Issues and Challenges of Tourism with Special Reference to Villupuram District

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INTRODUCTION
Tourists commonly move in search of entertainment and sensual pleasures. They seek higher returns from every bit of money and time spent. The physical comfort is the main concern. They are important for tourism as ‘consumers’ and hence their purchasing capacity makes them crucial for pure business purpose(s).

Both of these systems generate opportunities of employment and income. On this front, tourism definitely enjoys an edge over pilgrimage. Still, the economic benefits should be seen with respect to inherent abuse after effects which are pertinent in view of sustainability, etc. However, finally pilgrimage and tourism help creating cultural understanding between people of diverse ethnic-cultural backgrounds, i.e. a meaningful service to the cause of humanitarian values. In any age-old culture like India, no one can draw a line separating tourism and pilgrim in a distinct way, rather they superimpose and fulfill the other at different levels and degrees (cf. Turnbull 1991a, b, and 1992), what metaphorically Turner and Turner (1978: 20) once wrote their intriguing statement that “a tourist is half a pilgrim, if a pilgrim is half a tourist”.

IMPORTANT PILGRIMAGE CENTRES IN VILLUPURAM DISTRICT

Arambidha Perumal Temple
There is a Perumal temple (Kundusatti Perumal) here. The legend is that the Perumal idol is nothing but a stone, which has Sangu-chakra inside it. The specialty of this stone is that it is a part of the Lord Venkatachalapathy idol at the Tirumala Tirupati temple. So worship at this temple is considered the equivalent of going to the Tirumala-Tirupati temple.

Parikkal
A village located off the national highway proceeding to Tiruchirapalli from Parikkal, which is famous for its Lakshmi Narasimhar temple. This is one of 108 divya desams of the Vaishnavas and one of the main temples for the madhvas also. Known as Thiruvahindrapuram.

Perumpakkam
A village located 8 km away from Villupuram town, here is a temple for Sri Yoga Hayavaradhanar and Sri Vedanthadesikan. http://www.dalakshinabholam.info A village located 14 km Villupuram to Thirukollur Road. There is a temple of Saneswarar. It is the biggest stone to created Lord. It is one of the biggest of Asia. Villupuram - Mambalapattu - Saneswarar Aalayam.

Sriwanthi and
A village located 15 km away from Villupuram on the way to Cuddalore. It hosts one of the famous Lakshmi Narasimhar temple. In Villupuram town, the Kallanathar Shiva temple and the Vaikundavasa Perumal temple are the main Hindu worship places.

Thiruvannaimalur
A township located Villupuram towards Tirukollur. It hosts the famous Sunndar timed temple Kirubapureeswar temple.

Kalpatru
The Kalpatru 21 Feet Saneeswara Samadhi was built to commemorate the 50th Maha Samadhi celebrations of Sri Swam Prakashar Saraswathy Avadhutha Swamigal. Even today this tradition is upheld by Sri Swami Brahmanandam at Kalpatru Sri Swayam Prakashar Avadhutha Ashramam and there are no less than any commercial activities. Everything including accommodation is free in the Ashramam. Kalpatru Naranasimhar and family has given their life to this temple by performing various services even now. Since the inception from Nov 4, 1998 continuously free annadhanam is offered. All activities are purely through voluntary donations only. During every Sunpavarchi (Saturn’s transit) more than 200,000 are fed with prasadham. Swami Brahmanandam strongly believes changing money for darshan and food is a sin in a holy place like the ashramam.

Thimmalai
Thimmalai village is located 2 km away from the national highway and is a sacred place for Thimmalai people. There is a Thimmalai temple. There always appear two groups of thoughts. Some have argued that pilgrimage is a form of tourism, while others have argued that tourism is a form of pilgrimage, or even sometimes they refer to the distinction and superimposition between the two groups at different levels and in different cultures. Others have argued that the two subjects lie at opposite ends of a seamless continuum, while others argue that there is no distinction between the two at all. The inability to decide what, if any, characteristics distinguish pilgrimage from tourism has recently led to a call for a ‘de-differentiation’ of the two terms (cf. Collins-Kremer 2010: 440). By contrast, a recent argument appeals to the idea of the two ‘pillages’ and ‘tourisms’ that are used in these discussions in order to specify and evaluate a specific hypothesis about what distinguishes pilgrimage from tourism and concludes that pilgrimage is distinguished from tourism by virtue of the fact that a pilgrimage is claimed to be undertaken for reasons involving religious sacrifice, which can induce the destination being associated with religious sacrifice, the sacrifice of the trip being claimed to have religious consequences, or both (Palmer, Begley and Cee 2012: 72, and 81).

CHALLENGES AND PROBLEMS
In the academic discourses, one finds the scale and boundaries of the differentiation between pilgrimage and tourism. And, sometimes such contradictions based on experiences of one culture do not suit to others, especially in ancient culture like India, or to say in most part of the Oriental world. The suggestion made by Elsner and Rutherford (2005: 21) refers to ‘sacred tourism’ as being distinct from pilgrimage, which may be possible if it ‘sacred tourism’ is just being used to refer to religious tourism, but not if it refers to tourism that involves religious sacrifice (Palmer, Begley, Cee 2012: 81). Of course, at the methodological level, they demonstrate that religious tourism may not easily be distinguishable from pilgrimage (Elsner and Rutherford 2005: 21), as in both cases the sense of deeper or spiritual quest (atma-chetana) and sacrifice (tapasa) are essential, and to a substantial extent in both the cases rituals are performed as a way to have passage open to interact with the divine spirit. However, these attempts to falsify the definition referring differentiation should also help in mind that although