

TOURISM RESOURCE DIRECTORY

PEPPER- VAIKOM



Prepared by

Responsible Tourism Mission

Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala



The State RT Mission under the administrative control of Director, Department of Tourism is led by the State RT Mission Coordinator. The District level cells are under the administrative control of State RT Mission and it functions at the District Offices of the Department of Tourism.

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM MISSION

Department of Tourism
Government of Kerala
Park View, Thiruvananthapuram
Kerala, India - 695 033
Tel: +91 471 2334749
Email: rt@keralatourism.org

KEY PLAYERS



SRI. KADAKAMPALLY SURENDRAN

Minister for Tourism
Government of Kerala
Email:
kadakampallysurendran99@gmail.com



SMT. RANI GEORGE IAS

Secretary (Tourism)
Government of Kerala
Email:
ranigeorge@keralatourism.org



SRI. P. BALA KIRAN IAS

Director, Department of Tourism
Government of Kerala
Email:
director@keralatourism.org



SRI. RUPESH KUMAR K

State RT Mission Coordinator
Government of Kerala
Email: rupesh@keralatourism.org

PREFACE

Self-reliant community is the cornerstone of a progressive society.

‘PEOPLE’S PARTICIPATION FOR PARTICIPATORY PLANNING AND

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH RESPONSIBLE TOURISM’ (PEPPER) is an earnest attempt towards establishing cent percent structured Responsible Tourism destinations across the State of Kerala.

The project, now, plays a central role in the sustainable development of societies around the world and helps in enhancing the quality of life of the family. Envisaged at turning the face of tourism, it pictures the sustainable development of a destination by bringing the local community also into its fold.

The PEPPER project has been running very successively and actively in Vaikom. The main objective of PEPPER is discovering new zones or unexplored destinations that are rich with tourism potential and developing them in a hundred percent sustainable fashion with the active involvement of the local community. As a part of the project a resource directory of the Vaikom Municipality and all the associated Grama panchayats have been developed in the local language (Malayalam). Through this project we will be translating and compiling the resource directories already made for the panchayats into a single consolidated one, and thereby many of the lesser-known tourist destinations will be brought before the potential tourists. The directory has holistically attempted to cover the social fabric of Vaikom, the ecological eminences of the region, and the rich and diverse cultural aspects which will help reinvent the way tourist's involvement with the local community.

A systematic and well-validated methodology has been adopted for developing this resource directory. Both primary and secondary data were collected for this study using appropriate data collection methods. Special Tourism Grama Sabhas were conducted in each of the Local Self Governments (LSGs) with regard to resource mapping and also for the consolidation of the data collected. Apart from these, the data collection also included other activities and was done under the leadership of the concerned Local Self Governing Institutions and Resource persons. The activities included in-depth interviews with key informants, surveys, brainstorming sessions, and Focus Group Discussions with key resource persons. This resource directory can be regarded as first of its kind, developed with total participation from the entire community.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Vaikom Resource Directory, developed as a part of the PEPPER project represents a collaborative effort, made possible by the kindness and cooperation of many. We take this opportunity to thank each and everyone who has stood by us during the course of the project in various roles and capacities and helped us in achieving the stated objectives of the study.

*First of all, We take this opportunity to thank the Minister for Tourism, **Shri. Kadakampally Surendran**, for guidance and support, extended during the course of the project. We are deeply indebted to the Secretary (Tourism), Smt. Rani George, IAS, and also to the Director, Shri. P.Bala Kiran, IAS, for guiding us during crucial times of the project and also for the help extended during the editing process of the Resource Directory. The study would not have been possible without the patronage extended by the officers of the Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala.*

We are thankful to the Heads of the Vaikom Municipality and the following Panchayats, Udayapuram Panchayat, Maravanthuruthu Panchayat, Chempu Panchayat, T.V. Puram Panchayat, Vechoor Panchayat, Thalayazham Panchayat, Kallara Panchayat, Velloor Panchayat, and Thalayolaparambu panchayat, for their sincere support and for reciprocating to our needs by convening Special Tourism Gramasabhas, providing us with essential guidance to map the resources in their respective locality and above all for sparing their valuable time to attend the various meetings, workshops, and FGDs conducted on this behalf and also in motivating other Elected Representatives and Officials to do the same. We acknowledge with gratitude the help and support rendered by all the Elected Representatives, Officials, Kudumbasree members, and the public of the respective Grama Panchayats during the process of the Resource Mapping.

The acknowledgment would remain incomplete without placing on record Our appreciation for the RT Resource Persons, for their exemplary work and academic contribution in each and every stage of the project, without whom this project would not have been completed successfully.



C. K. ASHA
MLA - Vaikom



Rupeshkumar K
State RT Mission Coordinator
Department of Tourism
Government of Kerala



CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4-11
LIVELIHOOD MAPPING	12-40
HISTORY & SOCIO-CULTURAL BACKGROUND	41-49
HISTORICAL REMINISCES	50-53
LAUREATES & CULTURAL ICONS	54-83
PLACES OF WORSHIP	84-129
CULTURAL, ART & HERITAGE TRAILS	130-151
LOCAL CUISINES & ETHNIC FOOD	152-158
CONCLUSION	159
APPENDIX	160-173
PHOTO GALLERY	174-198
VIDEO GALLERY	199-203



WELCOME TO VAIKOM...

MAKE MEMORIES AS YOU MOVE ABOUT

INTRODUCTION

'Resource Directory eBook on Vaikom' includes an exhaustive documentation of tourism resources in the Vaikom municipality, and its associated panchayats, namely, Thalayazham, Vechoor, Kallara, Maravanthuruthu, Chempu, Udayanapuram, TV Puram, Thalayolapparambu and Velloor panchayat. The tourism in these areas has been developed strictly following the principles of Responsible Tourism, as a part of the PEPPER project (People's Participation for Participatory Planning and Empowerment through Responsible Tourism). The PEPPER project has woven a totally inclusive approach, wherein the residents and the local bodies of Vaikom worked hand-in-hand to weave one of the best tourism models globally, deemed fit to be replicated anywhere. This resource directory will give its readers a detailed outlook of all the potential tourism activities, socio-economic aspects, livelihood aspects, cultural forte, eminent personalities of Vaikom and much that will ensure a rich experience for the tourists visiting Vaikom Taluk.

Vaikom is located in the heart of Kerala, in the northwest region of Kottayam, close to Ernakulam district, the commercial capital of Kerala. It is about 60 kms from the Kochi International Airport. Vaikom is well connected by air, road and rail. As a result, you can reach this exotic place and enjoy the calm of the suburban environs without much loss of time or energy. The drive from the airport, which takes about an hour and a half, gives you glimpses of busy cityscapes and quiet villages, of urban streets thrumming with human activity and rural spaces echoing with Nature's music.

Vaikom is a municipal town that has witnessed the birth of varied cults and cultures of Kerala. Besides, it has played a significant role in triggering as well as maintaining social reforms and political movements that were part of the Indian struggle for independence. This document will give you a peek into the cults, culture, religions and people of this wonderful land. It will unveil details of the ideas and values that shaped the ethos of the place, the great native citizens who moulded the culture of fellow-residents, the traditions revered in different parts of this region, the lifestyles practised by various communities, the sites where you can have fun and adventure, the spots that will help you transcend worldly worries, the myths and the legends that surround them, the natural wonders and the pleasures they afford, and, above all, the efforts taken by the Department of Tourism to ensure you do not miss out the fun! So, sit back, relax, and let this complete travel guide to Vaikom take you on a virtual tour. Perhaps this teaser will inspire you to strap your knapsack on and pamper yourself with real-life experiences this region has to offer.



CLOSER UNDERSTANDING OF PLACES AND SPACES OF VAIKOM

Vaikom is the capital town of Vaikom taluk, situated in the northwest of Kottayam district in the state of Kerala, India. The Vembanad lake is situated at one of its borders. The town is easily accessible from Ernakulam, Alappuzha and Kottayam. Vaikom is rich in natural bounties like the backwaters and greenery, and has great tourism appeal. Situated in the central Kerala region, Vaikom exhibits a strong character that reflects a harmonious blend of both North and South Kerala cultures. Vaikom is a pilgrimage centre. The famous Shiva temple is situated here. It was the epicentre of the Vaikom Satyagraha, a civil rights movement, which was aimed at removing the evil custom of untouchability and securing freedom of entry into temples for the backward sections of society. The best time to visit Vaikom is during the months of November-December during the Ashtami festival. Spices like nutmeg and black pepper and natural substances like latex have caught the attention of the Vaikom farmers, and they are into cash crops and rubber plantation in a big way. The economy is based on agriculture, coconut and rice being the major crops cultivated here.



HOW TO GET THERE

Vaikom town is situated at the northwestern end of Kottayam district, close to Ernakulam district. On its western border is the Vembanad lake, and the land is virtually irrigated by the various tributaries of the Muvattupuzha. Vaikom is the oldest township in Kottayam district, and among the oldest in South India. Vaikom is also very close to Kumarakom, a very popular tourism destination. It is situated at a distance of 30 kms from Ernakulam and 32 kms from Kottayam and about 60 kms (37 miles) from the Kochi International Airport



BY FLIGHT:

To reach Vaikom via air, there are two options. You may either catch a flight to the Kochi International Airport which is around 60 kms from Vaikom or to the Thiruvananthapuram International Airport, around 148 kms away.



BY TRAIN:

Vaikom Road is the railway station that connects you directly to Vaikom, The nearest major railway station is Cherthala which is around 22 kms from Vaikom and Kottayam Station, around 30 kilometers from Vaikom.



BY ROAD:

Vaikom is well connected with all major cities in India by road. The government transportation service providers, the KSRTC, runs direct bus services to Vaikom from all major destinations within and outside Kerala. Private bus services are also abundant. Inter-state bus services are available.



DEMOGRAPHY

According to the 2011 Census India data, Vaikom Taluk, located in Kottayam district, comprises of 76876 households, with a population of 310414 of which 152570 are males and 157844 are females. Out of total population, 92.52% of population lives in Urban area and 7.48% lives in Rural area. The reported population of children in the Taluk, between ages 0-6, is 27143 which depict 8.74% of the total population.

The male-female ratio of Vaikom Taluk is around 1035 and the literacy rate approximates to 87.66% of which 88.65% are males and 86.7% females. The total area of Vaikom is 319.30 sq.km. with a population density of 972 per sq.km.

Out of total population, 50% of population lives in Urban area and 60% lives in Rural area

DESCRIPTION	URBAN	RURAL
Number of households	6068	70808
Total Population	23234	287180
Population (%)	48.65%	50.81%
Male Population	11304	141266
Female Population	11930	145914
Sex Ratio	1055	1033
Literacy (%)	89.31%	87.52%



VAIKOM - THE BACKWATER LAND

Vaikom is one of the oldest townships in Kerala and has many beautiful and must-visit spots which are still untouched by modernity. This attractive township on the western side of Kottayam district is bounded on one side by the enchanting Vembanad lake. The Kampukadu canal of TV Puram panchayat was dug for the easy transit of the then Raja of Travancore to pray at the Ettumanor temple.

The main water body in Vaikom is the Muvattupuzha river along with its tributaries which originate in the Western Ghats. A group of islands that forms Vaikom is well connected mainly by three bridges across the three channels of the Muvattupuzha before it merges into the mighty Vembanad lake. And these lands are split into small areas by interconnected estuaries, narrow canals, and backwater passages. The most attractive features of this region are associated with its backwater activities, cultivation, village life, and culture. Vaikom is a vast network of rivers, ponds and canals, most of which merge into the great expanse of Vembanad lake. Ithupuzha, Muriinjapuzha, Poothotta backwaters, Mundar and Kariyaar backwaters are spots of great natural beauty.

SOIL TYPES

Nine different soil types are found in Vaikom area. The fertile alluvial soil carried ashore by Muvattupuzha river is found in abundance, and this makes the region close to the river banks rich and fit for agriculture. Sandy soil and sandy loam are found at the lower end of the river valley. Much of Vaikom has laterite soil, red soil and black soil, the last of which has a localized presence mostly in the foot hill areas.

Peat soil is a type of acidic soil formed due to a network of backwaters and estuaries bordering the coasts, and it is a dominant soil type in Vaikom. These swampy areas are highly acidic and contains a high proportion of carbonaceous wood. The local residents believe that the occurrence of the black soil is due to frequent forest fires that destroyed the thick forests in the region, and the recurrent rains that followed led to the creation of swamps in these areas. The region is below Mean Sea Level and bunds are constructed around it to keep water away. The peat lands are deep black in colour, heavy in texture, poorly aerated and ill- drained. Pieces of wood are seen embedded in the subsoil. This soil cracks during summer, and is affected by severe acidity (pH 3-4.5). Periodic saline water inundation also occurs here.



GETTING TO KNOW THE LAND AT THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL

VAIKOM

12



Mapping Livelihood
Patterns in
Vaikom - 'Travelling Right'



You need to get up close and personal with the livelihood aspects of the local community of Vaikom if you really wish to feel the pulse of Vaikom. This is an opportunity for you to see the people's capabilities, assets, levels of income and activities that help them secure the necessities of life, cope with and recover from shocks and stresses (such as natural disasters and economic or social upheavals) and enhance their well-being as well as that of the future generations without undermining the natural environment or resource base. If you 'travel right' you will be able to experience village life better, enjoy its charms, and appreciate the natives' grit and inventiveness.

The Responsible Tourism (RT) Mission in Kerala lets travelers experience the compassion and craftsmanship of the serene, secluded villages of Kerala up close. For this, the RT Kerala has included various packages such as the village life experience package, the native experience package, and the cultural experience package. The itinerary helps the tourists to indulge in the day-to-day activities of the local communities as well as the livelihood activities of the locals, thus helping the tourists get a firsthand account of these grassroot level livelihood activities. This section of the report highlights some of the prominent livelihood activities that take place in Vaikom, which are included in the RT packages.



1. FISHING

Vaikom is a vibrant place surrounded by lakes and rivers on all three sides and hence a perfect setting for fishing. The natives depend on it as a means of livelihood. A large number of men and women of the place have adopted fishing as their occupation, and actively take part in an array of activities associated with fishing, ranging from catching fish to selling it.

Fishing is still largely done in the traditional way, using the conventional catamaran and fishing nets. Apart from that, long-established methods of fishing can also be seen in abundance, such as the 'Kambavala'. It is the gill net, a large one, that is laid over a huge area. Two sides of the net are weighed down with heavy stones which allow the central portion of the net to trap the fish. The net is then pulled back to the shore by a group of fishermen. The best part of the whole affair is to view the variety of catch ranging from small prawn, shrimp, mighty lobster, flat sole fish, yellow fin trevally, the pearl spot, sword fish, catla, reba mullet, surgeon fish tilapia, flying fish, sting ray, orange chromide, fresh water gar fish, Indian mottled eel which looks like a snake and has a high medicinal value, tank gobi and low calorie red snapper to the prodigious Bluefin trevally. But the locals recall a past when Vaikom used to be clad in wide strips of blue, when the rivers, canals, and ponds yielded rich bounties like the scrumptious snake head fish, cat fish, silurus, to name a few.

Fishing Equipment

The fishing techniques in Kerala are very old, and the fisherfolk of Kerala are well known as experts in the art of fishing. The greatest asset they possess is an intimate knowledge of a great variety of fish and fish habits. It is a fund that is handed down from generation to generation. The technology used among the traditional fisherfolk of Kerala for catching fish, such as the fishing craft and the gear, is traditionally evolved and differs from place to place according to the specific fishing conditions, that is, the opportunities they offer and the restrictions they impose. Traditional fishing equipment like Veeshu Vala , Udakku Vala ,Olli Vala, Vatta Vala, Koodu, Ottal, Ayiram Chu, Bamboo trap, Thettali, Padala, Vallam, etc. are commonly used in Vaikom

Popular Fishing Gear or Craft

Marine fishery, that employs traditional gear like boat seines, shore seines and gill nets, is an age old tradition practised in the backwaters of the region. Mechanization made its appearance in the late nineteen fifties in the area. By the mid-sixties, individual entrepreneurs entered the scene and paved the way for fast development of trawling operations along the coastal waters. Commercial purse-seining appeared during the late seventies, and the process of large scale motorization of the country boat began in the early eighties. With the advent of mechanization, the development of diversified fishing methods in the artisanal sector gained momentum. Some of the important gear operated by traditional craft along the Vaikom coast are the following.



■ TRAWL NET (MUTHU VALA)

The trawl nets in use differ according to the anticipated size of the catch and the head rope length of different trawls which ranges from 39.6 to 81 m, and the mesh size which is in the range of 16 to 25 mm. The trawl nets are used largely in the rainy season, especially in areas of flowing water where the currents are strong.

■ DRAG NETS (VEESHU VALA)

Drag nets are used in areas of stagnant water. Unlike the Veeshu valas used in other parts of Kerala, in Vaikom the Veeshu valas, are not attached to ropes; instead, rings of metal are attached to these nets and due to the weight of these rings these nets sink to the waterbed and the fish get trapped inside the net.

■ VEESHUVALAYAN VALA

This net is used to catch fish from both stagnant as well as flowing water. The fishing net has a rope attached to it, and hence can be thrown into the water and pulled up after the catch.





■ CHAVITTIPIDIYAN VALA

A unique and interesting fishing technique which requires two skilled workers. The 'Chavittipidiyan Vala', comprises of a net with ropes attached to its circumference as support. The uniqueness of this equipment lies in the method devised for fishing wherein the people involved keep the net submerged by stamping on the sides, whereas crest of the net will be at the water level. Finally, the net will be lifted as and when fishes enter.

■ KAI VALA

This is a type of small net that can be held by hand. Here bamboo is bent to form a circular frame and the net is stitched onto the bamboo ring. This is commonly used to catch fish from canals and rivers.

■ BAMBOO TRAP (OTTAL)

technique is good for catching fish in small canals and paddy fields. This trap device is also called koodu (cage) by the natives. It is placed at the narrowest area of running water. The part of the canal towards the back of the trap is blocked with twigs or mud. Fishermen locate the fish with the help of powerful lights. The fish enter the trap through the wide opening of the basket but cannot escape as the other end is closed. The trap is then lifted from the waters with the catch.



■ MEEN TAPPIDITHAM

This method is an exceptional fishing method practised mostly by women in the backwaters of Kerala. They dive into the water and catch fish with their bare hands. Small fish like Pallathi are caught by this method.

■ VELLAVALI

Vellavali, a unique method of fishing used to catch Karimeen (Pearl Spot), is commonly used in Vaikom backwaters. This method requires expertise in fishing and swimming.

A piece of thick coir rope, about one km long, is bent into a U-shape. Tender palm leaves are attached to the rope and two fishermen tie the ends of the rope to their waists while standing in water in bright sunlight. The men then walk through the shallow waters. As the palm leaves shine in the water, the light

reflected from the leaves scares the Pearl Spot and the fish hide in the muddy areas. At this time, expert swimmers, who have been following the two men in country boats, dive into the muddy water and catch the prized fish with their bare hands.

They usually start fishing by 8 am and stop by 2 pm. To a very large extent, the timings depend upon the climatic conditions. Severe breeze and waves work to the disadvantage of the fishermen. The water should be clear for the divers to see the movements of the fish. The fishing time also depends upon the expected volume of the catch. Generally they get 5 to 20 kgs of fish (30 to 120 in number). The surprising fact is that the diving fishermen go down up to 24 feet to catch Karimeen in this unique way, without using any diving equipment.



■ SHORE SEINE (KAMBAVALA)

This net is a Portuguese product that was introduced to Kerala centuries back. It is a net operated from the shore and thus known by the name 'shore seine'. Locally, it is known as KambaVala or Karamadi. The shore seine nets are mainly used along the coast of Vaikom. Both cotton and nylon nets are used. The net is attached to poles fixed on land and is spread in the backwaters and then hauled into the shore by a group of persons with great effort. A variety of fish is caught by this net.



2. MUSSEL COLLECTION

Marine mussels are bivalve molluscs belonging to the family Mytilidae, and form one of the most dominant cultivable species all over the world. Farming of mussels is now a well-established commercial practice in Vaikom and the produce is exported to other countries as well. The Cooperative Society for Mussel Trading in the 14th ward of TV Puram panchayat plays a major role in managing and promoting mussel trade in the region. Apart from that, two Self Help Groups also aid the fisherfolk to earn steady employment and sustainable livelihood.

Mussel Collection Equipment

The equipment used to collect mussel, locally known as Kolli, is made of iron and attached to one end of a long pole. Using this rod, the mussel is plucked from 10-15 m depth. This is an off shore process and requires immense skills.



3. FISH LANDING

This is an area on the banks of the Vembanad lake, which provides livelihood opportunities to the local populace. It houses one of the biggest fish markets in the area. Locally caught fresh fish is sold here in retail and bulk, which gives opportunities to the tourists to experience the process, and buy their most favourite varieties as well.

VAIKOM 20

4. COIR PRODUCTION

A stroll along the various panchayats in the region will definitely take you to the interesting scenes of villagers engaged in the manufacture of coir. You will see the local residents working in perfect harmony to generate coir, the golden fibre of Kerala, and one of the strongest threads in the world. If you have time at your disposal, you will be able to watch them convert it into some of the most durable household items and artistic products as well.



Coconut fibre extracted from coconut husks is used in the making of coir. With the abundant growth of coconut trees, Vaikom has become an ideal locale for coir industry. Traditional husk retting is a common sight in the panchayats of this place, and this is the preliminary step in coir production. Coconut husk is submerged in a waterlogged area, about 4 feet deep in water, and covered with mud. This is kept for months together in the retting moulds, and from there it is loaded on to canoes and transported to threshing zones. The retted husks are then pounded and crushed using mallets or machetes. This process is followed by fibre collection. The collected fibre, threshed and dried, is now spun into yarns with the help of spinners with wheels attached to a small gear and spinning axle. It is a pleasure to observe how coconut husk gets transformed into beautiful objects in the hands of master craftsmen. This long process which takes months of waiting and work, begins with the simple phenomenon of retting. The end-products may be objects as varied as ropes, twines, brooms and brushes to doormats, rugs, mattresses and other upholstery material.



5. SCREW PINE CRAFT

The art of transforming the leaves of screw pine plant into different types of mats and wall hangings is an age old skill practised by the female artisans in the region. Screw pine plant grows wild on the banks of rivers, canals, ponds and backwaters. They are used for fencing the fields. The root structure of this plant is known to be very effective in the prevention of soil erosion. The leaves are sword shaped, with thorns on both edges and along the mid-rib of the leaves. Women in Kerala have been engaged in the craft for more than 800 years. Screw pine mats have played a significant role in the traditional customs of Kerala. Traditionally mats were unrolled on floors in order to seat visitors. The screw pine mat is called Thadukku, Methapaya or Kachipaya in the local parlance.

How is it made?

Leaves of screw pine or Pandanus are used for this craft. The artisans prefer the female plant for its fine supple leaves, to the male plants that have coarse leaves. First, the leaves are cleaned. This has to be done very carefully as they have spiky edges. The cleaned leaves are then split in half, lengthwise. The sliced leaves are then rolled outwards to prevent them from curling, giving an angular reel of approx. 1-2 cms thickness. These long and narrow strips are boiled for one hour. After this process, the leaves are washed once again, transferred to vessels containing fresh water and kept there overnight. They are then dried thoroughly. Within a couple of days it takes on an ivory color. Once completely dried, the leaves are properly straightened using a knife, and kept rolled the other way (inwards) into a circular reel. The leaf strands in the reels are further split into two or three using a knife. This is to bring the strands to the required width. The strands are kept rolled and bundled until the dyeing process begins. Basic dyes are used to give them different colours. To remove excess colour, the strands are washed. After another round of drying, they are ready for weaving. The weaving process involves a lot of care and attention as one strip forming the weft is interlaced diagonally between two layers of leaves that form the warp. The entire process is done manually, with the artisans holding the strips under their toes. New strips are added lengthwise and crosswise and the interlacing continues until the required dimensions are obtained. The weaving is done with the inner side of the strips facing upwards so that the mat is smooth to touch.

Nearly half the population of Thalayazham panchayat were dependent on this cottage industry for their livelihood until recently but these days their number has declined due to scarcity of screw pine. Another problem plaguing this industry is the unhealthy intervention of middle men and agents, which hikes the market price of the product without bringing any real benefit to the artisans.





6. COCONUT THATCH WEAVING

Thatched, eco-friendly houses were a very common sight in Kerala until the land came under colonial rule. Thereafter, traditional methods got labelled as old-fashioned and undesirable, sidelined and eventually discarded. The most common building materials used during that era were locally available kutcha materials such as mud and coconut leaves. The widespread prevalence of such materials was the obvious reason behind the choice, and it was perfectly suited for the rain-fed, warm and humid climate of the region. The easy availability of raw materials, the accessibility to local artisans, and the simple skills that made construction quick and hassle-free – all these factors contributed to the popularity of the traditional structures. That they helped keep heat at bay and assured proper air circulation were the additional benefits that the natives had grown to appreciate.

In Vaikom, we come across several local residents who are experts at thatching roofs using coconut leaves. Earlier, such a roof was a very common sight but with time, thatched roofs were replaced completely, first with terracotta tiles and later with concrete terraces. Now the old style is back in demand, and is patronized by resorts in order to give their clients a feel of the true tropical atmosphere, and occasionally by temples for the conduct of ceremonies like the Udayam puja.

How it is made?

The coconut-leaf thatched roofs are made by soaking leaves in water for days, splitting the coconut leaves in longitudinal halves barring a few leaves (the number of un-split leaves depends on the size of thatch roof you need). Now leaves are woven together by braiding them tightly.



7. COPRA PRODUCTION

Copra is the dried meat or kernel of the coconut, which is the fruit of the coconut palm. Since coconut oil can be extracted from copra, it is an important agricultural commodity for many coconut-producing countries. It also yields de-fatted coconut cake after oil extraction, which is mainly used as feed for livestock. In Vaikom, as in every coconut-growing area, the coconut is dehusked, broken in two and left to dry under the hot sun. The kernels automatically get detached from the shells. Sometimes they may require gentle coaxing with a knife or spatula. When they become completely dry, the kernels look almost translucent. They are called copra. Some of them may need to be washed to remove any fungus, and dried again. The drying process is complete after three to five more days (up to seven in total). The copra is then sliced into thin slivers and sent to oil presses where they are further pulverized and squeezed to extract coconut oil.



