

# ROLE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE, FAIRS AND FESTIVALS OF TOURISM PROMOTION IN MADURAI, TAMIL NADU AND INDIA

**C.M.Prakash**

*Guest Faculty, Research Scholar, Centre for Tourism and Hotel Management,  
Madurai Kamaraj University, Palkalai Nagar, Madurai – 625 021.*

## **ABSTRACT:**

Tourism promotes National Integration and International understanding. It encourages preservation of monuments, heritage properties and eco-sanctuaries, helps survival of traditional art forms, crafts and culture. It has achieved rapid strides due to its capacity to earn foreign exchange, generate employment opportunities and inculcate a sense of fraternity in the minds of people. The economic liberalization, open-sky aviation policy, luxury cruises, improved surface transport, tourist trains, increased business travel and e-booking facilities have created a paradigm change in the tourism sector. From a mere service industry, tourism has transformed into a major revenue generating industry. For the development of Tourism in Tamil Nadu, the Department of Tourism and Tamil Nadu Tourism Development Corporation (TTDC) were formed. The Department of Tourism concentrates on dissemination of Tourism information and implementation of tourist infrastructure schemes for the benefit of the tourists. The TTDC on the other hand was assigned the job of conducting package tours, 3 running of Hotels (Hotel Tamil Nadu) and maintaining of boat houses. Over the years, the Tourism Industry in Tamil Nadu has registered a good growth. Tourism development is an important catalyst for a rapidly growing economy like India. Its primary importance lies in the contribution to employment, income generation and foreign exchange inflow. Tourism is defined as travel for recreation, leisure, religious, family or business, medical, adventure, sports, education and research, usually for a limited duration. Tourism is commonly referred to as travel to another place within or outside the country. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines Tourists as people “travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one year for leisure, business and other purposes”

Madurai, the city with a cultural heritage which dates back to 2,500 years, is located on the banks of the Vaigai river in Tamil Nadu state of southern India. Madurai is one of the oldest cities in India and is 444 km from Chennai, the capital city of Tamil Nadu state. Madurai is known as the “Temple City” due to the presence of a large number of temples in the city for which many tourists go and visit the place each year. About 9,100,000 tourists visited Madurai in 2010, including 524,000 foreigners. . The most important temple in Madurai is the Meenakshi temple. The temple has a 1000 pillar hall, 14 towers with remarkable art, architecture and painting. Thirugnanasambandar, the Hindu Saint has mentioned the temple in his songs which go back to the early 7<sup>th</sup> century. Madurai is connected with re-establishing the glory of the language Tamil. Madurai is an example of cultural diversity. Owing to its glorious past, the richness of its culture is visible in everything. This includes its architectural majesty, customs and traditions, religious sanctity, magnificent art work, handicrafts, ballads, folk dances, dramas, songs, festivals and ceremonies. The folks of Madurai are genuinely traditional and they adhere to their customs and values very strictly. The city has very-well blended its ancient

cultural heritage, with the fast paced technological advancements. Madurai is expanding rapidly and is one the major commercial centers of South India. The growing number of educational institutions and industries in Madurai are live examples of its progress. The historic Meenakshi Amman Temple serves as a lifeline of the city and boasts of the city. The cuisine of Madurai is known to be simple, yet delicious, Dosai, idly, sambar and pongal are the popular dishes. The World Travel & Tourism Council calculated that tourism generated 8.31 lakh crore or 6.3% of the nation's GDP in 2015 and supported 37.315 million jobs, 8.7% of its total employment. The sector is predicted to grow at an average annual rate of 7.5% to 18.36 lakh crore by 2025. About 80.27 lakh foreign tourists arrived in India in 2015 compared to 76.79 lakh in 2014. Lack of a local initiative to realize the inherent strengths have kept this potential untapped and much less understood by the people of Madurai. Cultural Heritage has taken the initiative to bring about awareness among the public to the hidden treasure and through a consolidated initiative brand, Madurai as gateway to culture and heritage in the International arena. The city has very-well blended its ancient cultural heritage, with the fast paced technological advancements. Madurai is a veritable goldmine with a long cultural history and has a great potential to contribute to the economy through tourism. Madurai is a synonym of diversity and possesses the rich heritage. There are various major tourist centers surrounding Madurai, there are Meenakshi Amman Temple, Alagarkoil, Koodal Azhaar Temple, Pazhamudhirsolai, Thirupparangundram, Kodaikkanal, Palani, Srivilliputhur and Thekkady. The common festival that is celebrated by the people of Tamil Nadu during the mid January is Pongal. This festival is celebrated in praise of God by the farmers for showing them grace in supplying rain and produce good harvest. The first day is Bhogi day, the second is the Pongal day, and the third is Mattupongal day. During the Pongal season Jallikattu or the taming bull is played and many involve in themselves in this entertaining and thrilling sport. The famous Jallikattu is Alanganallur Jallikattu. The marriage occasion of goddess Meenakshi and Lord Sundareeswarar is celebrated during the Tamil Month of Chithirai (April / May). It is believed that the Lord Vishnu as Alagar came from the heaven above to Madurai on a golden horse to attend this grand wedding. Nowadays many marriages are held here. The other festivals are Float festival, Avanimoolam festival and Navarathri festival. Devotees gather in large mass during these grand festivals.

