

A Study of Pilgrimage Tourism with Special Reference to Delta District in Tamil Nadu

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How to cite this paper: Tamilmani K | Prof. S. Poornachandran "A Study of Pilgrimage Tourism with Special Reference to Delta District in Tamil Nadu"

Published in International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (ijtsrd), ISSN: 2456-6470, Volume-3 | Issue-5, August 2019,



IJTSRD25256

pp.277-283,

<https://doi.org/10.31142/ijtsrd25256>

ABSTRACT

A research survey was conducted with a population of 50 samples in all the nine navagraha temples which aimed to identify the overall satisfaction level of the tourist that includes devotees' perception, preferences, satisfaction with various services and facilities and the level of satisfaction of various services offered to the pilgrimage tourist in navagraha temples of Tamil Nadu. For the present study a ranking questionnaire was premeditated to quantify the preferences of facilities available to the pilgrimage tourists. The questionnaire was dispersed to 450 tourists (50 in each of the navagraha temples) and all the 450 tourists have replied with complete data and nobody have submitted with incomplete data or not submitted. Based on the study, the inferences and interpretations are given to enable the readers to understand the real aims and objectives of the study. The present study also recommended the measures to be taken for measuring the devotees' perception and the level of satisfaction of a range of services provided.

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KEYWORDS: Tourism, Pilgrimage, Navagraha, Temples

TOURISM IN TAMILNADU

Among the different states of India, Tamil Nadu has the foremost of attractions in the state are its impressive ancient temples, which are true edifices of a great and ancient culture vibrant and even today. Next only to the pilgrimage and heritage locations in Tamil Nadu comes the scenic beauty of nature in and around the state in the form of forests, wildlife sanctuaries, hill stations and the long bio-diverse coastline.

These locations provide immense opportunities for sightseeing, pleasure and leisure, to the visitors of various categories including adventure tourists.

Tamil Nadu has a wide range of tourism wonders which attracts domestic and foreign tourists from India and all over the world. In order to grow the tourism wonders, Tamil Nadu Tourism department has been initiating identification of the places for the sustained development for the welfare of the tourists.

PILGRIMAGE TOURISM

Among the different categories of tourism the pilgrimage tourism in India is emerging more when compared to other types, due to the presence of number of ancient temples. This type of tourism attracts mostly senior citizens. It is a journey undertaken to a location with an importance to an individual's belief and faith in search of spiritual awakening, to get absolved of sins, to pray for relief from ill effects and disabilities of life, to express gratitude for blessings or simply to visit them for worship and so on. They are in the form of Holy shrines or temples of Hindus, Mosques and Dargahs of Islamic faith and popular Churches, Chapels and Basilica's of Christian belief. Tamil Nadu has abundance of scope in this segment.

PILGRIMAGE TO NAVAGRAHA TEMPLES

Believers in astrology and the influence of planets over individual destiny will find Tamil Nadu as a Great

Destination. Indian Astrology believes that the planetary positions of the nine planets in a geocentric orbit determine the strength and weaknesses of a life, and how it takes its course. **Nava** means Nine and **Graha** means Planets. Navagraha temples dedicated to the Nine Celestial bodies, with incarnation of God for each of those nine planets are found in and around nagai and Thanjavur District

HISTORY AND GREATNESS OF NAVAGRAHA TEMPLES

Believers in astrology as well as the power of the nine planets over individual fate will discover the state of Tamil Nadu as an enormous target place and it is being believed that the weakness and strength of any individual was determined by the positions of the planets in a geocentric orbit. The course of movement taken by the nine planets also influences the same. The meaning of Navagraha is nine planets (Nava means nine; graha means planets) and Navagraha temples dedicated to the nine extraterrestrial bodies, with manifestation of God for each of those nine planets are found in and around Nagapattinam and Thanjavur District.

These celestial bodies are named Surya (Sun), Chandra (Moon), Mangala (Mars), Budha (Mercury), Brihaspati (Jupiter), Shukra (Venus), Shani (Saturn), Rahu (North Lunar Node) and Ketu (South Lunar Node) and Many temples in South India contain a shrine dedicated to the Navagrahas.