8. TODDY TAPPING

Toddy is nothing but the sap that oozes from incising immature clusters of the coconut flower. First, the tapper carefully cuts open the spathe that covers the coconut inflorescence, works on the individual florets by gentle tapping and rubbing them between his palms to speed up the sap production. After each day's work, the bunch is tied up and covered completely using leaves. This labour-intensive process goes on for an hour each day for a span of one week until the bunch is ready for tapping. The tip of the inflorescence is cut progressively and a pot placed beneath it to collect the sap. If required, the tapper makes more incisions at the base of the flower cluster too to stimulate the production. The sap has very low alcohol content initially but on fermenting, it becomes alcoholic and is called palm wine. Later, when distilled, the product is known as arrack. It used to be a very common sight in most parts of Vaikom to see toddy collectors scaling coconut trees to tap the flower bunches, attach clay pots under them to catch the sap, and finally collect the produce. The men cart the resulting milky liquid back to the shops where they are left to ferment and gain strength. The longer it ferments, the more alcohol accumulates, but it must be drunk before it turning to vinegar — usually within a few days. (The sap is also evaporated in order to make jaggery, a rich, brown palm sugar.) At one point of time, toddy from Vaikom used to be exported to the neighbouring states for distilling it to manufacture alcoholic drinks like brandy, and this was a huge source of local revenue. There was even a popular brand, called 'Cocobrandy', which was produced from the local toddy. But now the production has stopped due to lack of availability of enough toddy, caused by diseases in coconut trees. Earlier nearly 200 people were employed in this small scale industry, and hence was a main source of livelihood in the region.



9. AGRICULTURE

In 1955-56, agriculture was the main economic activity of Keralites and about 53.1 percent of the total working population was engaged in agriculture. But now, due to poor returns and high labour cost, many of the growers are keeping off agriculture and the state's agriculture sector (including livestock) contributes only 10.88% of the total GDP (at current prices in 2013-14). The state has witnessed a remarkable transformation in the agricultural sector since its formation in 1956. Cash crops like coconut, rubber, tea, coffee, pepper, cardamom, arecanut, ginger, nutmeg, cinnamon, etc. and food crops like paddy and tapioca give the agricultural sector of Kerala a distinct flavour. The agro-climatic conditions in the state are immensely suitable for the cultivation of a variety of seasonal crops and perennial crops.

■ Paddy Cultivation

The story is no different in Vaikom, where paddy cultivation is a part and parcel of life and culture, and rice is the major food grain cultivated in the region. Geographically, Vaikom is classified as part of the midland wet lands of Kerala, with a unique topography and a fragile ecosystem. Here, paddy cultivation is not only a predominant occupation, but also a phenomenon connected to the culture and festivals of the region. Despite these facts, the area under cultivation and the production of paddy in Vaikom continue to decline over the years.

Kerala or Keralam got its name from kera (coconut). For centuries, coconut trees and coconuts have played a vital role in the everyday life and economy of Kerala. Although coconuts are cultivated in nearly 8.08 lakh hectares of land, constituting almost 39.4 percent of the state's net cropped area, there are very few large coconut plantations in the state. More than 95 percent of coconut trees in Kerala are grown in the front and back yards of homesteads. Coconut palms grow almost everywhere in Vaikom. The shores of lagoons, backwaters and the banks of rivers in Vaikom are studded with coconut trees. Coconut farming in Kerala has been facing severe setbacks in recent years owing to fall in market price and low productivity due to pest attacks and diseases. The rise in the cost of cultivation and competition from other oils such as palm oil are the other reasons adversely affecting the production of coconut.

■ Rubber Plantations

Farming means rubber for Kottayam district, and Vaikom has also witnessed an increase in the number of rubber plantations due to which other crops have come down considerably. Rubber has positively influenced the economy of the region over the years. In order to encourage and enhance agriculture in the region, small scale farmers are provided seeds, manure, etc. at heavily subsidized rates, through various panchayat schemes. The state agricultural department has also come up with several promotional schemes like providing pump sets, sprayers and other agricultural equipment to the farmers. Expert help and advice are provided to entrepreneurs on rain water harvesting, mushroom farming and pest control measures.



■ Nutmeg Cultivation

Another cash crop grown in several parts of Vaikom is the evergreen Nutmeg tree, which grows to a height of 60 feet. The tree yields two spices – the dark coloured nut and the bright red lacy membrane called ‘mace’ that covers it. This tree is originally from Indonesia, and thrives in warm, humid conditions with abundant rainfall - 150 cm and more. Since Vaikom has clay loam, sandy loam and red laterite soils, it provides ideal conditions for the luxuriant growth of these trees. This makes it an ideal intercrop in coconut, clove, coffee or arecanut plantations.



■ Pineapple Cultivations

As you enter some parts of Vaikom, like the Chembu grama panchayat, pineapple cultivations can be seen everywhere. These places are mostly bustling pineapple markets, where headload workers are busy either loading sacks of the fruit onto lorries, unloading and carrying them to shops. Scores of lorries loaded with the fruit plying the roads that cut through sprawling pineapple plantations are a common sight.

■ Banana Cultivation

Owing to its tropical humid climate and fertile soil, which enjoys abundant water supply nearly all the year round, Vaikom is a place where banana grows abundantly. The numerous varieties of banana that you find here will definitely make you fall in love with at least one. Rich in fibre, antioxidants and potassium, the banana is known to be a wonderful mood-elevator too. This curvy yellow fruit that has high nutritional value and many beauty benefits is bound to bring a smile on your face too, when you visit the banana plantations around Vaikom.



Traditional Indigenous Technology and Tools used in Agriculture

The fund of indigenous knowledge that Kerala has accumulated in fields like agriculture, health, medicine and environment is formidable and is known to all. Much of it was amassed by people through intimate contact with and understanding of the environment, informal experiments and hands-on experiences. As they got transmitted from one generation to another, many of the practices evolved, became customized, leading to the creation of a wide variety of techniques and methodologies, and eventually systematized. These tried-and-tested techniques are an eloquent testimony to the creativity and innovativeness of the rural society of Kerala.

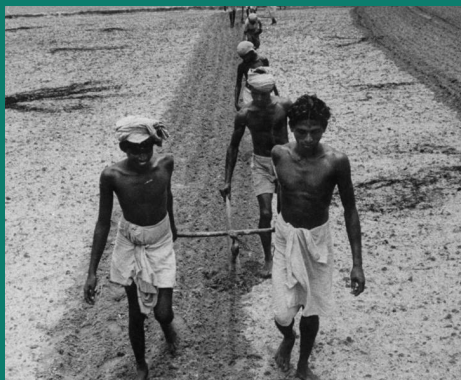


■ Petti Parayum'

'Petti and Para' is an indigenous instrument used to channel water to the paddy fields as and when required. This was earlier done with the help of paddle water wheels, but with the advent of electricity this indigenous method was created. In Malayalam language, petti means 'box,' and para is a cylindrical measuring vessel. The components of this indigenous machine include an electric motor,

a submerged wooden vessel, and a rectangular wooden box above the water. One side of the rectangular box is open and the para is fitted onto it. Inside the para there is a long pole, called Dendu or Ilavettu, to which leaves are attached in the shape of a fan. The fan inside the para is connected by a belt to the motor inside the pump house. When electricity passes, the fan rotates and this process of rotation of leaves at a very high speed forces water into the box and then water exits through the open end. The water that is sucked in through the vessel flows out of the box, whereby the water is pumped out from the low lying areas into the backwaters.

■ Plough (Kalappa)



Tillage is a basic operation in farming. It is done to create favourable conditions for the sowing of seed and plant growth. This is done mainly with a plough made from *Acacia* wood. The small scale farmers and farm owners of Vaikom, who do not have either the finances to buy a tractor or enough area to make tractor-ploughing a viable option, depend on country ploughs. The plough was a radical change in the evolution of tools. As one of the most basic and important tools in traditional agriculture, it was very well adapted to the specific needs of the locality. It has often been subjected to improvement and adaptation, and this has led to the creation of a wide range, differing in size, weight and overall shape to suit the different soil types of the area. The old wooden plough used in Vaikom region consisted of a tongue of wood fitted with an iron tooth, a long handle and a yoke to be attached to the necks of buffaloes or bullocks

■ Kattakuzha

This is a wooden log piece which is used to crush dry blocks of mud in the fields.

■ Nukam

This is a customized yoke used to tie the oxen to the plough. The Kari is fitted onto this.

■ Kari

Kari is made from the wood of various varieties of palm (*Kol pana* and *Karim Pana*) and coconut trees.

■ Jala chakram

This is an indigenous water wheel used for collection and supply of water in the fields.

■ Etha Kotta

This equipment is used to draw water from deep pits.

■ Vithu Pothi

Seeds are kept in a packet of hay known as the 'Vithu Pothi'.

■ Vithu Kutty

This is a wooden instrument used to collect rice grains from the field.

■ Velli Kol

This was traditional measuring equipment used, in place of beam balance, for measuring grains

■ Kattapaayum Kayarum

These were used to carry bundled stalks of corn from the fields after harvesting.



10. CATTLE REARING

The farms of Vaikom are perfect stopovers for people interested in knowing more about cow-rearing, and making products with milk, cow urine and dung. Here, you can find some of the best-kept cow shelters in Kerala.

■ Cow

The white revolution of the 1970s brought about a spectacular leap in milk production in the country. Today, India is the largest milk producer of the world and milk has been ranked as the number one farm commodity. Dairying in Kerala is gaining the status of a profitable enterprise where there ample scope for marketing milk and milk products.

There are many local cattle rearing centres, starting from small scale cattle farmers owning one or two cows to entrepreneurs with large dairy farms in the region. A medicinal product named Panchagavyam, is made out of milk, ghee, cow urine, cow dung, and curd. It is an excellent pesticide. As a fertilizer, it increases the growth of leaves, and enhances the production of fruits. If given to animals under medical supervision, it increases the weight of the animal and keeps it disease-free and healthy.



Pradeep Edayath and Gopa Kumar Kannimattom of Chembu grama panchayat breed cows that produce milk with high medicinal values. Cow breeds such as Vechur, Vadakara, Malanadu kulan, etc. are bred here. Pradeep Edayath also owns groves where he grows rare plants such as Gack, Gantola, and other tubers. A rare species of mango tree that produces seven different varieties of mangoes; sweet tulsi, air potato, adathappu potato yam, etc. are also grown here.

■ Goat

Commercial goat farming in Kerala is a great source of income for rural folk and unemployed educated people. Raising chicken, cattle, sheep, etc. is also a very popular and old business that has been exploited in Kerala. But among all the livestock animals, goats can be raised and managed more easily than others. And the climate of Kerala is also suitable for commercial goat farming. Goat rearing is very popular in Vaikom region. Goat milk and urine are used in anti-venom treatment, while the horns are used to make medicinal pills, the bones, limbs, etc. are boiled in water and used for arthritis treatment.



■ Pig

Pig farming is also a very popular and lucrative business in this region. Pork is in great demand in Kerala as is evident in the various recipes that have been developed to pamper the taste buds of the natives. The pig farms here are built in quite large areas with very strong fences. Since adult pigs are notorious diggers, the fence poles are driven deep into the ground. A visit to the pig barn in Vaikom



teaches you quite a lot regarding their eating habits, the medicines administered to keep them healthy, and the conditions that are maintained for their proper rearing, etc.

Pigs are mostly grown for their meat. Ayurveda has evolved very efficient medicines using pig products in order to combat grave and chronic illnesses among humans. Pig hooves and tusks are highly effective for treating epilepsy, and pig fat is used to prepare Pancha Sneha Kuzhambu for treating paralysis.

■ Pisciculture

Yet another venue worth visiting are the fish breeding centres where farmers and entrepreneurs have adopted the methods of growing them in ponds and through aquaponics. The most popular breeds found here are pearl spot, tilapia, carp, etc. People visit these farms to study the methodology and to buy fish. First, the net is set up inside canals and ponds. Baby fish are then released into them. The net is lifted after a year by which time the fish would have grown in size.

A fish farm worth mentioning is the Matsyafed Aqua Tourism Centre, Palaikari. This is one of the units of the Kerala State Co-operative Federation for Fisheries Development Ltd, popularly known as Matsyafed, which is the Apex Federation of 666 Primary Co-operatives of Fishermen in Kerala. Palaikari Fish Farm is one of the largest fish farms in Kerala. It is situated at Kattikkunnu in Chempu village in Vaikom. It extends across 120 acres, alongside the Vembanad Lake. The farm is famous for its wide variety of fish like Karimeen, Poomeen, Naran, Kara, etc.

One of the major attractions of Matsyafed Palaikari Aqua Tourism Centre is its 600 meter long, tiled walkway running alongside Vembanad lake. Two of three storeyed viewing galleries give the visitors awesome pictures of the Vembanad lake and the Palaikari Fish farm. Guests can take advantage of the facilities arranged there and enjoy fishing using fishhooks, one among the oldest traditional methods of fishing in the inland water bodies. You can also buy special fish dishes prepared there, using natural ingredients. They are guaranteed to tickle your taste buds. Visitors can enjoy safe swimming with the help of life buoys and other safety gear. Pedal boats and row boats are ready for use. Pedal boats have seating capacity of two as well as five, and speed boats that are more popular for lake cruising are fitted with eight seats. The entry fee to the farm includes lunch with fish curry and fish fry along with vegetable curries and a cup of ice cream. Special dishes of Karimeen, Chemmeen, Konchu, Crab, Clam, etc. are also available. There are a number of swings and hammocks along the bund beneath shades of trees, where the visitors can relax and refresh themselves





■ Duck Farming

Around 50 ducks are bred in a farm in a traditional way, where the farmers spend six months of the year keeping their flocks on the move and feeding them until they are ready to be sold. These farmers have to accompany the flocks when they are feeding. While braving the elements, they also have to provide medical care to injured or sick ducks, and collect eggs (sometimes as many as 400) every day. It does

not seem to be an easy livelihood but duck farmers also have a very positive impact on the economy. These farmers provide employment to people who live in the area where the ducks are left to wander. The flocks help fertilize the soil as farmers prepare their fields for the next season, and duck meat is known to make great tasty delicacies.

11. MANUFACTURE OF AYURVEDIC PRODUCTS

The Indian Herbs and Pharmaceutical Company is situated in Chembu grama panchayat of Vaikom. Numerous Ayurvedic products like arishtom, asavam, medicinal oils, kuzhambu, lehyam, khrutham, etc. are produced here.

■ Botanical Garden for Medicinal Plants

Rare Ayurvedic medicinal plants are cultivated in this orchard by Dr Deepu. Medicinal plants like Ashokam, Gooseberry (Nelli), and Aloe Vera are commonly used for treating diseases in women. Plants like Kuruntotti, Kallurukki, Keezha nelli, etc. which are found to be highly effective in treating arthritis are also grown here.



12. SCULPTURING

Descendants of sculptors from Tamil Vishwakarma Brahmins were brought from Tanjore in Tamil Nadu by the Travancore rajas in the past, when temples were scarce. They settled in a colony at Brahmamangalam in Vaikom. Many of the temples in Kerala have been designed by artisans of this place. The traditional sculpting method called Kadu sharkarayogam was used by their ancestors to make the famous idols of the Sree Padmanabha Swami temple in Thiruvananthapuram, the Ananthapadmanabha Swami temple in Kasaragod, the Madayikkavu Bhagavathy Kshetram in Kannur and the Adikeshava Perumal Kshetram in Thiruvattar. In these temples, the idols are not made exclusively of stone, wood, metal or clay. They are created by using 108 different materials, including wood from select trees, metal, coconut fibre, jaggery, ghee, curd, different kinds of sands, oils, nuts, plant extracts and so on, following certain procedures laid down in ancient texts. As a result, the traditional form of worship which involves libation is avoided.



■ Munveedu (Clay House)

Another site worth visiting is a house constructed out of red bricks and plastered using clay. Referred to as Munveedu in local parlance, it was a highly unique method of construction in Kerala. Over time however, it lost its charm and is no longer patronized.

13. HANDICRAFTS

The handicrafts of Vaikom comprise a wide variety of useful and decorative objects, made completely by hand or by using only simple tools. The traditional and indigenously designed products are made using Eerapoli (bamboo sticks), coconut shell, husk, etc. Various handicraft products like wall hangings, cups and saucers, flower vases, pen stands, decorative mats, etc. are made out of Eerapoli.



■ Baskets

Baskets are woven from bamboo sticks and are used in the region for carrying coconuts. They are relatively inexpensive, tough and durable, besides being eco-friendly.

■ Houseboat models and souvenirs

Artisans of Vaikom use simple tools like chisels and carving knives to make small replicas of houseboats from wood, and souvenirs like models of monkeys from coconut shells. This ancient art form is admirable, especially when you consider how these untrained but highly talented people create such intricate designs and beautiful products from raw materials that are rough, using the crudest of implements.





14. GOLDSMITH

Brahmamangala in Chembu panchayat in Vaikom is famous for goldsmiths who still create jewellery in the traditional way. With the advent of machinery and imported designs, such gold crafting methods have lost their charm and the number of clients has dwindled. Historically, goldsmiths of the region have made silverware, platters, goblets, decorative and serviceable utensils, ceremonial or religious items. But the rising prices of precious metals have brought down production in a substantial manner. If you get an opportunity to watch these traditional artisans at work, you will find out what it means to use your bare hands for operating the bellows, pouring the liquid metal into moulds, filing, soldering, sawing, forging and polishing the metals into beautiful pieces.

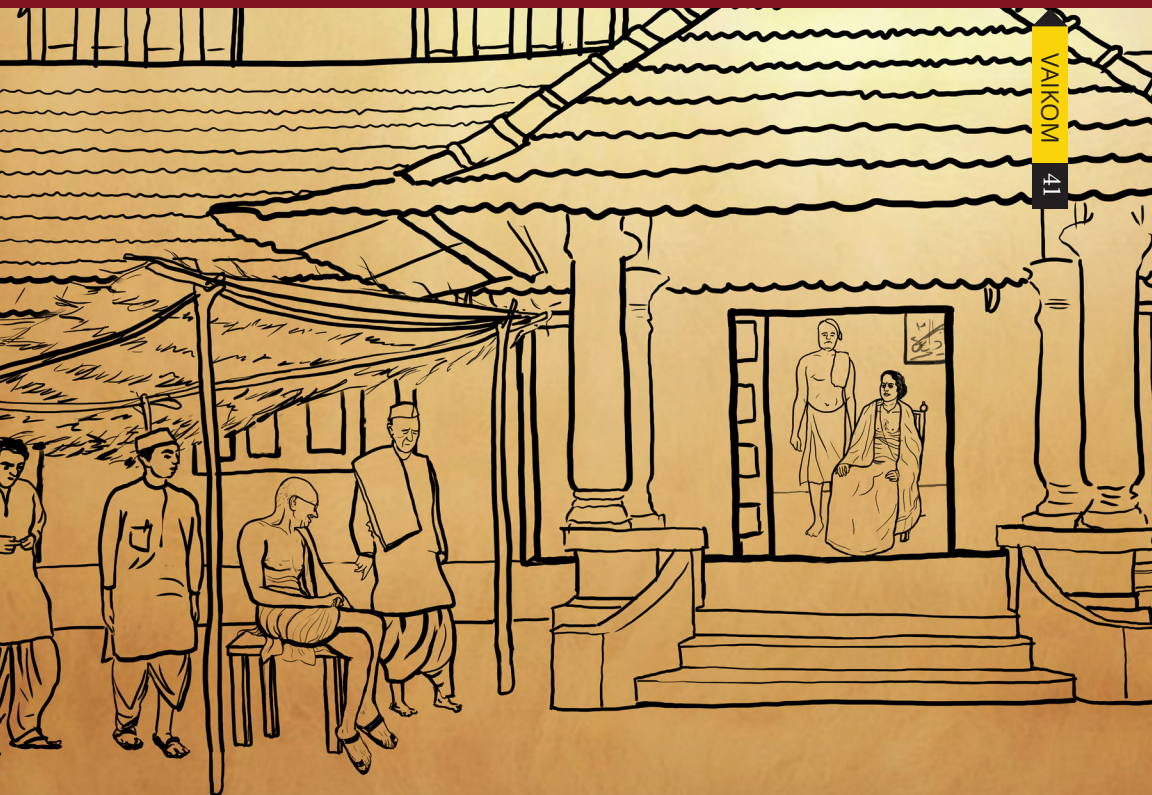
15. MUSICAL INSTRUMENT MANUFACTURING UNITS

Nowadays it is quite common, in any vacation package, to arrange recitals of indigenous music. But here at Vaikom you get a chance to view the real talents behind the curtain, the artisans at work who, with the magic in their hands, make musical instruments. In Vaikom there are places where the mridangam, chenda, violin, harmonium, etc. are manufactured. The wooden parts of the instruments are made of Jackfruit tree wood, White teak wood, Cassia fistula wood or Sugar palm wood. Those carved out from the core of the jackfruit tree are considered special. In percussion instruments, the cylindrical portion is carved out of the trunk of the tree, and the hides of cow or buffalo are fastened at the ends. This requires expertise and the process is called vattam maadal in Malayalam.



16. PAPAD MAKING

Papad is a thin wafer-like product that is fried and served at traditional meals and feasts in Kerala. There are many small-scale papad making business centres, mostly home-based, located behind the Jacobite Church in the sixth Ward in Brahmamangalam where it is still produced in the traditional manner.



HISTORY AND SOCIO-CULTURAL BACKGROUND

The various cultural festivals and dances give a clear picture of culture imbibed by the people of Vaikom. Millions of devotees from all over India come to participate in the festivals of all religions, and offer prayers to the deities. Today, Vaikom can be best described as an area which is peacefully inhabited by people belonging to varied religions and castes and is reflected in her persona. The region is heavily influenced by the Syrian Christian community and hence the dance form of Margamkali is popular in the region. Vaikom is synonymous with the Vaikom Mahadeva temple, it is the icon of Vaikom. Many well-known authors grew up in Vaikom. This section will enrich you further on all these aspects.

Vaikom is believed to have been a part of a kingdom called Venmalanadu in the past. When Venmalanadu was split into Vadakkumkoor and Thekkumkoor, it became part of Vadakkumkoor dynasty. Later in 1742, it became part of Travancore, when the then Maharajah of Travancore, Anizham Thirunal Marthanda Varma, annexed Vadakkumkoor to his kingdom.

At that time the social structure of India, especially Kerala, was based on a rigid caste system. People were divided into several castes, and they were strict rules that restricted them to their respective communities throughout their lives. A member of one community was never allowed to join another or do the work allotted to another. Thus a kind of monopoly reigned in various fields of work.

The rules and regulations of caste system were so severe and inflexible that it led to rampant inequality. Accessibility to education was denied to the lower castes, opportunities for employment were severely curtailed, freedom to wear the dress of one's choice was also heavily compromised. Those belonging to the privileged high castes, especially the men, enjoyed rights for generations. At the same time the lower castes remained in poverty for centuries and this condition choked all chances of social or academic advancement. The Vaikom Satyagraha (1924–25) was a social protest against the practices of “pollution” and untouchability in the Hindu society. Vaikom gained fame at the national level during the Vaikom Satyagraha.



VAIKOM SATYAGRAHA (1924-25)

Vaikom Satyagraha was a social reform movement in Travancore (modern-day Kerala) for ensuring temple entry rights to the Avarnas [the depressed castes], and thereby establishing equality among all classes. The famine that hit the entire world towards the end of the Second World War was prevalent in this region too. Under those circumstances, both men and women of the region under the leadership of K. Vishwanathan, went to the Tahasildar of Vaikom, and demanded that measures be taken to put an end to the exorbitant charges and taxes slammed on essential goods. The demonstration was marked by marches taken out by the local residents, with round baskets of palm leaves on their head.



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

During 1865 the Government of Travancore published a notification proclaiming that all public roads in the state were open to all castes of people alike. In July 1884, the government by a fresh notification reaffirmed the policy laid down in the previous order and warned that any violation of these orders would provoke its severest displeasure. This notification came up for a judicial review before the High Court. The High Court then considered it expedient to draw a distinction between Raja Veedhis (Royal Highways) and grama veedhis (village roads). It decided that the public roads mentioned in the government notification were intended to mean only the Raja veedhis and not grama veedhis. The roads around Vaikom temple were considered Raja veedhis, and consequently even after 65 years of government proclamation, they were barred to the Avarnas. A unit of police (consisting of Savarnas) was stationed in the vicinity to enforce the custom. This was held near Kottayam.

Another reason cited for this Vaikom agitation was a small incident, when Comrade Madhavan, an advocate belonging to the Ezhava community, was barred from appearing before the honorable judge in relation to a case on behalf of his client. This prohibition was carried out because the court was located inside the compound of the Maharaja's palace. It was believed that the entry of a person of the lower caste might lead to the pollution of the palace premises.

Yet another probable reason was the first-ever attempt made by a group of about 200 Ezhava youth to enter the temple in 1803-4. Those who were in charge of the temple carried the news to the king, and the authorities and the king promised to take necessary action. On the day of the proposed temple entry, an Intelligence Officer of the Maharaja's army came to Vaikom, and met the temple authorities. They wondered how a single man would stop 200 able-bodied youth. The young men organized themselves into a procession from Tiruvelikkunnu on Kottayam Road. Their plan was to enter the temple from the eastern side. They gathered near Dalawa Kulam (a pond), about 150 metres east of the temple beyond which they were not permitted to move, towards the temple. This pond, originally a small one meant for pilgrims to take bath in before entering the temple, was renovated by Ramayyan Dalawa in 1752 and hence the name "Dalawa Kulam". One Koya Kutty collected about a dozen Nair warriors from the locality, and the sight of Koya Kutty on horseback and the Nairs on foot wielding swords scared the Ezhavas and they fled from the area. In the melee that followed, a few got injured and a few others died falling in the pond. Later this incident came to be known as 'Dalawa Kulam Incident'. The pond no longer exists. It has been filled in and now houses a private bus stand.

