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SIGNIFICANCE OF MUZIRIS IN KERALA HERITAGE TOURISM

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Abstract: Muziris is an ancient port town on the Malabar Coast that dates back to at least the 1st century BC. The Muziris Heritage encompasses monuments, archaeological sites, and the very landscape that illustrates a significant era in the history of Kerala. The evolution of the Muziris Heritage has been greatly influenced by its natural environment. Muziris has found mention in the Tamil Sangam literature and several classical European historical sources. The monuments and living cultural traditions are the remnants of its ancient past. The Muziris Heritage Site (MHS) stretches across from the municipality of North Paravur in Ernakulam district to that of Kodungallur in Thrissur district. It includes four panchayats in Ernakulam district namely Chendamangalam, Chittatukara, Vadakkekara, Pallippuram, and three panchayats in Thrissur district namely Eriyad, Mathilakam and Sreenarayanapuram. It was one of the important centers for the spice trade in India. It is located in the coastal part of Kerala where a lot of foreigners traded in a variety of spices and other commodities. It is a good initiative taken by Kerala tourism for it to become one of the upcoming spice route circuits. This paper explores the significance of Muziris in Kerala heritage.

Keywords: Muziris, Heritage, Spice route, Central Kerala, Tourism

I. Introduction:

India is famous for the ancient culture and rich heritage. India's eminent past and cultural diversity make an influential blend that attracts millions of tourists to its heritage tourist attractions every year. The Ministry of Tourism & Culture and Government of India and motivates heritage tourism by offering several benefits to the Indian states that are particularly famous for attracting tourists. Kerala, a treasure trove of architectural monuments, historical sites and heritage centers stands in majesty, reflecting the glory of the past. Whether it's a pilgrimage place, ancient fort, and places or museums or mausoleums, every unique structure has a piece of history to exhibit. Kerala has a rich legacy in so many aspects like Ayurveda, Places of Worship, Handicrafts, Astrology, Traditions and rituals, Fairs and festivals.

The era of Muziris Heritage:

The history of Muziris starts from early 3000 BC when Babylonians, Assyrians, and Egyptians came to the Malabar Coast in search of spices. Later these Middle-East groups were joined by Arabs and Phoenicians and gradually Muziris in Kodungallur entered into the cartography of the World trade map. Till now, Muziris holds the key to a fine amount of Kerala's ancient history is now the ancient trade route. Muziris was known as 'Murachipattanam'. In Ramayana, this place where Sugreeva's (one of the Monkey King) sleuths scurried through while looking for the abducted Sita. The well known commodities exported from Muziris were semi-precious stones, spices, and clothes. It is widely believed that the invasion of Tipu Sultan destroyed Muziris. The port of Kochi started emerging after the arrival of British and Muziris was nowhere to be found. The location of Muziris is still unknown to archaeologists and historians. It is speculated to be located around present-day Kodungallur; a town situated 18 miles north of Cochin. Kodungallur in central Kerala figures prominently in the ancient history of southern India as a vibrant urban hub of the Chera rulers. The North Paravoor (Ernakulam) and Kodungallur (Thrissur) were included in this Muziris project. Archaeologists believe that it was occupied by indigenous people around 1000 BC and continued to be active till the 10th century. Periyar river basin underwent a major transformation and the prosperous city port of Muziris at the mouth of Periyar, overlooking the Arabian Sea was silted over. While excavating the Muziris archaeologists found a jetty with a boat loaded with pepper, mango, gooseberry, frankincense, and dry shells of coconut. The cargo was perfectly mummified in mud. Wood of the boat is carbon-dated to 2,500 years by scientists from Bhubaneswar Institute of Physics. The wood was identified as *Artocarpus lacucha* (wild jack or 'anjily') and *Tectona grandis* (teak) by the Kerala Forest Research Institute, Thrissur. For the two bollard samples, the 14C date range is 800 bc to 200 bc (500 plus or minus 300 bc, with 95 per cent probability) and 1100 bc to ad 1300, (ad 100 plus or minus 1200 with 95 per cent probability), respectively. The steps near the boat and large wood pieces mounted vertically (bollards) indicate the remains of a port. Amphora (a clay vessel for wine), roofed ware, torpedo jars, Central Asian, Persian pottery and Chinese pottery are also found in this area. (Beevi.S, 2019) The Kerala Government launched Muziris Heritage Project in 2006 and is still an ongoing project. The main objective of this project will be preserving the historical buildings and cultural and traditional heritage at the Muziris site. The

attractions that come under the Muziris heritage are Pattanam, Paravur Market, Paravur Synagogue, Kottayil Kovilakam Jewish cemetery, Chendamangalam Synagogue, Paliyam Kovilakam, Paliyam Nalukettu, Gothruthu performance center, Kottapuram market, Kottappuram fort, Cheraman Juma masjid, and Pallipuram fort. The ancient Muziris port was part of the Spice Route that was connected to different parts of the world.