Table: Navagraha temples with the nine planets

Sl. No	Planet	Temple
1.	Surya (Sun)	Suryanar Koil
2.	Chandra (Moon)	Tingaloor Koil
3.	Chevaai (Mars)	Vaitheswaran Koil
4.	Budhan (Mercury)	Tiruvenkadu
5.	Guru (Jupiter)	Alangudi
6.	Shukran (Venus)	Kanchanoor
7.	Shani (Saturn)	Tirunallar
8.	Rahu	Tirunageswaram
9.	Ketu	Keezhperumpallam

SURIYANAR KOIL, AUDUTHURAI

Suriyanar Koil (the sun temple) is 21 Kms from Swami Malai and 58 Kms from Thanjavur. It is believed to have been built by Chola King Kulothunga I in 1100 AD, and the temple has been patronized by the King of Srivijayam, the current day Indonesia. This depicts the religious connection between the two countries and the temple is dedicated to Lord Suriyan [Sun] which is believed to confer health, success and prosperity. In the state of Tamil Nadu, the Pongal Festival is celebrated as Harvest Festival and Thanks giving to Lord Suriyan (Sun).

The temple is believed to be the place where all the nine planetary divinities were forced to live by the curse of Lord Brahma and as a result of their hard penance, all the nine planetary deities regained their original power and bliss. The nine planets were directed by Lord Shiva to stay at the same place and they bless the devotees who worshipping them. Among all, this temple is principally worshipped for the Sun God.

Suriyanar Koil (the sun temple) is the only temple in Tamil Nadu, where we found separate shrines for all the nine planetary deities and the temple is a 900 years old Dravidian Architecture built by the Chola King Kulothunga Cholan. In this temple, the presiding deity is the Sun God and his consorts are Usha and Chayadevi.

According to Markandeya purana, the Sun (the Lord Suriyan) was created by Brahma, to drive out the darkness of the universe and Lord Sun married the daughter of Thuvashtha, Sanjeehai also known as Usha. They gave birth to Vaithasumanu, Yaman and Aswini. As Usha could not tolerate the radiating heat from her husband, Sun, she created a shadow of herself called Sayadevi to be with him and she left him and Sayadevi is known as Prathyuksha. She lived with Sun without revealing her true identity and they gave birth to two sons, Savarnimanu and Sani and a daughter named Pathirai.

Lord Sun finally came to know that the Usha had left him. He went in look for of her. In a forest he saw her doing a self-punishment in the form of a horse and he convinced her with kind words and took her back with him. Afterwards, these two devis, namely Usha(Sanjeehai) and Saya are always together with the Sun and it can be inferred that 'Usha kalam' the sunrise and 'Saya kalam' , the sunset are considered as the two devis.

THE KAILASANATHAR TEMPLE, THINGALUR

The Kailasanathar Temple is situated in the village of Thingalur which is 18 kilometres from Kumbakonam and this temple is known to be sthalam for the presiding deity Chandran (Soma or moon), one of the navagrahas. The main

deity in the temple is Kailasanathar (lord Shiva).The Chandran (the moon) is said to be the grandson of Brahma, born to his son Athri and wife Anusuya and Puranas also says that Chandran was born out of 'paar kadal' while it was being churned for nectar of life (the 'amudham'). Due to his bias towards one of his wife Rohini, ignoring the rest of his twenty seven wives, Datchan, one of his father in law cursed Chandran to lose his beauty and glamour and he prayed to Lord Shiva. He restored his beauty saying that he will regain his figure slowly in a fortnight and But because of the curse he wanes every fifteen days. Due to this only the waxing and waning of the Moon occurs.

In Kailasanathar temple, in the left side one can see the snactum for Suryan and proceed towards south, one can see the sanctum of mother goddess Periyannayaki facing south. As one walk clockwise from there can see ganapathy, Subramanya, Dakshinamurthy, Gajalakshmi, Chandikeswarar and Bhairavar. In the sanctum sanctorum of this temple, Lord Shiva is called Kailasanathar bless the devotees who faces towards east and Close to that sannithi, one can see the sannithi for Chandran, praying to Chandran here will reduce the bad influence of Moon. Due to the prayers, the devotees are blessed and releived of their sufferings.

