



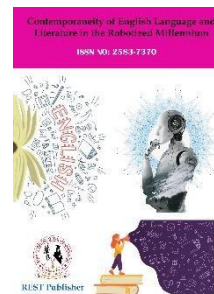
## Contemporaneity of English Language and Literature in the Robotized Millennium

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## Pilgrimage Centres in Kanyakumari District

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**Abstract.** A pilgrimage is a journey of search of moral or spiritual significance. Typically, it is a journey to a shrine or other location of importance to a person's beliefs and faith. Kanyakumari is situated in Tamilnadu State Previously known as Cape Cormorin,. Located at the southern tip of the Indian peninsula, it is surrounded by three oceans; Bay of Bengal in the east, Arabian Sea in the west and the Indian Ocean in the south. 83km south of Thirunelveli, Kanyakumari is also the district headquarters of the district of the same name. The place is popular among the tourists for its spectacular sunrise and sunsets, Gandhi Mandapam, Vivekananda Memorial, Thiruvalluvar Statue, Kanyakumari temple etc. Many religions attach spiritual importance to particular places: the place of birth or death of founders or saints, or to the place of their "calling" or spiritual awakening, or of their connection (visual or verbal) with the divine, to locations where miracles were performed or witnessed. Such sites may be commemorated with shrines or temples that devotees are encouraged to visit for their own spiritual benefit: to be healed or have questions answered or to achieve some other spiritual benefit. A person who makes such a journey is called a pilgrim. Kanyakumari is notable for pilgrimage and tourism. The place takes its name from the goddess Devi Kanyakumari, considered to be a sister of Krishna. Another pilgrimage centre is Nagaraja Temple, Nagercoil, and the other important pilgrimage centre is Thanumalayan Temple in Suchindram. Other important pilgrimage places are Mondaikadu Bhagavathi Amman Temple, Kollemcode Sree Bhadrakali Temple, Thiruvattar Sri Adikesava Perumal Temple, Velimalai Murugan Temple, Darisanamcope Raghaveshwara Temple, Parthivapuram Arulmigu Parthasarathy Temple and so on. Further some Christian and Islamic centres also considered as famous pilgrimage sites.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Kanyakumari is a popular pilgrimage site. Pilgrimage is a journey of search of moral or spiritual significance. Typically, it is a journey to a shrine or other location of importance to a person's beliefs and faith. Many religions attach spiritual importance to particular places: the place of birth or death of founders or saints, or to the place of their "calling" or spiritual awakening, or of their connection (visual or verbal) with the divine, to locations where miracles were performed or witnessed. Such sites may be commemorated with shrines or temples that devotees are encouraged to visit for their own spiritual benefit: to be healed or have questions answered or to achieve some other spiritual benefit. A person who makes such a journey is called a pilgrim.

### 2. PILGRIMAGE CENTRES

Kanyakumari is notable for pilgrimage and tourism. The place takes its name from the goddess Devi Kanyakumari, considered to be a sister of Krishna. Another pilgrimage centre is Nagaraja Temple, Nagercoil, and the other important pilgrimage centre is Thanumalayan Temple in Suchindram. Other important pilgrimage places were Mondaikadu Bhagavathi Amman Temple, Kollemcode Sree Bhadrakali Temple, Thiruvattar Sri Adikesava Perumal Temple, Velimalai Murugan Temple, Darisanamcope Raghaveshwara Temple, Parthivapuram Arulmigu Parthasarathy Temple and so on.

**Bhagavathi Amman Temple:** The Kanyakumari Bhagavathi Amman temple is an ancient temple located on the southernmost tip of mainland India in Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu, India. It is one of the Shaktipeetha in India where a form of Parvati is worshipped. According to legend, after the death of Sati, Lord Shiva's wife, he roamed the universe carrying her dead body. Her body parts are believed to have fallen at different places, and wherever they fell, a Shakti Peeth, for the worship of the divine mother emanated. Some believe that there are 51 Shaktipeeths, while another school of thought believe that there are 108 Shakti Peetham. According to legend, the Sarvani