Tamil Nadu is a State with multifarious tourist attractions. It has mountains, verdant vegetation, sandy beaches, mammoth monuments, timeless temples, fabulous wildlife, scintillating sculptures and reverberating rural life. It has picturesque spots, continuing heritage, cultural confluence and aesthetic magnificence. Tourism is declared as an "Industry".

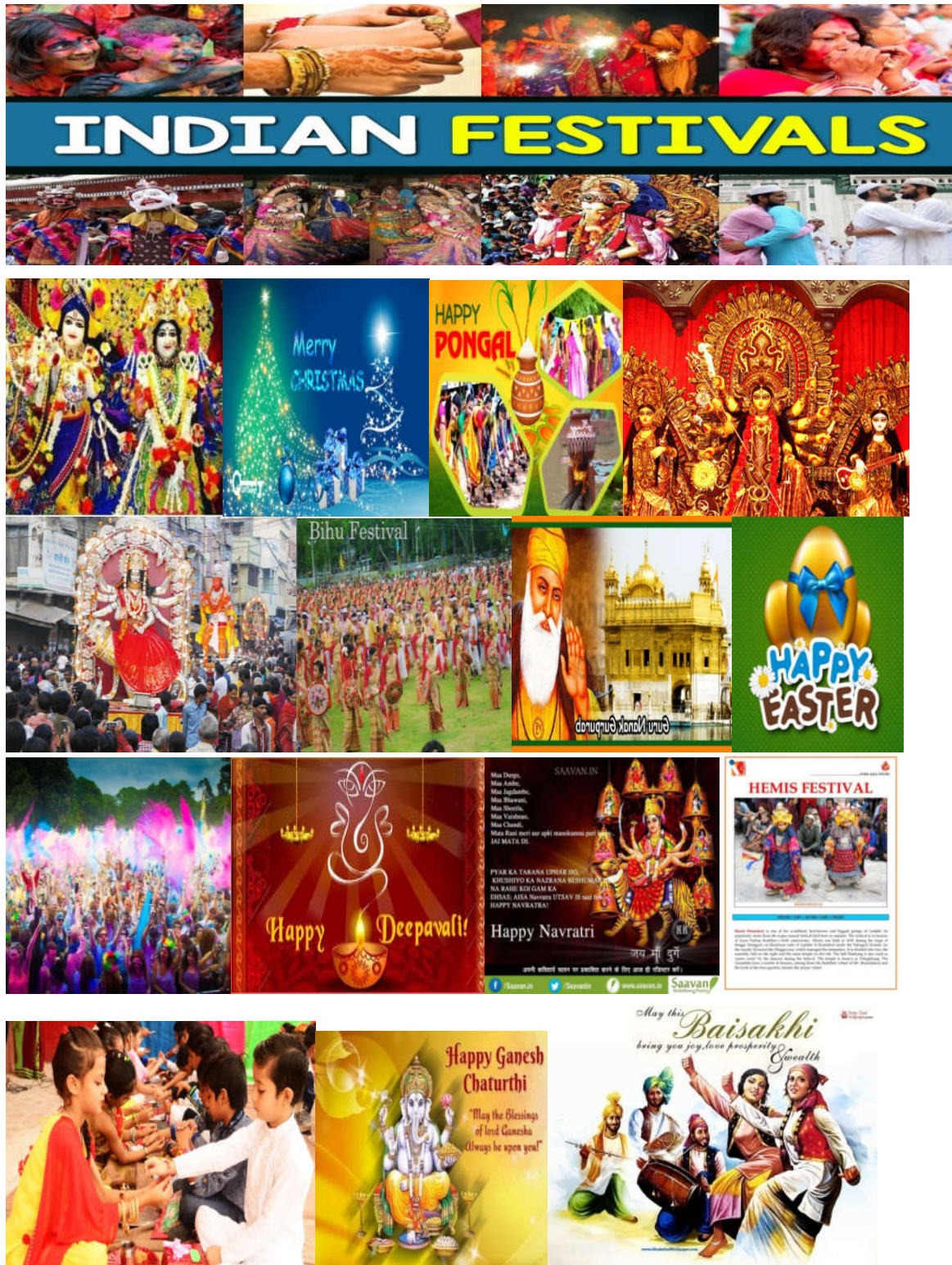
India has emerged as the fastest-growing market in Asia in terms of international tourist spending. India has incredible Monuments, Forts, Palaces, Temples, Beaches, Wild Life Sanctuaries, Memorials, Music and Dance. There is vibrancy of the culture, both ancient and modern. The economic and social conditions prevailing in India today have created huge growth in domestic tourism. The economic growth achieved by the country over the years has created a powerful middle class with reasonable affluence and disposable income. The 'visa on arrival' scheme introduced by Government of India, will enhance foreign tourist arrivals. The tourism industry in India is economically important and it is growing rapidly.

