

TOURISM RESOURCE DIRECTORY

PEPPER- VAIKOM



Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala



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Let loose in Vaikom...Ensure Memories in Making

Introduction

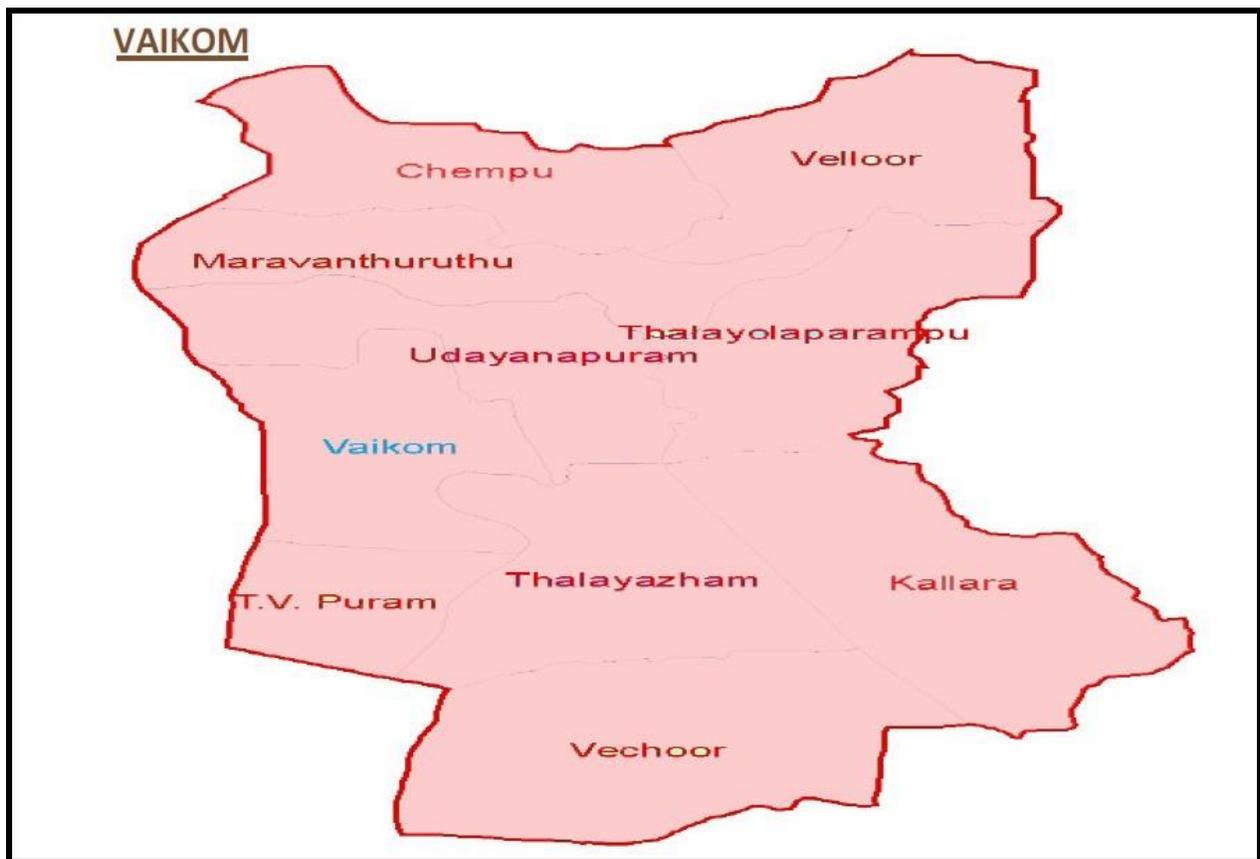
Vaikom is located in the heart of Kerala, situated in the northwest of Kottayam district, close to Ernakulam district, which is the commercial capital of Kerala and about 60km from the Cochin International Airport. Vaikom is well connected through air, road and rail and hence unlike most of the other exortic places wherein it is mostly a hasstle to travel from the airport to reach the calmness of suburbs here you save a lot of time and energy there. Speaking about how to reach the destination in discussion, from the Cochin International Airport, around an hour and a half drive is covering around 65 kilometer distance, giving us glimpses of the panoramic views of both the urban and rural cross-section of Kerala.

Vaikom, a municipal town that falls in central Kerala has witnessed the birth of varied cults and cultures of Kerala and also been a significant part of the Indian independence. This report will help in unfolding the mystery of cults, culture, religion, land and people of this wonderland, which is nearly an unattainable task for such is the synthesis obtained by all these entities. Detailed documentation of anything and everything important to the eyes of a tourist has been incorporated in this report - the background, the myths, activities, how they go about doing it, where you will find it so on and so forth, in short this is going to be the bible for any traveller to Vaikom, to ensure you don't miss out the fun! So, sit back, relax, and set your hands on this complete travel guide to Vaikom, with your travel suit on, because you never know when the travel bug is going get you.