Shaktipeeth Shri Kanya Kumari Bhagavathy Amman Temple is located at the spot where the right shoulder and the area around the spine of Sati fell. The sacred and ancient temple in Kanyakumari is known by various names like Kumari Amman Temple, Devi Kanyakumari Amman Temple, Devi Kanya Kumari, and Bhagavathi Amman – Kanyakumari, etc. The history Of the famous Kanya Kumari Amman Temple is traced back to the mythological times. Devi Kanya Kumari finds mention in the great Indian epics, Ramayana and the Mahabharata, and also the Narayana Upanishad of the Taittiriya Aranyaka of the Yajur Veda. Reference to Kanyakumari is also found in ancient Sangam literature. There is a reference to Cape Comorin (Present Day Kanyakumari), in the famous 1st-century work, *Periplus Of The Erythrean Sea*. The anonymous author of, " *Periplus Of The Erythrean Sea*," mentions the worship of the Kanyakumari Temple Goddess, an incarnation of Goddess Parvati thus, "There is another place called Comori and a harbour, hither come those men who wish to consecrate themselves for the rest of their lives, and bath and dwell in celibacy and women also do the same; for it is told that a goddess once dwelt here and bathed." The mythological connection of the Bhagavathy Amman Temple in Kanyakumari India is also with Lord Parashurama, the sixth incarnation of Lord Vishnu. According to legend, the Kumari Amman Temple, Kanyakumari, is the first Shakthi Temple built By Lord Parasurama. It is also believed that Parashurama consecrated the deity of the temple, near the confluence of the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea and the Bay Of Bengal. Another mythical connection of Kanya Kumari is with the lost land known as Kumari Kandam, which is alluded to in Sangam literature. This is a mythical continent, that some believe existed and is lost to the sea. The foundations for the current structure of the temple are believed to have been laid during the time of the Pandya Dynasty. and the temple was expanded and embellished during the Nayak dynasty. Both the Pandyas and the Nayaks ruled the region from their capital in Madurai. Kanya Kumari is believed to have been ruled by the Chera dynasty during the Sangam period and later came under the Travancore rulers. After independence, it was part of the Travancore state, and in 1956, based on the linguistic reorganization of states, Kanyakumari became part of Tamil Nadu state.

***Thanumalayan Temple In Suchindram:*** Suchindram is famous for the Thanumalaya Perumal temple which is also called Suchindram Anjaneyar Temple. Known for its sculptural grandeur, the temple has a majestic sevenstoreyed white Gopuram which is visible from quite a distance. Its 40m façade is covered with intricately carved sculptures of Hindu deities. Located almost mid way between Nagercoil and Kanyakumari, Suchindram is a very famous pilgrim center. Suchindrum is a small village about 12 kms away from Kanyakumari and about 7 kms from Nagercoil. According to the tradition, Suchindrum is the place where Indra attained "suchi" i.e., purification. Actually 'suchi means purity and "Suchindrum" denotes the place where Indra attained purity'. The present structure of the temple is the work of a number of persons spread over a number of centuries and is one of the best specimens and a storehouse of the Dravidian style of art and architecture. Suchindrum has recorded history. The 123 inscriptions of the place (the earliest one belonging to the 9<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.) narrate a lot about this Chadur Vedimangalam, its evolution, distinctiveness and development. The King of almost all dynasties of the south had viewed with each other to commemorate their association with the 124 metres long and 72 metres wide main temple, by constructing halls and arranging for the conduct of special poojas in their name. The Chempakaraman Mandapam and santhi pooja along with the Veerapandian Manimandapam and santhi pooja are just two examples. Chanda Sahib and Baba Sahib who set fire to the old temple in 1740, have also left behind their doings in some mutilated stone sculptures in the inner passage, A brass chair, known as "parunki markaty" presented by the Portuguese to Travancore king is even now used in some temples here. The monolithic good looking (satvic) Anjeneya of 5 metres height invites admiration. The 4 metres high stupendous Nandi, made of mortar and bricks, is the second best in the country. The 40 metres tall, seven tier gopuram is stately in look and its outer space is studied with exquisite plaster figures depicting scenes from puranas and epics. The temple has four Temple cars (chariots), with splendid wood carvings and is quite majestic in appearance. The famous Suchindrum Kaimukku deserves special mention. The contribution of the temple to a typical cultural synthesis is patently original. The presiding deity Thanu (Siva) Mal (Vishnu) Ayan (Brahma) in the Linga form, the top, the middle and the base of which are identified with the trinity.