There was another crucial incident which triggered the action. Sree Narayana Guru, a very powerful social reformer born in Ezhava community, was himself prohibited from using the road around the temple. Sri Bhargavan Vaidyar mentions this in the golden Jubilee Souvenir of Neyyattinkara S N D P Union. The editorial of the Malayala Manorama on 29 March 1924 (the day before the Satyagraha began) mentions, "If a venerable sage like Sree Narayana Guru and his disciple Mahakavi Kumaran Asan are driven away from the road around the temple by a drunken upper caste buffoon in the name of caste, can their people take it lying down? If they rise up in revolt can any authority stop them by force?"



LEADERS IN THE FOREFRONT

Gandhiji
Sreenarayanaguru
C. Rajagopalachari
Vinoba Bhave
Kumaranasan
T.K. Madhavan
K.P. Keshava Menon
K. Kelappan
E.V.R. (E.V. Ramaswami Naicker)
George Joseph
Kuroor Neelakantan Namboodiripadu
Mannath Padmanabhan
T.R. Krishna Swami Iyer
C.K. Kochu Krishnan
K. Raman Nair Ilathoor

Swami Neelakantatheerthan
Thevan
N. Lekshmanan
A.K. Pillai
Chittedathu Sankupillai
Mrs. George Joseph
Govindan Channar
Mrs. Naickar
M. Pappu
N. Kumaran
P.W. Sabastian
Amachadi Thevan
Swami Satya Vrithan
Sardar K.M. Panicker
K. Chakrapani Vaidyer

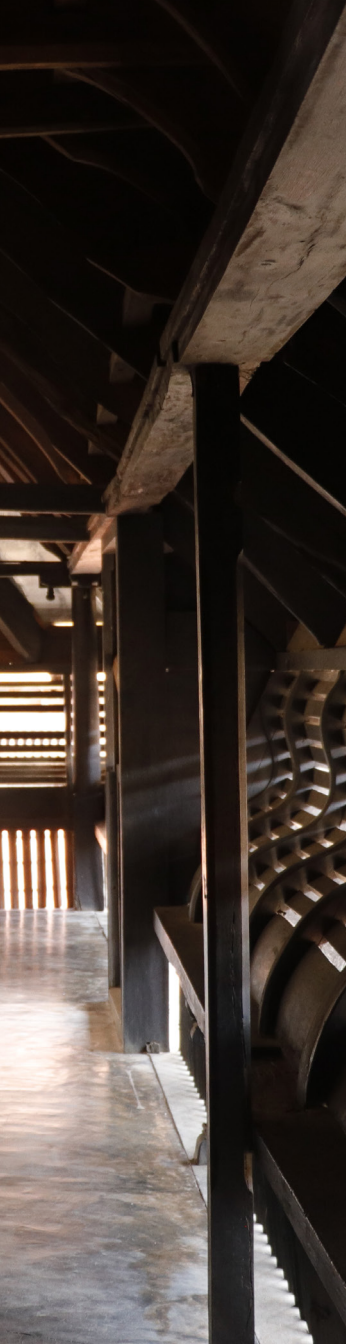
Dr. Naidu
C.K. Kesavan
Karippadam Madhavan
Mukhathala Gopalapillai
P.K. Vasuppanicker
Mrs. Krishnaswami Iyer
Mandapathil Raman Nair
Kettuvalli Velayudhan Nair
Cyriac Vettikkappalli
C. Kuttan Nair

PANDIT K. P. KARUPPAN MEMORIAL LIBRARY

Pandit K. P. Karuppan Memorial Library was established on 1 May 1945, in memory of the poet, dramatist, and social reformer Pandit Karuppan who came from Ernakulam of the then Cochin State and worked relentlessly as a crusader against untouchability and other social evils. He was called the “Lincoln” of Kerala for steering the socially-, economically- and educationally backward communities to the forefront. This library was the first one in Vaikom, the second in Kottayam district and one hundred and seventy-seventh registered library in the state. It was inaugurated by Sanskrit Pandit Mahakavi Vadakam Koor Raja Varma.

YOUNG MEN’S NAIR ASSOCIATION

Young Men’s Nair Association, which was established in 1948, was the assembly point of all social activities in the region. The club was famous as the focal point of social reforms in the region.



HISTORICAL REMINISCENCES

During the heyday of the princely states of Travancore and Kochi, Velloor of Vaikom used to be on the Kochi-Travancore border. This small village still houses some of the relics of those erstwhile days of pomp and glory.

■ ILLI KOTTA & MANAYATHATTU MANA

The Illi Fort, situated in the Velloor gram panchayat, is said to have been built in anticipation of an attack by Tipu Sultan by the then Travancore king, under the guidance of Diwan Ramayyan Dalawa (1713-1750). It extends from Nirpara, enroute to Mulaekadi and extends up to the borders of Mulakulam, in Velloor panchayath, and from there it stretches till Perumbavoor. The foundation pit is almost 20 feet deep, and was reinforced by locally available bamboo (illi in Malayalam). You can find remnants of check-posts also in between. They had been built to prevent illegal transport of tobacco, rice, etc. Apart from the fort, the Manayathattu Mana, which was constructed for the stay of Diwan Ramayyan Dalawa is also still preserved there. The Mana, an old, aristocratic house that is centuries old, is worth a visit, as it is famous for its awe-inspiring sculpture. It is believed to have been constructed some 600 years ago. The pond which was dug during his days still exists. Indo-chinese sculpture is the speciality of this 6100 square foot house.

■ KOTHI KALLU

The Kothi kallu is a sort of mile stone which marks the border of the erstwhile kingdoms of Kochi and Travancore. This structure derives its name from the sculpted letters of the Malayalam alphabet on both sides of this stone - ko on one side and thi on the other.

■ KAL THOTTI

Kal thotti is a stone bucket which used to store butter milk for travelers who crossed Kochi-Travancore border. Believed to be centuries old, this is still present at an anganwadi in Velloor.

■ PATHALAM

During the time of Diwan Ramayyan Dalawa, there were Pathalams or bunkers constructed in every nook and corner of the kingdom to hide and store armaments. Out of the 108 bunkers that were originally built, two were in existence in Varkkaamkunnu until recently. They got buried during the construction of new roads.

■ BHOOOTHANTHONDU

This is a canal that was constructed and used for easy access to the interiors of Vaikom, along the Moovattupuzha river. Once a busy transportation channel, it is now in a dilapidated state.



■ VAKKAYIL KOTTARAM

This palace is an archeological masterpiece, over two centuries old and constructed using wood. It is in the traditional home-stead model of old tharavadu where many generations of a matrilineal Vakkayil Kaimal lived. The traditional architecture comprises a Nalukettu, which is a quadrangular structure with a central courtyard open to the sky. Vakkayil Kaimal, from Thripriyar, was the Commandeering Chief of Thekkinkoor Raja.

■ OTHER ANCESTRAL HOMES

In this region you will find a number of very old traditional houses which are hugely popular amongst the millennials today. The Kerala style of architecture is unique in India, and is in stark contrast to the style patronized in other parts of South India as well. The architecture of Kerala has been influenced by Dravidian and Indian Vedic architectural science (Vastu Shastra) over two millennia.

The primary elements of all these traditional structures tend to remain the same. The base model is normally circular, square or rectangular. The most distinctive visual form of Kerala architecture is the long, steep sloping roof built to protect the walls of the house against heavy monsoon. It is usually laid with tiles or woven palm leaves, supported on a roof frame made of hard wood and timber. Structurally, the roof frame is supported by pillars on walls erected on a plinth raised from the ground for protection against dampness and insects in the tropical climate. Often the walls are also of timber abundantly available in Kerala. Gable windows at the two ends provide attic ventilation when the upper storey is incorporated for providing room spaces.

LIST OF KERALA STYLE ANCESTRAL HOMES

1

Manayathattu Mana Tharavadu

2

Padinjaru Manayathattu Mana Tharavadu

3

Manayathattu Pullumavin Mana Tharavadu

4

Panappurayil Tharavadu

5

Kokkodithara Tharavadu

6

Kaniyampadikkal Tharavadu

7

Kalappurakkalayil Kollamparambil Tharavadu

LAUREATES AND CULTURAL ICONS OF VAIKOM

Travel to any place will be incomplete if you do not visit the homes of great people who were born there and brought glory to their native place with their creative genius or intellectual contributions. For example, a trip to Kolkata will remain unfinished without a peek into the life of greatest ever Laureate Rabindranath Tagore who modernised Bengali art. Gathering information about the important people of the place takes you closer to its spirit, puts you in touch with its culture, makes you feel less of an outsider and equips you to connect better with its people. Here are pen portraits of a few well-known people of the place, who have helped in spreading the name of Vaikom far and wide.



Chempil Arayan

Chempil Thailamparambil Anantha Padmanabhan Valiya Arayan Kankumaran, known as Chempil Arayan, was the Admiral of the fleet in the service of Avittam Thirunal Balarama Varma, King of Travancore. He was born at Chempu, near Vaikom. Chempil Arayan was involved in the Travancore War under the command of Velu Thampi Dalawa in 1809; among other things he led an attack on Bolghatty Palace, the residence of the then Company Resident, Col-in Macaulay. The Resident escaped narrowly with his life, eluding the attackers through a tunnel and fleeing in a small boat. The

Arayan was later captured, and freed after the payment of a ransom; he died in battle against the forces of the East India Company.

Chempil Arayan was well known for his naval exploits using the traditional Kerala boat known as the "Odi Valam". Chempil Arayan's Nalukettu (Ancestral home) known as Thailamparambil House is in Chempu, Vaikom. Chempil Arayan's tomb is situated next to his ancestral home.

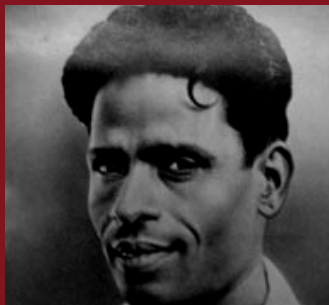


Vaikath Pachu Moothathu (1814 - 1882)

Vaikathu Paramesvara Sivadvija, popularly known as Vaikath Pachu Moothathu, was a great scholar of the yesteryears, from Vaikom. A scholar of Ayurveda, Sanskrit, Malayalam, and history, he wrote the first autobiography in Malayalam and established the first institution for learning the traditional Indian ayurvedic medicine, which developed to become Government Ayurveda College,

Thiruvananthapuram. He wrote more than twenty books in Sanskrit and in Malayalam. He is known as the first person to introduce the idea of the lottery as a means of fundraising in the princely state of Travancore .

REVOLUTIONARY LEADERS



P. Krishna Pillai (1906-48)

P. Krishna Pillai was a Communist revolutionary from Vaikom and founder leader of the Communist movement in Kerala. Popularly known as 'Comrade,' Krishna Pillai was born in 1906. He was 'Kerala's first Communist', home-grown, impishly bold and acutely sensitive to injustice, a product of the very movement he helped fashion during a short and exceptionally dedicated life of 42 years.

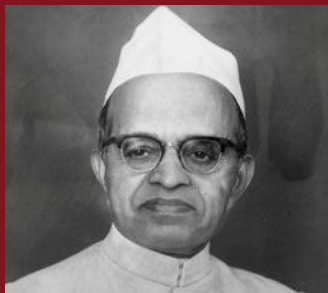
Since the early 1930s, no other leader in Kerala has been so successful in organising the masses, in spotting talent, in moulding the cadre and inspiring their commitment. At the time of his untimely death on 19 August 1948 of snake bite, Krishna Pillai was perhaps the most familiar face in the homes of the labourers and peasants of Kerala, a leader known for his courage and dynamism, humaneness and uncompromising stand against exploitation and oppression. As EMS wrote later, while he himself acted as the "intellectual centre" of the undivided Communist Party of India (CPI), Krishna Pillai was the "itinerant centre" entrusted with the job of going to every nook and cranny of the state "to meet comrades individually" and make the party "a united entity, acting as one".

Like the other founders of the Left movement, Krishna Pillai began his career in the Indian National Congress, first as a Gandhian and then as a Congress Socialist. In the early 1930s, when he began his political activity, Krishna Pillai was exposed to radical politics in various parts of North India, which involved openly challenging the British. Later, he was among the first to be recruited to the then "illegal" CPI, along with EMS, by P. Sundarayya, the legendary Communist leader and veteran of the Telengana armed struggle, and became a life-long adherent to the cause of Communism.



AMACHADI THEVAN

Amachadi Thevan, a staunch revolutionary, great leader and above all, a substantial contributor to the freedom struggle. In spite of his immense contributions to the Indian history, he is one among our few leaders whose contributions have not been rightly acknowledged. He can be regarded as first in line in the region to fight the social taboos of unequal treatment including untouchability and caste system. He was actively involved in the Vaikom Sayagraha, and his entry into Poothota Sri Krishna Temple is believed to have been the prelude to this agitation (1924-25).

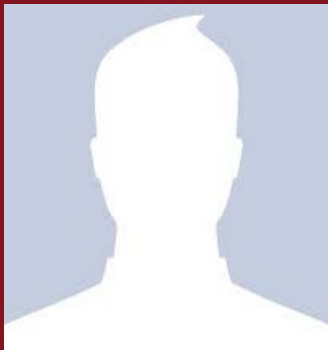


A. J. John

A. J. John, born in 1893 at Thalayolaparambu in Vaikom, evolved as one of the founding leaders of the erstwhile Travancore State Congress. He had always stood out in his studies, and moved to Madras in 1919 to do a degree in Law. During this juncture of his life he abandoned his studies and plunged into freedom struggle,

which proved to be the turning point in his life. He led several historic movements against social injustice during that period, like the 'Abstention Movement', which had rocked Travancore. He was also in the forefront in the agitations against the Independent Travancore proposed by Sir C. P. Rama Swamy Iyer.

Some of the notable achievements he acquired during his political career were having won in the first-ever held General Elections in India (1951-52) and became a member of the Travancore-Cochin Legislative Assembly. This was a major break in his political journey, which eventually led him to be the Chief Minister for a while in 1954. Other prestigious posts served were as the Speaker of the first Travancore Legislative Assembly in 1948 and Minister for Home, Food, Civil Supplies, and Forest. The last post held by him was as the Governor of the Madras State.



Chembithara Keshavathandar

Chembithara Keshavathandar, who played lead role in Vailom Satyagraha, was imprisoned for 603 days along with T. K. Madhavan and Shri K. P. Keshava Menon. His contributions did not go unnoticed, and he was rightly given the certificate of recognition 'Thamra Pathram' and the freedom fighter's pension. In 1975, he received accolades from the then Prime Minister of India, Smt. Indira Gandhi.

FORMER MINISTERS FROM VAIKOM - KERALA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



V . K . Velappan

Shri.V.K. Velappan, a senior Congress leader born to Krishna Panicker and Pappi Amma, hailing from Vaikom, became well-liked through his activities in the Nair Service Society. Some of the remarkable milestones in his professional journey were the position which he held in the Sree Moolam Praja Sabha twice, and was elected to the Travancore Legislative Assembly multiple times, and became the Minister for Health. It was his thought that gave Kottayam

and Alappuzha districts, Medical Colleges. As far as his contributions to Vaikom are concerned, he had served as the Municipal Councillor of Vaikom Municipality, and was also the Chairman from 1938 to 1952 and again from 1956 to 1960.



PK Raghavan

A former Minister of the Kerala State, Mr P. K. Raghavan, formally entered Kerala political arena through the Student movement of the Communist Party. Having formally enrolled in the Communist Party of India in 1953, over a decade of active contribution helped him get elected to the Kerala Legislative Assembly from Pathanapuram Constituency. He was Minister for a short term in the C. Achutha Menon Ministry in 1970 and held the portfolios of Harijan

Welfare. In 1987 he represented Vaikom Constituency and was Minister for Harijan Welfare in the E.K. Nayanar Ministry from 1987 to 1991. He was the State Executive Member of the Communist Party of India in Kerala and also the General Secretary of the Kerala Pulayar Maha Sabha.



P.S. Sreenivasan (1923 – 1997)

P. S. Sreenivasan, a former leader of the Communist Party of India, had once served as one of the most efficient Ministers of Kerala. He was elected thrice to the Kerala Assembly, viz., 1960, 1967 and 1970, from Vaikom constituency. A brief description of the various posts he held are as follows, Minister for Transport and Electricity, from October 1970 to September 1971, then during his tenure from 1978-79, served as the Minister

for Industries and Forests, from January 1980 to October 1981 he was the Minister for Revenue and Fisheries. He *was the Minister for Revenue and Tourism* from March 1987 to June 1991. P.S. Sreenivasan died on 9 July 1997. The Kerala Assembly paid its homage to him on 14 July 1997.



Binoy Viswam

Binoy Viswam, a senior member of the Communist Party of India, is a national secretary member of the CPI hailing from Vaikom. He was the president of the Kerala Tourism Development Corporation Employees' Federation, and has previously served many eminent posts including Forest Minister in the Government of Kerala during 2006-2011. He also served as Kerala Agricultural University Senate Member and Director Board Member of KTDC.

He won "Ambassador of Friendship among World Youth Award" instituted by the Young Communist League of the Soviet Union. He also received "Banner of Youth Unity" and diploma awarded by the World Youth Federation.

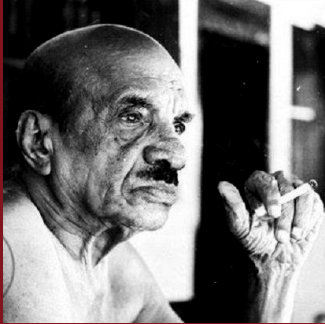
OTHER ELECTED MEMBERS FROM VAIKOM



Vaikom Viswan

Vaikom Viswan, former Convenor of Left Democratic Front in Kerala and a member of the Central Committee of Communist Party of India (Marxist). Born in Vadayar Village in Vaikom, he entered politics as an activist in the Student Federation, which is the precursor of the Students' Federation of India (SFI). Later, he emerged as an integral part of the Kerala politics, and held several prominent positions like State President and Secretary of Kerala Student's Federation and Vice President of Kerala State Youth Federation (KSYF), Member of Kerala Legislative Assembly etc.

WRITERS



Sri Vaikom Muhammad Basheer (1908-94)

The legend Vaikom Muhammad Basheer enjoys a remarkable position in the Malayalam literary arena. With his profound insight into human nature and simple writing, touch of satire, sarcasm and black humour, Basheer wove a style of his own and marked his presence as a short story writer, novelist, humanist and freedom fighter.

Born in Thalayolaparambu in Kottayam district as the eldest child of a timber businessman, Basheer was attracted to Gandhian thoughts and ideologies from his childhood days. He participated in the freedom struggle and was imprisoned. The experiences he had during those times inspired his writings considerably. The classics of Basheer earned him a cult following and secured a reputed position in the Indian Literature. Translations of his works have won worldwide acclaim. The major literary contributions of this artistic genius include Pathummayude Aadu, Balyakalasakhi, Mathilukal, Premalekhanam, Anargha Nimisham and so forth.

Fondly known as “Sultan of Beypore,” Basheer is an unparalleled genius in the selection of themes, characterisation and narration. Love, humanity, poverty and harsh realities of life all find their place in his works. The humorous romance, Premalekhanam that narrates the tale of love between Keshavan Nair, an upper caste Hindu, and Saramma, an unemployed Christian woman, marked the beginning of his literary carrier.

Basher was honoured with the Padma Shri in 1982. He bagged the Sahitya Akademi award in 1970 and Kendra Sahitya Akademi award in 1982. This uniquely ebullient intellect was the rarest of the rare kind who revolutionised Malayalam literature and took it to a new level.



Pala Narayanan Nair (1911 – 2008)

Mahakavi Pala Narayanan Nair was a poet famous for his most celebrated work, *Keralam Valarunnu*, published in 1953 in eight volumes when the concept of a unified state was fast spreading. This masterpiece earned him the title of Mahakavi. He wrote more than 5,000 poems, compiled in about 48 collections.

Mr Nair was born to Keezhpallil Sankaran Nair and Parvathy Amma in Pala on 11 December 1911 and was married into Vaikom. He was educated at VM School and St Thomas School at Pala. Mr Nair started his career as a teacher in Poonjar and later joined the military and participated in World War II. A teacher by profession, he published his first poetry collection, *Pookkal*, in 1935. He joined the Publications Department of Travancore University as a Pundit and received his M.A. (Malayalam) degree in 1956. Nair worked as a Malayalam Professor at Alphonsa College, Pala. He was the first secretary of Kerala Sahitya Akademi and Malayalam Professor at NSS College, Kottiyam, in Kollam district.

He is the only Malayalam poet to have taken part in the freedom struggle. During the Second World War, when the British was engaged in a battle against the Japanese Emperor in the Burmese forests, Nair was a part of the battle. It was in a Burmese cave, which was his hideout during the battle, that he penned one of his greatest literary works, 'Nirdhanan'.

He received many awards like the Kerala Sahitya Academy Award (1976; for the poem "Vilakku Koluthoo"), Vallathol Award (1991), FOKANA Kerala Ganam Award (1992), Ulloor Award (1999), Ezhuthachan Puraskaram (2000), Asan Smaraka Kavitha Puraskaram and Mathrubhumi Literary Award (2002). The Kerala Sahitya Academy honoured him with a fellowship in 2006. He belonged to the rare breed of poets who wrote poems relentlessly without a break, and that he did for 85 years. K. Sachidanandan, the Secretary of Kerala Sahitya Academy, had remarked that Walt Whitman's "Canto General of America" was similar to Nair's work 'Keralam Valarunnu', wherein Mahakavi has sketched an insightful portrait of the socio-cultural background of Kerala. *Amruthakala* is a notable anthology of his poems. He has authored as many as 43 literary works that include: *Keralam Valarunnu*, *Shanthi-vaikhari*, *Kasturba*, *Aalippazhom* and *Anthyapuja*.



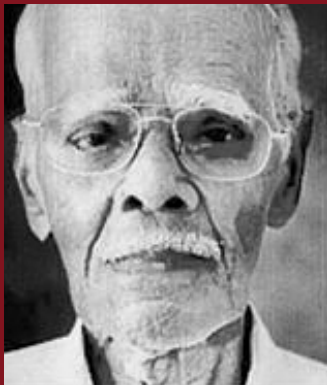
Shri Omchery N. N. Pillai (b. 1926)

Omchery N. N. Pillai is a Malayalam playwright, novelist and poet from Vaikom. He has written nine full-length plays, more than 80 one-act plays and a few novels. His plays are noted for their bold experiments in form and technique as well as the uncommon vision inherent in many of the themes. He won the Kerala Sahitya Akademi

Award twice: in 1972 for the play Pralayam and in 2010 for his overall contribution to Malayalam literature.

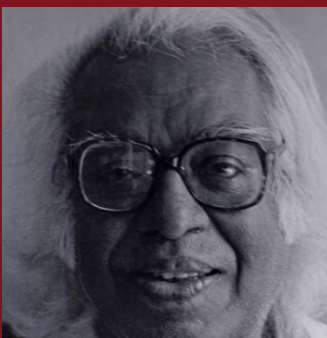
Omchery was born to Omchery Narayanan Pillai and Pappikkutty Amma in TV Puram panchayat in Vaikom. He started writing poems at a very young age. After completing his education from University College, Thiruvananthapuram, he joined the news department of Delhi All India Radio in 1951 and was later promoted as Editor in their publication department. He pursued his higher studies in Mass Communication from Pennsylvania University and Mexico State University and worked in the Indian Institute of Mass Communication. He is one of the prominent Malayalis in Delhi who has spread the fame of his birthplace far and wide.

He wrote his first play “Ee Velicham Ningaludethakunnu” (This Light is Yours) at the behest of A. K. Gopalan who was then the Leader of Opposition in the Indian Parliament. Members of Parliament K. C. George, P. T. Ponnoose, E. K. Imbichi Bava, V. P. Nair, etc. acted in the play. He founded the theatrical organisation ‘Experimental Theatre’ in 1963. DC Books published a collection of his 26 selected plays in 2011. He is married to Leela Omchery who is a well-known singer and sister of famous Malayalam singer, Kamukara Purushothaman. Shri Omcheri’s dramas are still lauded and studied by Malayalis the world over.



Chempil John (1925 - 2015)

A popular Malayalam writer, he authored more than seventy novels and penned several short stories. Many of his novels have been made into movies. A tailor by profession, he took to writing out of his passion for literature. His drama, 'Manushyan Narakam Shrishtikkunnu' received the KCBC Award.



Vaikom Chandrasekharan Nair (1920-2005)

Vaikom Chandrasekharan Nair, a popular writer and a bold journalist who primarily penned in the regional language, Malayalam, was born in Vaikom. Apart from being a popular writer, he was an activist of the communist party during his early days. Even though the dawn of his career was marked by his days as a journalist, he emerged as a multi-faceted person, a journalist,

poet, playwright, novelist, actor, orator, singer, artist, and activist. The play Jathugriham Won the Kerala Sahitya Academy award in 1980. He was chairman of Kerala Sangeetha Nadaka Academy from 1978 to '81. In 1999 he was given the Kerala Sahitya Academy Award for lifetime contribution.

ACTORS



Smt. M. K. Kamalam (1923 – 2010)

M. K. Kamalam was an actress in Malayalam cinema, and was the heroine in the first Malayalam talkie *Balan* (1938). She was born to Kumarakam Mangat Kochupanicker, a music teacher, and his wife Karthyayini at T V Puram Panchayat in Vaikom. She appeared in her first play *Allirani* and acted along with her father when she was only seven. She was invited to act in a movie while she was acting in a play called *Vichithravijayam*. She was selected from among the

five ladies who acted in a play by director S. Nattani. A film producer T. R. Sundaram and actor Alleppey Vincent were among the spectators who watched the play. Thus at the age of 15, she acted in the first Malayalam “talkie”.



Bharath Mammooty

Muhammad Kutty Paniparambil Ismail (b. 1951), better known by his stage name 'Mammooty' is an Indian film actor and producer who works in Malayalam cinema. In a career spanning four decades, he has appeared in over 350 films. Mammooty was born in Chandiroom in Alappuzha district, and was raised in the village of Chempu.