Objectives:

- Identifying the Muziris heritage structures of Central Kerala.
- Find out the prospects of Muziris heritage tourism of Central Kerala.
- Promote awareness and understanding of the cultural distinctiveness and diversity of Muziris
- Identify the economic and cultural benefits of Muziris heritage

Need for the Study:

Kerala also known as "God's Own Country" is a tourist destination blissful with heritage and culture. Numerous visitors across the world visit the destination over a year. The development of heritage destinations is vital for the sustainable development of the state. Muziris has a lot of heritage structures which has a confluence of all religions such as Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. Trade and Commerce flourished with foreigners. The spices of Kerala made foreigners come in search of it. Not much study has been done on Muziris heritage. In this background, the present study has been undertaken on the significance of Muziris heritage in Kerala as it is one of the upcoming spice route destinations in the state.

II. Review of Literature:

Heritage Tourism

Heritage tourism is the emerging combination of words to look at tourism planning more comprehensively. It affirms that the local community has identified significant elements of their places as important enough to preserve and pass on to the future generations. Heritage tourism also denotes that people are dedicated to caring for these identified elements or resources and sharing them. In sum, heritage tourism is a broad concept that covers a diverse collection of phenomena (Tweed & Sutherland, 2007 as cited in Trinh 2013). Jimura (2011) remarked that Heritage Tourism is one of the most significant and fastest-growing segments of the tourism industry as tourists become increasingly more interested in consuming heritage. Heritage tourism is a branch of tourism aimed towards cultural heritage resources of the location where tourism is occurring. Heritage sites provide the tangible links between past, present, and future (Bushell 2011). Prentice (1993) clears the term "heritage" as not only landscapes, natural history, buildings, artifacts, cultural traditions, and the like that are literally or metaphorically passed on from one generation to the other, but those among these which can be promoted as tourism products. He also suggested that heritage sites should be differentiated in terms of types of heritage: built, natural, and cultural heritage. Heritage is a broad concept including natural and the cultural environment. It combines landscapes, sites, and built environments, historic places, as well as biodiversity, past and continuing

cultural practices, collections, living experiences, and knowledge. It records as well express the long processes of forming the essence of diverse national, regional, indigenous, and local identities, the historic development, and an essential part of the modern life. And is a "positive instrument for growth and change and dynamic reference point" (Long, Brian 1999). According to Praveen Sethi (1999) in Heritage Tourism, by the end of the 19th century, to see the ancient historical monuments of Egypt, the beginning of packaged heritage tourism with Thomas Cook's first holidays existed. The development of heritage centers depicts the story of an area or a particular theme, using novel strategies of interpretation such as interactive video. Heritage tourism became as a tool for government, the economic and regional policy with historic docklands are developed as tourist attractions in UK and USA and also gastronomy and the use of rural traditions to attract tourists, so farms can be kept viable in rural France. Poria et al., (2001) describe Heritage tourism as a phenomenon based on tourist's motivations and perceptions rather than on specific site attributes, Heritage tourism is a subgroup of tourism, in which the main motivation for visiting a site is based on place's heritage characteristics according to the tourist's perception of their heritage. Timothy and Boyd (2003) stated that heritage can be divided into tangible immovable resources (e.g. national parks, sanctuaries, monuments, buildings), tangible movable resources (e.g. objects in museums), and intangible resources including values, customs, ceremonies, lifestyles, and experiences such as cultural events, currently UNESCO focusing on folk dances of South India as a cultural heritage. It defines heritage tourism as "an immersion in the natural history human heritage, arts, philosophy and institutions of another region or country". The term Culture and Heritage tourism refers to "segment of the tourism sector that places with special emphasis on Cultural and Heritage attractions. These vary and include performances, museums, displays, archaeological sites, fairs, festivals, etc. In developed areas, Heritage and Cultural attractions include art galleries, plays, orchestra shows, and other theatrical performances. The tourists may travel to particular places and to visit cultural shows or enjoy special musical performances. It may be a visit to a particular fair like craft mela etc. In less developed areas, heritage and cultural attractions may include a visit to traditional religious places, handicrafts, and cultural performances." The term Culture and Heritage tourism refers to "That segment of the tourism sector that places special emphasis on Cultural and Heritage attractions. These vary and include museums, performances, displays, fairs, festivals, archaeological sites, etc. In developed areas, Heritage and Cultural attractions include art galleries, plays, orchestra shows, and other theatrical performances. The tourists may travel to particular places and to visit cultural shows or enjoy special musical performances. It may be a visit to a particular fair like craft mela etc. In less developed areas, heritage and cultural attractions may include a visit to traditional religious places, handicrafts, and cultural performances." (Christou, 2005). McKercher (2002) introduced a two – dimensional model on cultural tourism and classified cultural tourist into five categories – the purposeful, the sightseeing, the casual, the incidental, and the serendipitous cultural tourists.