Critical Understanding of Places & Spaces of Vaikom

Vaikom is a capital town of Vaikom Taluk, situated in the northwest of Kottayam district in the state of Kerala, India. It shares its border with Vembanadu Lake. It is easily accessible from Ernakulam, Alappuzha and Kottayam. Vaikom has lots of backwaters and greenery and has a high potential for tourism. Falling in the Central Kerala region, Vaikom exhibits a strong character that reflects both North as well as South Kerala physiognomies. Vaikom is a

pilgrimage centre. The famous Shiva temple situated here. The best time to visit Vaikom is during the months of Nov-Dec during the Ashtami festival. Spices like Nutmeg, Black Pepper and Latex have caught the attention of the Vaikom farmers. The economy is based on agriculture with coconut and rice being the major crops cultivated here. The town is also noted for its role in the Indian independence movement for being the venue of Vaikom Satyagraha, a civil rights movement aimed at securing freedom of movement for all sections of society.



How to get there?

Vaikom town is situated at the northwestern end of Kottayam district, close to Ernakulam district border. Its western border is the Lake Vembanad, and is crossed by various estuaries of the River Muvattupuzha. Vaikom is the oldest township in Kottayam district, and among the oldest in South India. Vaikom is also very close to the popular tourism destination Kumarakom. It is 30km from Ernakulam and 32 km from Kottayam and about 60 km (37 mi) from Kochi International Airport.

By Flight:

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

By Train:

Vaikom Road is the railway station directly connecting you to Vaikom, but unfortunately there is no regular train service from major cities. But 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, KSRTC, runs direct bus services to all major destinations within and outside Kerala. Private bus services are also abundant. Inter State bus services are available from Ernakulam to Bangalore, Coimbatore, Mangalore, Chennai & Pondicherry.

Demography

As per the 2001 census, Vaikom has a population of about 22637 (male: 10955; female: 11682). This region has a literacy rate of 92% (male: 97%; female: 90%). Population density of the region is 2496 per square km.

As per the 2011 census, Vaikom municipality has a population of 23,234 of which 11,304 are males while 11,930 are females. The population of children under age 6 is 1807, which is 7.78% of the total population of Vaikom Municipality. In Vaikom municipality, the female sex ratio is of 1055 against the state average of 1084. The male child sex ratio in Vaikom is around 960, compared to the Kerala state average of 964. The literacy rate of Vaikom city is 96.84%, higher than the state average of 94.00%. In Vaikom, male literacy is around 98.30% while female literacy rate is 95.47%.

Blue 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 by the enchanting Vembanad Lake. The Kampukadu canal of TV Puram Panchayat was dug for the easy transit of the then Travancore King to pray at Ettumanor Temple.

The main water body adorning Vaikom is the Muvattupuzha River and its tributaries which originate from the Western Ghats. A group of islands that forms Vaikom is well connected mainly by 3 bridges across the 3 channels of Muvattupuzha River before it merges to mighty Vembanad Lake. And these lands separated into small pieces by crisscrossed estuaries, narrow canals, and backwater passages. The main attractions are connected with its backwater activities, cultivation, village life, and culture. Vaikom is a vast network of rivers, ponds, canals and wells, most of which merge into the great expanse of Vembanad Lake. Ithupuzha, Murinjapuzha, Poothotta Backwaters, Mundar and Kariyaar Backwaters.

Soil Types

Nine different soil types are found in Vaikom. The fertile alluvial soil carried ashore by Muvattupuzha River is found in plenty and this makes the region rich and fit for agriculture, this is mostly spread over the river banks. The sandy soil and sandy loam is found in the lower end of the river valley. Maximum area of Vaikom comprises of laterite soil, red soil and black soil which is having a localized occurrence in Vaikom mostly at foot hill areas.

The peat or Kari soil is an acid saline soil which is formed due to a network of backwaters and estuaries bordering the coasts. The Kari lands, or the Kari nilam occupies a dominant land area of Thalayazham Panchayat in Vaikom. These are swampy areas are highly acidic and contains a high proportion of carbonatious wood. The local residents believe that the occurrence of the Kari 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 swamp in these areas. The region is below Mean Sea Level and bunds are constructed around it to keep water away. Kari lands are deep black charcoal colored heavy in texture, poorly aerated and ill- drained.

Pieces of wood are seen embedded in the subsoil. Soil cracks during summer, are affected by severe acidity (pH 3-4.5). Periodic saline water inundation occurs here.

Getting to know the Grass-root

Mapping Livelihood Patterns in Vaikom-‘Travelling Right’

In this section of the report various livelihood aspects of the local community members of Vaikom has been broughtout and which will help in understanding the real pulse of Vaikom. A livelihood is a means of making a living. It encompasses people’s capabilities, assets, income and activities required to secure the necessities of life. A livelihood is sustainable when it enables people to cope with and recover from shocks and stresses (such as natural disasters and economic or social upheavals) and enhance their well-being and that of future generations without undermining the natural environment or resource base. It is the moral responsibility of a tourist to ‘travelling right’, which often doesnot happen, tourists stay in expensive hotels, visits tourist spots, gifts alms to beggars and street children, but these however doesnot benefit the local community much. A number of initiatives can be adopted to empower them economically, support different micro enterprises, souvenir units, art and cultural groups in the destination. Hence this section covering the livelihood options of Vaikom will definitely equip the reader to ‘travel right’ and experience village life better.