Mammooty who is a lawyer by training established himself as a lead actor in the 1980s. His major breakthrough came with the commercial success of the 1987 film New Delhi. He has won three National Film Awards for Best Actor, seven Kerala State Film Awards and thirteen Filmfare Awards. In 1998, the Government of India awarded him the Padma Shri for his contributions to the field of arts. He received honorary doctorate degrees from the University of Kerala and the University of Calicut in 2010.

Mammooty is the chairman of Malayalam Communications, which runs the Malayalam television channels Kairali TV, People TV and WE TV. He is also the goodwill ambassador of the Akshaya project, the first district-wide e-literacy project in India. He is the patron of the Pain and Palliative Care Society, a charitable organisation in Kerala formed with the aim of improving the quality of life among patients with advanced cancer, and has also been working with the Pain and Palliative Care Centre in Kozhikode, India.



JANAKI RAMACHANDRAN

Janaki Ramachandran, an actress turned politician, the wife of the most celebrated South Indian actor Maruthur-Gopalan Ramachandran, or MGR was born in Vaikom on the 23rd September 1924. Her family moved to Madras during her early teens where she entered into the film world, and acted in a number of movies, many of which she was paired opposite her future husband.



Janardhanan

Popular Malayalam film star Janardhanan hails from Vaikom. He started his career in movies way back in 1971, in a feature film *Adyathe Kadha*, directed by K. S. Sethumadhavan, and ever since then, he has acted in umpteen number of movies in prominent roles as the sub hero, villain etc. He is known for his style of handling humor and his iconic voice. He started his career playing brusque villains and sub hero roles in the 1970s and early 1980s, acting along with yesteryear stars like Prem Nazir and Jayan, but later established himself as a highly sought-after comedian.



Chembil Ashokan

Chembil Ashokan, a renowned actor who has performed numerous memorable small roles and cameo in Malayalam movies hailed from Chembu in Vaikom. Chembil Ashokan began acting career in mimicry later appeared in dramas and continued to lead a stage career for 18 years, during which he performed in over 200 dramas.

This theatre artist later found his way into the Malayalam film industry and during which he was able to execute several notable characters.

DIRECTORS



P. Balachandran

This multitalented native of Vaikom is one of the noted writer, director, scenarist, and actor of the Malayalam film industry. He is best known for his play, Paavam Usman for which he won the Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award and Kerala Professional Nataka Award in the year 1989. These works eventually led him to the Malayalam film industry, wherein he scripted many exemplary works including Ulladakkam (1991), Pavithram (1994), Agnidevan (1995) and Kammatti Padam (2016), to name a few. His directorial debut is Ivan

Megharoopan (2012). He has also acted in a few films, the most notable being Trivandrum Lodge (2012).



John T. Vekken

The veteran Playwright, Actor, Director, Theatre trainer and Producer at Vaikom Thirunal Theatre, he hailed from Vaikom. He was the person to set up India's first permanent theatre in 1978.

THEATRE ARTISTS

VAIKOM

72



Vaikom Vasudevan

Vaikom Vasudevan Nair was a legendary theatre artist in Malayalam who had made a track of singing for more than six decades. Sri. Vaikom Vasudevan started his music lessons from Vechoor Harihara Subramania Iyer and later continued his lessons at RLV College of Music, Tripunithura. He worked as a music teacher at the government girls' school in Vaikom. Yet another remarkable achievement of his was that he acted in one Malayalam movie 'Kerala Kesari' in 1951.



N. N. Pillai

Narayana Pillai Narayana Pillai, or popularly known as N.N.Pillai, was a playwright, actor, director, theatre director and an orator. He had set aside his life for drama, and has scripted more than 30 Malayalam plays, 40 one-act plays, two theoretical studies on theatre and an autobiography. He has won several awards from Government of India, as well as the Kerala State Government, including the prestigious Kerala Sahithya Academy, Sangeet Natak Akademi and Sahithya Pravathaka Samgham.. His autobiography Njaan received an award from Abu Dhabi Malayala Samajam.

MUSICIAN

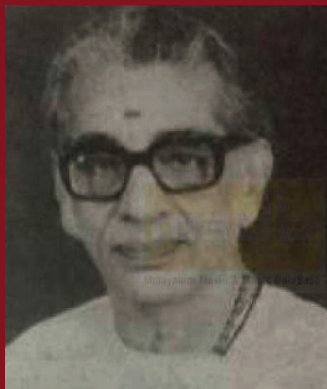


V DHAKSHINAMOORTHY SWAMY

VenkateswaranDakshinamoorthy, the great maestro of Indian music, an all-rounder in the realm of Carnatic music, a veteran musician, composer and director, who has left his foot prints in Malayalam, Tamil and Hindi films, predominantly in Malayalam films. He has set scores for the songs in over 125 films and composed around 1400 songs.

Sree Dakshinamoorthy, fondly known as the Swami of Indian music had a deep-seated attachment and regard for Vaikom. He moved here at a very early age and spend some years of his early life in Vaikom, teaching and practicing music. The most noteworthy aspect of his stay in Vaikom was the opportunity to pay, "NirmaalyaDarshan" to Vaikathappan for three and a half years continuously. Being a true devotee of Vaikathappan, he offered Sahasrakalasham at Vaikom Temple for his 60th, 70th, 80th and 90th birthdays.

PLAYBACK SINGERS



Vaikom Mani

Mantri Vancheeswaran Mani, popularly known as M. V. Mani, was born in 1904 in Vaikom. He was inclined towards acting at a very early age and later was instrumental in creating South Indian Film Artistes Association. M. V. Mani was also an active participant in India's freedom struggle.



Vaikom Vijayalakshmi

Vaikom Vijayalakshmi is a playback singer born in Vaikom. An expert in a rare musical instrument, Gayatriveena, and also a blessed singer. Vijayalakshmi was born blind. She won special jury mention in 2012 in the Kerala State Film Awards for her much appreciated work in the movie Celluloid and in 2013 won the best singer award. Apart from the State awards, she has also won several awards and honours in the upcoming years, like the Filmfare Award in 2014, Mirchi Music Award in 2014 etc.



V Devanand

Devanand is a renowned playback singer of the Malayalam film industry. Devanand, born into a family of musicians in Vaikom, has bagged several prizes and awards. He has worked with some of the biggest names in the industry, including G. Devarajan, K. Raghavan, Shyam, Raveendran, Johnson, A. T. Ummer, Rajamani, Ousepachan, Mani Sharma, A.R. Rahman, M. Jayachandran, Devi Sri Prasad, Deepak Dev, Alex Paul and Gopi Sundar.



Uday Ramachandran

Uday Ramachandran a gifted musician, who has recorded umpteen songs for the Malayalam film industry, with a wide forte of talents, a popular Playback singer, Composer, Carnatic musician and a Voice Trainer.

PERCUSSIONIST



Vaikom Retnasree

Retnasree, Vaikom native, is probably the only professional Tabla player in Hindustani style from South India and of the few in the country. She is a regular performer for solos at festivals, an accompanist to Hindustani vocalists and instrumentalists, and has travelled far and wide in this regard.

DANCER



Paris Laxmi

A popular dancer and an actress, christened as Myriam Sophia Lakshmi Quinio, but professionally known as Paris Laxmi, was born in France and now settled in Vaikom Kerala. She runs the Kalashakti School of Arts in Vaikom, along with her husband, Kathakali dancer Pallippuram Sunil. Not only has she mastered Bharatanatyam, but also various other dance styles; Ballet, Jazz, Contemporary, Flamenco and Hip-hop. Laxmi is an active and well-known dancer who has performed through out India and abroad as a

Bharatanatyam soloist and with her husband Pallippuram Sunil. Sunil and Laxmi created the duet 'Sangamam' in 2012 and in 2015 their first creation, Krishna Mayam, a classical dance fusion of Kathakali and Bharatanatyam showcasing stories and manifestations of Lord Krishna with compositions from the Kathakali and Bharatanatyam repertoires.

SITTING AND PREVIOUS MLAS OF VAIKOM ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCY

YEAR	NAME	
2016	CK Asha	
2011 & 2006	K. Ajith	
2001 & 1998	P Narayanan	
1996, 1982, 1980 & 1977	M.K.Kesavan	
1991	K.K. Balakrishnan	

1970, 1967 & 1960	P. S. Srinivasan	 <div> <div>VAIKOM</div> <div>79</div> </div>
1965	P. Parameswaran	
1957	K. R. Narayanan	

OTHER NOTED PERSONALITIES

NAME	AREA OF SPECIALISATION/ IMPRTANCE
Brahmamangalam Chandran	Theatre actor, Writer and Social reformer
N. V. Panicker	Sanskrit Pandit
Brahmamangalam Madhavan	Sanskrit Pandit , Poet
Professor Ramesh Chandran	Laureate, literature critics
S. Rameshan	Poets
Ponnuvallil Muthethu	Sanskrit Pandit
Vaikom Baby	Drama artiste
TV Puram Raju	Journalist cum lyricist
KV Joseph	Critic
Puliparayil G. Balakrishanan Nai	Dewasom Board Commissioner
Palakkad Varkey Vaidyan	Principal of Government Ayurveda College
P. S. John	Malayalam Manorama Bureau Chief
Keetu Parambil P. R. Nair	Deputy Controller of Iron and Steel
Murinjoor Manayil Vishnu Namboorthiri	Melshanthi of high priest of Sabarimala

Vijay P. Nair	Film director
M. L. Jay	Drama director
K. Vishwanathan	Freedom fighter and Leader for the famous hunger strike
M. K. Padmeshanan	Freedom fighter and first martyr of the Communist Party of India
Eranattu M. Madhavan	Political leader
P. S. Vava	Political leader
K. P. Vasavan Puthenpuraykkal	Political leader
Prabahakaran Parakkattu Kalam	Political leader
Kuttezethu Damodaran	Political leader
P. K. Narayanan Kunju	Political leader
P. K. Velayudhan	Political leader
M. S. Krishnan	Political leader
P. Damodaran Pattassery	Political leader
Vaikom Venugopal	Percussionist-Mridangam
Nelloor Vasudevan Nair Bhagavathar	Musician
K. N. Thangappan Bhagavathar	Musician
Vallakath Bhavanniyamma	Musician

Konnasheryl C. K. Narayanan	Police officer
Dr Sanjay Joseph	Civil Service (first person of TV Puram panchayat)
Keettuparambil K. P. K. Nair	Major General - Indian Army
V. K. Krishnankutty Nair	Brigadier - Indian Army
Paravoor Gopalan Pillai	Drama
P. K. Sukumaran Nair	Drama
Vaikom Sukumaran Nair	Drama
Smt. Vaikom Sukumari Amma	Drama
Kodavara Antony Panezhan	Drama
Vechur Raman Pillai	Kathakali
Tottakam Gopalan Pillai	Kathakali
Thangappan Nair and Purushothaman Nair (Vaikom Brothers)	Kathakali Music
Narayanan Ashaan	Percussion Instrument (Udukku)
Keshavan Ashaan	Percussion Instrument (Chenda)
Palliyadu Krishnan Ashaan	Chavittu Naadakam
Diwakaran	Chavittu Naadakam

Kunjen Ashaan	Kolu Kali	VAIKOM
Smt. Chinnamma Ashatti	Thiruvathirakali	
Shri R Raman Nair	Percussion Instrument (Mridangam)	83
Puneimana Shri. Sasidhara Sharama	Thiyattu Kala	
K. Kochuttan	Member of ThiruKochi Senate	
Mar. Abraham Kattumana	Delegate at Vatican	
S. K. Warriar	Ayurveda physician (Vaidyan)	
K. S. Warriar	Ayurveda physician (Vaidyan)	
Valyarapathu Damodara Kaimal	Ayurveda physician (Vaidyan)	
Mannasheri Achuthen Vaidyar	Ayurveda physician (Vaidyan)	
Sri Ramathuthara Raghavan Shanti	Ayurveda physician (Vaidyan)	
Govinda Kaniyar	Ayurveda physician (Vaidyan)	
Kunnaparambathu Bhaskaran	Ayurveda physician (Vaidyan)	
Ikkara Vaidyar	Ayurveda physician (Vaidyan)	

CULTURE AND IDENTITY: PLACES OF WORSHIP



Churches, temples, mosques, and synagogues – wherever they are in the world, these holy places almost always make it into the tourist's itinerary.

You may visit them out of curiosity, to learn about another country's religious traditions, to see the incredible artistic and architectural creations they contain, or simply to bathe in that solemn, reverential ambience in order to rejuvenate yourself and become fighting fit for the challenges of modern life. Whatever your aim, Vaikom is sure to satisfy you. The Responsible Tourism Mission has introduced Pilgrim Tourism Circuits and also Cultural Tourism Circuits which connects these religious places listed below.

Vaikom has one of the most visited religious sites in the state: the Vaikom Mahadeva temple. To devotees of Shiva, this Hindu temple, Ettumanoor Shiva temple and Kaduthuruthy Thaliyil Mahadeva temple constitute a powerful trio. The awe-inspiring and incredibly well preserved temple is an archaeological and spiritual wonder. From the powerful Bhadrakali temples, and great churches with long histories worth narrating, to the mighty mosques with dominant domes, you can see them all while on a tour of the whole stretch of Vaikom. To slake your intellectual and artistic thirst, you can explore the mythologies that underpin the construction of these places of worship, the arts they have generated and sustained, the festivals they have caused to celebrate, the histories they hide, the archaeological features they contain, and the music they have patronized.



VAIKOM MAHADEVA TEMPLE

Vaikom is a place of great religious importance. A famous Shiva temple in the area, the Vaikom Mahadeva temple, also known as Dakshina Kashi, is a major pilgrim destination. The temple is built following the Kerala style of architecture. While the structure enclosing the sanctum sanctorum is surmounted by a golden stupa, a golden staff that measures 19.5 m dominates the surrounding landscape. Traces of a few paintings will be seen on the exterior walls. A one metre high Shiva Linga (phallic symbol representing Shiva, the Destroyer) is the main deity of the temple. Legend has it that a demon named Khara in the Hindu epic Ramayana worshipped Shiva at Chidambaram and obtained three Shivalingams from him. He journeyed back home, holding one Shivalingam

in each hand and the third in his mouth. He sojourned at Vaikom, and set a Shivalingam on the ground, in order to take some rest. A little later, he found, to his dismay, that it had become firmly fixed. Thereafter Khara installed the other two Shivalingams at Ettumanur and Kaduthuruthy. He entrusted the Shivalingam at Vaikom to the care of Vyaghrapadar. Vaikom therefore acquired the name Vyaghrapadar which ultimately became Vaikom for short.

The architecture of the Vaikom temple is spellbinding. All the devotees to the temple believe it has an aura that is truly divine. Surrounded by a courtyard that stretches to almost eight acres, the boundaries of the temple are marked by four Gopuras or towers.



THRINAYAMKUDAM SREE RAMA SWAMI TEMPLE

Sree Rama Swami temple is one of the most famous temples in Kerala. It is more than 450 years old. Temples with Sree Rama as the main deity are very uncommon in Kerala. Amongst the Sree Rama temples, this one stands out owing to its history as well as the bhava of the deity. This is the biggest temple on the banks of the Vembanad lake.

The deity is more than six feet tall and the bhava (lakshanam) of the deity makes it special. In order to create the work of art out of indigenous rock, the ancient artisans worked on natural rock known as 'Pathalanjana Shila', which is far more robust and lasting than sandstone. This was made centuries back, and covered with a close-fitting sheath made of 'Panchaloha' an alloy of five metals – gold, silver, bronze, copper and iron. The main deity, Lord Maha Vishnu, was believed to be that of Tirupati Venkatachalapathy earlier but is now worshiped as Sri Rama.

Another specialty of this temple is the temple pond here which the local people call Eli Kulam [Rat Pond]. People believe that poison inflicted on humans due to rat bites can be removed by washing the wound in the pond, and by performing special rituals.

The bali kallu [stone where offerings are placed], located in front of the temple, is yet another speciality of this temple, because this stone carries inscriptions sculpted on orders by Shri Shaktan Thampuran. Mythology says that this temple was built by Gowda Saraswatha Brahmins, and this sect was on the verge of extinction and stories narrate that it is the responsibility of Rama devotees to protect them. The idol of Gayatri Devi, who is believed



to be the mother of all Vedas is present here.

Festivals:

The main festival is celebrated for 10 days during the Malayalam month of Meenam [March-April]. It ends with aarattu comprising a ritual procession. During this period, several traditional art forms of Kerala like Kurathiyattam and Ottamthullal are performed here, besides Carnatic music recitals.

During the monsoon month of Karkidakam [July-August], when heavy rains hit Kerala, there is a likelihood of outbreak of diseases or instances of ill health. In order to prevent such troubles, Karkidaka kanji, a medicinal porridge is distributed here in Vaikom, as in the whole of the state, to boost the immunity of the body.

Dashaavathaara charthu and chandana charthu are also important offerings in this temple. Bali, a ritual performed by Hindus to honour their dead ancestors, is conducted during Karkidaka Vavu and the obsequies take place in Vilakkumandam, in the centre of the lake. The Vilakkumadam is located in a bend of the Vembanad lake, where the lake takes a dangerous turn. At this point the boats run a big risk of being toppled by strong undercurrents and whirls. In olden times a lamp (vilakku in Malayalam) used to be kept lit at this spot in order to alert boatmen of the possible danger ahead, and hence the name Vilakkumadam. This is very near the Thrinayamkudam Sree Rama Swami temple, and hence the ritual Bali is organized here.



MOOTHEDATHU KAVU BHAGAVATHY TEMPLE

VAIKOM

89

The main deity of this shrine is Bhadrakali, and there is an interesting legend behind its installation.

The Madurai that we know today is not the Madurai of ancient times, for it is said that the entire city was once destroyed in an all-consuming fire. The story behind that fire is told in the 5,270-line Tamil epic Silappathikaram epic [“The Story of the Jewelled Anklets”] written by a Jain monk named Ilango Adigal in the 5th century CE. The story portrays how Kannaki took revenge on the Pandyan King of Madurai, who had wrongfully put her husband Kovilan to death. She cursed the entire town of Madurai as a result of which it got consumed in a huge fire. During this chaos, it is believed that a Brahmin salvaged the idol of Kannaki Devi and proceeded to Kerala. On reaching Aarattukadavu, in Vaikom, the Brahmin placed the idol there to take his bath. When he returned an incredible sight met his eyes. The idol remained fastened to the place and could not be moved. In the ancient days, temples were built to provide devotees a spiritually-energized place, where they could connect and surrender to their deities any time of the day. While some temples have specific times during which they are opened for the devotees each day, a few remain open throughout the day. But, this temple in Vaikom has a unique protocol. The temple doors to the inner sanctum are opened only nine months in a year.

Thousands of people from around the state arrive every year to visit the temple. It opens on first day of the month of Karkidakam [July-August] and closes during Kumbham [February-March] after celebrating the goddess’ birthday. Once the birthday celebrations end, the goddess is believed to set off to visit her husband, ‘the Madhuradhipan’,



and with that the main sanctum sanctorum closes.

Festivals:

The Ganesh Chaturthi also known as Vinayaka Chaturthi or Vinayaka Chavithi, the festival denoting the birth of Lord Ganesha, which falls in the months of August or September, is celebrated in a grand manner throughout the country. The festival is marked by the installation of Ganesha clay idols privately in homes or publicly on elaborate pandals (temporary stages). Observances include chanting of Vedic hymns and portions of Hindu texts, prayers and vrata [fasting]. The festival is distinctively celebrated in this temple with a notable ritual of a homa where one-thousand-and-one coconuts are used.

The other festivals celebrated in an outstanding manner are the Navaratri, which is conducted through a period of nine nights (and ten days).



SREE NARAYANAESHWARAPURAM SUBRAMANYA SWAMY TEMPLE

Sree Narayanaeshwarapuram Subramanya Swamy temple is built in an intricate and indigenous Kerala style of architecture with the main sanctum built completely in wood and copper under the supervision of Kodungalloor Sree Devadas Achary. The key features of the temple are Namaskara Mandapam, Kodi Maram, Nadappandal, and Alankara Gopuram.

The legend behind this temple is that in ancient times there was a small temple located in the spot where the present Subramanya Swamy temple is situated. But this temple did not have any deity then. At this juncture, Sree Narayana Guru Swami was invited to Chemanathukara by Alappurathu Achudan Vaidyar, Kandathil Karumban and Munduchira Cheeru. Swami Sree Narayana Guru advised them on the installation of an idol, which the neighbouring goldsmith was working on then, as the principal deity. At that time the goldsmith was finishing a silver 'Vel' or spear, which was mounted on a wooden lotus frame. The main attraction and speciality of this temple is that this temple practised certain principles far ahead of the times. Even during the days when there was a ban on 'low caste people' entering the temples, people of any caste or religion could enter this temple, thereby symbolizing the unity of Hindus, Christians and Muslims in the region.

Festivals:

The most eminent festival of this temple is Shiva Ratri which lasts for a week and is celebrated with cultural feasts by celebrated artistes.



SVAYAMBHU SARASWATI TEMPLE

Svayambhu is a Sanskrit word that means “self-manifested,” “self-isting” or “that which is created by its own accord”. The word swayambhu is used in this context to describe self-manifested image of a Goddess Saraswati, which was not made by human hands, but instead is believed to have naturally arisen, or was generated by Nature. This is the sole Svayambhu Saraswati temple in Kerala. The folklore epitomizes the immense love Goddess has for her devotees and the incredible faith her followers showed in bringing this temple into being. In olden times there used to be Othikkans, a class of Namboothiris who basically taught Othu [recital of the Vedas]. The story tells of an ardent devotee of Goddess Saraswati. He was an Othikkan, who taught chants to Brahmin boys in the Othupura [building designated for the purpose]. The area in which the temple is now located was once the Othupura. One day Lord Ganesha, in order to test the devotion of this Othikkan, took the form of a Brahmin boy and arrived at the Othupura. This small boy had an aura about him and reflected enormous brilliance and grace. He shot many questions at the Brahmin, which no ordinary man could ever answer. The Othikkan also stumbled and struggled to answer many questions that was put across. But during all those difficult times, Goddess Saraswati blessed him with the right answers. A deliberate attempt made by Ganesha to trip the Othikkan and give a wrong answer was also dampened by Goddess Saraswati. Lord Ganesha was hugely impressed by the love and respect the Goddess had for this disciple of hers, and in return Ganesha appeared in his real form. At that very instant, Goddess Saraswati also appeared and blessed the Othikkan. The Othikkan however wished for their blessings to be bestowed on the coming generations, and the temple was installed at the Othupura. A speciality of this temple is that no idol of the principal deity is present. Instead, a mirror is installed at the point



where Goddess Saraswati appeared.

Festivals:

A major attraction of this temple is that Vidyarambham [the formal initiation into education with the introduction of alphabet] can be performed throughout the year since the temple is dedicated to Goddess Saraswati. In other temples around the country the ceremony of Vidyarambham is held only on Vijayadashami (the last day of Navarathri). On the day of ceremony, a large number of people arrive at this temple to initiate their children into learning.



■ PAZHUTHUVALI SREE BHAGAVATHY TEMPLE

The Pazhuthuvalli Sree Bhagavathy temple is dedicated to mother Goddess Lakshmi Devi, known as Sree Bhagavathy. The main deity here was formerly worshiped by an affluent Brahmin family who later had to abandon pujas due to dearth of money. But the pujas were resumed by the Pazhuthuvalli family, and the temple was eventually handed over to the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana (SNDP) Yogam. The Bhagavathy is said to be very powerful. Devotees find miraculous cures for their diseases, and they believe she helps not only in warding off famine but helping her devotees pursue higher education and acquire better careers as well. The rituals the devotees follow for the attainment of their desires are done after observing strict vratham or fasting. There are various offerings or vazhipadu which are regarded to be highly potent because they appease the Goddess. One such is the chuttuvilakku where oil wicks are lit on the walls surrounding the main sanctum. The devotees light up an auspicious number of wicks (usually 18, 27, 108, 1008 or 10,008) in sesame oil or ghee. After lighting the lamps the devotees circumambulate the sanctum in clockwise direction. This is known as pradakshinam. This whole activity is known as Thiripiditham and this temple is known far and wide for this particular ritual.

There are three separate legends associated with this temple. The first one goes like this: long ago there used to be a Brahmin family whose members were staunch worshippers of Bhadrakali. After the last descendant of this family passed away, there was no one to carry forward the legacy, and the Brahmin illam was taken over and rebuilt. It was then that the Theyvarappura, which is an area attached to the bathing pond, was renovated and redone into an Arappura, or the



granary, which is an enclosed storage area, often used for threshing grain. The presence of Goddess was felt in this Arappura, and hence the structure was transformed into the present Pazhuthuvalli Sree Bhagavathy temple.

Another legend in connection with this temple says that a childless couple from the Pazhuthuvalli family worshipped the Arimbu Kaavu Bhagavathy for a healthy child. Their constant devotional prayers finally led to the appearance Goddess who blessed the couple. It is believed that the Goddess Bhagavathy's power remained in the Ara or an interior room of the house, which was later transformed into the Pazhuthuvalli Sree Bhagavathy temple.

The third story states that a devastating flood once hit the region and the idol was obtained by the Pazhuthuvalli family during the flood. This idol was installed in the Ara within the house to ward off the flood.

The idol which was initially installed in the Ara was later installed in a Cherukshetram [small temple] and in 1998 the Marthanam Vijayan Tantri reinstalled the idol in the new sreekovil or the sanctum sanctorum.

Festivals:

The main utsavam or festival of this temple happens during Makara Sankranthi. As a forerunner to the utsavam, on the twelfth day of the month of Dhanu [December-January], the Thiruvabharanam or the sacred ornaments of the presiding deity are taken around the region in a procession to the accompaniment of enormous celebration. On



twenty-fifth day of same month, the idol is ceremoniously carried around in a ferry and welcomed by the devotees. The whole event is known as Jala varavelppu. It is done to commemorate the manner in which the idol was obtained during the massive floods.

