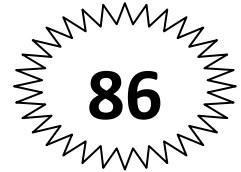# A Study of different values in relation to landscape along the Kanyakumari Beach stretch

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Abstract: Each land has its own history and character for an architect to help in improving or enhancing the land for its existing usage. Understanding the character of a land plays a major role in deciding the need and the style of architecture.

The study focuses on the significance and uniqueness of Kanyakumari Beach, the necessity of developing its waterfront landscapes, which have natural, religious, and cultural importance, and the necessary design and planning interventions, which were analysed through mapping of existing usage, movement, and identification of issues that affect the beach environment in order to restore and showcase the beach's natural and cultural uniqueness.

Key words – Cultural value, Traditional, Natural, Historical, Tourism Value of Kanyakumari beach, Aboriginal Cultural Heritage, Local Character.

1. INTRODUCTION

Kanyakumari is a coastal town located in the southernmost part of India, in the state of Tamil Nadu. It is situated at the confluence of the Arabian Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the Bay of Bengal. The town is also known by its former name, Cape Comorin.

2. LOCATION AND SIGNIFICANCE

Figure 2. 1.Map showing the study area.
Source:https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Location-map-of-Kanyakumari-district-Tamil Nadu_fig1_344920010

Kanyakumari is a popular tourist destination, famous for its natural beauty, cultural and historical significance, and religious importance. Some of the most notable attractions in the town include:Vivekananda Rock Memorial,Thiruvalluvar Statue,Kanyakumari Beach,Kumari Amman Temple.Apart from these, Kanyakumari also boasts of a rich history and culture, with several museums, art galleries, and cultural centers showcasing the town's heritage. The town is also a popular destination for pilgrims, as it is considered a holy site in Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam.

3.1. Mythological Origin of Kanyakumari

Hindu mythology holds that the goddess Kanyakumari, also known as Devi Kumari, who is thought to be an incarnation of the Hindu goddess Parvati, is the source of the district's name. According to legend, the goddess Kanyakumari was set to wed Lord Shiva, but the ceremony was cancelled at the last-minute

owing to a miscommunication. Devastated, the goddess made the decision to remain at the location of the wedding and took a vow of celibacy. A temple is located at the location because it is thought that the goddess is represented by the rock formation in Kanyakumari. According to a different myth, Kanyakumari was once a princess who was cursed by the sage Narada to become a stone statue. When Lord Shiva pledged to wed her, the curse was broken; however, he did not appear on the wedding day. As a result, the princess threw herself into the water and vanished, however legend has it that her soul is still present in Kanyakumari.

These myths have helped to shape the district's Hindu temple and shrine architecture as well as the cultural significance of Kanyakumari. Due to its natural beauty and rich cultural past, Kanyakumari is now a well-known pilgrimage location.

3.4. Craft Traditions in Kanyakumari

1. Wood Carving: Kanyakumari is known for its intricate wooden carvings, especially those found in temples and religious monuments. The craftsmen of Kanyakumari use a variety of woods such as teak, sandalwood, and rosewood to create beautiful and intricate carvings.

2. Stone Carving: Stone carving is another popular craft tradition in Kanyakumari. The craftsmen of Kanyakumari use granite, soapstone, and marble to create statues, sculptures, and other decorative items.

3. Palm Leaf Weaving: Palm leaf weaving is a traditional craft that has been practiced in Kanyakumari for centuries. The artisans use palm leaves to create a variety of items such as baskets, mats, hats, and even toys.

4. Terracotta Pottery: Terracotta pottery is a popular craft tradition in Kanyakumari. The craftsmen use local clay to create a variety of items such as pots, jars, and figurines. These items are often decorated with intricate designs and patterns.

5. Bamboo Crafts: Bamboo is a versatile material that is used to create a variety of items such as baskets, mats, and furniture. The craftsmen of Kanyakumari use bamboo to create beautiful and functional items.

