram*, the *Elango Mandram* and the *Kotrappandal* are also at display in this art gallery.³³

The Thanjavur art gallery, Saraswathi Mahal Library, palace and Sivaganga garden-all at Thanjavur, are a few secular monuments of great value. The Tirumalai Nayak Mahal at Madurai, the Dindigul fort, the Damsites at Sattanur, Manimuthar, Vaigai etc., are certain secular tourist spots available in Tamil Nadu. The Thirumeyyam fort of Kilavan Sethupathy, the Senji fort of Desingu Rajan, the Namakkal fort etc are also standing monuments of tourist importance in Tamil Nadu. So it is acknowledged that Tamil Nadu is a repository of number of secular monuments, which are attractive centres of tourist value. The different kinds of sanctuaries available in different parts of Tamil Nadu too serve as centres of tourist attraction. Thus it will be no wrong to treat the Tamil country as a Tourists' paradise.

³² *Ibid.*, p.38.

³³ *Census of India, 1981*, Tamil Nadu District Census handbook, Tanjore District, *op.cit.*, p.37.