The Bhagavathy pattu is recited by the temple astrologer, marking the commencement of the utsavam, and then a kappu or consecrated thread is tied on to the divine sword. With that it is believed the power of the divinity is transported to the sword. After this ritual, the sword is addressed respectfully as the Pal-li Vaal [divine sword]. The offerings to Goddess here include Bhagavathy Pattu, Thalappoli, Garudan Thookkam, and Kalamezhuthu for the serpent gods. During the Makara Sankranthi day, auspicious ceremonies like the Kalasha puja, Sree Bhootha Bali and Ppushpabhishekam are carried out. The 'Velya Kuruthi Utsav' is carried out in the 'Vadakkumpurath' of the temple, and after this, the temple remains closed for six days. On the seventh day the utsavam ends with the offering of pongala, which means 'to boil over'. It refers to the ritualistic offering of porridge made from rice, sweet brown molasses, coconut gratings, nuts and raisins. Generally women devotees participate in this ritual.



PAYARUKAADU SREEKRISHNA SWAMI TEMPLE

The Payarukaadu Sreekrishna Swami temple is an ancient one constructed in Kerala style of architecture with Kodimaram or the flagpost and Gopuram or the entrance tower. It is under the administration of Moothedathukavu Devaswom. Another speciality of this temple is that this is the only temple dedicated to Lord Krishna that has the ceremonial sacrifice and offering known as Pal Kaavdai.

MOZHIKODU SREE KUMARAPURAM SREE SUBRAMANYA SWAMI TEMPLE

Mozhikodu Sree Kumarapuram Sree Subramanya Swami temple is another antique temple in this panchayat which has age-old traditions and practices. The presiding deity is Lord Muruga who is worshipped as Subramanya Swami. The temple used to belong to Chembithara family residing in the panchayat and was owned by a person called Chembi. Later 1918, the temple administration was handed over to SNDP, after which the main vigraha or idol was reinstalled by Sree Narayana Guru.

Festivals:

The Pooyam Mahotsavam celebrated in this temple is worth mentioning, where a number of activities such as 'Kodiyettu', 'Thalapoli', 'Kaavadi', 'Kalashaparihara' and other cultural events are conducted.



CHEMMANATHUKARA SREE KRISHNA SWAMI TEMPLE

Sree Krishna Swami as Chemmanattu Appan is believed to be the Desathipathi or the owner of Chemmanathukara. According to a long-standing myth regarding this temple, Chemmanattu Appan, fell in love with the picturesque landscape of this place, and appeared in his Vishwaroopa or majestic four-armed form holding shakhu [conch], chakram [serrated discus], gadha [mace] and padmam [lotus].

Festivals:

The main festival of this temple is celebrated in the month of Dhanu [December-January]. The six day long annual festival begins with the Kodyettu where the ceremonial flag is hoisted amidst loud chants of Krishna bhajans by hundreds of devotees present there.

For the welfare of the people of that region a special puja is done for 11 days, where the Dashavataram [ten incarnations] of Lord Vishnu, made out of pure sandalwood, are displayed each day, and on the eleventh day Chemmanattu Appan is exhibited. The Dashavatara refers to the ten primary avatars of Vishnu, the Hindu god of preservation. Vishnu is said to descend to the earth in form of an avatar during times of anarchy to restore cosmic order. The word Dashavataram derives from dasa meaning 'ten', and avataram, roughly equivalent to 'incarnation'. The first avatar is Matsya (fish); the second, Kurma, the giant tortoise; the third, Varaha, the great boar which came to earth's aid and saved it from an incredibly powerful demon; the fourth, Narasimha the Man-lion; the fifth, Vamana, the dwarf born during the Threta Yuga; the sixth, Parashurama, the 'axe-wielder'; the seventh, Lord Rama, considered to be the perfect man; the eighth, Lord Krishna born in the Dwapara Yuga; the ninth, the Buddha born as Prince Sid



dhartha, who became world renowned as Gautama Buddha after attaining enlightenment. Kalki is described as the final incarnation of Vishnu, who, the devout Hindus believe, is yet to appear.

Bhagavata Saptaham is also conducted here during which one of the eighteen puranas of Hinduism, the Bhagavatam is sung and explained in a span of seven days. The Bhagavatam discusses a wide range of topics including cosmology, genealogy, geography, mythology, legend, music, dance, yoga and culture.

DAIVATHAR DHARMA DAIVA DEVI TEMPLE

The picturesque Daivathar Dharma Daiva Devi temple, located on the banks of the Vembanad lake, is more than a century old. The temple is unique since three principal deities, namely, Parashakti, Prapanchanathan and Satya Swaroopini, occupy the sreekovil [sanctum sanctorum] and are worshipped simultaneously.

Festivals:

Thiruvathira and Makara Bharani Mahotsavam are the main festivals. Thiruvathira falls in the month of Dhanu [December-January] and is celebrated for two days. Makara Bharani falls in the Malayalam month of Makaram [January-February] and is celebrated for seven days. During this time Deivam thullal, Sarpam and Gandharvan Kalamezhuthu Pattu, Thiruvathira oottu, Vadakkumpurathu Kuruthi are also conducted.



SRI PANDAVAR KULANGARA SREE KRISHNA SWAMI TEMPLE

Sri Pandavar Kulangara Sree Krishna Swami temple is a powerful place of worship that gives Kallara panchayat an ancient history. The story of Kallara panchayat dates back to the first ever temple or devasthanam called Pandavar Kulangara Sreekrishna Swamy Kshetram. It is widely believed that this temple was consecrated by the Pandavas with Krishna as the prime deity. According to the Mahabharata, the Hindu epic, the Pandavas are the five sons of Pandu, and their names are Yudhishtira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva. They had to go into exile for 12 years on losing a gambling game, and during these 12 years of Vanavasa [stay in the forest], they resided in this place, installed the deity in the temple and offered worship. The main festival of this temple is Ashtami Rohini, marking the birth of Lord Krishna.

PANDAVAR KULANGARA DEVI TEMPLE

The Pandavar Kulangara Devi temple is one of the oldest temples in Kallara panchayat, Vaikom.

The principal deity here is Bhagavathy or Devi, considered the female aspect of the divine force that sustains the universe, as conceived by the Shakta tradition of Hinduism. Shakthi is considered the female counterpart without whom the male aspect remains impotent. Shakthi is cosmic energy, and Shakthi worship is a vital part of Hindu tradition.

According to local legend, the Bhagavathy worshipped at this temple was brought from Kodungalloor – the famous Sree Kurumba Temple – by a devotee from the Thirumalpadu family. Now the temple properties are managed by a committee nominated from among the



members of the Kallara NSS Karayogam.

Festivals:

The main utsavam is performed in the Malayalam month of Kumbham [February-March] during the time of Bharani asterism. The religious events conducted during this time include Kalam pattu, Garudan Thookkam and several others.



SREE SHARADA DEVI TEMPLE

The Sree Sarada Devi temple at Kallara grama panchayat is dedicated to Goddess Saraswati. The idol is in the form of Veena pani [holder of the veena]. The idol was installed by Sree Narayana Guru, one of the famous revolutionary social reformers of Kerala. This was done during his travel throughout Kerala in connection with his fight against the ignominious caste system. In those days, the construction and consecration of a Hindu temple was the exclusive monopoly of the Brahmins. Now the temple is managed by a committee nominated by the SNDP Yogam, Kallara.

Festivals:

The main festival of this temple falls in the Malayalam month of Makaram [January-February].



PERIYAR KULANGARA VANA DURGA TEMPLE

This temple remains closely associated with the Paandava Kulangara temple, since Kolath illam owned both these temples. At one point of time when the illam went through a difficult phase the temple's fame and glory had diminished, but recently the Kallara SNDP wing took over the temple administration and they have been instrumental in reviving the glory of the temple.

Festivals:

The main festival of this temple is organized in the Malayalam month of Medam [April-May] on the day of 'Patham Udayam'.

THRIPAKKUDAM SREE MAHADEVA TEMPLE

The principal deity of this ancient Thripakkudam Sree Mahadeva temple is in the form of 'Panchakshara moorthy' and had appeared there as 'Swayambhu' which means self-manifested, and is in the bhavam [stance] of Prapancha Srishtavu, which means 'the Creator'.

According to the myth associated with this temple, once when Swami Vilwamangalam was travelling in a canoe and passing along a region dotted with small islands, the place was unusually misty and foggy. With his Divya drishti or divine-eye, which is a spiritual gift, he understood the reason for this strange sight. He caught the smoke or the energy and trapped it in three pots and tried to install these pots. At that instant, he saw a vision of the Lord as Jadadhari [ascetic]. After this, Swami brought the pots to this panchayat and placed them on a high ground, the current location of the temple. These pots later came to be known as 'Thripakkudam'.



to be known as 'Thripakkudam'.

The prathista or the idol here is in the form of Lord Mahadeva in his yogic pose after Goddess Sati, his consort, gave up her life on seeing her father insult her divine spouse. The place where fog was seen was later called 'Kandam Thuruthu' and the presence of God in this region is largely accepted by the local people.

This is one of the main temples in the Kottayam-Vaikom-Kumarakom region and is regarded as the 'Deshadhipan', which means the owner of Vechur, Alappuzha and Cherhala.

The 'upa-devatha' or sub-deities of this temple include Brahmarakshas, Vamana moorthy, Subramanya and Ganesha. The administration of the Thripakkudam Devaswom used to be in the hands of a few prominent families in the region, namely, the Padappalli, Poothappalli and the Chadukkoppali, who had donated their lands to the temple. The main priest or the 'Tantri' of the temple was a member either of the 'Puliyenoor Mana' or the 'Manayethattu Mana', since this temple was their family property. The temple is of great significance to the people of these families. After the boys from this family undergo the ritual of upanayanam [wearing of the sacred thread to become a Brahmin], they have to first serve this temple before working elsewhere. The Mel Shanti and Keezh Shanti [high and assistant priests] of this temple are from Varyathu Madhom. The management of the temple is undertaken by members of the Idamana Madhom. The right for the Sreebali ritual goes to Poov illam, Mangatt illam, Kolassery Illam and Thovalakkad illam. The most important 'Vazhipadu' of this temple is 'Naivedyam' and 'Tulabharam' with poovan pazham, where



plaintains are weighed against the devotee on a set of huge scales, and offered to the temple. Other offerings are lighting of ghee lamps and chathushatham.

Festivals:

In the month of February, the main utsavam starts on the day of Chathayam asterism and lasts ten days. It ends with the Aarattu, wherein the immersion of deity is done in Vembanad lake. The main festival of Thripakkudam and Ettumanoor falls on the same day. The main deity is decorated with 'Swarna Ura' or a gold shield and the lord blesses his devotees.

The other important days of this temple are Shiva Ratri and Pradosham. During Pradosham, the pradosha puja, dhara, ashtabhishekam, 108 kalasham, 1000 kalasham kalabham are very important offerings in this temple.

During the utsavam, cultural programmes and indigenous art forms such as Kathakali, Chakyarkoothu, and Ottamthullal are performed.

PUDIYAKAAVU DEVI TEMPLE

The Pudiyaakaavu Devi temple is another antique temple of the region which is believed to be more than 600 years old. The deity of the Puthiyakavu temple is Bhadrakali, the Goddess. The rights to the temple go to Parambusseri Maramattathu illam or family which is based in a place along the Aluva- Mala route, to the east of Kalamassery. It is believed that the Goddess of this temple is their Paradevatha or their family Goddess.

Initially the sreekovil [sanctum sanctorum] was made of bricks and had a thatched roof. Later, almost a century back, it was replaced with granite and the roof was copper plated. The temple tantri [priest] is from Annamma Nada Kashakottath illam. The upa devathas or the sub-deities of the temple are Thevaramoorthy, Rakshasa and Naga devam or the serpent gods. The very uniqueness of this temple is that it regards Rakshasa as its sub-deity.

The temple has been renovated by the Maramanattathu Mana Narayana Namboothiri. The temple administration is carried out by the NSS Karayogam of Ullala.

Festivals:

The main festival falls in the month of Kumbham [February-March] and is a six-day affair. It is charted in such a way that the Arattu falls on the day of Bharani asterism. The ceremony of hoisting of the divine flag called Kodi yettu marks the commencement of the utsavam. The rope attached to the divine flag, known as kodi kayar, is brought by a particular family belonging to the Dheevera community from Kothavara Akkaparambil. As a part of the utsavam, Vela padayani, a ritual



art, is performed and this is yet another speciality of this temple. This is a ceremonial dance where the performers wear masks. It is an ancient ritual performed in Bhagavathy temples to honour Bhadrakali. In this temple this is performed by

people from Kothavan Karuveli family. The Velan pattu is another art form that is now dying due to lack of patronage. It is conducted at homes to remove ill luck or misfortune. Other rituals that are part of the festival are the Kalamezhuthu and Kalampuja. These rituals – the drawing of elaborate three-dimensional pictures of deities on the floor using colourful powders accompanied by singing – attract a lot of devotees. Theeyattu, another ritual, is based on the story of Goddess Bhadrakali, returning after killing the demon, Darika, and describing her exploits to Lord Shiva. Kadum payasam, Arunazhi, Kaivettuguruthi, Lemon lamp, and Ghee Lamp are other important offerings of this temple. 'Chathushatha Nivedyam' is a notable offering made from the coconut milk extracted from one hundred and one coconuts. Another significant ritual of great significance involves becoming the torch bearer in a ritual named 'Thee Vetti Pidikkuka', when the principal deity arrives from temple, atop an elephant. The nine day long celebrations of the Navarathri Mahotsav are also conducted in a magnificent way.



THOTTAKAM VALYARAMBATHU KUPPEDIKAVU DEVI TEMPLE

This is a family temple of a the Vakayil Kaimal family, and is located near Palamkadavu. The temple is located within the residential premises of this family. It is more than 500 years old. The deity is Goddess Durga in Bhadrakali form, who after slaying Mahishasura, helps him attain moksha [spiritual liberation] and become one with the divine. The folklore narrates that Mahishasura worshipped the sixteen-armed Bhadrakali after seeing her in a dream. Appeased, the Goddess appeared before Mahishasura. Mahishasura told her that through the dream he had realized that his end was near. Hence, he asked the Devi to grant him moksha. The Devi blessed him and told that after she freed him from his mortal coil, he would never reincarnate on earth.

The popular legend regarding this temple states that the vigraha or the idol installed in the temple was obtained from a nearby property while it was being cleaned. The Velyarambathu family considered this idol as the Pradesha Devam [the god of the locality] and then installed it within their premises. The temple has some magnificent monuments. The idol of the main deity has been carved from a single piece of wood. Within this temple there are several other wooden sculptures and idols. The Bhadrakali carved on the door of the Balikkalpura is very popular. Another popular figure is the four feet Kshetrapalakan [guardian] sculpted from a single rock. A figure of the Sapta Rishis [Seven sages] is carved in wood. The Upa devatha of this temple is Naga raja or the Serpent God, and a five foot tall figure of Naga raja has been carved out from a piece of wood. The other sub-deities are 'Anthimahakalan' and 'Ayela Yekshi', brought from 'Manjoor'. Hence, devotees fondly call the goddess 'Manjoor Bhagavathy'.



Festivals:

The main festival of this temple spans over a period of six days and during this period the 'Ullala Kavilamma', a deity of a temple to the south, is believed to visit the temple. There is an 'Irakki puja' to welcome the 'Ullala Kavilamma'. Ceremonial processions are held on the birthday of the goddess.

■ ULLALA KAALIKSHWARA KSHETRAM

The presiding deity of this temple is Lord Shiva. The temple is more than six centuries old and is located near Ullala Pudiyaakavu Kshetram on the Vaikom-Vechoor road. This temple belongs to Kanakkankadavu Kattiyottu Kariganompalli Swaroopam family that hails from Aluva in Ernakulam district, en route to Mala. The legend states that a lady belonging to this Brahmin family used to be a staunch believer of Ettumanoor appan [the Lord of Ettumanoor]. She used to regularly visit the Ettumanoor temple until she grew so old to travel, and this predicament disheartened her. But the supreme power appeared in her dream and gave her a vision that the same power at Ettumanoor is present in the Ullala Kaalikshwara Kshetram, and so there is no need for to travel all the way to Ettumanoor. From then on, she regularly prayed at Ullala Kshetram.

This is one among a few temples where Mruthyunjaya Homam [a puja to ward off untimely death] is performed. This temple is now under the administration of the NSS Karayogam.

KALPAKASERY DEVI TEMPLE

The principal deity of this temple is Bhadrakali Devi.

Festivals:

The main festival is Makarakudam festival. It starts on the twenty-eighth day of the Malayalam month of Makaram [January-February] and ends on the first day of Kumbham [February-March]. During this festive season Makarakudam, Talappoli and Garudan Thookkam are also conducted here.

CHERUPARAMBU KHANTAGHARNA TEMPLE

Khantagharna Swami is the main deity of this temple. The speciality of this temple is that thadi thullal and udayam puja are conducted during the Malayalam month of Medam [April-May].

PATTAASSERY TEMPLE

The Pattassery Bhagavathy temple is under the administration of Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana (SNDP) Yogam.

Festivals:

The major festivals celebrated here are on 'Thiruvathira', celebrated in the Malayalam month of Dhanu [November-December]. The festivals



lasts for five days. Other main celebrations here are 'thadi thullal', 'Sarpa pattu' and 'Gandharva Pattu' are also conducted on the first day of the Malayalam month of Medam [April-May].

■ KAITHAKATTUMURI TEMPLE

The Kaithakattumuri temple is a Kudumbakshetram which means 'family temple'. The main deities of this temple are Devi, Kanthagharan and Gurunathan. The temple is owned and run by a landlord family of the region.

Festivals:

The festival is celebrated annually on the fifth of May to commemorate the day the deity was installed. The celebrations include sarpam thullal which is the dance of snakes wherein different forms of Bhasma kalam, Podi kalam and Koottu kalam for serpents are drawn. During this period other rituals and ceremonies like Kalasham, Thalappoli, and Annadanam are also conducted.

■ VELLOOR PERUNTHATT MAHADEVA KSHETHRAM

The temple is believed to have been installed by Sage Parashurama. During Tipu Sultan's attack, the local priest, fearing the theft of the precious articles from the temple, took the main idol and jewellery, deposited them in a well in front of the temple and covered it. The utsavam in this temple is conducted during the month of March.



AYANKOVIL SHATHA VISHNU TEMPLE

During ancient times, a Brahmin family used to worship Thevara Moorthy, which was a Salagramam, a fossilized shell, used as an iconic symbol and reminder of the God Vishnu as the Universal Principle. Salagramams are usually collected from river-beds or banks of such rivers as the Gandaki in Nepal. They are easy to carry and popular in certain traditions of Vaishnavism, as an iconic representation of the divine. They are typically in the form of spherical, black-coloured Ammonoid fossils of the Devonian-Cretaceous period which existed from 400 to 66 million years ago.

During olden days, there used to be a Brahmin illam named 'Cherumanal' in the north-eastern parts of this place. The local legend says that after constructing a Shasta-Devi temple this Brahmin family installed an idol near the earlier Vishnu temple. But this idol was said to have created displeasure to the Devi and hence the Devi idol had to be reinstalled in another temple at Thalayolaparambu.

The specialty of this temple is that Lord Ayyappa, who is generally believed to be a 'Brahmachari' or ascetic, has a wife, 'Prabha' and son 'Satyakan'. Their idols are installed beside him, thus giving credence to the belief among some Hindus that Lord Ayyappa or Shastha had a wife and family before he left for Sabarimala.

Other deities in this temple – Lord Krishna as 'Parthasarathy', Shastha and Goddess Bhadrakali as Narathala Bhagawathy – are worshipped here. The administration of this temple is handled by seven Brahmin landlords and the local residents of the area.



Festivals:

The main utsavam starts from end of April, on the day of Uthram asterism, and lasts for six days. The major events include Kalamezhuthu, Kathakali, Sasta pattu, Ottamthullal. By mid-June the installation of the deity is commemorated, and Theeyattu is performed on this day.

PUNDARIKAPURAM TEMPLE

The temple is situated on the borders of Velloor grama panchayat, and is believed to be one of the most ancient temples in the region built sometime in the 16th century. Around this period a Brahmin family of Velimamkovil illam from Payyanur, came to a place near Velloor in Vaikom. This family did not have descedents and hence the last member of the family married into 'Ayyozhu illam', a family in Vaikom. The then Kottayam King gifted many places in Mithaikunnu to them, without extracting taxes.

According to a legend, when a member of this illam was attending Val-lom kali [boat race], a 'Thetti flower' and a lotus sprung up from the river. People dived into the river to examine this unusual phenomenon and then retrieved the idol from the riverbed. It was later installed in this temple. The deity is in the form of Lord Krishna returning to Dwaraka, along with Satyabhama after killing the demon Naragasura. There are rare mural paintings in this temple. The mixtures used to create the painting are still unknown. It is said that Raja Ravi Varma once visited this temple. The sculptures of this temple carved in wood are exquisite



BRAHMAPURAM MATHANAM DEVI TEMPLE

Brahmapuram Mathanam Devi temple is a 'swayambhu temple', which means it has a self-manifested deity. The important days of this temple are considered to be Tuesdays and Fridays, when a series of special pujas are organized. Devotees flock to this temple in their hundreds on these days. Thambala nivedyam is a very important offering to the goddess. Prasada oottu or auspicious lunch is also highly regarded in this temple on the day of Karthika asterism. A special puja is also offered in the temple. Sree Narayana Guru is said to have visited this temple in 1927, and as instructed by this saint, his disciple Narasimha Swami, deposited some of the crude sculptures of this temple into the temple well.

Festivals:

The major festival of this temple is conducted in the month of February for seven days, at the beginning of which the Kodiyettam [hoisting of the holy pennant] is done to mark the commencement of celebrations. The flag remains hoisted throughout the period and is brought down on the last day. The utsavam concludes with Aarattu or procession.



VADAYAR ELAMKAVU DEVI TEMPLE

Vadayar Elamkavu Devi temple, dedicated to Goddess Bhagavathy or Devi in a fierce form, is located about 9 kms from Vaikom, on the banks of the Vadayar.

Two main festivals are held here. One is the flag hosting festival held in the month of February that lasts for eight days. The other is the famous two-day Elamkavu Attuvela Mahotsavam (water carnival), observed in Malayalam month of Kumbham [February-March].

The rulers of erstwhile Travancore used to come and stay at Vadayar. But once when there was an outbreak of smallpox and the disease spread drastically in the region, astrologers were consulted. Accordingly, the idol of Kodungaloor Devi was installed in this temple to check the rapid spread of this disease. The deity was brought to this place in a grand boat temple. The British mistook it for a warship and fired at it, and this day is still remembered and celebrated in this temple as 'Elamkavu Aattu vela'.

Festivals:

The Kodiyyettam takes place every year on February 13, and another specialty of this temple is that Kalamezhuthu is done in this temple on all days. Cultural events that are conducted during the utsavam are Chakkyar koothu, Ootaam thullal, Kathakali, Korathiyattam, and so on. The historic Vadayar Elamkavu Aattuvela is organized every year during the utsavam. During this festival, two boats are tied together and a model of the temple is erected on it. The floating model is decorated and rowed along a one-and-a-half kilometre stretch to reach the temple. This rare event is called Aattuvela, and happens on the day of Ashwathy asterism, during the month of April. The temple model is made out of centuries old teak structures which are assembled only during this time of the year.



made out of centuries old teak structures which are assembled only during this time of the year.

■ AYYARKULANGARA DEVI TEMPLE

Ayyarkulangara Devi temple is one of the oldest temples dedicated to Kunthi Devi (the mother of the Pandavas in the Mahabharata). It is believed that she along with the Pandavas resided here during their vanavasa [period of exile in the forest]. In the Vaikom temple, Kunthi Devi is worshipped as Panachikkal Bhagavathy.

■ KALAKKAL TEMPLE

Kalakkal Valiyachan is considered as Nandi, the first servant of Sri Parameswara. Local people call him Kalakkal Valiyachan. From ancient times, the temple has belonged to an Ezhava family named Kalakkal. The festival is observed on the tenth day of the Malayalam month of Medam [April-May].

After the Athazha Puja and Sreebeli, the temple closes. From then to the ritualistic awakening of the Lord (Palli Unarthal) the next morning, the protection of the temple rests with the Kalakkal Kavudayon or Kalakkal Valiyachan. Once a pundit named Pachu Moosad was fasting in the temple. He saw a miraculous being circumambulating the temple near the boundary walls, holding the Sreekovil Kalasa [consecrated pot] in one hand. That was believed to be Kalakkal Valiyachan or Nandi. When Vaikkathappan's procession goes outside the temple, an unsheathed sword is carried from the Kalakkal temple. This custom shows the special relation between the two temples. Vaikom Devaswom gives a certain amount of money as tribute to the Kalakkal temple.

KOOTTUMMEL BHAGAVATHY TEMPLE

Koottummel Bhagavathy temple is situated in Maravanthuruth grama panchayat near the Vaikom-Ernakulam road. Bhadrakali is the deity of the temple.

Festivals:

Theeyattu is the main festival of the temple which is a 40 day long colourful celebration with the observance of rituals like Theeyaattu, Kumbhakudam, Pakalpporam, etc. The Theeyaattu kalam, Thalappoli, etc. of the festival attract a lot of tourists to this spot every year.

UDAYANAPURAM SUBRAMANYA SWAMY TEMPLE

The temple is situated in Udayanapuram, 2 kms from Vaikom Mahadeva temple in Kottayam district. The presiding deity Subramanya faces the east. The idol stands six feet tall. The sub-deities are Ganapathy and Dakshinamoorthy.

Festivals:

A 10-day festival in Malayalam month of Vrischikom [November-December] is celebrated at this temple. Rituals like Shashti and Karthika are celebrated every month. Thypooyam too is celebrated with great pomp.