**Keywords:** Temple City, Cultural and Heritage Tourism, Jallikattu, Chithirai Festival, Inherent, Treasure, Initiative Temples, Tourism Industry, Beaches, Mountains, Music, Dance,

**INTRODUCTION:**

One of the most salient forms of modern-day tourism is based on the heritage of humankind. The majority of all global travel entails some element of the cultural past, as hundreds of millions of people visit cultural attractions, heritage festivals, and historic places each year. The book delves into this vast form of tourism by providing a comprehensive examination of its issues, current debates, concepts and practices. It looks at the social, physical and economic impacts, which cause destinations, site managers and interpreters to consider not only how to plan and manage resources but also how to portray the past in ways that are acceptable, accurate, accessible and politically relevant. In the process, however, the depth of heritage politics, the authenticity and inauthenticity of place and experience, and the urgent need to protect living and built cultures are exposed. The book explores these and many other current issues surrounding the management of cultural resources for tourism. Tourism in India is economically important and is growing rapidly. The World Travel & Tourism Council calculated that tourism generated 8.31 lakh crore or 6.3% of the nations GDP in 2015 and supported 37.315 million jobs, 8.7% of its total employment. The sector is predicted to grow at an average annual rate of 7.5% to 18.36 lakh crore 2015. Madurai is an example of cultural diversity. Owing to its glorious past, the richness of its culture is visible in everything. This includes its architectural majesty, customs and traditions, religious sanctity, magnificent art work, handicrafts, ballads, folk dances, dramas, songs, festivals and ceremonies. The city has very-well blended its ancient cultural heritage, with the fast paced technological advancements. Madurai is expanding rapidly and is one the major commercial centers of South India. The growing number of educational institutions and industries in Madurai are live examples of its progress. A profound influence of the culture heritage of Madurai is seen over its people too. Though the people of the city are slowly adopting the modern lifestyle, their value system remains intact. The social fabric of the place is well fabricated and its people live in harmony with each other. The major religion of the people of Madurai is Hinduism. There is also an evident number of Jains, Muslims and Christians in the city. Madurai is an ideal example of unity in diversity. With people following different religions there is no clash amongst communities. The main language spoken by the people of Madurai is Tamil. It is spoken in its pure form. The Sourashtra language is spoken by the people of Sourashtra community, which is significantly present in the city. People also speak a host of other regional languages like Telugu, Malayalam, Hindi and Urdu. English, being an important international language, is widely spoken by the educated people of Madurai. Madurai has become a big commercial centre in the south. It is famous for its textile industry which is growing in stature with time. The city contributes immensely to the textile wealth of the county. The textile industry still uses its ancient techniques of weaving. Madurai is one of the ancient cities of South India with a glorious history. It is famous for its world acclaimed Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple. The city of Madurai has been constructed in the form of a lotus and is built around the temple. It is situated on the banks of the river Vaigai. Madurai is famous for its spirit of festivity. There are a number of festivals celebrated in the city, forming an important part of its cultural heritage. People from across the globe gather here to be a part of these festivals. Madurai Festivals form an integral part of the society of the city. Pongal, Festival of Cradle, Dance Festival Avanimoolam Festival, Jallikattu, Navarathri, and Chitirai Festival are some of the major festivals of the city that are celebrated with pomp and show. Apart from its Majestic Temples and religious places, the city of temples offers a host of other places of interest. A sightseeing tour of Madurai is the best option to relax and enjoy. After diving into the ocean of divinity, these tourist attractions help you to lighten your mood.

FAIRS AND FESTIVALS IN INDIA PICTURES



## FAIRS AND FESTIVALS IN INDIA:

**Diwali or Deepavali:** Diwali or Deepavali is the Hindu festival of lights, which is celebrated every autumn in the northern hemisphere. One of the most popular festivals of Hinduism, Diwali symbolises the spiritual "victory of light over darkness, good over evil and knowledge over ignorance"

**Holi:** In the Braj region of India, where the Hindu deity Krishna grew up, the festival is celebrated until Rangpanchmi in commemoration of the divine love of Radha for Krishna. The festivities officially usher in spring, with Holi celebrated as a festival of love.

**Dussehra:** Vijayadashami (IAST: Vijayadaśamī, pronounced [ʋjəjəðəʃmɪ]) also known as Dasahara, Dusshera, Dasara, Dussehra or Dashain is a major Hindu festival celebrated at the end of Navratri every year.

**Navratri :** Navratri is a nine-night celebration of Durga, the Hindu mother goddess. Navratri comes from the Sanskrit nava, meaning "nine" and ratri, meaning "nights." The festival is also called Sharada Navratri or Maha Navratri, meaning "great Navratri."

**Durga Puja :** Durga Puja, also called Durgotsava, is an annual Hindu festival in the Indian subcontinent that reveres the goddess Durga. It is particularly popular in West Bengal, Assam, Tripura, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Bangladesh and the diaspora from this region, and also in Nepal where it is called Dashain.