***Thirumalai Mahadevar Temple:*** Among the twelve Sivalayams, the Thirumalai Mahadevar Temple is said to be the first one. It is located on the top of a petty rocky elevation and it is reached by a fight of 95 steps. It is situated at a distance of about six miles South of Kulithurai in Vilavancode Taluk. There are two Srikoils in this temple, one dedicated to Siva, and the other to Sri Krishna. The Siva Srikoil consists of a garbhagraham and a room in its front called, rishabhamandapam which is built fully in granite." The 12 temple records describe the principal deity as Soolapaani " In an inscription of the seventh regnal year of the Chola king Rajendra (1012-44) engraved on a rock in the outer prakara of the temple, the main deity is called, Munchirai- Thirumalai-Devar. This Siva Temple has a Dravidian vimana. The ottupurai lies on the north-eastern corner of the compound and has a thatched roof with mud-walls. This is used during the utsavams in the temple, and has its walls and roof.

***Thirupparapu Mahadevar Temple:*** The third among the twelve Sivalayams is the Mahadevar Temple at Thirupparapu near Kulasekharam, Thirupparapu was formally known as Srivisalam. Srimeans Thiru' and 'visalam'

means parapu'. Therefore it was known as Thirupparapu." The word Thirupparapu' denotes a pavilion of beauty and sacredness. An inscription belonging to the Ay ruler Kokkarunandadakkan is found in this temple. Generally the Siva Temples face the east. 14 But, this shrine faces west. Virabhadra, the principal deity of this temple, represents a ferocious aspect of Lord Siva and he is also known as Jatatharar, 15 It is said that Nandi, the vehicle of Lord Siva is unable to face the fierce look and hence it turns to the northern side of the shrine. The shrines of Ambal and Ganapathy of this temple are facing east on either side of the mukhamandapam This is built in granite. To safeguard against the Muslim invasions, the golden idol of Mahadeva (Utsava Murthy) was sent to the famous Aadi-Keshava Perumal Temple of Thiruvattar. It is still preserved in the 'Sanctum' of this temple." This temple was a famous Saivite pilgrimage center in the 12 Century AD, and it attracted pilgrims From distant places like Madurai.

**Kalkulam nakastaswamy temple:** the makantaswamy temple is said to be the seventh one among the twelve sivalayams, at padmanabhapuram, the ancient capital of south travancore. It is a seat of vaishnavism as well as saivism is a place in which the blending of two cultures namely tamil and malayalam are to be seen. The principal deity is named as kalkulam mahadeva' in the lithic records. The temple faces the east. The main deity nilakanta is in the linga (phallic) form. There are two srikoils dedicated to siva and amman." The siva srikoil, consisting of a garbhagraham and ardhmandapam, is built in granite. There is a small neerazhi in the theppakulam in front of the temple.

**Sri mahadevar temple at thiruvithancode:** sri mahadevar temple at thiruvithancode is located at a distance of 54 kilometers from trivandrum.<sup>20</sup> the temple dedicated to sri mahadevar bestows on it the status of a pilgrim centre. The past glory of this temple still continues to hold it as one of the twelve sivalayams swalaya ottam, where devotees pour in during sivaratri in the month of february or march. In olden times the venad kings used to come there and to valavechagostam of a very powerful devi temple nearby) before assuming rulership, to take an oath that they would rule justly and well. Though almost all famous temples of south travancore and the rest of the venad had considerable interaction with the thirupparapoor swarooppam, even later on, this temple must have been of such significance in the scheme of affairs so as to warrant the assumption to the kingship of the landchiravayi mooppu by adithya varma in 1544 a.d.<sup>21</sup> at this sri mahadevar temple, thiruvithancode.

**Nattalam siva temple:** the siva temple at thirunattalam is said to be the twelfth one among the twelve sivalayams. The nandi is installed in a pavilion in the namaskaramandapa. The temple consists of a circular outer structure in masonry, with an inner garbhagraham with masonry walls of the deity. There is also a small ganapathy koil near to srikoil. There is a granite floor in front of the srikoil<sup>23</sup>. A inscription belonging to the 16<sup>th</sup> century a.d., is engraved on a rock in front of the temple.<sup>24</sup> in the vishu temple, the lord vishnu faces the east. The inhabitants of this area call him sankaranarayana. The temple has two prakaras.<sup>25</sup> the southern side of the inner prakara is having a separate shrine to lord vinayaka.<sup>26</sup>