OTHER IMPORTANT TEMPLES IN VAIKOM

1	Thrinayamkudam Rama Swami temple
2	Sreenarayanaeswarapuram subramayai swami temple
3	Svayambhu saraswathy temple
4	Pazhuthuvalli sree bhagavathy temple
5	Payarukadu sreekrishna swami temple
6	Mozhikode sreekumarapuram sree subramaniya swami temple
7	Chemmanathukara sree krishna swami temple
8	Daivathar dharma daiva devi temple
9	Sri Pandavar kulangara sree krishna swami temple
10	Pandavar kulangara devi temple

11	Sree sharada devi temple
12	Periya kulangara vana durga temple
13	Thrippakkudam sree Mahadeva temple
14	Pudiyakaavu devi temple
15	Thottakam Valyarambathu Kuppeditravu devi temple
16	Ullala kaalikhvara khethram
17	Kalpakseri devi temple
18	Cheruparambu Khantagarna temple
19	Pattassery temple
20	Kaithakattumuri temple
21	Velloor Perunthatt mahadeva kshethram
22	Ayankovil shatha vishnu temple
23	Pundarikapuram temple

24	Brahmapuram mathanam devi temple
25	Vadayar elamkavu devi temple
26	Ayyarkulangara devi temple
27	Kalakkal temple
28	Koottummel bhagavathy temple
29	Udayanapuram subramanya swamy temple



KOTHAVARA ST FRANCIS XAVIER'S CHURCH

The story about how church came into being is an interesting one. Maramittathu Mana used to be a prominent landlord family in Kothavara, Vaikom. In olden days, there used to be a custom in Namboothiri families which enjoined the Christians of the locality to touch oil in order to purify it. A Christian family was made to relocate from Kodungaloor to Kothavara by the Maramittathu Mana for this purpose. The present-day Christians of Kothavara are largely the descendants of these immigrant Christians. With the purpose of catering to the religious needs of these Christians, a thatched hut was built. Before 1870s, the local Christians of this area worshipped at Kudavechur Church established in 1465 AD. Initially, the pleas of the local Christian community for a church was declined by the Maramittathu Mana since the Namboothiris feared that the burial of dead bodies within the premises would pollute the land. But later on, on persistent requests, land was allotted in the 'Vadakkupurath' and in 1870 CE, a church was constructed. The St Xavier's College now stands in the site where this church was first built. Subsequently the Maramittathu Mana was annihilated completely by fire and they had to shift from that locality, which by then had come to be known as the Manakkal Parambu. Eventually this land was brought over by Christians and was used for building the Kothavara St Francis Xavier's Church and on 1 December, 1980 the church was blessed by Rev. Cardinal Joseph Parekattil.



■ ST JOSEPH FORANE CHURCH

Vaikom Forane Church was established in 1391 and is the second church in Vaikom taluk. Initially, as found in the church records, the church was named after Holy Mary, and was later changed into St Joseph's name. This is backed by the Syrian scriptures placed in the sanctum sanctorum or the madubaha. It is mentioned in the book titled *Jornado* written by Guvayo, that the representatives of this church had taken part in the Synod of Diamper (1599). The diocesan curia erected this church as a Forane Church in 1958.

The wedding ceremony of St Joseph and Holy Mary is commemorated here as the major feast. In the contemporary social context, where marital life faces many challenges, a lot of people visit this church and plead to St Joseph for help. Believers specially pray for a fruitful family life and healthy children.

The present-day church building was built in 1809 under the vicarship of Rev. Fr Kuriakose Koikkeril. The big and beautiful belfry constructed in 1961 has three bells. They were brought from France in 1923. These three valuable bells were the memento of the Sacerdotal Golden Jubilee of Rev. Fr Jacob Veticappilly. The Relic of Holy Cross of Our Lord, brought from Rome in 1925, is kept in this church. The present presbytery was built in 1968. In 2012 a new presbytery, with office facilities, was blessed by His Eminence Cardinal George Alanchery.

In connection with the Second Centenary Celebrations, the church building was renovated under the leadership of Rev. Fr John Thekkan, the vicar. An awesome grotto of Blessed Virgin Mary decorates the churchyard. The statue of Holy Mary carved out of 'Devadaru' (Cedrus deodara) was brought from Fatima by Rev. Fr Syriac Puthenangady.

St Joseph Forane Church, Vaikom, is blessed with a good number of priests. The first Bishop of Gorakhpur diocese, Mar Dominic Kokattu



and the present Auxiliary Bishop of Archdiocese of Ernakulam-Angamaly, Mar Sebastian Adayanthrath belong to this parish. Besides, 31 priests and 80 nuns from this parish serve the church, both inside and outside India.

Festivals:

Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara, C.M.I. (1805 – 1871) was an Indian Catholic priest and social reformer. He is the first canonised Catholic male saint of Indian origin and belongs to the Syro-Malabar Catholic Church, an Eastern Catholic Church based in the state of Kerala. The feast of Saint Father Chavara Kuriakose is celebrated in an elaborate way on 3 January annually.

The marriage feast of Saint Joseph, a figure in the Gospels, and Mary, Jesus's mother, is the main festival of this church. It is celebrated on 23 January every year with great splendour.

Another event is the feast of Saint Joseph conducted to commemorate his death. It falls on 19 March. Apart from this, the Feast day of St Alphonsa, Mother Teresa and Holy Mary are also celebrated on 23 April, 5 September and 8 September respectively.

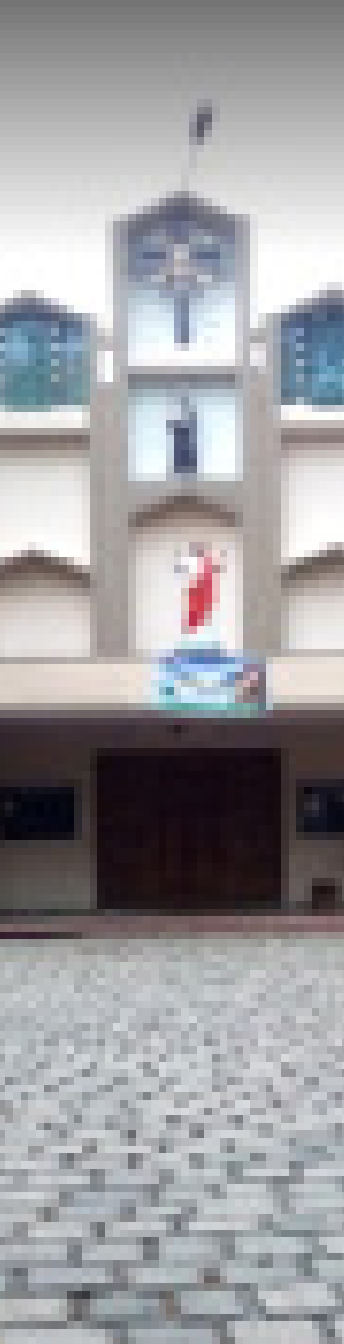


SACRED HEART CHURCH, VAIKOM

On 1 March 1913, Christian devotees living in TV Puram panchayat, began their 'Vanakkamasom' or fasting of Saint Joseph, built a small thatched hut in Pallipalakattu, and placed a 'Peetham' or a Sacred Chair symbolizing the Saint. Later, on 31 March 1920, a new edifice for the church was built as an interim arrangement and named St Antony's Chapel. On 31 December, 1952, a much bigger building was constructed for the church and named Thiruhridaya Chapel. The church was erected in over an acre land donated by the Forane Church, Vaikom. The foundation stone was laid by Father John Payyapullil on 7 December 1966. The Vencherippu or the blessing and cleansing of the new church was performed by the Most Rev. Dr Joseph Parekattil Mar Thoma Metropolitan.

SAINT SEBASTIAN'S CHURCH, KOTTARAPALLY

The Saint Sebastian's Church, Kottarapally, was erected in 1951 as a Carmel Ashram and is attached to Kalamassery province in Ernakulam Archdiocese.



ST ANTONY'S CHURCH, CHEMMANATHUKARA

The St Antony's Church, built in 1949, is located between Vaikom and Thottakam. In 1982, in the event of construction of the present church the ceremonies and sessions of the church were initially conducted in the Chemmanathukara Madom Chapel. This interim arrangement came into being due to the relentless efforts of Dr Father Immanuel Maniyankot. Later, Monsigneur George Velyarambath enabled the setting up of an ashram for the hapless, and along with that a hospital was also set up. Around 150 families in that area regularly visit this church to worship. The foundation stone of the present splendid and grand church was laid in December 1994 by Father Manathedathu. The present church started functioning on 14 April 1999, with the blessings of Father Mar Thomas Chakyath.

JOSEPURAM ST THOMAS CHURCH

On the Easter day in the year 1972, which fell on 2 April, the Josepuram St Thomas Chapel came into being. This chapel, in the name St Thomas, was blessed by Father Joseph Chakyath and the Holy Mass has been taking place there ever since. On April 7, 1983, Father Immanuel Maniyankot gave leadership to the decision to construct a church of dimension 70x20 feet. On the 11 February 1985 the foundation stone was laid and funds came in from all over the globe, and the dream of Father Immanuel Maniyankot was realized on 13 September 1986, after the ceremonial blessing by Mar. Antony Padiyara.



KALLARA PAZHAYA PALLI

Kallara St Thomas Knanaya Catholic Church (otherwise called as Kallara Pazhayapalli) was established in 1900 CE. As part of the Kaipuzha Forana and Kottayam Arch diocese, Kallara Palli has grown and become a spiritual haven for many. As a parish between Nendoor St Michael's Parish and Kallara St Mary's Parish, Kallara Pazhaya Palli is located at the centre of Kallara South Jn.

The Knanaya Christian families of Kallara panchayat used to pray together in the place where this church is currently located. Chruvil Kuruvila and Chorath Puthenpurayil Ouseph donated the piece of land for the construction of the church and construction work started in 1896. An unbelievable fact regarding this impressive church building is that the total expense for constructing this magnificent structure came up to only Rupees Six Hundred and Three, Nineteen Chakra and Fifteen Anna, since the currency value was immensely low then. The holy blessing of the church and the holy mass was performed by Changanasserry Arch Diocese Methran Makkal Mar. Mathew, and Father Mathew Pazhukayil was appointed as the first Chief Vicar.

In order to ensure a sustainable flow of funds for running the church, small scale activities such as chit fund, selling goodies and homemade eatables, are carried out. The church was later renovated on 2 July 1959 and then blessed by Arch Bishop Rev. Thomas Tharayil. In 1975 the platinum jubilee of the church was celebrated in a befitting manner under the leadership of the then priest Father Stephen Niravath. In 1999-2000 the centenary celebrations was conducted under the guidance of Father Thomas Valleppallil. Around five hundred and seventy families living in the vicinity are devoted to this church, and this church now has five chapels under its administration.



ST. MARY'S CHURCH VECHOOR (VECHOOR PALLI)

The famous St. Mary's Church, Vechoor, belongs to the Syro-Malabar Catholic Major Archeparchy of Ernakulam-Angamaly. The specialty of this church is a painted image of St. Mary, believed to have miraculous power and the tell tale is that it is a true copy of the St. Luke's portrait of Mary. The church is situated in a picturesque location on the banks of river Vembanad, in Vechoor Panchayat of Vaikom. The church dates back to 1463. The present building is a culminated result of several renovations; the present structure itself is believed to be more than 150 years. The building reflects the ancient Persian as well as Portuguese architecture. This is a popular pilgrimage centre of Kerala, in the name of Mother Mary.



■ ST MARY'S CHURCH, PUTHENPALLI

The St Mary's Church, Puthenpalli, was set up to the north of Kalabukkaadu canal, to facilitate prayers for the Knanaya families in the locality. The church was last renovated in 2008, in connection with its silver jubilee celebrations. There are several chapels under the Puthenpalli and Pazhayapalli to serve the devotees of the region. Under the Puthenpalli, there is St Mathews Church situated in Maniyanthruthu and St Anthony's Church which is located in the Perunthuruthu.



■ MOHIYUDHEEN MASJID

Mohiyudheen masjid situated in Thalayolaparambu, is one of the important mosques in this locality. The mosque stands tall as remembrance to some of the past remarkable incidents in the yesteryears, the very architecture of the centuries old building is a perfect example of the traditional Kerala architecture. The pillars, the artwork, remind us of the traditional 'nalukettu'. Other mosques in this locality include Vettikkattumukku Juma Masjid, Salafi Masjid, Sainudheen thangal thaikavu, and Palankadavu thaikavu. There are madrasas functioning in Thalayolaparambu, Palamkadavu and Vettikkattumukku. Vaikom Muhammed Basheer did his religious schooling in the madrasa at Palankadavu.

■ ANSAR UL ISLAM JAMATH ACHINAKAM

The Muslim communities in this area are believed to have migrated around 150 years ago. This mosque caters to the religious needs of Muslims living in the Maramveedu- Kavanattinkara region of Vaikom. Congregational prayer is held in this mosque every Friday, apart from the daily five prayers.



■ KULASEKHARAMANGALAM NUSRAT UL IKHWAN SALAFI JUMA

The Kulasekharamangalam Nusrat Ul Ikhwan Salafi Juma which is more than three to four centuries old is regarded as one of the oldest mosques in the region. The mosque was instrumental in bringing about some of the social reforms amongst the Muslim communities in the region.

■ MULLAKKERIL JUMA MASJID

The Mullakkeril Juma Masjid, established in 1954, though not a very old mosque, is one of the important mosques in the region and holds a unique position in the history.



CULTURE, ART AND HERITAGE TRAIL

The local culture in its myriad forms and expressions is an important element that contributes hugely to a destination's uniqueness. Hence it is very significant to understand the various art forms celebrated in a region and, as far as possible, to witness the events and be a part of them. The Art and Craft, Music and Dance, which are often specific to a place, community or social group, are the most direct and tangible expressions of culture. The local artistes and cultural performers are the real heroes who keep the flame of art burning through the ages and spread joy to those who watch them.

THEEYATTU

Theeyaattam also known as Theeyaattu is a traditional dance form widely performed in Central and South Kerala. An ancient and multi-hued cult, its genesis is untraceable in the pages of history. There were two types of Theeyaattam - Bhadrakali Theeyaattu and Ayyappan Theeyaattu. Bhadrakali Theeyattu is performed by Theeyaattunnis (a Brahmin community in Kerala) whereas Ayyappan Theeyaattu is performed by Tiyyadi Nambiaris (an Ambalavasi community).

Bhadrakali Theeyattu is a ritualistic dance usually performed in Bhadrakali temples and in the households of Namboothiri and Theeyattunni communities. The ritual starts with the ceremony of kalamezhuthu, ritualistic drawings in colourful powder. An elaborate three-dimensional picture (kalam) of Goddess Bhadrakali is drawn using powders on the floor using natural colours, strictly following guidelines on pattern, details and di-

mensions. The materials used are rice for white colour, charcoal of husk for black, turmeric for yellow, mixture of lime and turmeric for red, and green leaves for green. When lighted oil lamps are placed around it, there emanates an awe inspiring image of goddess Bhadrakali. The performance has many parts, of which preparation of the ritual art (known as Kalamezhuthu), singing songs in praise of Bhadrakali and the performance of the dance are a few. Kalamezhuthu is done during the day time on the floor. The singing of the songs takes place in front of the Kalamezhuthu and may last up to three hours. The dance performance usually commences at night which is performed by a male Theeyattunni. He enters the stage wearing elaborate costumes and a huge headgear. In this form, he



takes on the status of goddess Bhadrakali. The theeyattunni wears red clothes, chilambu or anklets, and carries a sword. Percussion instruments like the chenda, and elathalam (cymbals) are used while the ritual takes place. Lord Shiva is symbolised by the lighted lamp. The performance is in the form of a narration of story of the slaying of Darika, by Kali to Shiva. As she is affected by small pox and has pockmarks on her face she does not face the lamp almost throughout the performance. The legend of “Darika vadham”, or “Death of Darika” goes like this: two of the fiercest Asuras, Darika and Danavendra, were granted immunity from death by Lord Brahma. The only exception was that they could die at the hands of a woman. The two grew powerful and became a threat to the gods and godly men. After several attempts by the gods to defeat them, Lord Siva created Bhadrakali following the design given by Narada. All the Devas donated their special weapons to make up her armoury, and Bhadrakali

succeeded in destroying the demons after a fierce battle.

The performance progresses through chants, dances, gestures, and reports of the incidents leading to the killing of Darika. It concludes with the enactment of the assassination of Darikasura, representing the destruction of evil. As the Theeyattam approaches its conclusion, fire is lit to ward off ill luck, misfortune and evil eye.

■ GARUDAN THOOKKAM

Garudan Thookkam is a ritual art form performed in certain Kali temples in certain central districts of Kerala. The people who dress up as Garuda perform the dance. After the dance, the performers dangle from tall shafts with huge hooks piercing the skin on their backs. In some places, the ritual is performed colourfully with Garudas taken in a procession on bullock carts or boats or hand pulled carts. It is seen in Devi temples during the festivals of Mee-na bharani and Patham Udayam in



Kottayam district.

Legend has it that even after slaying Darika, Kali remained insatiable and thirsty. At this point, Lord Vishnu sent Garuda to Kali to quench her thirst. A dancing and bleeding Garuda was taken to Kali and only after getting some drops of blood from Garuda, was Kali pacified. It is this belief that fuels the ritual.

Garudan Thookam is undertaken by devotees at the temples of Goddess Kali as a gesture of gratitude for favours received or problems solved. During this feat, 40 to 50 people hang as Garudas from the shafts, that are decorated and carried around in a procession. After the long performance to the accompaniment of background music provided by scores of chendas, the Garudas – bleeding after the Choondakuthal [piercing of the skin on the backs with sharp metal hooks] – will be hung on a tall pedestal-like structure and taken thrice around the temple by the devotees. Only men perform this ritual and they

wear false beaks and wings to resemble the heavenly bird, the mount of Lord Vishnu. Sandalwood paste is applied on to their bodies, and garlands offered by the temple priest are tied on their hands.

■ SARPAM THULLAL

Sarpam Thullal (Dance of Snakes) or Nagakalam Pattu, is a unique form of ritual associated with ancestral temples or tharavadus predominantly in state of Kerala. In ancient times most families in Kerala had special snake shrines called Kavu or Pambin Kavu, where this exotic and spectacular ritual performance was performed to appease the snake gods and thereby to bring prosperity to the family. This is usually conducted during the time of Ayilyam asterism. Special pujas are performed and kalams [colourful, three-dimensional drawings on consecrated floor] are drawn to represent the serpents.



Sarpam Thullal (Dance of Snakes) or Nagakalam Pattu, is a unique form of ritual associated with ancestral temples or tharavadus predominantly in state of Kerala. In ancient times most families in Kerala had special snake shrines called Kavu or Pambin Kavu, where this exotic and spectacular ritual performance was performed to appease the snake gods and thereby to bring prosperity to the family. This is usually conducted during the time of Ayilyam asterism. Special pujas are performed and kalam [colourful, three-dimensional drawings on consecrated floor] are drawn to represent the serpents.

Sarpam Thullal is generally held to appease snake gods. The belief is that it will ensure prosperity to the family or give offspring to the couples. In most cases, Sarpam Thullal is done to ward off any doshas or evil of the family and bring peace and prosperity.

The temple astrologer is the one who normally initiates the

process. In certain places it is held as an annual or regular practice. Once the date is finalized by the family, the Pulluvan family associated with the temple is informed.

The Pulluvans are a special caste of wandering minstrels in Kerala who sing songs and play a stringed instrument to propitiate the snake gods. It is the Pulluvan and Pulluvathy (his wife) and their assistants who have the skills for and are responsible for creating the aesthetic ambience for the Sarpam Thullal.

They create a pandal, decorate it and sing songs in praise of serpents. The blessing of serpents is showered on some people during this puja who then become the mediums or manifestations of Snake Gods. They behave as oracles and can at times predict future.

The Pulluvan and his team create a floral decoration using various natural colours on specially made floor in front of the snake idols. The floral decoration is called Nagakalam. Nagakalam are of various types such as Bhasma Kalam (a Kalam which is made of ash powder exclusively) and Varna Podi

Kalam (A Kalam Which Is Made Up Of Colour Powder).

Nagarajavu generally stands inside the kalam. The Pulluvan starts singing and playing the veena and the Pulluvathy sings along and plays the instrument called kudam. The initial lines are generally sung in praise of Ganesha, followed by paeans of other gods. Then the Thala or beat changes along with the song. The latter part is dedicated to Serpent God Astika. The people who contract powers from Serpent Gods generally get into a trance like state within 20 to 30 minutes. It is believed they feel that the snake which is drawn on the floor has come alive. Some of them experience vibrations all over their body and they feel their body resonating with the vibrations.

■ THIRUVATHIRAKALI

The Thiruvathirakali is a unique dance performed on the auspicious day of Thiruvathira, celebrated as the birthday of Lord Shiva. It is performed by women who seek blessings for eternal marital bliss. It falls in the Malayalam month of Dhanu [December-January]. This kind of dance form falls in the 'lasya' category of acting, where the body sways slowly in fluid movements. This is a unique art form in that it rejuvenates a person physically, mentally and spiritually. Thiruvathirakali is also performed

during marriages in Namboothiri Illams. Kaikottikkali and Kummikali are variants of this dance form.

As per Hindu mythology it is believed that on this day, the Goddess Parvathi finally met Lord Shiva after her long penance, and Lord Shiva took her as a saha-dharma chaarini (equal partner). This is believed to be the

reason that brought Kamadeva (God of Love) back to life after he had been burnt to ashes by Lord Shiva's fury. At least seven days before Thiruvathira, women devotees sing songs of praise of Parvathy Devi and perform dances to please her.

Groups of up to eight or ten women get dressed in traditional Kerala attire, and dance in a circle. The graceful movements of the dance are both enchanting and elegant. The off-white saris with rich, zari borders, along with fresh garlands on their hair tied up in a traditional knot, make for a wonderful sight. The garlands on their hair are made from ten sacred flowers called Dasapushpam (from Sanskrit dasa, meaning 'ten', and pushpam, meaning 'flower'). These herbs are found almost everywhere in Kerala, especially in the Western Ghats.



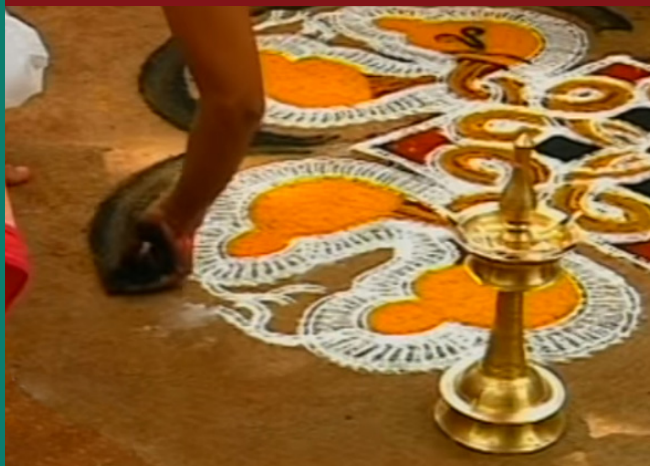
Fidelity and the power of female energy are the crux of this ancient practice. The dance performance commences after the sun sets and the Thiruvathira star rises in the sky. Very often, the performance extends up to midnight.

A variation of Thiruvathirakali also practised in South Kerala is known as Pinnal Thiruvathirakali. Although this art form was on the verge of extinction a few years back, now it has been revived due to the earnest efforts of a few. Women sing and dance to tunes in praise of Lord Krishna. The word Pinnal Thiruvathira comes from the fact that the women hold on to three long ropes while dancing. While performing the dance their steps are so carefully executed that by the end of the dance the three ropes are neatly plaited like a traditional braid (pinnal). This dance form is now carried out in the Payarukadu Sree Krishna Swami temple.

Yet another type of Thiruvathira is Pinjani Thiruvathira, also called Kinnamkali, performed by women holding a small vessel in hand. This had not been widely practised until now in Thalayazham panchayat.

■ KALAMEZHUTHUM PATTUM

Kalam, a ritual art form of Kerala, comprises unique hand drawings of figures of Gods and Goddesses on the floor using powders. The rituals practised in Kerala where Kalam is drawn include Bhadrakali Theeyattu, Mudi yettu, Kalamazhuthum pattum, Ayyappan Theeyattu, Kolam thullal and Sarpam thullal. Songs are rendered to appease the deities. The subject for these rituals are usually Kali, Durga, Yakshi, Ayyappa, Gandharvan and Thirumadamkunnill Amma.



Coloured powders are used for preparing the kalam. Primarily, five natural colours are used – white, black, yellow, green and red. Various natural products are used for making the colours. White colour powder comes from fine rice flour; charcoal powder for black; turmeric powder for yellow; powdered green leaves for green; and a mixture of turmeric powder and lime for red. In Nagakalam, instead of vaka (gulmohar) leaves, powdered Manchadi (Bead tree) leaves are used as the leaves of vaka are poisonous.

Kalams are drawn by people belonging to different communities in different places. Members of the Kurup community or locally known as ‘Kuruppanmaar’ draw kalam inside the temple. Outside the temple, especially when it happens in homes, the kalam is drawn by the Vannan community. Other communities also do according to the place and type, like the Malayan, Pulayar, Parayan, Paniyan, Aaviyar, Velan and Kuruvus, to name a few.

Figures are drawn based on the rituals of a particular place and these include Yakshi, Sarpam, Bhadrakali, Gandharvan and Gulikan. Kalams are drawn differently for different ritual performances like Kalamezhuthu pattu, Mudi yettu, Panna, Theeyattu, Pulluvan pattu, Kethronpattu, Gandharvan Thullal, Malayan Kettu, Balikala, Bhagavatipattu, Kalathilarpattu, etc.

The Kalamezhuthu is performed during the utsavam season which is usually between the first of the Malayalam month Vrishchikam [November-December] and the eleventh day of Dhanu [December-January], that is, the Mandala season, which is the main pilgrimage season of the renowned Sabarimala temple. It is seen to be executed only in Dravidian temples and Kaavus [holy serpent groves] of Kerala. Hours of puja follow the kalamezhuthu, where songs in praise of Gods are sung. Velichappadu thullal is also a part of this. Velichappadu is the oracle or mediator between a deity and devotees at a Hindu temple in Kerala. When the Velichappadu starts performing the song gains speed. The Velichappadu erases the kalam during the process of performing his dance, with vigorous steps. The kalam is distributed as prasada or consecrated blessings, and with this the kalamezhuthu ends.

