

**PROPOSAL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF HOLY CORRIDOR IN
55 KM LONG COASTAL STRETCH OF
KANYAKUMARI - NEERODY BORDERING THE SEA**

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1. KANYAKUMARI DISTRICT

Kanyakumari, also known as Cape Comorin, is the Peninsular tip of India and is referred as the LANDS' END. It is set at the confluence of three oceans viz., The Bay of Bengal, The Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea, also called as Mukkoodal or Trisangamam, and the only location India where one can see the sun rise and sun set in sea by standing at one place. The panoramic land attracts the national and international tourists to throng along the shoreline.

The coastal segment of Kanyakumari District is bounded by the latitudes: 8°08'57" N and 8°17'41" N and the longitudes: 77°05'38" E and 77°36'35" E. The coastal belt extends to about 15 km on the eastern side bordering Bay of Bengal + Indian Ocean combine and 55 km on the western side bordering Arabian Sea + Indian Ocean combine. The southernmost tip of Indian mainland, 'Kanyakumari' is well known for its tourism activity by virtue of its natural aesthetic view surrounded by the three seas.

There are four fishing harbours located in Kanyakumari district namely Chinna Muttom, Muttom, Colachel and Thengapattinam. Along the rest of the Kanyakumari district coast, there are 42 other fish landing centres. Kanyakumari, being the southernmost district of Tamil Nadu is having good connectivity by road, rail and by air through the nearest airport at Trivandrum & Tuticorin. The shape and orientation of the Kanyakumari coast is different from the rest of the Indian coastline (**Figure 1**). It is nearly spread in east – west direction at the southern tip facing the Indian Ocean. The overall stretch of Kanyakumari coast is composed of sandy beaches with intermittent presence of rocky headlands particularly at Kanyakumari, Muttom, Colachel and Enayam.