**Sree adi kesava perumal temple, thiruvattar:** the enchanting village of thiruvattar was under the jurisdiction of travancore, till 1956 when the re- organisation of the indian states took place.<sup>27</sup> now part of tamilnadu, it still basks in the grandeur of a great spiritual centre the furious sree adi kesava perumal temple.<sup>28</sup> situated in kalkulam, kanyakumari district, it is about fifty kilometers south of thiruvananthapuram and can be reached only by surface transport.<sup>29</sup> originally known as 'adi anantapuram' or the ancient city of ananta, it became famous later on as thiruvattar. During rani gowri lakshmi bai's reign (1811 1814 a.d.), three hundred and forty-eight major temples including the temple at thiruvattar were brought under the direct control of travancore state. There were fourteen sub-temples or keezhaidams' operating under the thiruvattar temple. The thiruvattar temple possesses twenty-two inscriptions in tamil, tamil vattezhuthu and sanskrit nagari script relating to chola and chera royalty. These inscriptions seem to date from the ninth to the sixteenth century a.d.

**Mandaikadu bagavathi amman temple:** in mandaikadu temple, poojas are performed early in the morning at 8.a.m and the temple remains open till 1.00 p.m and again it is reopened at 6.30 p.m for worship." The daily pooja takes place immediately after thirunadai thirappu, which means opening of the sacred gate. Daily pooja is conducted for the creation of wisdom. In the early days during the daily pooja, prasadam is offered on thursdays and fridays. Weekly poojas conducted on thursdays and fridays are considered to be of great importance. During these days female devotees come in huge crowds. During these days worship is done with camphor, flower and fragrant water.<sup>34</sup> thus temples are considered to be the main backbone of hinduism. The temples are the places where the devotees worship god and so the place of worship should be sacred.

**Nagaraja temple in Nagercoil:** Nagaraja Temple, as the name signifies, is dedicated to the Serpent God. The serpent deity worshipped here is a five-headed Naga, which is installed on the ground. The temple complex also consists of shrines dedicated to Lord Shiva and Lord Anantasayana. Nagaraja Temple of Nagercoil is visited by pilgrims mostly in the month of Avani (August – September). On every Sunday in Avani, huge hordes of pilgrims visit Nagaraja Temple and offer special prayers to the serpent deity. It is the wet sand scooped out from the enshrined ground of Nagaraja idol, which is distributed as prasadam. Nagaraja Temple is one among the prime attractions situated in Nagercoil, the headquarters of Kanyakumari District.

### 3. CHRISTIAN

There are many important pilgrimage places in Christianity in Kanyakumari District. Particularly St. Xavier Church in Kottar, Kanyakumari Our Lady of Ransom Church, C.S.I. Home Church in Nagercoil, Thiruvithamcode Arappally St. Thomas Orthodox Church, Our Lady of Presentation Church, Colachel, Chinna Muttom St. Thomas Church, Devasahayam Mount, Mylaudy Ringel Taube Vedhamanickam Memorial C.S.I Church, Shrine of Our Lady of Periyana Church in Thiruvithamcode, St. Antony Church in Vettuvenni, and etc.

**St. Xavier Church in Kottar:** The St. Francis Xavier's Cathedral also St. Xavier Church is a Roman Catholic Latin Rite shrine located at Kottar, Nagercoil in Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu state, India. While Saint Xavier was doing missionary work at Kottar and its neighbourhood, he averted an invasion of Padagas with the help of his cross alone and thus protected the people of Venad kingdom from that attack which was appreciated by the king, Unni Kerala Varma, who became closer to the priest and befriended him from then on. In recognition of Xavier's services, the king allotted him a piece of land to construct a Catholic church, as a gesture of goodwill, as per the church records. There was already a small church, in the same place where St. Xavier's church stands at present, dedicated to Mary the Mother of God, since AD 1544. Church records indicate that St. Xavier Church was built in 1600. In 1865, the Shrine of Mary was renovated and enlarged. In 1930, the church was raised to the status of a cathedral. The annual festival is celebrated from 24<sup>th</sup> November – 3<sup>rd</sup> December, lasting for 10 days. Pilgrims from all walks of life and creed visit the Cathedral of St. Francis Xavier, Kottar, either to offer their petitions or to thank for the favours received through his intercession. His miraculous intervention in favour of his devotees has been so powerful at this Shrine that it has become almost proverbial to address him endearingly in Tamil "Kettavaram tharum Kottattu Saveriar, meaning, Xavier of Kottar, is the grantor of all favours". In the year 1544, a small church was built by St. Francis Xavier with the help of the then Travancore king (This chapel for Mother Mary is still preserved as a part of St. Xavier's Cathedral, Kottar, where continuous 12 hours adoration is carried out daily in week days). During the year 1603, the church was modified and rebuilt by Swamy Andreas Pucharlo from Italy with mud and wood. St. Xavier Church was later renovated in 1865 and the Church of St. Mary was taken over. In the year 1930, St. Xavier Church rose to the status of a Cathedral. In 1942, a tower to honor St Francis Xavier was constructed. A grotto for St. Mary and minor shrine for St. Ignatius were also constructed within the premises of this cathedral. In 1955, the church was again renovated and the Chapel of St. Mary was added to this church. Annual celebrations are conducted at St. Xavier Church during November – December which last for about 10 days.