There are two widely accepted myths behind the sketching of Kalams. The first one dates back to the era when Buddhism was a well-established religion and was followed during the period of AD 650-850. During the 8th century, the decline of Buddhism started as the Brahminical revolution started overtaking in Kerala. This art form is believed to have been derived from the ancient Buddhist art form known as the ‘Dhuli paintings’.

The second myth comes from a time before the advent of Buddhism in Kerala, when Shaktheya religion existed in Kerala. The Kalamezhuthu is believed to have been a ritual adopted from Shaktism.

BHADRAKALI KALAM AND PATTU

Kalamezhuthu pattu performed mostly in Bhadrakali temples are known as Bhadrakali kalam and Pattu. The number of forearms of Bhadrakali determines the size of the kalam, usually sixteen to sixty-four hands are drawn.

This ritual is usually performed during the Mandala (pilgrimage) season. Once the kalam has been completed, paddy, coconuts and fibres are placed in it. And then the rendering of songs starts. After the songs are over, the performer circumambulates the kalam. Against the background music of instruments, the singer dances vigourously and erases the kalam. The popular song rendered in Bhadrakali pattu is that of Bhadrakali killing the demon Darika. While the songs and chants are repeated, devotees go clockwise around the kalam and this is called Pradakshinam, which is the practice of circumambulating sacred spaces. This is also called 'thotam pattu'.

NAGAKALAM AND PULLUVAN PAATTU

Nagas or serpents are considered gods of the earth. Many rituals are performed to appease the serpents for ensuring peace and happiness in the society. Prominent among these rituals are Nagakalam and Pattu. Naga worship is mostly performed by the Pulluvan community in Kerala.

Usually the rituals begin after the dusk, with Ganapathi puja. The kalam for this will be of Nagas and Nagaraja. Once the kalam is completed Pancharchana is performed and is followed by Akamuzhiyal, a ritual which involves striking the Pulluva Kudam (pot). Then Muram puja for Garudan and Noorum



Paalum for the serpents is offered. After that Bhadrakali and Ashtavasus are worshipped. The girls who have been on a holy fast enter the kalam and start dancing (thullal). The songs are sung to propitiate the elephant-god Ganapathy or to exorcise the Nagas. The Ashtanagas [eight serpents] are Ananthan, Vasuki, Thakshakan, Karkodakan, Shanghupalan, Mahapadman, Padman and Kaaliyan. Young girls dance and simultaneously shake bunches of arecanut flowers (pookulas in Malayalam). As the tempo increases, the girls begin imitating the movements of the serpents and erase the kalam.

■ KALAM PATTU

The rituals of drawing kalam and singing is observed in North Kerala also. The chief priest is the Kaniyan or Kanisan, who belongs to the astrologer community. People belonging to the Vannan community also perform these rituals. The ritual takes place in a specially built pandal. The figures of Gandharvan, Karukalaki, Bhairavan, Raktewari and other Goddesses are created. The 'piniyal' stands in front of the kalam and sings the song. The ilathalam (cymbal) is then played. The songs are from Kalyana saugandhikam, Balivijayam, Kuchelavrutham, Krishnaleela and Marappattu. When the tempo of the song and the beat increase, the 'piniyal' dances vibrantly and the kalam is erased.



MUDIYETTU

Mudiyyett or Mudiyettu is a traditional ritual theatre and folk dance drama from Kerala that enacts the mythological tale of a battle between Goddess Kali and the demon Darika. The ritual is a part of the Bhagavathy or Bhadrakali cult. The dance is performed in Bhadrakali temples, the temples of the Mother Goddess, between February and May, after the harvesting season. In 2010, Mudiyettu was included in the UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, thus becoming the second art form from Kerala, after Koodiyattam.

Mudiyettu is also based on the Kali-Darika myth described in the Theeyattu section of this script. Mudiyyett is a village ritual performed by members of the Marar and Kurup communities in Kerala. However, the entire community contributes to and participates in it. Mudi-yettu is performed annually in 'Bhagavati Kavus',

the temples of the goddess, in different villages along the rivers Chalakudy Puzha, Periyar and Moovattupuzha.

There is no rehearsal or preparation involved in playing Kali. The performance is a natural progression from Lord Shiva, Narada, demons Danavan and Darikan to Kali. A complete Mudiyettu performance requires a total of 12 to 20 persons— including percussionists, Kalamezhuthu artists, and vocalists. There are also evident regional differences in the attire and performance styles of Mudiyettu. Thus, in the Koratty style, Kali exhibits a bare torso, covered only by a breast-shaped plank while in the Keezhillam and the Pazhoor styles, she wears a full upper body dress. Similarly, in the Koratty style, Darika's hair resembles the Kathakali crown and his face paint, the Kathi style of face make-up of Kathakali. This points to how the two forms have become interlinked even though Mudiyettu predates Kathakali, with epigraphists



tracing its evolution as an art to the 9th or 10th century CE. The first major steps involved in Pratistha puja refer to the rite or ceremony in which a murti (image of a god) is consecrated, the Bhadrakali kalamezhuthu is prepared, thiri uzhichil is done, wherein the body of the performer is anointed with a wick dipped with oil, a thalapoli or procession is taken out and in the end the kalam is rubbed out by the oracle. The Mudi yettu is performed in front of the Bhadrakali kalam. The stories narrate how two Asura women gave birth two children: Danamathi gave birth to Danavendra, and Darumathi gave birth to Darika. But their births took place at an evil hour and they grew up to be destructive forces. Narada, the bard of Devas, took this news to Lord Shiva and informed him of the atrocities committed by Darika. This is where the story of 'Mude yettu' begins. Darika then enters the stage from amidst the audience and starts performing acts revealing his insolence and cruelty. At that juncture Kali enters to

the cheers of the devotees. In some temples, this is preceded by the sacrifice of chickens. In most temples, the performer comes to the space of performance without the crown, and wears the crown in front of the temple. Her performance is accompanied by the recitals of the musicians amidst chants. Kali begins to perform and goes into a trance-like state.

The spectators in a Mudi yettu performance are not mere witnesses as in the case of those in the modern theatre forms. They are active participants in the performance and a deciding factor in its success and effectiveness. There are several segments in this group of spectators. There are families who have been involved with the temple and the rituals there for years. Then there are those who are active in the organisation of the rituals and the Mudi yettu performers. And then there are the devotees with deep respect for the mother goddess. These are people who are well versed in the conventions of the performance and its nuances. They know the legends and myths. They respond to the performance text with immense devotion and dedication and they become part of the performance. They are mentally ready for specific responses. For them, being part of the performance is a social as well as religious responsibility.

Mudi yettu is a communal undertaking in which each caste of the village plays a specific role. The bamboo artefacts and leather hides for drums are provided by the Parayan caste while the Thandan caste brings the arecanut fronds that are required for the masks and headgears. The Ganakan community paints the masks while the Kuruvan community keeps the country torches burning. It is the Veluthedan (Patiyan) caste that washes the clothes used for making the deity's dress while the Maran caste readies the torches and keeps them supplied with oil.

Thus each caste in the village contributes to the festival according to its traditional caste role. Mutual cooperation and collective participation of each caste in the ritual instill and strengthen the common identity and mutual bonding in the community. This is followed by the entry of Koyinbadi Nayar and this character appears to pacify Kali. He interacts with the musicians and reveals the context of the performance and then enters providing relief and entertainment. During the scene of the killing of Darika, Kali chases Darika around the temple and symbolically beheads him. Kali blesses the children by placing them on her lap, blesses the village and ensures its well-being. Finally, in front of the village, the performer removes the crown. This also symbolizes the return of Kali after the completion of the ritual.

KALAMS OF CHEERBAKAVU

While drawing Kalam, the Thiyyas of Cheerbakavu in North Kerala follow a particular singing tradition. This is known as Kalam of Cheerbakavu. The rituals for Kalam at Cheerbakavu will last for three days. It begins with a Thaliipoli festival which takes place once in a year. They draw the Nagakalam and the song describes Cheerba killing the demon, Darika.



PULLUVAN PATTU

Pulluvan Paattu is an inevitable segment of serpent worship and is deeply entrenched in the culture of Kerala. It has a close association with the kaavus or the serpent temples of the state. Even though pulluvan pattu is chanted and sung in temples, the alapana or the melodic improvisation of the songs sung during pulluvan pattu is a lot different from that of the traditional and conventional Carnatic music and Sopana Sangeetham which are forms of Indian classical music that developed in the temples of Kerala.

Pulluvans are believed to be the descendants of Jarita, a female bird of the species called Sarngika, whose story is told in the Mahabharata. According to a folktale, a saint called Mandapala, returned from the shades because he had no son, he assumed the form of a male bird, and by Jarita he had four sons. He then abandoned her.

children, and they were eventually saved through the influence of Mandapala over the god of fire. Their names were Jaritari, Sarisrikta, Stambamitra, and Drona. They were “interpreters of the Vedas,” and there are hymns of the Rigveda bearing the names of the second and the third.

Pulluva caste has been described in depth in the Castes and Tribes of Southern India by Edgar Thurston.

The song depicts folklores related to serpents portrayed in the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. Garudolpathi, Kaliyadamanam, Vishaparedesha, Nagolsavam and Paalazhimadhanam are a few examples of Pulluva songs. Apart from these, Navoor pattu is a Pulluva pattu which is sung for small kids to ward off evil eye.



KALARIPPAYATTU

Kalaripayattu (sometimes shortened to Kalari) is an Indian martial art and fighting system that originated in Kerala. Some practitioners claim that it is the oldest martial art in existence, with its origin dating back to the 3rd century BCE. Kalaripayattu has three schools which are distinguished by their attacking and defensive patterns. They are Arappa Kayy, Pilla Thangi, and Vatten Thiripp. There are four stages of Kalaripayattu, they are Meythari, Kolthari, Angathari and Verum Kai.

Early written evidence of martial arts is found in Dhanurveda, a part of Atharvaveda and Rig Veda and in Sangam literature about Kalaripayattu in the 3rd century BC to the 2nd century AD. The Akananuru and Purananuru describe the use of spears, swords, shields, shields, bows and silambam in the Sangam era. The word kalari appears in the Hindu Puranas and Akam to describe both a battlefield and combat arena. The word 'kalari tatt' denoted a martial feat, while 'kalari kozhai'

meant a coward in war. Each warrior in the Sangam era received regular military training in target practice, horse and elephant riding. They specialized in one or more of the important weapons of the period including the spear (vel), sword (val), shield (kedaham), and bow and arrow (villum ambum). The combat techniques of the Sangam period were the earliest precursors to kalaripayattu. References to Silappadikaram in Sangam literature date back to the 2nd century. These refer to the silambam staff which was in great demand among foreign visitors.

Elements from the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali were incorporated into the fighting arts. A number of South Asian fighting styles remain closely connected to yoga, dance and performing arts. Some of the choreographed sparring in Kalaripayattu have been applied to dances, and Kathakali dancers who know Kalaripayattu are seen to be markedly better than other performers. Velakali



an art form of the Nair soldiers from the southern part of Kerala combines elements of Kalarippayattu to depict ancient battle scenes from the Mahabharata. Until recent decades, the Chhau dance was performed only by martial artistes. Some traditional Indian classical dance schools still incorporate martial arts as part of their exercise regimen.

Kalarippayattu developed into its present form by the 6th century, during an extended period of warfare between the Chera and Chola dynasties. It includes strikes, kicks, grappling, preset stances, weaponry and healing methods. Regional variants are classified according to geographical position in Kerala; these is the Northern style from Malabar region in North Kerala; the Central style from mid-Kerala; and the southern style from Travancore. Northern kalarippayattu is based on elegant and flexible movements, evasions, jumps and weapons training, while the southern “Adi Murai” style primarily fol-

lows the hard impact based techniques with priority on fighting with bare hands, and pressure point strikes. Both systems make use of internal and external concepts.

Sage Agastya is regarded as the founder and patron saint of southern kalarippayattu Marmachikitsa – an ancient science of healing marmam or vital points of the human body for varied diseases.

Kalarippayattu techniques are a combination of steps (Chuvadu) and postures (Vadivu). Chuvadu literally means ‘steps’, the basic steps of the martial arts. Vadivu literally means ‘postures’ or stances that are the basic characteristics of Kalaripayattu training. Named after animals, they are usually eight in number. Styles differ considerably from one tradition to another. Not only do the names of poses differ, the masters also differ about application and interpretation. Each stance has its own style, power combination, function and effectiveness. These techniques vary from one style to another.

It is claimed that learned warriors can disable or kill their opponents by merely touching the correct marmam (vital point). This is taught only to the most promising and level-headed persons in order to discourage misuse of the technique. Marmashastram stresses the knowledge of marmam and is also used for marma treatment (marmachikitsa). This system of marma treatment comes under Siddha vaidhyam, attributed to the sage Agastya and his disciples. Critics of kalarippayattu have pointed out that the application of marmam techniques against neutral outsiders has not always produced verifiable results.

The earliest mention of marmam is found in the Rig Veda, where Indra is said to have defeated Vritra by attacking his marmam with a vajra. References to marmam are also found in the Atharva Veda. With numerous other scattered references to vital points

in Vedic and epic sources, it is certain that India's early martial artistes knew about and practised attacking or defending vital points. Sushruta identified and defined 107 vital points of the human body in his Sushruta Samhita. Of these 107 points, 64 were classified as being lethal if properly struck with a fist or stick. Sushruta's work formed the basis of the medical discipline Ayurveda, which was taught alongside various Indian martial arts that placed emphasis on vital points, such as varma kalai and marma adi.

As a result of learning about the human body, Indian martial artistes became knowledgeable in the field of traditional medicine and massage. Kalarippayattu teachers often provide massage (uzhichil) with medicinal oils to their students in order to increase their physical flexibility or to treat muscle injuries encountered during practice. Such massages are generally termed thirumal and the unique massage given to increase flexibility is known as katcha thirumal. It is said to be

as sophisticated as the uzichil treatment of Ayurveda. Kalaripayattu has borrowed extensively from Ayurveda and equally lends to it.

■ DAFF MUTTU

Duffmuttu also called Dhappu Ratheebu and Dhappu Kavathu is an art form prevalent in among the Muslim communities in Kerala. It derives its name from the duff, a percussion instrument made of wood and ox skin. The word duff is of Arabic origin and is also called a thappitta.

Duff muttu is performed as a form of social entertainment and to commemorate festivals, uroos (festivals connected with mosques) and weddings. Duff muttu can be performed at any time of the day. A duff muttu performance usually consists of six members who stand or sit facing each other singing songs and swaying their bodies to the tempo of the song which is set by the rhythmic beats of the duff.



Duff muttu songs are a tribute to Islamic heroes and martyrs. The lead player also leads the troupe in song while the others provide the chorus. The dancers drum on the duff with their fingers or palms, and while moving rhythmically often toss them over their heads. A closely related art form is the Aravana Muttu or Arabana Muttu that uses a drum called aravana that is similar to the duff.

■ PADAYANI

Padayani is a ritual art form performed at Bhadrakali temples located on the banks of river Pampa. According to mythology, this ritualistic dance commemorates the dance performed by Lord Shiva and the other gods to appease Goddess Durga, whose anger could not be quenched even after annihilating the demon, Drika. Popular places where Padayani is performed are Kadammanitta, Kottangal, Othara, Kunnanthaanam and many other temples in south Kerala. Though traditionally, it lasted nearly two weeks, nowadays, it is held for durations that are as short as a single day. Kolam thullal is the major portion of Padayani performance. Kolam is a masque made by drawing images on the leaves of the arecanut palm. Wearing this Kolam, the Padayani dancer performs the ritual dance in devotion. An important activity in Padayani is Kaachikottu which is used to inform local folks that the art form is taking place. This is followed by kappoli, wherein the people stamp their feet in rhythm and wave leaves or towels. Later the leaves



and towels were replaced by bells known as kaimani in local language. Then it is called thavadi thullal. Percussion instruments like chenda are also used. The humorous version of thavadi is called pannathavadi. The instruments are made of Pala or palm leaves. Characters like Velichappadu (oracle) and Paradeshi (foreigner) appear to lighten the mood. Thappu and chenda are the main musical instruments played during the onset of the event.

These Kolams are representations of spiritual forces or divine characters, and are depicted with terrifying and spectacular face masks and head gear, painted in vivid colours like deep red and black, using natural powders. They include the Ganapathi Kolam, the Yakshi Kolam, the Pakshi Kolam, the Maadan Kolam, the Kaa-lan Kolam, the Maruthaa Kolam, the Pishachu Kolam, the Bhairavi Kolam, the Gandharvan Kolam and the Mukilan Kolam. The biggest amongst the kolaam is the Bhairavi Kolam, playing which, the performer

wears a kolam made out of 101 Pala or palm trees. Pa-dayani is essentially a communal activity where villagers are actively involved in collecting arecanut palms, and participate in the making kolam.

■ GANDHARVAN THULLAL

This is an ancient art form usually performed in Brahmin families and affluent families of the region. Minor differences in the style of performance are usually noted from place to place. Kurppan from the Ganaka community is entitled to perform this, the objective of which is to ward off evil spirits. This art form is quite rarely seen in Kerala these days. Some of the major components of this art form are kalamezhuthu, accompanied by singing, Gandharva dance and pinniyal thulal. Foremost of the kalams is that of Chitra Radhan who is the Gandharva King, popularly known as the Gandharva Rajan. The kalam is drawn using natural organic powders and mixtures to impart various colours, like rice flour for white, coal powder for black, turmeric for yellow, a mixture of turmeric and lime for produce red, and Circassian leaf for green.

■ AYYAPPANN PATTU AND AYYAPPAN VILAKKU

Ayyappan vilakku is a popular ritual organized in temples as well as houses and common places to please and get the blessings of Lord Ayyappa. The whole day ritual includes craftsmanship, bhajan, procession, etc. This is conducted during the main pilgrimage season of Sabarimala by pilgrims who observe vritham or fasting and abstinence before going on a pilgrimage. The artistes are trained professionals. By dawn they create miniature temples for the deities such as the Lord Ayyappa, and Lord Vavar, a Muslim warrior who became a close friend of Lord Ayyappa, and Goddess Bhagavathy, using the stem of banana plant and tender fronds of the coconut tree. After the installation of the deities, the main programme is a ritual procession in the late afternoon with ladies carrying lamps, drum beats and udukkukottipattu (folksongs), etc. In some places, panchavadyam (traditional orchestra with five musical instruments),

caparisoned elephants are the added attractions. The ritualistic dance performance by oracles (velichappadukal) in accordance with the rhythmic drum beats of chenda and udukku is the most spectacular show of this event. By night Ayyappan pattu begins. Songs commemorating the feats of the king of Pandalam and Lord Ayyappa are sung.

Ayyappan pattu is the udukkukottipattu, where a group of singers narrate the story of Lord Ayyappa through folksongs. This will continue for two-three hours. After midnight another ritual procession with Thalappoli, is held similar to that in the evening. After this Thiri uzichil (anointing the body of the performer with vegetable oil from a wick), fire walk, symbolic fight between Ayyappa and Vavar, and their truce are performed. Ayyappan vilakku ends by the next dawn with fireworks. When the Ayyappan pattu is celebrated in a ceremonial way it is often called Ayyappa Vilakku.

■ KAVADI ATTAM

Kavadi Attam is a ceremonial sacrifice and offering practised by devotees during the worship of Lord Muruga, the Hindu God of War. It is a central part of the festival of Thaipuyam and emphasizes debt bondage. The kavadi ("burden") itself is a physical burden, bearing which the devotee implores to Muruga for assistance, usually on behalf of a loved one who is in need of healing, or as a means of balancing a spiritual debt. Devotees move in a procession and dance along a pilgrimage route while bearing these burdens.

On the day of the festival, devotees undertake a pilgrimage along a set route while engaging in various acts of devotion, notably carrying various types of kavadi (burdens). At its simplest this may entail carrying a pot of milk (pal kavadi), but piercing the skin, tongue or cheeks with vel skewers is also common.

A more elaborate kavadi consists of two semicircular pieces of wood or steel which are bent and attached to a cross structure that can be balanced on the shoulders of the devotee. It is often decorated with flowers and peacock feathers (the vehicle of God Murugan) among other things.

The most spectacular practice is the vel kavadi, essentially a portable altar up to two meters tall, decorated with peacock feathers and attached to the devotee through 108 vels pierced into the skin on the chest and back. Fire walking and flagellation are also practised. It is claimed that devotees are able to enter a trance and so feel no pain. They do not bleed from their wounds and the piercings leave no scars behind.



■ UDAYAM PUJA

Udayam Puja is a festival of reverence of the solar deity, one among the few festivals where devotees offer salutation to rising sun. This is also called 'Pathaam Udayam'. Udaya puja is performed from the first to tenth day of the Malayalam month of Medam [April-May]. The offerings to Sun God during this period are Appam (small round snack made from rice, jaggery, banana, roasted coconut pieces, roasted sesame seeds, ghee and cardamom powder fried in oil), Neeranjana deepam, flowers and fruits. Devotees sing praises and the ceremonial ululating sounds made by women called 'Kurava idal'. This throws light on the former life of Keralaites which was in close association with Nature.



LOCAL CUISINES AND ETHNIC FOOD

KAKKA IRACHI THORAN (MUSSELS)

Kakkai irachi is derived out of the lime shells collected from the backwaters of the region.. These when prepared provides delicious taste. Mussels fry or curry is made and is served in almost all the restaurants of the destination and it is much cheaper than other fish items. The tuber is now considered as endangered specie.

The local cuisine of Vaikom is unique in terms of its flavor that has over the years attracted the tourists in flocks. Sea food is available all over. In the destination the traditional cuisine includes fresh-water fish like Karimeen, Prawn, Shrimps, Kanava (Squid), and many other delicacies served along with 'Kappa' (Tapioca) or rice. A list of such food items is prepared after consultation with the age old experienced people and households of Kumarakom. The most important of them and which could be preferred to be served to the tourists are listed as under.

These Ethnic/ Local dishes of Vaikom are available in the Experience Ethnic Cuisine Units of RT Mission.



FRESH TENDER COCONUT

Tender coconut water and the pith or its inner essence is two delicious products of tender coconut. It's one of the traditional drink served to the tourist. It is also mixed with the toddy which provides the combination a new varied taste.

Toddy is the indigenous Vaikom beverage extracted from the inflorescence of the coconut tree. It's available in plenty in the region. Vast sections of the local population depend on toddy tapping as an occupation. The toddy is collected in a clay pot. Freshly extracted toddy is sweet in taste and is called madhura kallu - sweet toddy. The toddy shops in Kumarakom are often furnished with wooden benches and tables and the liquor is served in clay pots along with non vegetarian food which makes a good combination.



TAPIOCA (KAPPA)

In Kumarakom tapioca is a favorite food. Tapioca is widely consumed in Kumarakom usually as breakfast or in the evening. It is consumed either boiled or cooked with spices. Tapioca is also thinly sliced and made into wafers, similar to potato wafers. Tapioca could be served with a number of other cuisines. Some of them are listed as under:

1. Tapioca and Pearl Spot curry
2. Tapioca and Chilly Chutney
3. Tapioca and Mussels
4. Baked Tapioca
5. Fried Tapioca
6. Tapioca pudding served with fish curry
7. Kappa Biriyani

Tapioca can be stored for longer periods by parboiling & drying it after skinning and slicing it into 0.5 cm thick pieces. This is called Unakka Kappa or Vaattu Kappa (Dried Tapioca). Unakka Kappa pudding is also widely consumed in this part.



KARIMEEN (PEARL SPOT)

Pearl spot fish is one of the famous delights from the destination. Various cuisines made from this fish are well renowned and much sought off. This fish is an integral part of Kumarakom's eating habits. Pearl Spot is a hardy species having good flavour and taste. It has equal nutritional value as compared to other animal food products and also affordable by low income groups. There are a number of cuisines made from this fish and they are listed as under:

1. Karimeen Pollichathu
2. Karimeen Varuthathu
3. Karimeen Naadan Kari
4. Karimeen varutharacha kari
5. Karimeen Mappas

PRAWNS (CHEMMEEN)

Prawns are crustaceans of varying size with sweet, firm, meaty flesh. Prawns are one among the most preferred sea foods available in Kumarakom. It's available in plenty at the destination and is one among the most preferred sea food by the tourists. There are a number of cuisines available. They are listed as under:

1. Chemmeen Fry
2. Chemmeen Curry
3. Chemmeen Roast
4. Chemmeen Ularthiyathu
5. Prawn Coconut fry

These delights are available at almost all the restaurants and toddy parlors and are served along with rice or tapoca. There is a huge demand for these cuisines from the tourists.

LOBSTER (KONJU)



Lobsters as they are defined are ten-legged crustaceans closely related to shrimp and crabs. Lobster is yet another specialty of the region. Kumarakom is famous for its Lobster delights. There are a number of traditional Lobster cuisines prepared and served in this region. Some of them are listed as under:

1. Konju Curry
2. Konju Fry
3. Konju Varutharachathu
4. Konju Masala
5. Coconut lobster curry





CRAB (NJANDU)

Cuisines made of crabs are also demanded by the tourists. The crab cuisines prepared in the local taste becomes delight for the outsiders. The most sought crab items are listed as under:

1. Njandu Varutharachathu
2. Njandu Curry
3. Njandu Fry

PODIMEEN

The small fishes which are abundantly available in Vaikom is locally known as podimeen. A number of cuisines are prepared using these small fishes. They are prepared traditionally and is commonly served along with rice or tapioca. Such cuisines are available in almost all the restaurants and toddy parlors. Some of the commonly available cuisines are listed as under:

1. Podimeen Curry
2. Podimeen Fry
3. Podimeen peera vattichathu



PLANTAIN BUD THORAN (VAZHA CHUNDU THORAN)

Plantain bud thoran is one of the ethnic food items in Kumarakom as elsewhere in Kerala. It's preferred by the common folk of Kumarakom. It's a dish prepared using the bud of plantain. The dish is used along with rice and gruel.