**Janmashtmi :** A Hindu festival celebrating the birthday of the deified hero Krishna.

**Ganesh Chaturthi :** Ganesha Chaturthi is the Hindu festival held on the birthday of the lord Ganesha. He was the son of Shiva and Parvati. It is celebrated all over India. Ganesh Chaturthi is also called as Vinayaka Chaturthi, it is a pure Hindu festival, during this festival people pray Lord Ganesha with great devotion.

**Gurupurab :** A Gurpurab ((Punjabi: ਗੁਰਪੁਰਬ)) in Sikh tradition is a celebration of an anniversary of a Guru's birth marked by the holding of a festival. There are indications in the old chronicles that the gurus who succeeded Guru Nanak celebrated his birthday.

**Rakshabandhan :** Eid al-Fitr is an important religious holiday celebrated by Muslims worldwide that marks the end of Ramadan, the Islamic holy month of fasting. This religious Eid is the first and only day in the month of Shawwal during which Muslims are not permitted to fast.

**Bihu :** Bihu is the chief festival in the Assam state of India. It refers to a set of three different festivals: Rongali or Bohag Bihu observed in April, Kongali or Kati Bihu observed in October, and Bhogali or Magh Bihu observed in January. ... The other two Bihu festivals every year are unique to Assamese people.

**Hemis :** Hemis Festival is one such prominent festival that attracts people from all parts of the world. The two day Hemis Festival is celebrated with great enthusiasm and pomp all over the Ladakh region. The festival is organized in Hemis Gompa, which is one of the largest and richest Buddhist monasteries in the world.

**Onam** :Onam is an annual Hindu holiday and festival with origins in the state of Kerala in India. It falls in the Malayalam calendar month of Chingam, which in Gregorian calendar overlaps with August–September.

**Pongal** : Thai Pongal. The main event, also known as Thai Pongal, takes place on the second of the four days. This day coincides with Makara Sankranti, a winter harvest festival celebrated throughout India. In the Tamil language the word Pongal means "overflowing," signifying abundance and prosperity.

**Christmas** : Christmas is an annual festival commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ, observed primarily on December 25 as a religious and cultural celebration among billions of people around the world.

**Easter** : Easter, also called Pascha or Resurrection Sunday, is a festival and holiday celebrating the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, described in the New Testament as having occurred on the third day of his burial after his crucifixion by the Romans at Calvary c. 30 AD.

**Baisakhi** : Vaisakhi (IAST: visākhī), also known as Baisakhi, Vaishakhi, or Vasakhi is a historical and religious festival in Sikhism and Hinduism. It is usually celebrated on 13 or 14 April every year. Vaisakhi marks the Sikh new year and commemorates the formation of Khalsa panth of warriors under Guru Gobind Singh in 1699.



## FAIRS AND FESTIVALS IN MADURAI

The common festival that is celebrated by the people of Tamil Nadu during the mid January is Pongal. This festival is celebrated in praise of God by the farmers for showing them grace in supplying rain and produce good harvest. The first day is Bhogi day, the second is the Pongal day, and the third is Mattupongal day. During the Pongal season Jallikattu or the taming bull is played and many involve in themselves in this entertaining and thrilling sport. The famous Jallikattu is Alanganallur Jallikattu.

## CHITHIRAI FESTIVAL

The marriage occasion of goddess Meenakshi and Lord Sundareeswarar is celebrated during the Tamil Month of Chithirai (April / May). It is believed that the Lord Vishnu as Alagar came from the heaven above to Madurai on a golden horse to attend this grand wedding. Nowadays many marriages are held here. The other festivals are

Float festival, Avanimoolam festival and Navarathri festival. Devotees gather in large mass during these grand festivals.