VAIDHYANATA SWAMY TEMPLE, VAIDEESWARANKOIL

Vaidhyanata swamy temple is located 13 Kms from Mayiladudurai towards Sirkazhi, 6 Kms from Sirkazhi. and this temple is known to be the sthalam for the presiding deity Angarakan (Chevvai in Tamil for Planet Mars), one of the nava grahas. Lord shiva named, Vaidhyanata swamy, is the main deity in the temple. It is said that lord shiva have arrived as a Vaidyan (physician or doctor), heeding to the prayers of Angarakan (Mars) who was suffering from leprosy and the Vaidhyanata swamy consort is Thaiyalnayaki.

In this temple, Lord Shiva as Vaidhyanatha swamy is a swayambu in the temple and the five Gopurams of the temple are on a straight line. Unlike other shiva temples, Navagrahas are behind the sanctum on a straight line, placed side by side, which is a unique feature of this temple. There are two flagposts in this temple, one coated with silver and the other with gold. Avudaiamman sannathi is in the north and towards east is the important shrine of Lord Muruga (Selva Muthukumaran). The shrine of Vaidhyanatha Swamy situated facing the West and shrine for ambal Thayalnayagi facing the South. The shrines of Selva Muthukumar, Gajalakshmi, Nataraja, Dakshinamurthy, Sattanathar, the Jadayu kundam and the utsava murthy of Angarakan are also seen.

This Shiva Temple is praised in Thevaram and Tirupugazh hymns. The saints such as Tirugnana Sambandar, Tirunavukkarasar, Arunagirinathar, Kumara Guruparar, Chidambara Munivar, Ramalinga Adigal, and Kalamega Pulavar praised the shiva of this temple. In astrology, Sevvai dosha generally affects their health, marital happiness, property loss, injuries and other malicious effects. People pray here for removal of Sevvai dosha and it is beleived that fasting on Tuesdays, and performing abhishekams during rahu kalam, offering red vastras, offering red flowers, coral will please Angarahan for the alleviation of chevvai doshams.

SHRI SWETHARANYESWARAR TEMPLE, THIRUVENGADU

Shri Swetharanyeswarar Temple is located in the town of Thiruvengadu near Sirkazhi. It is around 28 kms from

Mayavaram, 14 kms from Vaitheeswarankoil. The three murthys, three Sakthis, three sthala vritchams (holy tree), Vilvam, Vadaval and Konrai and three holy tanks, Agni theertham, Surya theertham and Chandra theertham are the unique feature of this temple and this temple is mentioned in Valmiki Ramayanam and considered equal to Kasi. In this temple, Lord Shiva is incarnated as Agora Murthi and lord siva have been worshipped by Indran, Iravatham, Suvathakethu, Suvethan, Mahavishnu, Suryan, Chandran, Agni.

The main deity of this temple is Agora Murthi and it is said that Agora Murthi is the destructive and furious incarnation of Lord Shiva. There was a demon named Marutwasura who performed a severe penance towards Lord Bhrama for power. For his prayer, Lord Bhrama offered him power of invincibility. After getting the power, he started to torture the devas and innocent people with his immense power. Worried devas approached Lord Shiva for a reprieve. Lord Shiva took the form of Agora murthi and killed the Marutwasura under a tree with his third eye.

The temple has big rajagopurams in the east and the west as we enter through the east entrance, we can see the flagpost, narthana Ganapathi in the flagpost base, and nandhi and in the west is the corridor with hundreds of beautifully carved pillars and a shrine for Lord Arumuga. In the outer corridor we can see the shrine of Brahma Vidyambigai and inside the shrine area we can see 'pillai iduki annai' (mother carrying a child) and Sukravar annai. Towards south side of the temple we can see separate shrines for Varan ganapathi and Somaskandar and in the north corridor we can see the moolavar Agoramurthy and his utsavar in separate shrines. In the centre, there is a big shrine for Swadharanyaswarar as Mahalingam.