6. Brass Metal Craft: Brass metal craft is a traditional craft that is still practiced in Kanyakumari. The craftsmen use brass to create a variety of items such as lamps, utensils, and decorative items.

7. Beadwork: Beadwork is a traditional craft that has been practiced in Kanyakumari for centuries. The artisans use a variety of materials such as glass, metal, and wood to create beautiful and intricate beadwork. The above-mentioned craft traditions had its origin in different parts of Kanyakumari, but sold widely in the Kanyakumari beach.

8. The coastal town is also famous for its unique sea shell craft traditions. 9. Sea shell craft has been a traditional art form in Kanyakumari for generations. The artisans of the region use various types of shells, such as cowrie, conch, and clam, to create a wide range of decorative items and household objects. These include lamps, jewellery, wall hangings, trays, and even mirrors. One of the most popular sea shell crafts in Kanyakumari is the creation of lampshades. The artisans use small pieces of shells to create intricate patterns and designs, which are then glued onto a base made of wood or cane. These lampshades are not only beautiful but also functional, as they cast a soft and warm light that creates a soothing ambiance in any room. Another popular sea shell craft in Kanyakumari is the creation of jewellery. The artisans use a combination of shells and other materials, such as beads and thread, to create unique

and colourful pieces of jewellery. These pieces are often sold to tourists as souvenirs, but they are also worn by locals during festivals and other special occasions. Sea shell craft in Kanyakumari is not just a means of livelihood for the artisans, but also a way to preserve their cultural heritage. By creating these beautiful and intricate objects, they are keeping alive a tradition that has been passed down through generations These are just a few of the many traditional crafts that can be found in Kanyakumari. Each craft tradition is unique and reflects the rich cultural heritage of the region.

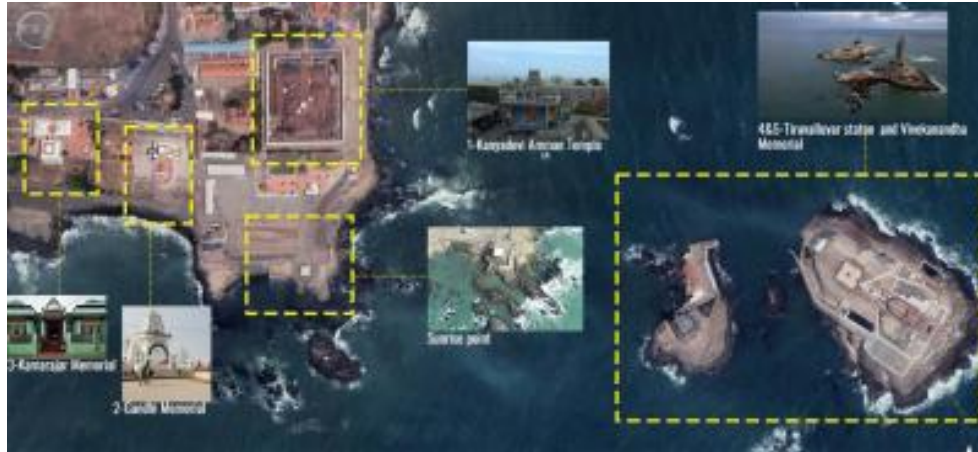### 3.5. Architectural Value of Kanyakumari Beachfront

Figure 3.6. Map showing the major heritage spots

Source:Google Earth

1-Kanyadevi Amman Temple

Bhagavathy Amman Temple is a famous Hindu temple dedicated to Goddess Bhagavathy, who is worshipped as the presiding deity of the temple. It is believed that the temple was built during the 8th century AD by the Pandyan kings.

The location of the temple is considered to be highly auspicious as it is believed to be the meeting point of the three major Hindu deities, Lord Shiva, Lord Vishnu, and Lord Brahma. The temple is known for its Dravidian and kerala style architecture, intricate carvings, and paintings. The main deity of the temple is Goddess Bhagavathy, who is also known as Devi Kanyakumari. She is depicted as a young virgin goddess holding a rosary in her right hand and a lotus in her left hand.