### **Madurai Tourist Attractions:**

The Gandhi Museum of Madurai was established in the loving memory of the Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation. It holds great historical importance and was set up by the Gandhi Memorial Trust after the assassination of Bapu in 1948. The museum has been set up in the Palace of Rani Mangammal of Nayak Dynasty. Vandiyur Mariamman Teppakulam is situated at a distance of about 5 km from the Meenakshi Amman Temple. The area of the tank, and the island pavilion with a garden in the center, is approximately equal to the area of Meenakshi Temple. It is one of the largest temple tanks in South India and gets water supply from the Vaigai River. Thirumalai Nayak Palace of India is an example of architectural grandeur and was built by King Thirumalai Nayak in 1636 AD. The palace was designed by an Italian Architect and served as the residence of the King. It is situated at a distance of 2.5 km from the Meenakshi temple of Madurai. Adhisyam is a water theme park, situated at a distance of 15 km from Madurai. This place serves as a picnic spot and people visit it for leisure activities. It was established in 2000 and is now the largest water park in area. It provides several water sports for having fun in the water. Adhisyam is an ideal place for family entertainment. It is just 20 minutes away from Madurai and opens at 10 am in the morning. There are rides and sports to suit everybody. Vandiyur Kanmoy is a tank situated at a distance of 6 km from the Periyar bus stand. The complex has boating facilities, a restaurant and a children train, maintained by TTDC. It also provides houseboats to the tourists, making it a perfect picnic spot in the city. Rajaji is a recreational Children's Park situated at a distance of just 2 km from the Central Bus Stand. It is owned and maintained by the Corporation of Madurai, located near Corporation Office (Anna Maaligai). The park is open on all days, from 10:00 am to 8:00 p.m. The entry fee for the park is very nominal, with no tickets for children below 3 years. The rich heritage and architectural splendor of Madurai, hold on, the city has much more to offer. There are a number of tourist places around the temple city, to make your trip memorable. Away from the hustle and bustle of the city, these excursions not only provide relief but also rejuvenate your senses completely exotic locations of the India. Vaigai dam is a popular picnic spot, situated at a distance of 69 km from Madurai. The place is a unique blend of artificial as well as natural beauty. There are manmade gardens on one side and mountains and the river on the other. Tourists flock the picturesque place on Sundays, when the dam is beautifully illuminated. Kumbakkarai Water Falls is located amidst the splendid beauty of the Kodai Hills, the Kumbakkarai Water Falls lie at a distance of 105 km from Madurai. These falls serve as a perfect destination for trekkers. Enjoying the scintillating water of the falls and then exploring the pristine beauty of the woods is a unique experience. One of the major excursions around Madurai is the city Courtallam. It lies 160 km from the temple city and is famous for its waterfalls. Popularly known as the 'Spa of the South', it is blessed with immense natural beauty. A panchayat town, it is situated on the Western Ghats of India, at a height of about 167 m. Kodaikanal is situated at a distance of 120 km from Madurai, Kodaikanal is a picturesque hill station of South India, nestled amidst the Pali Hills. At an altitude of 2133 meters (7,000 feet), the mesmerizing scenic beauty of the place enchants the tourists. Megamalai is located on the slopes of the Western Ghats, amidst the lush green Tea plantations and Cardamom estates. It is popularly called 'High Wavy Mountains'. It is a cool and misty mountain range and lies at a distance of 130 km from Madurai. Palani Hills is located at a distance of 122 km from Madurai, Palani Hills are of great religious importance for Hindus. The major attraction of the hills is a temple, dedicated to Lord

Subramanya. The temple is situated on top of a hill, reached by a flight of 659 steps. Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary, Periyar National Park is located at the Tamil Nadu-Kerala border in India. This Tiger Reserve lies 155 km from Madurai and is host to many animals and birds. The Park came to existence because of the love of the Maharaja of Travancore for nature. Suruli Falls is situated amidst rich flora fauna, Suruli Falls serve as a perfect picnic spot. They lie on the way to Periyar National Park, at a distance of 123 km from Madurai. The falls originate from the Megamalai hills and descend from a height of 150 feet.

### **Madurai Cuisine:**

Madurai cuisine is mainly comprises of Vegeterian food Viz, Dosai, Idly, Pongal and Sambar. The food of Madurai is cooked in coconut oil using minimum condiments and spices. Madurai food is known to be both simple and tasty. Some of the common ingredients used in food of Madurai are Lettuce Leaves, Carrots, Brinjals, Potatoes, Ladies Finger, Tomatoes and Cauliflower. Madurai Cuisine is very popular all over the country. Madurai is also known for its filter coffee, which is very popular among the tourists coming to the city. Besides, the city is also famous for its drinks such as Paruthi Pal, Jil Jil Jigarthanda and Ambatbath. Paruthi is a popular drink in Madurai, Which is made from coconut, raw rice flour and jaggery. Jil Jil Jigarthanda is yet another favourite drink, which is loved by the people of the city.

### **Cultural and Heritage City of Madurai:**

The ancient city of Madurai, more than 2,500 years old, was built by the Pandyan king, Kulashekarar, in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. But the reign of the Nayaks marks the golden period of Madurai when art, architecture and learning flourished expansively. The most beautiful buildings in the city including its most famous landmark, the Meenakshi temple, were built during the Nayak rule. Located in the heart of the city of Madurai, the Meenakshi-Sundareshwarar temple is dedicated to goddess Meenakshi, the consort of lord Shiva. It has long been the focus of both Indian and international tourist attraction as well as one of the most important places of Hindu pilgrimage. For the people of Madurai, the temple is the very center of their cultural and religious life.