In the left side of the ambal mandapam there is a separate shrine for Budhan and he is the son of Chandran and Tharai. Budhan is said to be the one who does good deeds and he is seen as the authority of all arts and to the devotees who worship him, he bestows intelligence, education, mastery in arts such as music, astrology, maths, medicine and linguistics. His consort name is Ilay and his son name is Puroovar.

SHRI DAKSHINAMURTHY TEMPLE, ALANGUDI

Alangudi (also called Kasi Arranyam, Thiru Irumpoolai) is a small village in Thiruvavur Dt. of Tamil Nadu which is 7 Kms South of Needamangalam Railway station and 17 Kms South of Kumbakonam, on the road that leads to Manargudi. The Divine poet, Thirugnanasambandar has blessed this Sthalam as beautiful place filled with flowers.

While devas were churning the 'paar kadal' the resultant venom threatened to destroy the living beings and this deadly venom was called 'Alangala visham' (deadly venom). In order to protect the devas and the living beings of the world, Lord Shiva consumed this venom. To denote that, this place is known as 'Alan gudi' which means one who drank the Alangala venom.

The temple has a large five tier rajagopuram and 'Kalangamal katha Vinayagar' will be seen near the entrance and as one go past that sannithi (sanctum), they will reach the first praharam where can see sukravara amman sannithi and next to that is the sanctum of Lord Shiva's consort Parvathy, here called as Umayammai (Elavar Kuzhaliammai).

The mother faces south and the sannithi has its own praharam.

We can see kasi Viswanathar, Visalakshi, sage Agasthiyar sannithis, and in the north we can see Lord Subramanya with Valli, Deivayanai, Mahalakshmi, Navagraha, sage poets Sammandar, Appar, Manivasakar sannithis and in the east, there are sannithis for Bhairavar, Chandran, and in the sanctum santorum, we can see Lord Shiva in the form lingam called here as Abathusagayar. In the south is the sanctum of Guru in the form of Dakshinamoorthy.

SHRI AGNEESWARAR TEMPLE, KANJANOR

Kanjanoor temple is one of the Navagraha kshetras dedicated to Sukran (Venus). It is 20 kms from Kumbakonam, 26 kms from Mayiladurai, 3 kms from Suryanar kovil and 3 kms from Aduthurai where Agneeswarar is the presiding deity and his consort is Karpagambal. In this temple Sthala vriksham (Holy tree) is Purasu. The holy water is Agnitheertham. It is believed that Agni (Fire) have worshipped Lord Shiva in this holy place and hence the name Agneeswarar. In this temple, the Brahma Lingam enshrined and it is said to have been worshipped by Brahma himself.

Centuries ago, at the banks of Ganges, sage Senagar and other sages started a yagna called Chatra yagam and at the end of the yagna, a sage called Soodhama arrived. The sages at the Ganges welcomed him to the place. It said that Ganges is the river that can wash away all types of sins that no other river can do. Hearing this Soodhama said that there is a river in the south more divine than Ganges. It added that a temple along the bank of that river that can remove one's sins and offer a very happy and contented life to those who visit the place.

Soodhama then narrated the story of a sage named Parasur munivar who was having an illicit relationship with a boat woman and he became mentally imbalanced. He forgot all his wisdom. At that time a voice from heaven asked him to pray to Shiva at Palasavanam which is situated in northern bank of the river Cauvery. He obeyed that order and he started a penance towards Lord Shiva. After his prayers, Shiva along with his consort Parvathi appeared before him. Through their blessings, they cured him of his mental illness. Parasur munivar was overjoyed. He requested Shiva to reside in that place so that his devotees can be benefitted. The place later came to be called as Thiru Kanjanur. Hearing this, sages Senagar and other sages reached Thiru Kanjanoor and they finished their holy bath at river Cauvery. They proceeded towards the Agnipureeswar temple. Suddenly they saw the sunrise in a golden hue. They saw Lord Shiva as Agneeswar along with Karpagambal and gave darshan to them.