Heritage Tourism in India

Basham A.L (1956) has given a complete picture of the history and culture of the Indian sub-continent before the coming of Muslims. Starting with the Geographical background he has given a complete picture of the country by throwing light on the state, society, everyday life, religion, arts and language, and literature of the country. S.P. Bansal and P.Gautam (2004) have stated that globally 37 percent of tourism is culturally motivated and it is growing at the rate of 15 percent annually. The authors have described that lack of resources, lack of expertise, lack of ready product, lack of mutual knowledge, and minimal marketing are the main reasons affecting heritage tourism in India. Manish Srivastava (2009) proclaimed that India was increasingly seen as an exotic destination offering a mix of culture, history, and state of art amenities to the international traveler. According to him, heritage tourism is a fertile ground for exercising creative talents, fostering relations between the visitors and the host of population, and between the tourists and the environment. While the international tourists are more satisfied with the food, hotel, and people of India, a deep sense of dissatisfaction can be perceived concerning infrastructure. There is dissatisfaction with bad road conditions, inordinate delays at immigration counters, bad airport facilities, and absence of signboards, illegal guides, and poor maintenance of heritage places. However, the tourists are very much satisfied with guides approved by the government. According to B.R. Parineetha (2005) in History and Tourism in India, the recommendations of the report submitted by Dr. E.R. Allchin the survey revealed that 54% of the tour enjoyed their stay in India and were interested in this monumental heritage aspect and they were mainly from Europe and America. About 48.3% of the tourists felt that the beautiful and natural scenery created in them an urge to visit India.

Muziris Heritage:

Beevi.S (2019) gives a detailed note on Muziris, an ancient global village as the port was a key trade center between southern India and the Phoenicians, the Egyptians, the Greeks and the Roman Empire. The important commodities were the spices such as black pepper and malabathron, semi precious stones, diamonds, pearls, sapphires, ivory, Chinese silk, Gangetic spikenard, and tortoise shells and also explain about the excavations at Pattanam. The 'locus methodology' taken for this excavation distinguished each feature or structure or activity area on the basis of color, texture and composition. This suggests that the site was first actually occupied by the indigenous 'Megalithic' (Iron Age) people and by the Roman in the Early Historic Period. Malavika Gopalakrishnan and S. Surya (2018) have outlined the process which the ecological conservation of the site of the Muziris Interpretation Center and the maritime museum at Pattanam, North Paravur was proposed, through site-responsive design. The proposed site was unique, with a major part of the site being an unrealized pisciculture plot. On the remaining plot, the museum was proposed as a floating structure with minimum intervention to the site. Each gallery was visualized as an island floating amidst the tranquil setting, connected through bridges. This not only makes the museum stand out, but elevates the visitor experience. An ecological and climatically responsive design practice ensures maximum sustainability and retains the natural setting of the site. Further, renewable energy