It is said that the people of the city wake up, not by the call of nature but by the chant of hymns at the temple. All the major festivals of Tamil Nadu are celebrated here with gaiety, most important being the Chithirai festival that is held in April/May, when the celestial marriage of Meenakshi and Sundareshwarar is celebrated, drawing a huge crowd of people from all over the state. The sculpted pillars are adorned with the exquisite murals that celebrate the ethereal beauty of princess Meenakshi and the scenes of her wedding with Lord Shiva. At the Sundareshwarar temple across the courtyard, Lord Shiva is represented as a lingam. The pillars depict scenes from the wedding of Meenakshi and Sundareshwarar. There are 985 richly carved pillars here and each one surpasses the other in beauty. Meenakshi was the daughter of King Malayadwaja Pandya and Queen Kanchanamala, who was born after performing several yagnas (sacrificial rites). The three-year old girl emerged out of the fire during the final yagna. The princess Meenakshi, grew to be a beautiful young woman of great valour who conquered several lands and challenged the mightiest kings. It was then revealed that the princess was actually an incarnation of Parvati who came to earth to honour a promise given to Kanchanamala in her previous life. Thus Shiva came to Madurai as Sundareshwarar to marry Meenakshi and the two ruled over the kingdom for many years before they left for their heavenly abode from the spot where the temple now stands. The grandeur of this twin-temple complex and its historicity reflects the old-world charm of the city. But today, Madurai is one of the most important cultural and commercial centres of India. Modernity has reached the city, but not at the cost of its rich culture and tradition.



**Initiatives to Boost Tourism:**

Some of the recent initiatives taken by the Government to boost tourism include grant of export house status to the tourism sector and incentives for promoting private investment in the form of Income Tax exemptions, interest subsidy and reduced import duty. The hotel and tourism-related industry has been declared a high priority industry for foreign investment which entails automatic approval of direct investment up to 51 percent of foreign equity and allowing 100 per cent non-resident Indian investment and simplifying rules regarding the grant of approval to travel agents, tour operators and tourist transport operators. Showcasing the Temple city as a gateway for Tamil culture, the Confederation of Indian Industry conducted a “Madurai Mystique” to enhance the tourism potential and attract investors to the potential. The “Madurai Mystique” would put the city on a pedestal to attract global and domestic tourists. Lack of a local initiative to realize the inherent strengths have kept this potential untapped and much less understood by the people of Madurai. Cultural Heritage has taken the initiative to bring about awareness among the public to the hidden treasure and through a consolidated initiative brand, Madurai as a “Gateway to culture and heritage” in the international arena. To pave the way, free supply of tourist map with all details, a picture post-card for remembrance become pre-requisites. A courteous and endearing conduct and behaviour from the stakeholders need to be ensured. There has to be linkage among the stakeholders. Tour guides and Tourist police have to become part and parcel of the system. Course on “Tour guides” has to be initiated. Tourism stakeholders in the city say a lot more can be done to highlight the local festivals. A long-standing demand on the Tourism Department was that it should come out with a comprehensive calendar outlining all the cultural events for the entire year. Foreign tourists plan the vacations way ahead and such a calendar would go a long way in attracting more people. Apart from the calendar, improving the hygiene at tourist spots and their proper maintenance are also badly needed.

Tourist Arrivals to Tamil Nadu Tamil Nadu is ranked first in both domestic and foreign tourist arrivals in 2014 and 2015 consecutively in the country. Many steps are being taken to sustain the Top position in both domestic and foreign tourist arrivals in the ensuing years. Targeted promotional strategies and extensive marketing campaigns through print and electronic media at the national and international levels and creation and upgradation of basic amenities and infrastructure at tourist destinations 9 have resulted in the increase of tourist arrivals to Tamil Nadu.

**IN LAKHS**

	<b>Year</b>	<b>Domestic</b>	<b>Foreign</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Domestic and Foreign Tourist Arrivals</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>1841.37</b>	<b>35.62</b>	<b>1876.99</b>
	<b>2013</b>	<b>2442.32</b>	<b>39.90</b>	<b>2482.22</b>
	<b>2014</b>	<b>3275.55</b>	<b>46.58</b>	<b>3322.13</b>
	<b>2015</b>	<b>3334.59</b>	<b>46.85</b>	<b>3381.44</b>

**Tourism Industry:**

Tamil Nadu is a forerunner in tourism sector in the country. Tourism in recent times has transformed from a service sector into a major export industry. The State holds the position of pride with 5 UNESCO Heritage sites