It is believed that one yagna here is equivalent to performing 1000 Chatra yagam'. It is also believed that bathing here in the Cauvery is equivalent to have bathed in the Ganges for 12 years. The temple has three praharams with the majestic rajagopuram which faces south. Outside the rajagopuram is the shrine for karpaga vinayaga. Just opposite in the lane is the Haradattar temple. In this temple we can see Haradattar praying at the feet of Dakshinamurthy.

Agneeswara swamy is worshipped here as Sukran, which is unfavorably placed in one's horoscope, they may suffer from various ailments such as skin disease, eye ailments, impotency,

gastric problems and unhappy marital life. On the other hand, he blesses for prosperity, wealth including house, vehicle etc and a beautiful wife. Pilgrims who Offers white lotus flowers, white garments, and fasting on Fridays said to please Sukran and worshipping Rajarajeshwari and Gajalakshmi, wearing of diamonds and recital of Devi Mahatimiyam are equally effective way of pleasing Sukran.

SHRI DARBHARANYESWARAR TEMPLE, TIRUNALLAR

Thirunallar is very famous for the shrine of Lord Shani (Saturn), which is near karaikal, Pondicherry state. This temple is within the temple dedicated to Lord Darbharanyeswarar.

As per myth to this temple, King Nala of Nidadha kingdom married the beautiful princess of Vidharbha, Dhamayanthi, in a swayamvaram arranged by the king and Lord Shani was desirous of marrying Damayanthi and since Nala married her, he became jealous and furious with him. As is the nature of Shani, if Shani enters into some one's life, they suffer ill health, misfortunes and downfall in their life and Since Nala was very pious and never wavered from dharma, Shani could not get hold of him to trouble him. After a few years, Nala washed his legs to perform his morning pooja, did not wash his feet properly. He left one of his heels dirty and dry while cleaning rest of his feet. Shani was waiting for an opportunity all these years. Suddenly he entered onto him through this dry patch on his heel.

Due to Shani's bad influence, Nala lost his kingdom in gamble. He also lost all his poverty. He became a pauper and started wandering around the streets with his family and he sent his sons to his uncles's house. Afterwards he went into a forest with his wife. Due to Shani's high influence, he also left his wife in a lurch in the dark forest and went away. Later, Dhamayanthi was rescued by a king and was escorted her back to her parent's kingdom. Meanwhile, Nala while wandering in a forest rescued a big serpent called Karkodan, from a forest fire. Instead of thanking him, the serpent bit Nala. By the venom of the snake, Nala turned ugly. The serpent Karkotan said that this transformation is for a reason. It also gave Nala a cloak made of serpent skin and asked to wear that in an appropriate time and it disappeared.

Meanwhile, Damayanthi, fretting for loss of her husband, asked his father to arrange for another swayamvaram. She has a hope that Nala would come back. Nala changed his name to Vagunan. He became employed as a charioteer to king Irudhupannan who also came to the Swayamvaram with Nala as the charioteer. As Nala was not allowed to participate in the swayamvaram, he went to the backyard and into the kitchen, where he saw his children and started playing with the children. Damayanthi who happened to see this recognized this ugly man to be Nala. Realizing that the time has come, Nala wore the cloak given by Karkodan. he regained his real personality instantly and became the beautiful king that he was. Becoming confident, he defeated king Putkaran. He regained his kingdom all his properties back.

Though he was united with his family and regained his kingdom, he was still feeling depressed and he didn't know the reason for these depressions. Sage Narada, once visited him and said that his mental agony was due to the influence of Shani. He asked Nala to take a pilgrimage. On his pilgrimage he met sage Bharadwaja in Vrithachalam, a small

town in Tamil Nadu. The sage asked Nala to go and pray to Lord Shiva in the name of Dharparanyeswarar to get rid of Shani's influence.

As soon as he entered Thirunallaru, he bathed in the tank and went inside the temple and Shani realizing that he should not torment Nala anymore and being afraid of Lord Shiva, went inside the temple and hid himself in a corner. Lord Shiva, answered Nala and Dhamayanthi's prayers, bestowed them with all prosperity and happiness and he also found out the hiding Shani. He told him that henceforth everyone entering the temple after worshipping him will also worship Shani and get his blessings. Since then, whoever comes to this shrine and seeks the blessings of Lord Shani, their influence by Shani is reduced and they are absolved of their miseries. Thirunallaru is a major temple in India dedicated to Shani God which is similar to Shani Shinganpur in Maharashtra.