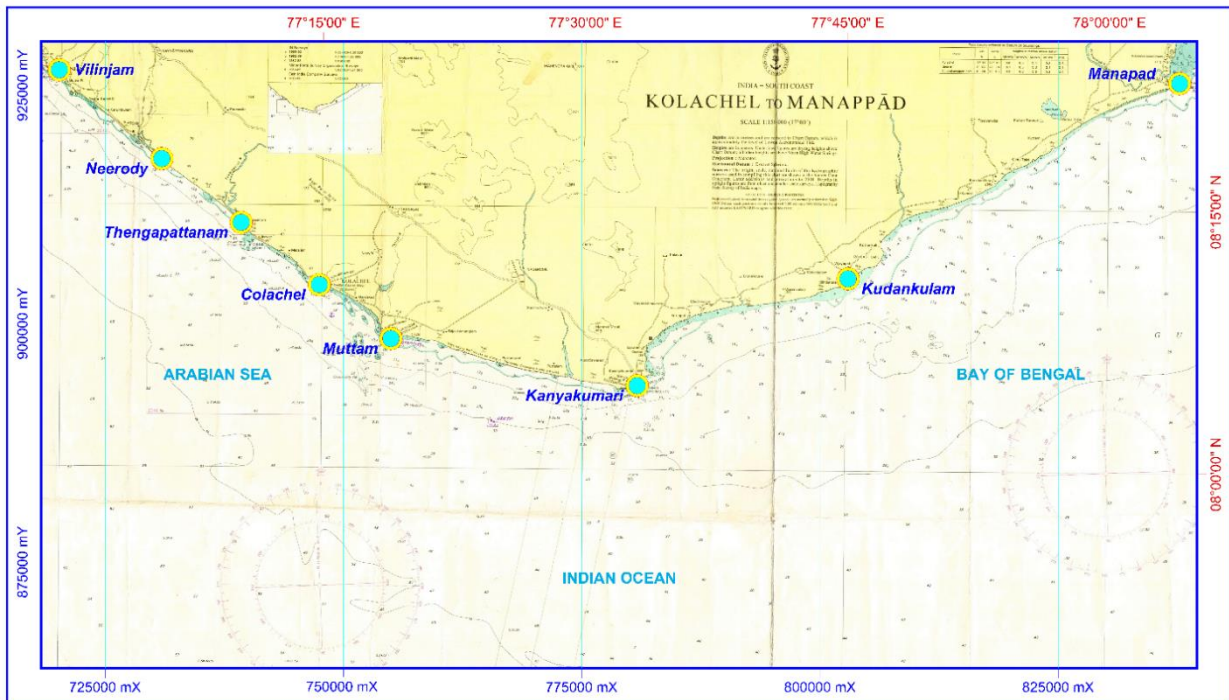


Figure 1. Peninsular Tip of India

Based on the agro-climatic and topographic conditions, the landform of Kanyakumari district can be divided into three regions namely, the uplands, the middle and low land as it is bounded with the patches of Western Ghats. Whereas, the upland consists of hills and valleys, midland consists of plains and the low land consists of coastal region. Unlike other districts in Tamil Nadu, Kanyakumari district gets rainfall both during the southwest and the northeast monsoons. The southwest monsoon period starts in the month of June and ends in September. The northeast monsoon period is from October to January.

Kanyakumari District is surrounded by Western Ghat Hills fallen with Plains bordered by colourful seashores, fringed with coconut trees and paddy fields, few elevated patches of red cliffs with undulating valleys, closely interwoven with Temples and Churches and other edifices lies the district 'Kanyakumari' (Figure 2). With an area of 1672 sq.km, it occupies 1.29% of the total extent of Tamil Nadu. It ranks first in literacy among other districts in Tamil Nadu.



Figure 2. District Map of Kanyakumari

2. PEOPLE AND CULTURE

The people both male and female are the valuable human resources of Kanyakumari district. Their culture, religion, aptitude, habits, beliefs, talents etc. have a bearing on how the district presents itself to others. Tamil and Malayalam are the main languages of this district. Hindus and Christians form a sizeable percentage of the population of the district and there are also a number of Muslim dominated belts in the district. The population of Christian religion primarily following the Roman Catholic seen more along the coastal belt and the CSI seen more at inland, are higher compared to erstwhile Tamil Nadu and India.

The caste system in the Society has weakened to a great extent especially after independence because of growth of education and improvements in transport and communication. Some of the communities in the district are Nadars, Nanjil Nadu Vellalars, Paravas, Mukthavas, Vilakki Thalanayar, Kammalar or Asari, Nairs, Chackarevars, Kerala Mudalis etc. Rice is the staple food of the rich and poor alike in the district. Some among the poorer section also use tapioca. Beverages like tea and coffee are widely spread even into the rural area of the district.

According to 2011 census, Kanniyakumari district had a population of 1,870,374. Average literacy rate of Kanyakumari in 2011 were 91.75 compared to 87.55 of 2001. Among the total population 909,872 (48.5%) are Hindus, 876,299 (47%) are Christians, 78,590 (4.2%) are Muslims, 438 (0.02%) are Buddhists, 160 (0.01%) are Sikhs, 156 (0.01%) are Jains, 10 (0.001%) are Others and 4,849 (0.26%) are "not stated".

3. EDUCATION AND LITERACY

As for as education is concerned, Kanyakumari District is not much backward. There are so many educational institutions functioning in the district to cater the educational value of the people. As per 2001 census report the literacy rate in the district is above 90 percent. It is evident that, Kanyakumari District is equipped with infrastructures like educational institutions, industries and tourist centres.

4. MARINE RESOURCES

Marine fisheries are one of the most important economic activities in Kanyakumari district. The district has a coastal line of about 70 km. There are about 42 fishing villages in 5 blocks. About 42,066 fisherfolk are actively engaged in Kanyakumari District. Annual catch of fish is estimated to be about 46562.85 tons. The important fish landing centres are Colachel, Manavalakurichi, Kadiyappattinam, Muttom, Pallam, Midalam and Thengapattanam. Fifty percentage of the catch fish are consumed within the district and the rest are sent to other district / states / abroad.

5. TOURISM IN KANYAKUMARI

The most tourist destinations in India are temples, churches, archaeological monuments, hill stations, deserts, sea-sides, wild life parks etc. Some other places, however, go far beyond being a mere vacation spot - a place to enjoy and sightseeing. Such is Kanyakumari, a beautiful, quaint district in South India. Presenting several tourist destinations, places of worship, national monuments and much more; this locale is far more than just a vacationer's destination. This is indeed a place to remember; a veritable spiritual experience, to appreciate and cherish for a long time to come. The Vivekananda Memorial Rock and Thiruvalluvar Statue are the worldwide tourist attraction located in Kanyakumari.