in India, being the highest number. The State is well connected with sea ports, best roads and rail connectivity, besides being the only State with four international airports offering direct connectivity to many countries. With peace loving people and good law & order, the State offers right business environment and desired linkages, along with all necessary infrastructure for investors. The “Vision Tamil Nadu 2023” outlines a road map for the growth in the State, covering all the major sectors in the economy. The State has emerged as a preferred investment destination ranked high among the investors for fostering growth and empowering an efficient and competitive market place. The State has always offered a climate of uninterrupted growth and economic resilience. Department of Tourism is the major catalyst for tourism promotion in Tamil Nadu. Tamil Nadu Tourism is taking various steps to attract both domestic and foreign tourists. Marketing Meets, Publicity Campaigns and Exhibitions are conducted at potential regions at domestic and overseas levels. The multifarious tourist attractions, excellent Law and Order, connectivity to destinations, tourist facilities for luxury and budget travel, tourist friendliness are highlighted in marketing activities. In Tamil Nadu, Chennai Port Trust and Thoothukudi Port Trust are attracting Cruises. Tamil Nadu Tourism Department has suggested to the tour operators to modify the tours, so as to make them spend more time on shore and visit more tourist places for a minimum of three to four days. This will help to generate more revenue and provide an opportunity to spend money on other travel related areas and shopping on handicrafts items. This will help to improve the economy of the State and the Country. This year, two cruise ships have arrived at Chennai Port and Tamil Nadu Tourism has extended good co-ordination with Chennai Port Trust and other Departments, for providing a warm welcome to the Cruise passengers. Coastal tourism is based on a unique resource combination at the border of land and sea environment; sun, water, beaches, outstanding scenic views, rich biological diversity etc. Based on these resources, various tourism products have been developed in many coastal destinations such as well-maintained beaches, water sports, boat-trips, cruises, bird watching tours etc. Our Coast line in Tamil Nadu is dotted with other tourist attractions like Temples, Historical monuments, Forts etc. 15 Creation of Public Convenience, Wayside Amenities, Watch Towers, Development of Walkway, Upgradation of Beach Front Pockets, Installation of CCTV Cameras, Information Signages, Erection of First Aid Kiosks and development of Arts & Crafts Villages are the proposed works. Para-Sailing, Windsurfing, Water Scooter, Banana Boating, Water Skiing, Sand Art are the proposed activities for the development of Beach Tourism. The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, has launched the “Swadesh Darshan” scheme with a vision to develop theme based tourist circuits on the principles of high tourist value, competitiveness and sustainability in an integrated manner by synergizing efforts to focus on needs and concerns of all stakeholders to enrich tourist experience and enhance employment opportunities. The Department of Tourism has identified the consultant for the preparation of DPR with focus on development of world class tourism product. Eco Tourism has to be developed on sustainable basis without causing damage to environment and wildlife by integrating facilities at hill stations, wild life sanctuaries and national parks for the benefit of tourists. While promoting eco-friendly destinations, the carrying capacity of the destinations will be taken into consideration and the local community is to be made actively involved in all developmental activities, to ensure inclusive development. Pachamalai in Tiruchirapalli district has been developed as eco-tourism centre by creating facilities for tourists.

### **Fairs & Festivals in Tamil Nadu:**

Tourism is working with an objective to promote Tamil Nadu as an attractive international tourist destination and sustain its leading position. This improves the economy of the State. The unlimited tourism potential of the State needs to be highlighted nationally and internationally to increase the tourist arrivals. The rich cultural heritage of Tamil Nadu is one of the important tourist attractions. The foreign tourists have special liking for Tamil Nadu because of its art, culture, architecture, heritage, traditional crafts, cuisine etc. The festivals, particularly dance and 18 music festivals are attracting large number of domestic and foreign tourists. Promoting important festivals, publicizing tourist attractions in India and abroad, conducting publicity campaigns in all major cities in India & abroad and participating in the International Travel Marts are the efforts made by this Department to increase the domestic and foreign tourist arrivals. Domestic and foreign tourist arrivals are generally high during the cultural and festival seasons. Summer festivals are conducted at important hill stations – Ooty, Kodaikanal, Yercaud, Yelagiri, Kolli Hills, Kalvarayan Hills, Javvadhu Hills and Valparai. Tamil Nadu Tourism will continue to conduct the following festivals every year for the benefit of tourists and to highlight the Cultural heritage of the State. • Pongal Tourist Festival - January • Hot Air Balloon Festival, Pollachi - January • Book Fair at Perambalur District - January • Sail and Surf Festival at Manapad - January • Melattur Bhagavatha Mela, Thanjavur - May • Summer Festival at all Hill Stations - May • Kodai Kondattam at Thoothukudi - May • Saral Thiruvizha, Courtallam - July / August • Aadipperukku Vizha, Hogenakkal - July / August • Valvil Ori Vizha at Kolli Hills, Namakkal District - July / August • Adi Perun Thiruvizha, Thirumoorthy Malai - August • World Tourism Day - September • Sadhaya Vizha, Thanjavur - September / October • Deepam Festival, Tiruvannamalai - November / December • Tea and Tourism Festival, Udhamandalam - November / December • Vaikunda Egadasi Festival, Srirangam - December / January • Indian Dance Festival, Mamallapuram - December / January To make the Tourist destinations prominent, Tamil Nadu Tourism has participated in the Government Exhibitions held at Madurai, Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi, Tiruvannamalai, Tiruchirapalli, Coimbatore, Salem, Kanniyakumari & Vellore and showcased the tourism attractions, which include lesser known centres.