In thirunallaru, the temple has a large seven tier rajagopuram. The nanadavanam (temple garden), Kalathinathan temple, sixty three nayanmar idols, a small sanctum for Nalan are seen in this temple. In front of the flagpost, one can see the sanctum of Sri Dharbaryaneswarar, lord Shiva in the form of lingam which is a swayambu (self originated) and it is customary that one should visit here first. Apart from these, there is a separate sannidhi for ambal (named as Parameshwari) and Lord Subramanya with Valli and Deivayanai.

The sthala vritcham (the divine plant or tree of that sthala) is Dharba grass (kusa grass) and hence lord Shiva here is called Dharparanyeswarar. To the left of ambal's sannidhi is the sanctum for Lord Shani who is the son of Suryan's second wife Sayadevi and he is also called as Saneeswar, Mandhan and Kaari (as he is black in complexion). The sanctum is small and idol looks beautiful in the oil lamps and he is facing east and in most temples Lord Shani usually faces south. In most idols of Shani have four hands the idol at the Thirunallar Temple has only two hands. Lord Saturn is the main deity of this temple at Thirunallar and there are no other sanctums for the other grahas (planets).

SRI NAGANATHASWAMY TEMPLE, THIRUNAGESWARAM

Sri Naganathaswamy Temple is located on the bank of the river Cauveri which is nearly 7 kms from Kumbakonam and this temple is known to be the sthala for the presiding deity Raaghu (serpent), one of the nava grahas. The main deity in the temple is that of lord Shiva known here as Naganathaswamy. In this temple, the serpents of the divine world, namely Adishesha, Takshaka and Karkotaga, worshipped Shiva and hence the name "Thirunageswaram" (Naga means Cobra).

The temple is another masterpiece exhibiting the Chola style of architecture which has been built by Aditya Chola I in 10th century A.D. the temple was later modified the temple with the own additions of the proceeding rulers. The temple has four gopurams and a surrounding compound wall and in the third praharam, there is a nandavanam (flower garden) on the northern side. In this temple, the Ganapathy shrine was installed by the great saint Sadasiva Brahendra along with a Ganapathy yantra. In the South-West Corner of the second praharam houses the Raaghu shrine, where Sri Raaghu Bagavan can be seen with his two consorts Nagavalli and Nagakanni.

As per legend, sage Bringhi used to worship only Shiva and angered at his attitude, Parvathy went on a severe penance asking for a boon wanting half her body as Shiva (Artha Nareeswarar). Pleased with her penance, lord granted her wish and hence we can see the Arthanareeswar in this temple. Thayar Girigujambigai, Lakshmi and Saraswathy are also seen together in the same sannithi and it is believed that praying here will bring wealth and prosperity to the devotees. During the month of Markazhi (Dec-Jan), the sanctum is closed for public for 45 days. Pooja are performed only to the curtain of the sanctum.

Next to this sannithi, there is a sannithi for Ganapathy and Raaghu as 'yoga Raaghu'. as Raaghu is a great devotee of Shiva, he is said to have stayed here along with his consorts. According to temple inscriptions, the ambal here is swayambu and Lord Indran is said to have done abhishekam with Punugu (a kind of fragrant scented material obtained from the Civet cat) to overcome his bad body odor due to a curse and Hence even today, no other abhishekams are performed to this goddess, only the fragrant Punugu is applied twice a year.

People pray here for removal of Raaghu dosha which generally affects their health, marital happiness, discontinuation in employment and it is believed that fasting on Sundays and Fridays, and performing abhishekams during rahu kalam, offering blue vastras, offering blue flowers, offering sesame rice (ellu sadham) will please Raaghu through which one can alleviate rahu doshams.