Kanniyakumari district has many tourist spots, which can be classified as places of interest for religious tourism, historical tourism, manmade attractions, nature tourism such as waterfalls, bird watching and wildlife sanctuaries, medical tourism and heritage tourism. The district has the following place of worships and tourist hot spots.

- i. Tri-seas and Bhagavathi Amman Temple
- ii. Vivekananda Rock memorial and Ayyan Thiruvalluvar Statue
- iii. Our Lady Ransom Church at Kanyakumari
- iv. Vattakottai & Udayagiri Fort
- v. Thanumalayan Temple at Suchindrum
- vi. Famous falls at Thirparappu
- vii. Nagaraja Temple at Nagercoil
- viii. Ayya Vaikundar Temple at Swamithope
- ix. St. Xavier's Church at Kottar
- x. Padmanabhapuram Palace
- xi. Bhagavathi Amman Temple at Mandaikkadu
- xii. Fishing Harbours at Colachel & Muttom
- xiii. Hanging Bridge at Mathur (Mathur Aqueduct)
- xiv. Peer Mohammed Durgah, Thuckalay
- xv. Pechipparai & Perunchani Dam
- xvi. Kodayar Hydro Electric Project
- xvii. Chothavilai, Sanguthurai & Lemur Beaches
- xviii. The Chitharal Jain Monuments.

6. KANYAKUMARI & ITS SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

Kanyakumari is significantly more than just a vacationer's destination, with various tourist attractions, places of worship, national monuments, and much more. The thrill of seeing the sunrise and the breath-taking sight of the sky becoming a majestic crimson shade in the evening are memories to be treasured for a lifetime. Vivekananda Kendra, a spiritual centre founded by Eknath Ranade, who was instrumental in the establishment of the Vivekananda Memorial, is located next to a seashore. A little woodland is located on the 100-acre campus.

Kanyakumari, a place rich in natural beauty and historical value, is well worth adding to your itinerary. This is a location to remember, a true spiritual experience that will be appreciated and treasured for a long time. Christianity is the district's second most popular religion. The Catholic Church has approximately 4,00,000 members, while Protestant groups have approximately 5,00,000 followers. The Christian population make up equal to the Hindu community in Kanyakumari District, accounting for 46% of the population. Entire coast of Kanyakumari is bid with Christianity. Kanyakumari currently has the appearance of a Church land. The number of churches dotting the coastline, as well as the Thiruvananthapuram - Kanyakumari highway, reflects the highest number of people visiting the churches each year. Fishermen continue to follow the writ as it runs through the region. Festivals are celebrated in a grand manner, especially the Annual Feast and flag hoisting ceremony celebrated in every church has centre of attraction which draws many people to Kanyakumari.

7. PROPOSED HOLLY CORRIDOR (புனித பாதை)

Many religions place spiritual significance on specific locations, such as the birthplace or deathplace of their founders or saints, or the location of their calling or spiritual awakening, or of their connection with the divine, or locations where miracles were performed or witnessed, or locations where a deity is said to live or any other site that is thought to have special spiritual significance. Speaking spiritually, Pilgrimage is one such thing in which people travel from one place to another habituated to find their own spiritual benefit, especially temples, mosque and churches. The coast of Kanyakumari is one such place where we can find enormous number of historically famous churches located along the shoreline. Plenty of

tourists from all over the country visit Kanyakumari during their vacation to get the glimpses of Peninsular tip of India. It will be more ideal and greatly useful to enhance this attraction and increase the value by making a Holy path. For an instance, the road between Jerusalem and Jericho, 30 km long, was an access road for trading caravans, military personnel, and the pilgrims who visited Jerusalem multiple times each year. Similarly, a Holy corridor can be created in such a way that pilgrims can use the pathway as they are headed to God's Direction.

In similar way, the coastal stretch of 55 km long extending from Kanyakumari to Neerody which is placed with plenty of Ancient Churches has been proposed to form as a Holy Corridor for the worship of God's belief.

This holy corridor (**Figure 3**) will connect the existing Churches (**Table 1**), Hindu Temples and Mosques. Also, giant statues can be erected for Buddha, Tamil Thai, Bharata Matha and Ancient King Marthanda Varma along the corridor. The proposed holy corridor will lay over the existing coastal road with further widening and housing other amenities running parallel to the Arabian Sea.

8. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTS FOR THE HOLY CORRIDOR

The detail of the development is shown in **Figure 3**. The proposed developments are detailed below.

- ❖ Widen the existing coastal road between Kanyakumari and Neerody.
- ❖ Divide the road with solid barricades, the eastern side for normal transport and the western side with covered walkway, cycle track and electrical rickshaw.
- ❖ Soft kneeling walkway for pilgrims,
- ❖ Kiosks at every 1 km demarcated areas for locals to have their takeaway shops.
- ❖ Well maintained urinals at Kiosk centres
- ❖ Malls, supermarkets, food courts, clean rest rooms for every 10 km.
- ❖ Plastic free corridor
- ❖ No smoking zones
- ❖ Eco-Tourism

- ❖ Connect Temples, Mosques, fishing harbours, coastal head lands
- ❖ Develop Greens and establish horticultural parks
- ❖ Develop bird sanctuary and butterfly park
- ❖ Develop marine aquarium
- ❖ Set up resorts and hotels on the eastern side of the road.

9. BENEFITS OF KANYAKUMARI HOLY CORRIDOR

Establishing this proposed holy corridor in Kanyakumari will directly increase the revenue of the district in terms of incoming tourists. Due to increase in the influx of tourist and tourism activities, the livelihood of people living along the proposed holy corridor will get enhanced. The existing tourism and recreational activities along the coastal corridor can be developed to the next level with the revenue generated out of proposed holy corridor. The pilgrims who visit Kanyakumari can take a battery operated vehicle from Kanyakumari and travel along the proposed holy corridor. In other case, if they wish to connect the main churches along this corridor, they can take public transport or hire vehicle and travel through the existing highway (NH 47) running parallel to the coastal road.

In parallel, the tourists visiting Kanyakumari can also access the other shrines in other places of Kanyakumari. Similarly, other tourist hotspots in Kanyakumari can also be connected from the proposed holy corridor as shown in **Figure 4**.

10. CONCLUSION

The proposed Holy Corridor can be taken up by the Department of Tourism, Government of Tamil Nadu to make this as the first and best in the world for such divine cause. It would enhance the spiritual belief among people, support the life of economically downtrodden people living along the coast, strengthen inter religious belief and respect, enhance the cultural value of Kanyakumari district people and also increase the revenue of the tourism department.

Table 1. List of churches connected by proposed Holy Corridor

Sl. No	Name of the Church	Area (or) Locality
1	St. Nicolas Church	Neerody
2	St. Joseph Church	Marthandamthurai
3	St. Mary's Church	Vallavilai
4	St. Catherine Church	Eraviputhenthurai
5	St. Jude's Church	Chinnathurai
6	St. Thomas Forane Church	Thoothoor
7	St. John The Baptist Church	Poothurai
8	St. Lucia's Church	Ezhudesam
9	Ootukuzhi CSI Church	Thengapattinam
10	St. Barbara's Church	Ramanthurai
11	St. Antony's Church	Enayam Puthenthurai
12	Punitha Leanammal Church	Enayam
13	Holy Trinity Church	Melmidalam
14	St. Joseph's Church	Midalam
15	St. Antony's Shrine	Alanchy
16	St. Francis Xavier Church	Alanchy
17	Siluvaiya Kurusadi Church	Midalam
18	St. James Church	Vaniyakudi
19	St. Bartholomew Church	Kodimunai
20	CSI Hacker Memorial Church	Colachel
21	St. Vincent De Paul Church	Periyavilai
22	St. George Church	Mandaikadu
23	St. Peter & Paul's Church	Kadiapattinam
24	St. Antony's Church	Pozhikarai
25	The All Saint's Church	Muttom
26	St. Joseph's Church	Pillaihoppu
27	St. Mary's Church	Azhikkal
28	St. Mary's Church	Ganapathipuram
29	Allankottai CSI Church	Ganapathipuram
30	St. Antony's Chapel	Azhikkal
31	Our Lady of Good Health	Rajakkamangalam
32	Sahaya Matha Church	Puthenthurai
33	St. George Church	Puthenthurai
34	CSI Church	Chothavilai
35	St. Matthew Church	Pallam