sources, such as solar and hydrothermal energy, are also incorporated in the design, in order to uplift the design. Anitta .G. Kunnappilly (2018) have stated about the Trade port of Muziris in ancient times as their economy depended on the spice trade. It was famed for spice trade, mainly the shipment of pepper and cinnamon that are indigenous to the Malabar region. The significance of port town in the ancient spice route is evident in so many literary sources, from Strabo (Geographica) to the Sangam epic works of Chithalai Chathanar (Silapadikaram) Pliny (Natural History) and Illango Adigal (Manimekalei). The Sangam works explain the wars were waged between Chera and the Pandyan kingdoms to win monopoly rights to the ancient spice routes. Literary sources are therefore invaluable to an understanding of the trans-oceanic trade of Muziris, which not only conveyed goods, religion, architecture, and culture to and from the port but also underpinned the state and economy of this particular place. Rachel.A.Varghese (2017) discusses how the discourses are generated around the early historic port site of Muziris that led to the configuration of overlapping and multiple territorial imaginations in the south Indian state of Kerala. This paper finds at how it responds to demands of an emergent globalizing discourse on heritage, and drawing heavily from the narrative preoccupations of the national modern. The heritage imagination is generated feeds back into popular perceptions altering and creating novel territorial imaginations of the past in the region. Rachel.A.Varghese (2017) examines the heritage discourses that have come up around the early historic port site of Muziris to build the narrative of a past of happy cosmopolitanism for the city of Kochi that at once engages with and deviates from the temporal and territorial notions of Kochi's past. Furthermore, she argues that the combination of Kochi and Muziris occurs through a process of narrative exclusion or re appropriation of the past of both these locales where it deviates from the requirements of recasting them as global heritage destinations. Kuriakose (2013) has stated that the management of the built heritage must take into account the values of the natural environment and its role as a wider setting; in particular when there are gaps in our detailed understanding of the relationship of the architecture and development. Inappropriate development in the region may impact negatively upon the built and natural heritage. "Trees, mangroves and other flora make a vital contribution to the setting of the Muziris Heritage Site, especially to its skyline. The bio-diversity of the Muziris Heritage Site is vulnerable and requires careful management to ensure its survival. The network of waterways would be used by a large number of new visitors for transport to the area once the Project Sites are open. It is critical that the importance of clean waterways, controlling mosquito menace, reducing pollution and such matters is stressed" Muziris Heritage Project area is an outstanding example of archaeological sites, buildings and landscape which illustrates an important stage of the human history of Kerala. And natural environment have greater importance to the status of the Muziris Heritage Project. The networks of waterways have influenced and inspired the architecture and growth of the built heritage. The intangible heritage helps the visitor to gain a deeper understanding of the place and the culture. Oral traditions and expressions, including social practices, language, performing arts, festive events and rituals; knowledge and practices on universe and the nature; traditional craftsmanship, are all various aspects of the intangible cultural heritage. The suggestions of the study are to improve the

infrastructural facilities at the destination so that it will add to the satisfaction level of the tourists and in turn provide employment opportunities to the local community as guides (Suja John, 2014). Cherian.P.J (2012) discusses material evidence relating to the maritime exchanges at Pattanam, including a wharf context and significance of site in transcontinental interfaces in antiquity. One of the most striking material evidence unearthed at Pattanam is an enormous quantity of terracotta objects that range from sherds of jars and pots to roof tiles and bricks. This paper will examine the Indian and non-Indian distinct pottery of the Pattanam ceramic assemblage. This study also examines the domineering distribution of local pottery- as an example for finding the problems of Euro-centrism in perspective on long-distance exchanges.

III. Significance of the Muziris:

Muziris Heritage Site (MHS) is an exceptional example of buildings and archaeological sites which illustrate a significant phase in the history of Kerala. The built heritage of Muziris is extensive and spreads across the site. There are a few notable buildings from the 18th and 19th centuries but it is mostly in Chendamangalam and Kodungallur. The Muziris comprises not only buildings but also markets, streets, bridges, and cemeteries. The excavations at Pattanam were the first-ever multi-disciplinary excavations undertaken in Kerala. The primary objective of the excavation is to find for archaeological evidence which helps to identify early historic urban settlement and the ancient Indo-Roman port of Muziris on the Malabar Coast. The natural environment is having greater importance to the status of the Muziris. The network of waterways has influenced the architecture and growth of the Muziris. Muziris also has rich associations with people from all strata of society, like royalty, politicians, artists, writers, and professionals particularly from the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. Historical records reveal that 31 countries in Europe, Asia, and the Far East had robust trade links in and around Muziris. Goods like spices, pearls, and precious stones were exported from the Muziris port. The Government of Kerala has initiated the Muziris Heritage Project to reinstate the historical and cultural significance of the legendary port of Muziris. The highlight of this project is it is presently the largest heritage conservation project in India and the first Green Project of the Government of Kerala. It also involves multiple Government Departments and convergence. It also has a research and academic institution to support the project. Due to this, there was a large scale improvement in infrastructure, which led to integration with local communities through native resource persons for data collection and survey. The route aims to revive cultural and academic exchanges between nations and develop a multinational cultural corridor that will bestow economic benefits upon the locals.