In this temple, during abhishekam of the idol of Raaghu in the Raaghukaalam with milk, the milk turns blue in color. It is a divine miracle and devotees throng to see this sight. Saivaite saints Thirugnana Sambanda Swamikal, Thirunavukkarasar and Thiru Sundaramoorthy nayanar and Saiva saint Sekkizar, who wrote the sacred ' Peria Puranam ' have sung in praise of lord Shiva here. As the temple is revered in Thevaram, it is classified as 'Paadal Petra Sthalam'. The temple is one of the 276 temples that find mention in the Saiva canon, Thirumarai.

SRI NAGANATHASWAMY TEMPLE, KEEZHPERUMPALLAM

Sri Naganathaswamy Temple is one of the Navagraha sthalam which is located in the town of Keezhperumpallam near Sirkazhi. It is around 28 kms from Mayavaram and this temple is dedicated to Kethu bhagawan, one of the Navagrahas. The main deity of the temple is Naganathar and Soundarya devi is his consort.

When devas and asuras got the 'Amudham' (elixir) after churning the 'paar kadal', the amudham was being distributed to devas and One of the asuras disguising himself as a deva stealthily joined the line and consumed the amudham. On seeing this, Maha Vishnu struck him with his chakra. The asura's body was cut into two and the cut head joined with the body of a snake, becoming Raaghu and the cut body joined with the head of the snake becoming Kethu. They repented for their mistakes. They prayed that they also may be granted the status of grahas so people can worship them and their wish was granted.

According to another legend, asuras who were denied of their share of amudham, got angry. They vented their fury over the serpent Vasuki and threw Vasuki towards the earth. The injured Vasuki recovered soon. It started repenting that Lord Shiva had to consume the poison it had spewed while

churning the ocean. Vasuki asked Shiva for forgiveness her at this Keezhperumpallam and Shiva as Naganatha swamy with his consort as Soundarya devi blessed Vasuki. They asked him to bless the devotees who visit this temple.

Unlike other navagraha temples, the temple has no big rajagopurams and is small which was built by Chola kings during 9-10th century AD. The temple faces east. We can see the holy tank naga theertham in front of the temple and walk through clockwise, we can see in the west praharam, the sannithis of Ganesha, Lord Subramanya with Valli and Deivanai, Durga, Lakshmi Narayana, Maheswari and also the Gajalakshmi.

In the east praharam is the sannithi for Kethu Bhagawan facing towards west and he is seen with a snake head with his hands in a praying posture. It is believed that if the Kethu is unfavorably placed in one's horoscope, they may suffer from various ailments such skin disease, leprosy, bad habits, bad acquaintances, wrath of the government etc and on the positive side he blesses for good profession, proficiency in civil engineering, medicine and knowledge. Kethu blesses all the ganesha's devotees and performing abhishekam with cane juice, offering red flowers, red garments, offering horse gram, tamarind rice said to please Kethu.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Tourists occupy an important position in tourism industry because they are the consumers of tourism products. As, tourism plays a very important role in the economic development, it occupies the second largest sector for earning foreign exchange in many countries. The main economic impact of tourism includes its contribution to government revenues foreign exchange earnings. It also focuses employment creation along with various business opportunities. The present study analyses the development of tourism and its economic importance from the views of tourists in relation with the Navagraha temples in Tamil Nadu. The data and the information collected from the study area in the above view have been given below in the form of tables and diagrams with interpretation.

Sex-wise tourists Analysis

Sex is the major factor of the tourist for determining tour. The table shows that the sex wise distribution of the tourists in the navagraha temple during the study period was given in the below table.

Table. Distribution of Tourist by Sex wise

Tourist	Sex		Total
	Male	Female	
Domestic	274 (60.8%)	176 (39.2%)	450 (100.0%)

Source: Computed from Primary data

Opinions regarding cost of accommodation

Cost of accommodation is an important factor which has a direct bearing on selection of accommodation and psychological satisfaction. The opinion of the tourists in this study regarding the cost of accommodation.

It is clear from the above table that only 16.89 per cent of the tourists feel that the cost of accommodation is low in areas of navagraha temples. Among the respondents, 48.89 per cent of reported that the cost of accommodation is high. It is clear from this table that the cost of accommodation is high near navagraha temples. This is a not healthy sign for pilgrim tourist and the government has to take necessary steps.

