

THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS HERITAGE IN GROWTH OF TOWN – MEENAKSHI TEMPLE (MADURAI)

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Abstract - One of India's historic temple cities, Madurai is located in the state of Tamil Nadu and has been inhabited for two millennia. In terms of area and population, it ranks third in the state and is the second-largest city overall. Despite this, the city's economy and population are declining. The city's boundaries were extended to include the entire urban agglomeration in 2010. However, there are still discrepancies between the newly amalgamated neighborhoods and the old city even after 9 years of integration. Due to the town's rich cultural legacy, the spatial split in the delivery of basic services and the features of a diminishing metropolis have posed significant obstacles to the path of sustainable development.

In this study, the growth of the town as a result of the presence of the Meenakshi Temple is discussed in relation to the town's history, population, economy, and infrastructure for health and education. It also provides details on the particular difficulties it has to deal with. In this research paper, we'll talk about how religious legacy contributes to a community's development and the distinctive effects it has on the town's environment, economy, and social-cultural features. One of the crucial elements in a town development is tourism. Both inbound and outbound tourism can take many different forms. But in India, pilgrimage tourism is a long-standing industry that is a major contributor to national income and a number of positive sociocultural, economic, and environmental effects.

Key Words: religious Heritage, Tourism, Economy, Culture, Ancient city.

1.INTRODUCTION

Urbanization in India has a 5,000-year history that dates to the Harappan civilization. Some cities have managed to maintain the memory of their illustrious past by preserving their history. One such ancient city that has been a significant settlement for two millennia is the temple city of Madurai in the state of Tamil Nadu. It continues to hold significance today as the second-largest corporation city by land and the third-largest city by population. The Meenakshi Amman Temple, which has played a crucial role in the growth and planning of the city and continues to draw a sizable number of domestic and international visitors each year, is the reason Madurai is so well-known. Until recently, a sizable portion of youngsters moved to Madurai for education, making it one of the significant regional centers of higher and technical education in the Tamil Nadu state.

With a fast-declining population growth and economic basis, the city, which had a rapidly expanding economy until the

1980s, is today experiencing various backwash impacts. The city currently shows the signs of a city in decline. In order to better serve the population residing in the outlying areas, the municipality limit of Madurai city was expanded in 2010. The city's infrastructure was being strained by the massive floating population, measured by the number of tourists that visit each year and the 27.32% of residents who live in unofficial colonies. Although the city's integration (to date) has not aided in the development of its peripheral infrastructure, its presence on the list of smart cities was anticipated to improve the urban infrastructure e, spurring urbanization and growth. However, like many other cities in India and throughout the world, Madurai has seen a general standstill in both population and economic growth. It is clear that this ancient city is progressively losing its dominance in the region.

2. HISTORY

Stated Legend has it that the King of Gods Indira found the sacred Suyambulingam in Kadambavanam and later enshrined it there. The Lord allegedly appeared on Indira's car in this temple, which serves as evidence for this claim. There are several historical relics of the temple that date back to the first century AD. Following the Islamic conqueror Malikkapur's conquest in the year 1310, the temple was nearly entirely demolished. The conquerors destroyed the majority of the temple's antique statues because Islamic monarchs were notorious for their intolerance of other religions. The temple is referenced in lyrics by the Hindu saint Thirugnanasambandar that date back to the early 7th century.

In his songs, the Lord is referred to as Alavai Iraivan. When the Hindu Kings retook control of Madurai in the late 14th century, the temple was brought back to its original splendour. Given that the temple had practically been reconstructed, this may possibly be considered the start of a new era in its history. Records indicate that the King Thirumalai Naicker was very important to the development of the temple. The HR and CE division of Tamil Nadu is currently in charge of running the Meenakshi Amman Temple in Madurai.

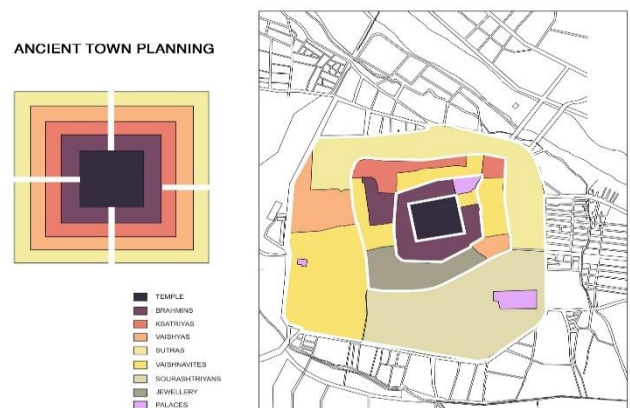


Fig -1

3. PRESENT URBAN GROWTH OF TOWN DUE TO PRESENCE OF RELIGIOUS HERITAGE:

The Meenakshi temple on the southern banks of the Vaigai river served as the centre of the city's development, but subsequently, when government offices and other institutional structures were built, districts close to the northern side of the river rose to importance. The city's central business district still maintains a high residential density (more than 1,000 people per acre), which rises even higher during religious holidays due to a movable population. Madurai's geographic growth has been done in a radial layout along the main transportation arteries (railway line, two national highways, and seven important district roads). The Town Improvement Act of 1865 allowed Madurai city to become a municipality on November 1st, 1866. The Madurai Municipal Corporation Act, 1971, which established the MMC, however, is what gave rise to the current system of government. The Municipal Commissioner, the MMC's executive leader, is directly in charge of the six departments: general, engineering, revenue, public health, town planning, and the computer wing. 100 elected members, one from each of the 100 wards, hold the legislative authority. In 2010, the MMC's size grew from 51.82 square kilometers to 147.99 square kilometers, and the number of wards also rose, from 72 to 100.