It's also prepared by mixing green grams also. This adds to the delight.

APPAM AND DUCK CURRY



Appam and Duck curry traditionally were inevitable items of the Church festivals and other gatherings of the destination. Toddy is also used as an ingredient of appam which adds to its flavor. The appam thus prepared is known as kallappam. Duck curry made in a traditional manner becomes the best combination with appam when it served. It is a local fact that duck curry made of male duck with green head tastes better. In local language such ducks are called pacha thalayam poovan tharavu.



KACHIL PUZHUKKU (YAM)

Kachil a locally available tuber is used for preparing a local dish called kachil puzhukku. This forms part of the diet of the people residing in this part of the State. Cherupayar curry (mung curry) is also served with kachil puzhukku. Kachil puzhukku is also prepared as a mix with cherupayar or mung.



KUMBIL APPAM

Kumbilappam is another delicious snack found in Kumarakom. The main ingredient of this recipe is Chakka pazham(Jackfruit). Jackfruit, jaggery ,rice flour and some fresh coconut are mixed together to prepare the dough. It is then wrapped in Vazhanayila (this aromatic leaf gives a special flavour to the appam) in Kumbil(Cone) shape. This is why its know as kumbilappam. The flavour of jackfruit and aroma of the leaves together gives a great taste to this dish



THIRUVATHIRA PUZHUKKU

Thiruvathira puzhukku is usually prepared during Thiruvathira celebration in Kerala. It is made using tubers, red cow peas and raw banana. The common tubers that are used for this dish, Kumarakom are kachil, vettu chembu, and elephant yam (chena). This is also replaced kappa (tapioca), regular taro root, etc. It tastes great by itself and will be an added delight to the tourists.



CONCLUSION

Vaikom, a place with all the components to be identified as a full-fledged tourism destination, remained untouched until recently. It was through the PEPPER project, which is a revolutionary tourism initiative by Kerala Tourism, through Responsible Tourism, that Vaikom was transformed into a vibrant, structured destination. The project PEPPER in Vaikom, was first of its kind in the country, for having adopted a totally inclusive approach in all stages of tourism development with total support and concurrence from the local community and Local Self Governments (LSGs).

This eBook gives us a fair idea of the participatory approach followed. It shows us that grass root level community participation was assured in PEPPER Vaikom. The Responsible Tourism model developed at Vaikom Taluk is the pilot project of PEPPER initiative of Kerala Tourism under RT Mission. The tourism products developed and displayed under this initiative has been identified by the RT Mission, with the help of the concerned LSGs through Special Tourism Grama Sabhas.

The Resource Directory has been prepared in the regional language, Malayalam, as well as in English. This eBook comprises detailed description of the attractions identified meticulously through the resource mapping process. A documentation process of this kind will help the potential destinations globally to develop into a global tourism destination applying Responsible Tourism principles.

APPENDIX



PEPPER TOURISM PROJECT, VAIKOM, COMMUNITY TOUR LEADERS

	NAME	ADDRESS	PANCHAYATH /MUNICIPALITY	TRAINING COMPLETED
1	Ancy	Madapally South gate vaikom	Vaikom municipality	Community Tour leader
2	Sicily george	Puthenkarayil vaikom.P.O	Vaikom municipality	Madapally South gate vaikom
3	Aneesh.P.K	Puthenkarayil,karayil vaikom.P.O	Sicily george	Community Tour leader
4	Pp kailsan	Peedikathara , kothavara	Tvpuram	Community Tour leader
5	Mercy tj	Pulmthara house, west gate , vaikom	Vaikom municipality	Community Tour leader
6	Faisal j	Mamkayil house, Tvpuram.P.O	Tvpuram	Community Tour leader
7	Manoj mm	Kodanthuruthiyil, udayanapuram	Udayanapuram	Community Tour leader
8	Sunil s	Perumanoor house, ks mangalam.P,o	Maravanthuruth	Community Tour leader
9	Sureshkumar p	Vishnubhavan, chettikari, thottakom	Thalayazham	Community Tour leader
10	Vishnu madhu	Cheepungal, house, pallipuathussery	Tvpuram	Community Tour leader

11	Sebastian joseph	Manakaavil, tvpuram, vaikom	Tvpuram	Community Tour leader
12	Preetha shibhu	Thotuukunnath, thalayazham, madapally	THALAYAZHAM	Community Tour leader
13	Mekhina.M	Mankavil, tvpuram, vaikom	Tvpuram	Madapally South gate vaikom
14	Shibhu pr	Rohini, chempu	Chempu	Community Tour leader
15	Abhijith s	Padinjareambattuchi-rayil, ambikamarket	Vechoor	Community Tour leader
16	Kochurani.Mj	Thachezhathu house, kochukavala, vaikom	Vaikom municipality	Community Tour leader
17	Saneesh tp	Kuttathara, thalayazham	Thalayazham	Community Tour leader
18	Renjumol kr	Kattathara, thalayzhm vaikom		Community Tour leader
19	Vrindamol kr	Puthenthara, kothavara, vaikom	Tvpuram	Community Tour leader
20	Kochurani binoy	Pullukattil house, tvpuram.P.O	Tvpuram	Community Tour leader
21	Aiswarya ashokan	Athikapalliyil, vechoor	Vechoor	Community Tour leader
22	Aswathy aa		Vaikom municipality	Community Tour leader
23	Praveen josheph	Pravatiil, Vaikom.P.O	Chempu	Community Tour leader

24	Shabilraj ts	Thekkemanchirayil, chempu	Chempu	Community Tour leader
25	Amal pavithran	Puthen thara,chempu	UDAYANAPURAM	Community Tour leader
26	Sudheesh d	Puthen thara, Nerekadav	Vaikom municipality	Madapally South gate vaikom
27	Jhon sebastian	Nelliparambil, vaikom	Vaikom municipality	Community Tour leader
28	Sudharshanan	Kurukkanparambil vaikom	Vaikom municipality	Community Tour leader
29	Adarsh m Kaladharan	Vrindhavanam vaikom	Udayanapuram	Community Tour leader
30	Praveen np	Nedungattil, udayanapuram, vaikom	Chempu	Community Tour leader
31	Athira. S	Sn sadanam, Chempu vaikom	Vechoor	Community Tour leader
32	Sajumon.Kd	Unnathaliyil, Kunnelparambil, ambikamarket	Vechoor	Community Tour leader
33	Thomas pj	Perayil house, ambik-market vechoor	Udayanapuram	Community Tour leader
34	Yemuna p	Kodamthuruth, udayanapuram.P.O vaikom	Udayanapuram	Community Tour leader
35	Sajas ps	Sajeshbhavan, Nerekadav, Udayanapuram.P.O	Udayanapuram	Community Tour leader
36	Hymi m g	Mannaramkun- nel,thottakom.P.O	Thalayazham	Community Tour leader

37	Viji shibu	Panamkaattil,erump- ayam.P.O	Velloor	Community Tour leader
38	Sreelekha Krishnankutty	Madathedathu, Mevelloor.P.O	Velloor	Community Tour leader
39	Niramala jayaraj	Arackal house, Mevelloor.P.O.	Velloor	Madapally South gate vaikom
40	Sajitha p	Thottunkal Chira,vechoor.P.O	Velloor	Community Tour leader
41	Susmitha	Arayankadu,vec hoor.P.Oarayank adu,vechoor.P.O	Velloor	Community Tour leader
42	Archana m.V	Manalel, Kudavechoor.P.O	Vechoor	Community Tour leader
43	Sethulakshmi b	Kallutharayil, Kudavechoor.P.O	Vechoor	Community Tour leader
44	Abhirami m	Abhijithbhavan, Kudavechoor.P.O	Vechoor	Community Tour leader
45	Dennis joy	Eluvakkathara,thotta- kom.Po.	Thalayazham	Community Tour leader
46	Akash jose	Kalathithara, Thottakom.Po.	Thalayazham	Community Tour leader
47	Jishn surendran	Jishnubhavan, Thottakom.Po.	Thalayazham	Community Tour leader
48	Tony thomas	Markalthuchira,thotta- kom.Po.	Thalayazham	Community Tour leader
49	Beena k.S	Elusserimangalam,ku- davechoor	Vechoor	Community Tour leader

50	Beena s	Kalathil house, Kudavechoor.Po.	Vechoor	Community Tour leader
51	Sruthi sharath	Pottethadathil, Kudavechoor.Po.	VECHOOR	Community Tour leader
52	Ansara p	Velliyampallil, Kudavechoor.Po.	Vechoor	Madapally South gate vaikom
53	Remadevi p	Vinodbhavan, Maravanthurath.Po.	Maravanthuruth	Community Tour leader
54	Saritha Manikuttan	Chellattuthara, Kudavechoor.Po.	Vechoor	Community Tour leader
55	Chippi shyam	Pathampramb,kudaa- vechoor.Po.	Vechoor	Community Tour leader
56	Suma rajesh	Rajeshsadhanam, Kudavechoor.Po.	Vechoor	Community Tour leader
57	Sari aneesh	Manumandiram, Kudavechoor.Po.	Vechoor	Community Tour leader
58	Saranya ajimon	Manumandiram, Kudavechoor.Po.	Vechoor	Community Tour leader
59	Sasikala shaji	Kaniyaravalli, Kuddavechoor.Po.	Vechoor	Community Tour leader
60	Shiny vinod	Pootholayil, Kanjipadam.P.O	Thalayolparambu	Community Tour leader
61	Akshay p das	Kudavechoor.Po.	Vechoor	Community Tour leader

LIST OF GOVT: APPROVED LOCAL TOURIST GUIDES VAIKOM AREA

1

SUDHEESH.D

PUTHENTHARA
NEREKADAVU.P.O
UDAYANAPURAM.P.O
MOB:8606208418
Sudheeshd8@gmail.com

2

SOJAN.V.S

VELLZHATHUTHARAYIL
KUDAVECHOR.P.O
VAIKOM
MOB:8281710160
Sojan.soman.madhavan@gmail.com

3

RAJAN JOSEPH

NIRMALA BHAVAN
THALAPARA.P.O
THALAYOLAPRAMBHU
MOB:94961162389

4

SUNIL.S

KODANTHURUTHIL
UDAYANAPURAM.P.O
VAIKOM
MOB 9446456439

LIST OF GOVT: APPROVED LOCAL TOURIST GUIDES VAIKOM AREA

5

SURESHKUMAR.P

PERUMANOOR HOUSE
K.S MANGALAM.P.O
VAIKOM
MOB:9446436439

6

SANEESH.T.P

THOCHEZHATHU HOUSE
KOCHUKAVALA
VAIKOM
MOB:9633886887

7

SHAJAS.P.S

SAJESH BHAVAN
NEREKADAVU
UDAYANAPURAM.P.O
VAIKOM
MOB:9947444972

VAIKOM

ACCOMODATION UNIT

	NAME	CATE GORY	ADDRESS	PHONE	EMAIL	DISTRICT	TALUK
1	Alan's guest house	Lodge	"Main road, thalay- olapparambu p.O., Kottayam 686605"	04829234766		Kottayam	Vaikom
2	Amrutha lodge	Lodge	"South gate, vaikom. P. O., Vaikom. 686141"	04829217412		Kottayam	Vaikom
3	Castle residency	Hotels	"Peruva p o Kottayam 686610 near peruva	04829231727	Info@aquariushotel.In	Kottayam	Vaikom
4	Hotel aquarius	Hotels	"West gate, vaikom vaikom	04829231727	Info@aquariushotel.In	Kottayam	Vaikom
5	Hotel varsha in- ternational residency	Hotels	"Manjoor p. O., Kuruppanthara, kottayam 686603"	04829244603	Anisamcottag@gmail. Com	Kottayam	Vaikom
6	Kalakkal tourist home	Lodge	"North gate, Vaikom p. O., Vaikom. 686141"	04829329245		Kottayam	Vaikom
7	Kalathil lake resort	Resorts	"Akkarappadam p o, chermanakary. 686143"	04829271034	Director@kalathillak- eresort.Com	Kottayam	Vaikom
8	Kanivelil tourist home	Lodge	"Kaduthuruthy p. O., Kottayam kaduthuruthy 686604"	04829282444		Kottayam	Vaikom
9	Kumara- kom heritage	Resorts	"Kumarakom aquaserene (p) Ltd, achinakom, kudavechoor p o, kottayam achinakom	04829277836	Mail@kumarakomheri- tage.Com	Kottayam	Vaikom

10	Mango meadows	Others	Ayamkudi po, kaduthuruthy, pincode: 686613 ayamkudy	9072580513	Sales@mangomeadows.In	Kottayam	Vaikom
11	Mc lodge	Loadge	"Near panchayath office, ward-4, kallara, kottayam kallara	9446200870		Kottayam	Vaikom
12	Municipal rest house	Rest house	"Padinjarenada west of vaikom temple	9496375109		Kottayam	Vaikom
13	Nss union guest house	Guest house	"West gate, vaikom p o, vaikom 686141"	4829214700		Kottayam	Vaikom
14	Oasis Tourist home	Loadge	"Oasis tourist home , main road thalayolaparambu main road Thalayolaparambu	04829-236289	Oasistouristhome@gmail.Com	Kottayam	Vaikom
15	Padavathil lodge	Others	"Padavathil complex, kallara south p.O., 686611"	04829269246		Kottayam	Vaikom
16	Philipkutty farm	Homestays	"Aniamma philip, pallivathukkal house, vechoor, kottayam 686144"	04829276530	Mail@philipkuttysfarm.Com	Kottayam	Vaikom
17	Pwd rest house	Rest house	"West gate, vaikom p. O., Near boat jetty 686141"			Kottayam	Vaikom
18	Santhom apartment	Others	"Manjoor p o kurupanthara kurupanthara	9495022055		Kottayam	Vaikom
19	Sree kailas tourist home	Loadge	"South gate, vaikom p. O ., Vaikom 686141"	04829231367		Kottayam	Vaikom
20	Sreekrishna ayurveda chikitsa kendram Ayurveda chikitsa kendram Sreekrishna ayurveda chikitsa kendram	Ayurvedic centers	"Padinjarekkara p.O ,vaikom thuruvelikkunnu	04829229534	Drvijithsasidharan@gmail.Com	Kottayam	Vaikom

21	VAIKATH-APPAN TOURIST HOME	Lodge	"SOUTH GATE, VAIKOM P. O., VAIKOM 686141"	04829233055		Kottayam	Vaikom
22	VEM-BANAD LAKE VILLAS	Homestays	"VEMBANAD LAKE VILLAS, PANAMBU-KAD, VAIKOM P.O., KOTTAYAM. 686141"	04829222487	info@vlvs.com	Kottayam	Vaikom
23	VIJAYA PARK	Hotels	"KOTHANALLUR P.O, KOTTAYAM 686632"	04829243546	info@vijayapark.com	Kottayam	Vaikom
24	WHITE-GATE RESIDENCY	Hotels	"VALIYAKAVALA, VAIKOM. 686141"	048292166961	sales@whitegateresidency.com	Kottayam	Vaikom
25	LAKE VECHHOOR VILLAS	Serviced villas	Lake Vechoor Villas Lake Vechoor, Ambika Market P.O. Vechoor, Kottayam-686144	9810132143, 7510791139	lakevechoorvillas@gmail.com	Kottayam	Vaikom
15	Yemsons Cottage Homestay	Homestays/ silver	Raju. T.M., Thekkekalayil Karikode P.O Peruva-686610	9995905885	yemsons@gmail.com	Kottayam	Vaikom
16	River Valley Homestay	Homestays/ Gold	Joseph Cherian Kattumana Building Thottakam P.O Vaikom, Kottayam-686606	9447125273	joecherian76@gmail.com	Kottayam	Vaikom
17	Vembanad Lake Home Homestay	Homestays/ Gold	Vipindas P Vembanad Group, Kudavachoor P.O, Kottayam	9447300874	vipindasvembanad@gmail.com	Kottayam	Vaikom
18	Nilas Heritage Homestay	Homestays/ Gold	Ambikamarket,po vechoor Kottayam	9961733009		Kottayam	Vaikom

VAIKOM PEPPER TOURISM PROJECT - EXPERIENCE ETHNIC CUISINE UNITS

	NAME	ADDRESS	PANCHAYATH /MUNICIPALITY	TRAINING COMPLETED
1	Geetha k v	Kizhakkeirathara,va-dakara	Thalayolaparambu	Ethnic Local cuisine
2	Rajalekshmi a	Sreragam , Mevelloor	Velloor	Ethnic Local cuisine
3	Sasikala gireesh	Devaswamparam-bil,karipadam	Velloor	Ethnic Local cuisine
4	Jaya suresh	Velloor	Velloor	Ethnic Local cuisine
5	Jaya stalin	Velloor	Velloor	Ethnic Local cuisine
6	Nirmala jayaraj	Velloor	Velloor	Ethnic Local cuisine
7	Mini arun	Velloor	Velloor	Ethnic Local cuisine
8	Divya sanil	Pllattukuzhiyil	Velloor	Ethnic Local cuisine
9	Deepthy anil	Pazhukkalayil,erum-bayam po	Velloor	Ethnic Local cuisine
10	Binumon	Kizhakkeirathara	Velloor	Ethnic Local cuisine

11	Shincy sinoy	Manjadiyil vechoor	Vechoor	Ethnic Local cuisine
12	Shyny joy	Indivar, vechoor	Vechoor	Ethnic Local cuisine
13	Ponnamma rajan	Chemmadiyil	Vechoor	Ethnic Local cuisine
14	Jaya mohanan	Velloor	Velloor	Ethnic Local cuisine
15	Geetha kv	Kizhakkeirathara,vadakara	Velloor	Ethnic Local cuisine
16	Santhosh m p	Mazhuvimel, Vadayar	Thalayolaparambu	Ethnic Local cuisine
17	Manju p	Akathalayoil, Ambikamarket po	Vechoor	Ethnic Local cuisine
18	Sushma suresh	Sandhyalayam	Vechoor	Ethnic Local cuisine
19	Bhavani	Peruthuruthu	Kallara	Ethnic Local cuisine
20	Sabitha	Athaniprambil	Kallara	Ethnic Local cuisine
21	Joseph.P.T	Palathungal	Vaikom	Ethnic Local cuisine
22	Sukumaran t.G	Thattarseril	Thalayolaparambu	Ethnic Local cuisine
23	Shobana a.R	Thattarseril	Thalayolaparambu	Ethnic Local cuisine

24	Elizebeth joseph	Thayil	Kallara	Ethnic Local cuisine
25	Animol	Pallicherayil	KALLARA	Ethnic Local cuisine
26	Mercy jonson	Arakkal	Kallara	Ethnic Local cuisine
27	Gouri	Maaliyil	Kallara	Ethnic Local cuisine
28	Jayasree k.G	Kochuparampil	Vechoor	Ethnic Local cuisine
29	Pennamma	Mazhavinivas	Tv puram	Ethnic Local cuisine
30	Bennychan	Chamathara	Kallara	Ethnic Local cuisine
31	Aniyamma	Kattupara	Thalayolaparambu	Ethnic Local cuisine
32	Sulekha	Thoppil	Thalayolaparambu	Ethnic Local cuisine
33	Radha soman	Pallichirayil	Kallara	Ethnic Local cuisine
34	Lalan s	Perayil	Vechoor	Ethnic Local cuisine
35	Manju R Kumar	Manjari	Udayanapuram	Ethnic Local cuisine

PHOTO GALLERY

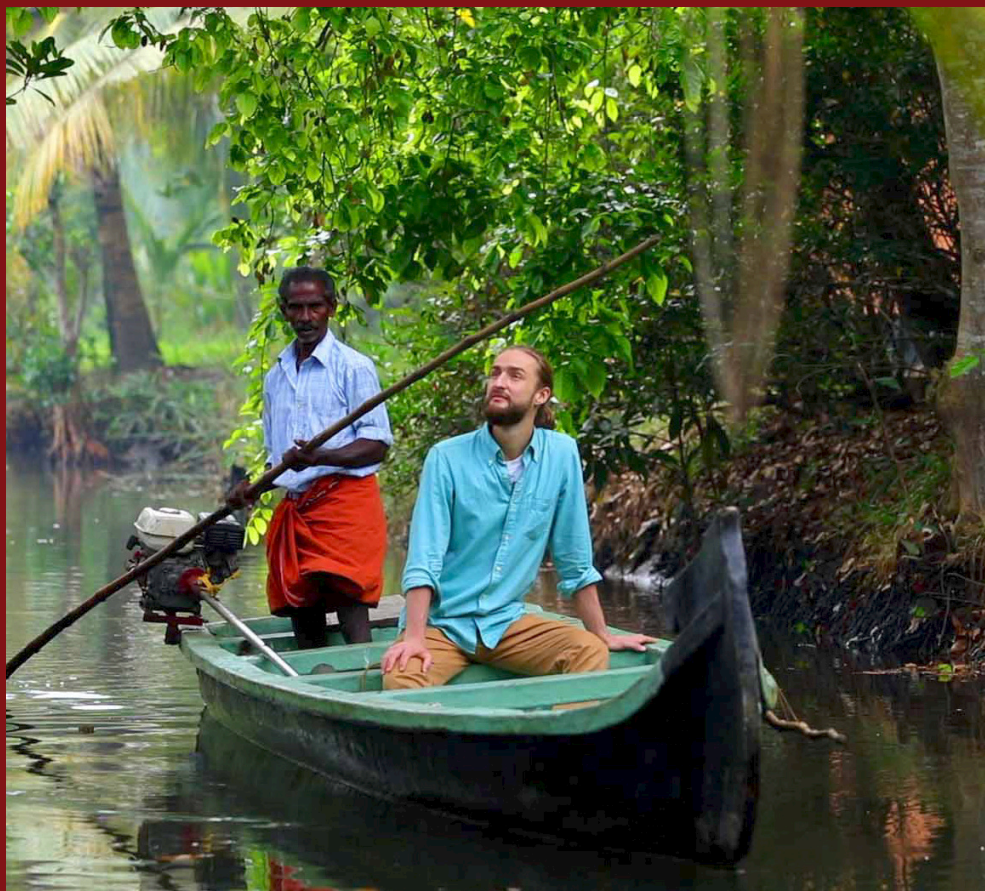


PHOTO GALLERY



PHOTO GALLERY



PHOTO GALLERY

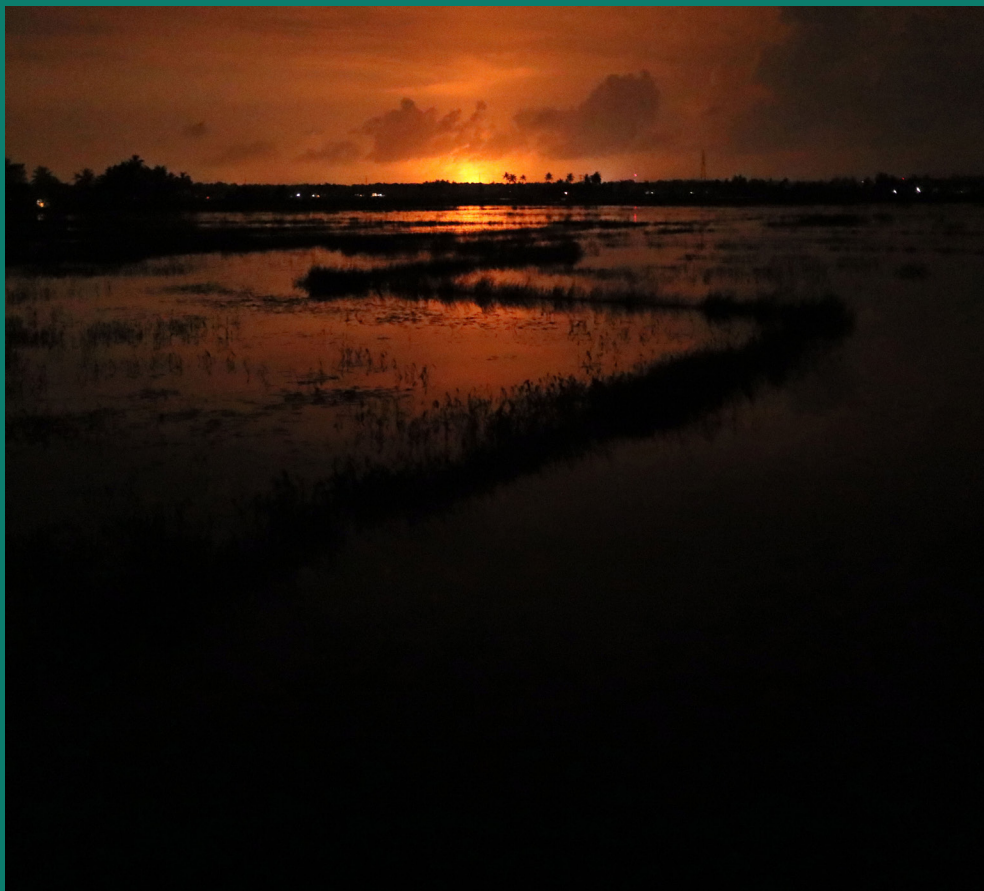


PHOTO GALLERY



PHOTO GALLERY



PHOTO GALLERY



PHOTO GALLERY



PHOTO GALLERY



PHOTO GALLERY



PHOTO GALLERY



PHOTO GALLERY



PHOTO GALLERY



PHOTO GALLERY



PHOTO GALLERY



PHOTO GALLERY



PHOTO GALLERY



PHOTO GALLERY



PHOTO GALLERY



PHOTO GALLERY



PHOTO GALLERY



PHOTO GALLERY



PHOTO GALLERY



PHOTO GALLERY



PHOTO GALLERY



VIDEO GALLERY



LET LOOSE IN VAIKOM

VIDEO GALLERY



BLACKSMITH'S WORKSHOP

VIDEO GALLERY



VAIKOM - VILLAGE LIFE EXPERIENCE

VIDEO GALLERY



VAIKOM AWAITS!

VIDEO GALLERY



VAIKOM MAHADEVA TEMPLE

THANK
YOU



God's Own Country

www.keralatourism.org