The temple attracts a large number of devotees from all over the world, especially during the Navaratri festival, which is celebrated with great fervor and enthusiasm. During this festival, the temple is beautifully decorated with lights and flowers, and special poojas and rituals are performed.

2-Gandhi Memorial

The Gandhi Memorial, also known as the Mahatma Gandhi Mandapam, is a unique architectural structure (Orissa Style of Architecture) that was built in memory of Mahatma Gandhi.

The memorial was inaugurated in 1956.

The architecture of the Gandhi Memorial is based on simplicity and symbolism, reflecting the ideals and principles that Mahatma Gandhi stood for. The main feature of the memorial is a huge central dome, which is 79 feet high and represents the Indian National flag.

The memorial also has an open-air meditation hall, which is surrounded by 8 pillars representing the 8 directions in Hindu mythology. The pillars are inscribed with Gandhian teachings and quotations. The memorial has a unique feature of allowing the sun's rays to fall on the exact spot where the ashes of Mahatma Gandhi were kept before immersion in the sea.

The memorial's structure is made of pink granite and reinforced concrete, and it is surrounded by beautifully landscaped gardens. The memorial's design incorporates traditional Indian elements, such as the use of local materials and the inclusion of Hindu mythology.

Overall, the Gandhi Memorial in Kanyakumari is a beautiful and unique architectural structure that reflects the spirit and ideals of Mahatma Gandhi. It is a popular tourist destination and a place of pilgrimage for those who admire and respect the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi.

3-Kamarajar Mani Mandapam

Kamarajar Mani Mandapam is a memorial dedicated to the former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, K. Kamaraj. The memorial was inaugurated in 2004 to commemorate the 100th birth anniversary of K. Kamaraj, who was known for his contributions to the development of Tamil Nadu and India as a whole.

The memorial comprises a central dome-shaped structure, surrounded by several smaller domes and pillars. The central dome houses a statue of Kamaraj, which is made of black granite and stands at a height of 12 feet. The statue is surrounded by several smaller statues of people who were associated with Kamaraj.

Apart from the statue, the memorial also has a library and a museum dedicated to Kamaraj, where visitors can learn about his life and achievements. The museum displays various photographs and artifacts related to Kamaraj's life and work, including his personal belongings, speeches, and letters.

Like the Gandhi Memorial Mandapam, this monument is where Kamarajar's ashes were kept for the public to pay homage before immersion into the sea

4-Tiruvalluvar Statue

Another major place of interest in this zone is the Tiruvalluvar Statue which is a 133-feet tall stone sculpture inaugurated on January 1, 2000, and is one of the biggest statues in Asia, located on a small island rock off the coast. To reach the statue, visitors have to take a ferry from the mainland. The statue is a popular tourist attraction and a symbol of Tamil culture and literature

The statue is made of granite and consists of three parts: the pedestal, the middle portion depicting a temple chariot, and the statue of Thiruvalluvar. The pedestal is about 38 feet high and represents the 38 chapters of his work, Thirukkural. The middle portion is about 95 feet tall and symbolizes the 95 chapters of the work, while the statue of Thiruvalluvar is about 39 feet tall, representing the 39 chapters of the work on ethics.

5-Vivekananda Rock Memorial

Vivekananda Rock Memorial is also located on a rocky island near to the Tiruvalluvar Statue. It was built in honor of Swami Vivekananda, a famous Indian philosopher and spiritual leader who is known for his contributions to the development of modern Hinduism. The memorial was built in 1970 by the Vivekananda Rock Memorial Committee, with the aim of promoting the teachings and philosophy of Swami Vivekananda.

The memorial comprises of two main structures, the Vivekananda Mandapam and the Shripada Mandapam. The Vivekananda Mandapam is a meditation hall that is built on the spot where Swami Vivekananda is believed to have meditated. It houses a statue of Swami Vivekananda and a collection of his teachings. The Shripada Mandapam is built on a footprint-shaped rock, which is believed to be the spot where Goddess Kanyakumari, a form of the Hindu goddess Devi, stood in meditation.