Sl. No	Name of the Church	Area (or) Locality
36	Mela Manakudy Church	Melamanakudy
37	New Holy Cross Church	Keelamanakudy
38	St. Ignatius Church	Kovalam
39	CSI Church	Kovalam
40	St. Micheal's Church	Kanyakumari
41	St. Antony's Chapel	Kanyakumari
42	St. Xavier's Cathedral Church	Kottar, Nagercoil



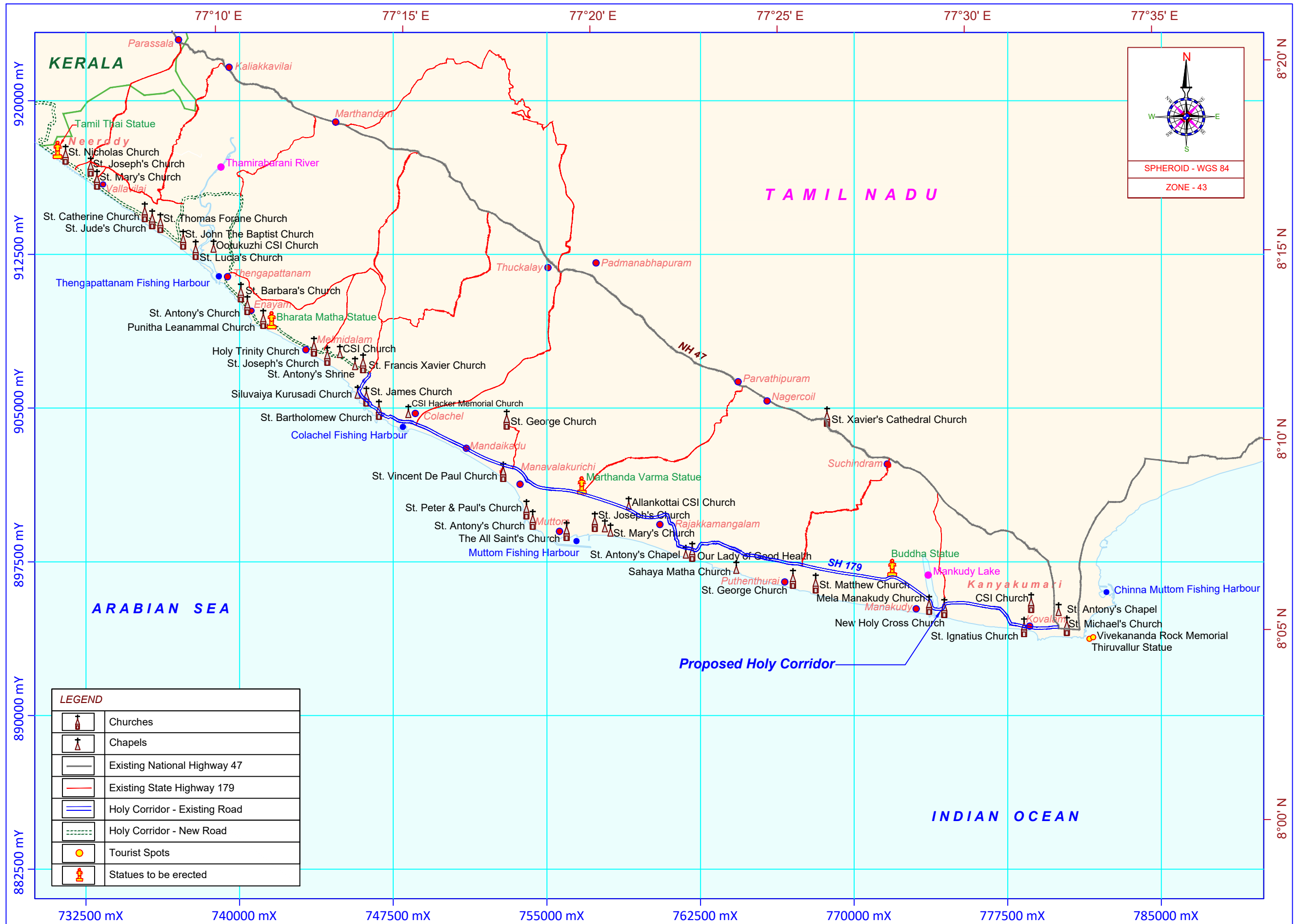


FIG. 3. CHURCHES ALONG PROPOSED HOLY CORRIDOR

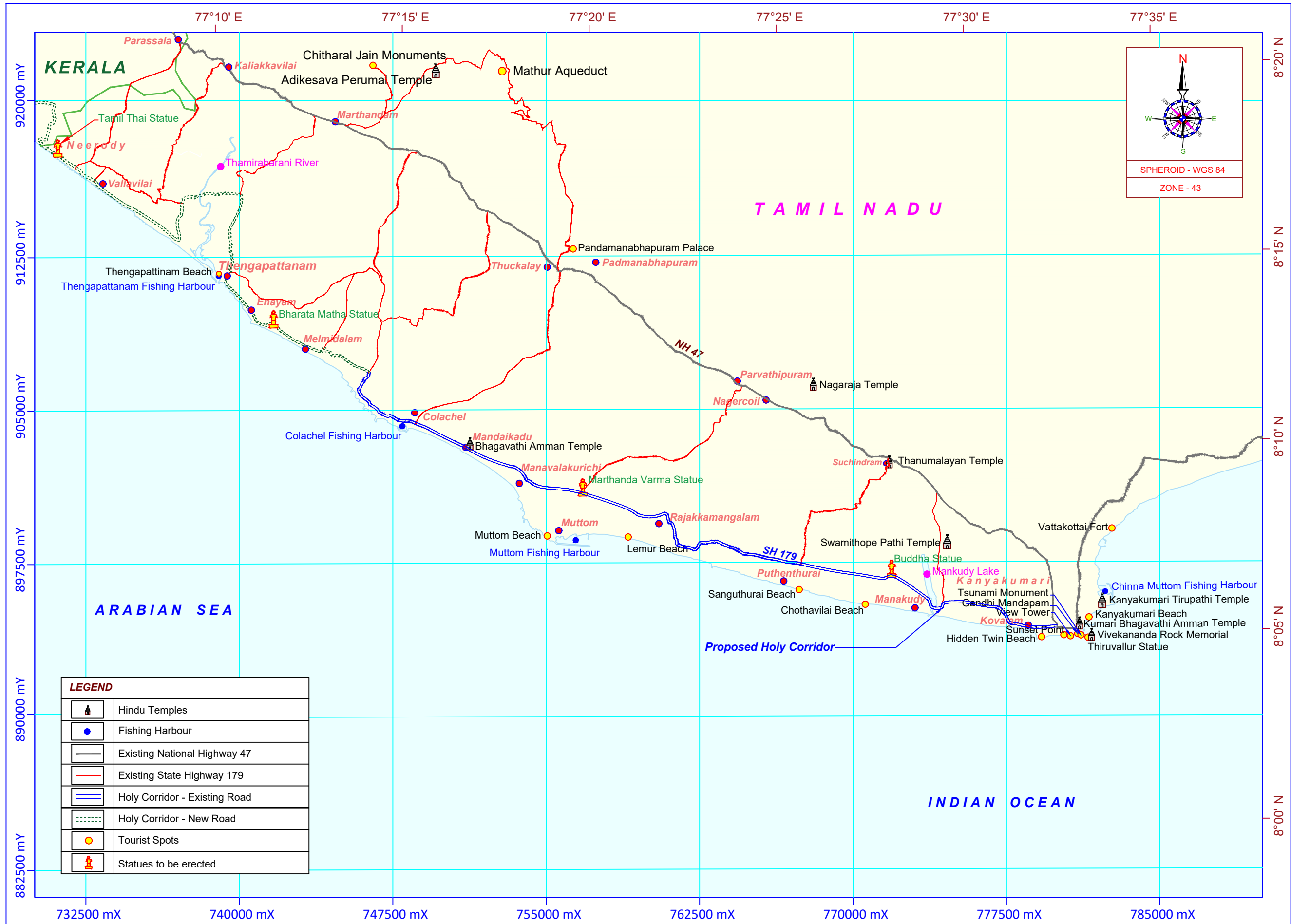


FIG. 4.HINDU TEMPLES AND OTHER TOURIST SPOTS ALONG PROPOSED HOLY CORRIDOR