Conclusion**Table: Safety and security in Navagraha temples**

SL.NO	QUALITY OF AMENITIES	STA	KTT	VTV	STT	DTA	ATK	DTT	NTT	NTK
1	Police outpost	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
2	Non-diffculty in moving alone or with family members	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
3	Peacefulness	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
4	Nuisance created by beggars	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
5	Well connected roads	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
6	Availability of regular buses from major town and cities	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y
7	Approach roads for easy movement around pilgrimage sites	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
8	Adequate parking space	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Y - YES; N - NO

STA - SURIYANAR TEMPLE, AUDUTHURAI

KTT - KAILASANATHAR TEMPLE, THINGALUR

VTV - VAIDHYANATA SWAMY TEMPLE, VAIDEESWARANKOIL

STT - SWETHARANYESWARAR TEMPLE, THIRUVENGADU

DTA - DAKSHINAMURTHY TEMPLE, ALANGUDI

ATK - AGNEESWARAR TEMPLE, KANJANOR

DTT - DARBHARANYESWARAR TEMPLE, TIRUNALLAR

NTT - NAGANATHASWAMY TEMPLE, THIRUNAGESWARAM

NTK - NAGANATHASWAMY TEMPLE, KEEZHPERUMPALLAM

From the present study, it is noted that all the nine navagraha temples lack any one of the quality of amenities, safety and security criteria. Among the nine navagraha temples, Naganathaswamy temple, keezhperumpallam is only providing two of the eight quality services mentioned i.e., only drinking water and toilet and wash room facilities. Similarly regarding safety and security it also lack many of the criteria.

CONCLUSIONS

Pilgrimage tourism is one of the important area of tourism which is also subject various research and study in due course and in the present study the researcher has identified pilgrimage tourism for this thesis for bringing out the issues. The present study also focuses the challenges in the pilgrim tourism towards navagraha temples and aimed to measure the level of satisfaction of the pilgrims in various services offered in pilgrimage centres with

Tourists view

- Among the total pilgrims tourists, there are more number of males and less number of females, male comprises nearly 60%.
- Among the total tourists the age group of 51 and above are more interested in pilgrim tourism, but the other type of tourism the age group of 21-40 are more.
- Majority of the tourists nearly 37% completed undergraduate degree
- It is found that married members (82%) are more active in undertaking tours.
- Employees who are working in the private companies nearly 46% are participating in tour in large number.
- Among the total tourists large income groups are included in the upto 100000 category
- Majority of the pilgrim tourists state that they are going tour for less than 3 times in every year.
- Tourist in many coastal tourist places that they faced some problems. The problems faced by the tourists in many coastal tourist places are no purified drinking water, poor canteen facilities, lack of entertainment facilities, less frequency of transports, dirty atmospheres, poor maintenance of schedules, nuisance of beggars etc.

Suggestions

- The temple areas are not maintained neatly. The Government of Tamil Nadu should take necessary steps to give a face lift to the shore.
- The Government should take steps to reduce the tariff of the hotels
- Accommodation facilities should be provided in all the nine navagraha temples.
 - The pilgrim tourist places should be brought into the international tourist map. Improved sanitary conditions, availability of water and electricity to the tourists in the hotels .
 - The government take action for better road conditions are the immediate needs of the tourists for comfortable stay.
 - As most tourists are business tourists, efforts should also be taken to promote pilgrimage centres in Tamil Nadu.
 - Tourists arriving late to the hotels should be given necessary protection.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I give honor to god and his glory standing by the side of me and showering me with his grace and blessing and my family members for the successful completion of my project.

It is great pleasure to express my heart-felt thanks and deep sense of gratitude to **Dr. K.Saravanan** co ordinator **PRIST**, Thanjavur-613 403 for his precious advice and encouragement throughout my project work.

With great pleasure, I express my profound and heartfelt gratitude to Prof. **S.Poornachandran M.A.(His), M.A.(Socio), M.A.(Yoga),M.Phil., P.G.D.T Research Advisor PRIST**, Thanjavur-613 403, for unflinching support,

cherishing attitude, constant encouragement, keen motivation, valuable advice, ever willing and constant guidance not only in the period of investigation but also throughout my life.

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