The memorial attracts thousands of visitors every year, who come to pay their respects to Swami Vivekananda and to enjoy the stunning views of the Indian Ocean. **3.6. Cultural Value**

The temple's connection to religious customs, festivals, and traditions adds on to the cultural heritage value

The festivals related to the temple may include,

1. Chitra Pournima Festival:

on the Full moon day in May.

2. Navaratri festival:

The 9-day festival in (September–October).

3. Vaisakha festival:

10-day festival in May–June culminating by a Thoni Ezhunellathu in May–June. During this festival, the idol will be taken in procession both in the morning and evening, during Aaraatu the eastern door is opened. On the ninth day, the Thoni Ezhunellathu takes place. Devi will be taken around the water on the western part in a boat.

4. Kalabham festival:

The idol is smeared in Sandal paste on the last Friday of the month of Karkidaka or Aadi, in July–August.

3.7. Historic Value

The historical layer includes places like the Thiruvalluvar Statue, Vivekananda Rock, Gandhi Mandapam, and Kamarajar Memorial that are connected to various leaders. **3.8. Natural Value**
The confluence of three seas, the seashore, Sunrise and Sunset form the main Natural landscape of this place.

3.9. Tourism Value
3.10.1. Domestic Tourism
Pilgrimage and recreation travel from India are the main sources of new arrivals to Kanyakumari. Visitors come to the Guganataswami Temple, Vivekananda Rock, and Kumari Amman Temple. Additionally, these temples are significant stops along the Sabarimala Pilgrimage Route.

3.10.2. International Tourism
Because of its distinctive natural features and the recognisable Thiruvalluvar Statue, Kanyakumari is a significant international tourist attraction.
Its importance is increased by the distinct cultural fusion of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Peak season for international travellers is in December, January, May, June, and July. **3.10.3. Tourist Season**
The tourist season runs from December through February and March through May. Due to the summer break, leisure tourism predominates from March to May whereas pilgrimage tourism predominates from December to February.It is now regarded as a year round tourism hotspot due to the significant increase in foreign visitors over the past few years.
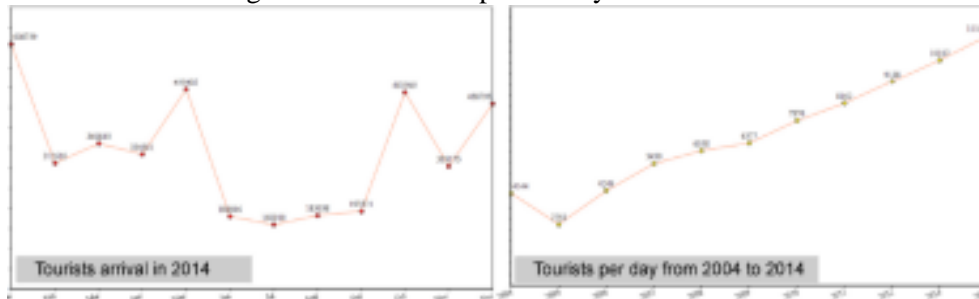

Figure 3. 7.Tourist's statistics
Source:Tourism Department,Kanyakumari

4.Design Fundamentals in case of Kanyakumari Beach.
4.1. Aboriginal Cultural Heritage
The temple and the temple related activities are the notable tangible and intangible cultural values associated with the study area. Reciting Lalita Sahasranama while approaching and circumambulating the temple during festivals is considered auspicious. The location Kanyakumari, i.e., the southern tip of India has been held sacred by Hindus' as it is the confluence of three seas. Offering Pitru Tarpana and bathing in the sea in the Kanyakumari beach is considered holy because it is the convergence of many important Tirthas. -There is a total of 11 theerthams associated with the temple in the ocean surrounding the area. The confluence of the seas, at the southern tip of the subcontinent has been held sacred for centuries. Circumambulation,Idol procession during Vaisakha festival and taking holy dip in the sea are the major cultural expressions associated with the temple.
4.2. Geology