### **Indian Dance Festival:**

Tamil Nadu is the State known for several fairs and festivals, which attract large number of people, who want to relax and rejoice in the folk arts of Tamil Nadu and various classical dance forms. During the peak season period (December–January) every year, Indian Dance Festival is performed at Mamallapuram. Renowned artistes from all over India in various classical dance forms and folk arts of Tamil Nadu & various States are also showcased in the festival. Many foreign tourists have included this festival in their tour itinerary. 34 Initially the Dance Festival was named as “Mamallapuram Dance Festival”. After the inclusion of various art forms of India, the festival was renamed as “Indian Dance Festival”. The master performers from various parts of India - Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Puducherry, Jharkhand, Nagaland, Manipur, Rajasthan, Odisha, Mizoram, Sikkim, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh showcase the various art forms in the UNESCO identified heritage site of Mamallapuram. The sponsored programmes of the South Zone Cultural Centre, Department of Art and Culture and Government Music College of Chennai are added attractions.

**Cultural and Heritage Tourism India:**

Heritage tourism India has registered an immense growth in the last few years, ever since additional initiatives were taken by the government of India to boost India's image as a destination for heritage tourism. India has always been famous for its rich heritage and ancient culture. So the onset of heritage tourism in India was long anticipated. India's glorious past and cultural diversity make a potent blend which attracts millions of tourists each year to its heritage tourist attractions. The government of India and the Ministry of Tourism and Culture encourage heritage tourism in India by offering several benefits to the Indian states that are particularly famous for attracting tourists. India's rich heritage is amply reflected in the various temples, palaces, monuments, and forts that can be found everywhere in the country. This has led to the increase in India's heritage tourism.

The most popular heritage tourism destinations in India are:

- Taj Mahal in Agra
- Mandawa castle in Rajasthan
- Mahabalipuram in Tamil Nadu
- Madurai in Tamil Nadu
- Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh
- Delhi, the Indian capital

The maximum number of tourists who come to India visit the Taj Mahal for it is one of the 7 wonders of the world. It is made of marble which has intricate inlay work done in an exquisite and meticulous style. The Mandawa castle in Rajasthan, built in 1775 reflects India's rich heritage and attracts thousands of tourists each year to Rajasthan which seems especially popular for its antique paintings, jade jewellery, palaces, and costumes. Mahabalipuram has sculptural and architectural sites which are considered the greatest in India. Mahabalipuram has cave temples that have been carved from granite blocks and belong to the 7th century. This is the primary reason why many heritage tourists in India visit this place. The tourism of heritage in India has also increased due to the interest of many foreigners in the temples of India. Madurai is known as the 'temple city' due to the presence of a large number of temples in the city. And for this reason, many tourists go and visit the place each year. The most important temple in Madurai is the Meenakshi temple.

Heritage tourism India has also been popularized because a lot of tourists go to Delhi which is not only the capital of India but also has many heritage sites. The most famous heritage sites in Delhi are the Red fort, Jama Masjid, Humayun's tomb, and Tughlaqabad fort. Heritage tourism India has grown in recent years but there is scope for further development which can be attained only through combined efforts of the government of India and the tourism boards.

**Conclusion:**

Madurai is a veritable goldmine with a long cultural history and has a great potential to contribute to the economy through tourism. The city has very-well blended its ancient cultural heritage, with the fast paced technological advancements. In recent times, the infrastructure facilities have improved. Hotels and Restaurants

comparable to international standards have sprung up. There was earlier only a single flight to Chennai, now there are four daily. With broad gauge conversion, there are trains connecting many places. Exclusive shopping centres, family amusement malls, showcasing the martial arts and rural sports would add to the promotion of the economy of Madurai. Tamil Nadu has diversified tourist attractions like temples, mountains, waterfalls, beaches, monuments, wildlife, hill stations, art, culture, tradition, cuisine and heritage and these attractions have made Tamil Nadu, the “Number One State” in the country. Tamil Nadu is well connected by road, rail and air. Tourist security and tourist friendliness are the factors adding value to the State. Many steps are being taken to retain the top position in Tourist arrivals in the ensuing years. In August 2017, a special promotion was undertaken to publicise Ahmedabad as India’s first World Heritage City of UNESCO. Internationally, an attitude towards cultural tourism have the World Tourism Organization (WTO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO, ICOMOS, ICOM, Organization of the world’s historic cities, the EU and its cultural institutions. None of these organizations did register generic statistical information on cultural tourism. At various intervals, on various occasions, surveys are implementing, but the results serve only specific goals and objectives of the study. Among the other factors contributing to the development of cultural tourism are the change in consciousness of the importance of cultural heritage, income and duration of leisure. This form of tourism is among the most popular within the short-term travelling: “getaway from the city” or a combination of the traditional holiday on the sea-side and mountains with day tours to interesting cultural and historical sites. The demand for travel and tourism in India is expected to grow by 8.2 per cent between 2010 and 2019 and will place India at the third position in the world. In view of the fierce competition in tourist generating markets from several countries, it becomes necessary for India to strengthen its promotional and marketing efforts continuously even to maintain its existing marketing share. India has had many rulers over the centuries and all of them made an impact on India’s culture. Once can see the influence of various cultures in dance, music, festivities, architecture, traditional customs, food and languages. It is due to the influence of all these various cultures that the heritage and culture of India is exhaustive and vibrant. This richness in culture goes a long way in projecting India as the ultimate cultural tourism destination given boost to tourism in culture in India.

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