Fig -2

4. BENEFITS OF HERITAGE IN TOWN:

Heritage is more than simply rebuilding bricks and mortar; it's also about enhancing and bettering the lives of those who live in historically significant parts of a community. Its main objective is to strengthen the community's feeling of place and cultural identity without compromising the basic necessities of its residents. It establishes a nation's personality and identity. The requirement for constructed heritage protection has been prompted by several risks. For the preservation of historical properties, several governments have developed the necessary institutional and legislative framework. Some of these particular programmes are supported by national and international organizations. Under the condition that it is integrated with a historic management plan created in

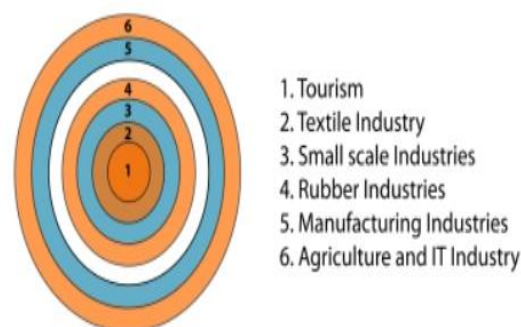
coordination with the urban development plan, heritage conservation has several social, environmental, and economic benefits.

Table -1: GROWTH RATE OF TOWN:

YEARS	POPULATION	GROWTH RATE
1951	3,70,791	4.15
1961	4,90,882	2.81
1971	7,01,904	3.58
1981	8,99,303	2.48
1991	10,77,158	1.80
2001	12,03,095	1.11

ECONOMIC DRIVERS:

Madurai is one of the cities where one of the major contributors to the economy is Agriculture. The other major sector is tourism with its many religious monuments. Due to the presence of religious heritage in town many small industries have started growing like textile industry famous for its Sungudi sarees, national and international importing of jasmine flowers for perfume preparation, cottage and small industries preparing thaalampoo kunkumam and glass bangles.



THE SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF ECONOMIC DRIVERS

Fig -3

5. IMPACT OF TOURISM IN DEVELOPMENT OF TOWN:

5.1 SOCIAL IMPACTS: The social repercussions of pilgrimage Crime, overpopulation, overused infrastructure, pollution, and environmental degradation are all on the rise as a result of tourism. To reduce negative impacts and boost good benefits of tourism, local engagement in tourism-related activities should be encouraged, and alternative tourist methods should be developed with their help.



Fig -4

5.2 ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS: It demonstrates how tourism and environmental concerns are related. There are numerous. There are two types of relationships: coexistence and conflict. Coexistence relationships showed harmony between the environment and tourism, whereas conflicting relationships between tourism and the environment led to significant issues like visual pollution, sewage issues, water and air pollution, and ecological issues.



Fig -5



Fig -6

5.3 ECONOMIC IMPACTS: Tourism had tremendous potentials of earning foreign exchange, yielding Tax revenue, speculating employment and contributing to the economic growth of the town. The most important need of the Tourists are more hotels, resorts, recreation facilities, transportation facilities and other auxiliary.

6. CHALLENGES IN GROWTH OF TOWN:

6.1 OVERDEPENDENCE ON THE TOURISM SECTOR

Relying solely on one industry will not allow a town to flourish in all respects, which will ultimately lead to degeneration as a result of a decline in the manufacturing sector, a decline in professional education, and an increase in unemployment, particularly among educated young.

6.2 MANAGEMENT:

Heritage protection is extremely difficult before there are established defined safeguard measures. Physical characteristics and rituals might be readily destroyed by new development if religious heritage is not declared to be preserved. There may be a significant mismatch between planning and preservation agencies and other levels of government when it comes to urban transformation of a town and its heritage.

6.3 REVENUE GENERATION:

Proper Revenue generation is one of the important factors in development of town as it will roll out better for further urban services

CONCLUSION

Madurai city has been one of the main political and economic centers of South India since ancient times. The morphology of the city till date is influenced by the Meenakshi Temple, around which the initial development of the city took place. The importance of the temple prevails till date as it attracts domestic and foreign tourists and contributes significantly to the economy of the city which is reflected in the higher share of trade, hotels and restaurants in Madurai. The economic base needs to be one of the priorities to achieve sustainable growth and agglomeration economies in cities of India. Revenue generation will help to roll out better urban services, which otherwise are largely dependent on grants from the central and state governments

The present study results have clearly showed that there is much impact on the pilgrimage tourism on environment, Economical and Socio culture aspects of the particular pilgrimage destinations regard to type and the age group of visitors.

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