Figure 4. 1.Natural Feature of the study area

The study area can be visibly seen with protruding charkonite rocks in the sunset zone. The slope and landform of this zone have the potential to act as the unique landscape element.
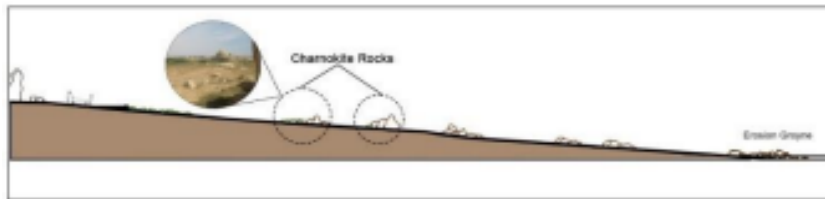

Figure 4.3. Section along the sunset zone showing charnokite rocks

4.3. Morphology

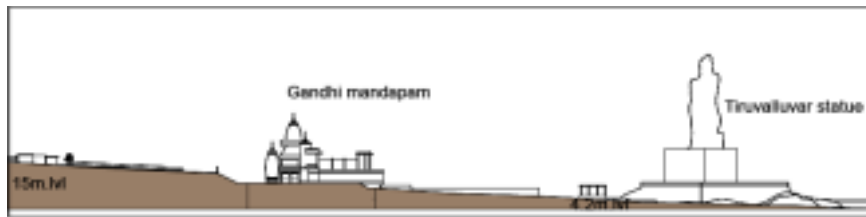The National Highway has the highest level of about 30m.lvl. and slopes down to the 16 pillared mandapam at about 4m.lvl.

Figure 4.4. Section from the triangular park to Tiruveni sangam showing the skyline of kanyakumari beach

4.4. Vegetation

Figure 4.5. Vegetation Map

Existing vegetation include Dry Deciduous Floral species,Spinifex species,Thorny Shrubs,Achyranthus aspera,Calotropis gigantea. Vegetation Cover is minimal with only certain varieties growing near the shore.Native vegetation has to be introduced to improve shade and microclimate modification

4.5. Climatic conditions.

The coast experiences hot humid climate and the temperature ranges between 35 degree celsius to 21 degrees Celsius and the annual rainfall ranges from 1400mm to 1800mm.The predominant wind movement is towards the coast from the southern side **4.6. Views.**
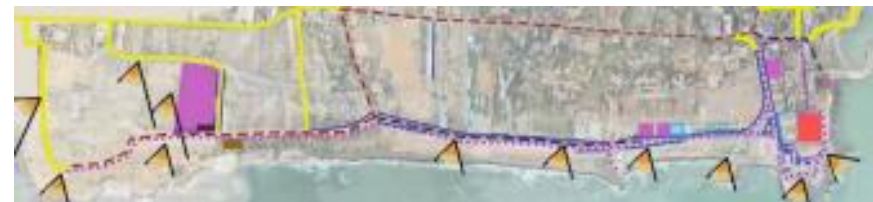

Figure 4.6. View points in the study area

4.6. Local Character and sense of place.

In terms of architecture the

temple is the oldest built structure where Dravidian style of architecture can be noted.Local craft traditions related to shells,mirrors etc.,reflects the character of the Kanyakumari beach.

4.7. Heritage.

The temple,Tiruvalluvar statue,Gandhi Memorial,Kamarajar Mani Mandapam,Vivekanandha Rock Memorial adds Heritage layer to the study area.

4.8. Public Access.

Figure 4.7.

Accessibility and movement mapping

The entire zone is not completely pedestrianised. Parking and vehicular movement onshore makes the user uncomfortable. View towards the sea is obstructed due to parking along the promenade.

5. Conclusion.

The values associated with the beach helps in identifying the needs and character of the beach.The existing man made character and the natural form in itself shapes the future development .Thus the above study is essential in the evolution of an architecture which blends with the local character of the Kanyakumari beach.

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