**Shrine of Our Lady of Periyana Church at Thiruvithamcode:** Thiruvithamcode is a small town in Kanyakumari District. It is well known for its historical importance in the then Princely State of Travancore. St. Thomas, one of the apostles of Jesus Christ, came to this land in 52 A.D. Here a church was built a thousand years back by king of Venad. It has become the church of our Jesus of Ascension. It was recorded that the Martyr Devasagayam Pillai was imprisoned in the secret tunnel inside the church. It was also told that St. Xavier, patron of the Diocese of Kottar, stayed here and continued his missionary works for a few days in the year 1545. **Islam:** Apart from these Hindu and Christian Pilgrim centres there are some Islamic centres in Kanyakumari District. Particularly Malik Mohammad Oliyullah Dharga at Thiruvithamcode, Peer Mohammed Oliyullah Dargha at Thuckalay, Chinna Palli Jumma Masjid Colachel, Guthba Mosque, Mosque at Thingal Nagar, Maathavalaayam Mosque, Sehu Noorudeen Mussliar, Palli Vaasal in Thengapattanam, Malik Khan Garden – Maiyavaadi, Thittuvilai Jumaa Palli, etc

**Peer Mohammed Oliyullah Dargha at Thuckalay:** Thuckalay Peer Mohammad Sahib was a contemporary of Mayalpattinam Sadakathullah Appa. He is the author of a large number of books on 'Gnanam' or supreme knowledge. His tomb is found in Thuckalay in Kanyakumari District. His works are highly noted for religious tolerance and deep theological ideas. His writings owned much for the cause of religions unity and communal harmony of the Tamil country. There is a Dargha named 'Peer Mohammed Oliyullah Dargha' at Thuckalay, named after the great philosopher Mohammed Appa, who was born in Tenkasi of Tirunelveli district.

**Palli Vaasal in Thengapattanam:** The Palli Vaasal in Thengapattanam, in Kanyakumari District is 1250 years old. The King Cheraman Perumal ruled over Kerala. During his period, the Arabian traders came for trade in Kerala through sea. Those traders preached the preaching of Nabigal. They built the first Pallivasal in Kodungallur in Kerala. The Thengapattana, Malik Dhinar Juma Palli Vasal was the last built one. It makes the people of Kanyakumari to feel proud. From the foundation to top lay with granite stones. The architecture of Arabian country can be seen in this Palli Vasal. Now this has been expanded spaciouly.

### 4. CONCLUSION

Monuments in Kanyakumari District are the living examples which take us back to thousands of years and helps in exploring the history of India. These monuments also attract a large number of tourists from all over the world. A lot of effort has been put in by the Government of India to preserve these ancient and historic monuments and the government has succeeded to some extent. Tourism gives impetus to national income. Today many monuments are demolished in various ways. To preserve these monuments, Government should take action to create awareness among the people to preserve the ancient and historical monuments in Kanyakumari District. It needs more publicity. At present the tourist information centers are established only in Kanyakumari. Such centres should be established at other tourist spots in this district. Thus, Kanyakumari District if provided a hygienic environment, with its serene atmosphere and with its unique location, can attract a number of tourists both foreign and Indian. It can take Kanyakumari tourism to greater heights.

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