Heritage places of the Muziris

The Muziris includes:

- a) Excavations such as
 - Pattanam - Oldest Archaeological Site and was first occupied by indigenous people around 1000 BC.
- b) Forts under the Portuguese influence such as
 - Pallipuram fort - Most coveted and contested forts in Kerala
 - Kottapuram fort - played a significant role in many wars between Zamorins of Calicut and rulers of Kochi
- c) Markets such as
 - Paravur market - an old market on the banks of backwaters
 - Kottapuram market - It was once the nerve center of Kerala's foreign trade
- d) Jewish influences such as
 - Chendamangalam synagogue – one of the biggest synagogues which were built 175 years ago. This synagogue was recently restored by the Archaeological Department with financial support from Kerala Tourism.
 - Paravur synagogue – It is the Largest surviving synagogue
 - Kottayil Kovilakam Jewish cemetery – the only place where a temple, synagogue, masjid, and church exist within a 1 km radius
- e) Mosques
 - Cheraman Juma Masjid - First and oldest mosque in India built by Malik Ibn Dinar under the instruction of Cheraman Perumal
- f) Temples built by the Chera Dynasty
 - Kodungallur Temple – The only temple where the idol is facing North and is made from the wood of the Jackfruit tree
 - Thiruvanchikulam Temple – It is one of the 108 temples of Lord Shiva and 274 Saivite Tirupathis. ASI (Archaeological Survey of India) protected the temple.
 - Kannankulangara Temple – a 600-year-old temple dedicated to Lord Krishna
 - Keezhthali Shiva Temple – Built by Cheraman Perumal and the temple has the largest Shiva linga
 - Azheekal Sree Varaha Temple – It is the only sampoonakshetra (complete temple) of the Nagara type in South India. The famous temple chariot is a rarity in temple architecture.

g) Churches such as

- Marthoma church – Built by St. Thomas and it has on display a particularly holy relic which people believe is a piece of bone from the right hand of the saint
- Holy cross church–It is a fine example of the cordial relationship of different communities in Chendamangalam and was built by Jesuit Priests.
- Manjumatha church – It is also known as Our Lady of Snows
- Kottakavu church - One of the seven churches built by St.Thomas

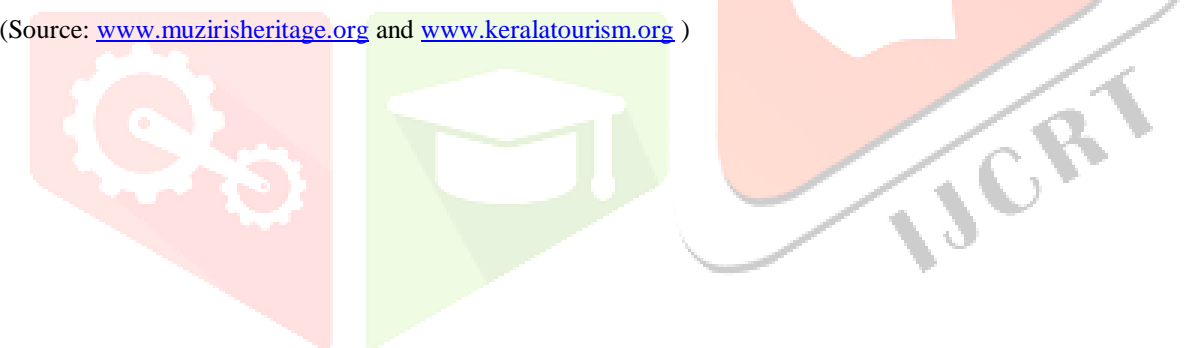
h) Museums such as

- PaliamKovilakam – also known as Kerala Jews Lifestyle Museum. Built by Cochin Royals it was the Traditional home of Paliathu Achans
- Paliam Naalukettu - also known as Kerala Lifestyle Museum. Built by Cochin Royals it was a typical self-contained Malayali house
- Sahodhara Ayyappa Museum – The museum has 59 panels depicting crucial moments in the life Sahodaran Ayyappan (a social reformer), closely linked with the social and political changes in the erstwhile Cochin-Travancore kingdoms.

i) Gothuruthu Performance center where it is famous for Chavittu Nadakam

j) Vypeenkotta Seminary is the college to teach Christian priests. It was built by the Jesuit Priests and the Printing material was made and crafted in wood and ink made of charcoal and oil

(Source: www.muzirisheritage.org and www.keralatourism.org)



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