1. Fishing

Vaikom is a vibrant place surrounded by lakes and rivers on all three sides and hence perfect setting for fishing to thrive as a means of livelihood. A large volume 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, starting from catching the fish to selling it.

Fishing is still done in traditional way, using conventional catamaran and fishing nets. Apart from that, long-established methods of fishing can also be seen in abundance, such as the ‘Kambavala’. The best part of the whole affair is to view the variety of catch ranging from small prawns, shrimp, mighty lobsters, 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 with high medicinal value, tank gobi and low calorie red snapper to the prodigious Bluefin trevally. But the locals still cheerlessly recall the past, when Vaikom used to be clad with the a wide network of blues, wherein the rivers, canals, and ponds used to slice off her land mass eloquently crisscrossing with feel, and the catch used to be even more elaborate then, with the scrumptious snake head fish, cat fish, silurus, to name a few, which are a rare catch these days.

Fishing Equipment

The fishing techniques in Kerala are very old and the Kerala fishermen are well known to be experts in the skills of fishing with their greatest assets being the knowledge of fish and the fish habits, this knowledge is handed down from generation to generation. The technology used among the traditional fisher folks of Kerala for catching fish, such as the fishing craft and the gear are traditionally evolved and differ according to the needs of the specific local fishing conditions. Traditional fishing equipment like Veeshu Vala , Udakku Vala ,Olli Vala, Vatta Vala, Koodu, Ottal, Ayiram Chu, Bamboo trap , Thettali, Padala , Vallam are commonly used in Vaikom.

Popular Fishing Gear or Craft

Marine fishery employing traditional gear like boat seines, shore seines and gill nets are age old tradition of the backwaters of the region. Mechanization made its appearance in the late fifties in the area. By mid-sixties individual entrepreneurs entered the scene paving the way for a 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 country craft 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 is being discussed below.

- Trawl Net (Muthu Vala)

The trawl nets used differ based on the size of the catch and the head rope length of different trawls range from 39.6 to 81.0m and the mesh size are in the range of 16 to

25 mm. The trawl nets are majorly used in rainy season especially in flowing water when 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 gets trapped inside the net.

- Veeshuvalayan Vala

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

- Chavittipidiyan Vala

This is a unique fishing technique where two people are required mandatorily to use it. The circumference of the net is attached to the rope and the rope will be the only support for the same. Two people will stamp on the bottom of the net from two sides of the fishing net and the top portion would be held at the water level. Once the fish gets trapped inside the net the net will be lifted by both the fisher men.

- Kai Vala

This is a type of small net that can be handheld. Here bamboo is bend in a circle and the net is stitched onto the bamboo stick. This is commonly used to catch fish from canals and rivers.

- Bamboo Trap (Ottal)

Around 100-105 small bamboo sticks are attached together and three rings are then attached to this. When fish is sighted, this is inverted over the fish and through the opening on top the fish is taken out of the trap. Fishermen, locate the fish with the help of powerful lights, and these traps are usually used in canals, rivers and fields.

- Vellavali

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

First, a piece of coir rope, about a km long, is shaped into an inverted U. Tender palm leaves are attached to the rope and then two fishermen tie the ends of the rope to their waists while standing in water in bright sunlight. The men then walk through shallow waters using poles. The palm leaves tied to their waists shine in the water. The light reflected from the leaves scares the Pearl Spot and they 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.

Small wooden country boat is used for the fishing, and in each Country Boat 5 to 7 people will be there for catching the fish in the backwaters. They will carry minimum 3 long bamboo poles; one man will use one of the poles from the backside of the Country Boat for moving the same and others will use oars to move into the pre-planned fishing spot. They will carry a long Valli (Unique fishing equipment) of around 85 Mar (475 Feet), this Valli was formerly made up of long thick coir and the tender coconut leaf. Thousands of the same leaf after removing the mid-rib will be attached to the Valli, each leaf will have average 1 inch thickness and 2 to 2.5 feet length. This leaf will be attached with the distance of up to 8 inch. Now a day's plastic is being used for the coir and for the leaf. Two men will tie each end of the Valli just above their hip and will take one bamboo pole each and they will jump down from the country boat to the water and they will start their forward movement by walking, swimming or jumping with the help of the pole, and they will keep the distance of around 75 feet, thus they will drag the Valli in a U shape through the down of the water. Two to three persons will be following at the back side of the U shaped Valli, they will make sounds with their hands and legs by swimming, beating and cutting into the water.

The fish (Karimeen) which is already in the U shaped valli, by seeing the peculiar glittering colour of the leaves of the valli usually get scared and move forward to the

back side of the U shaped Valli ,very fast ,but when they reach at the down of the U shaped vally, they will get further scared by hearing the artificial sound of the fishermen diving in the water and immediately they will dip into the mud, to get escaped, when it goes through the mud at the bottom of the water, because of the movements of the back fin, mud will come up in the water. The fisher men at the back ,will be watching this by diving and looking at the bottom, then the fisher men will know immediately where exactly the fish is under the mud and the fisher men will dive into the bottom of the water and with their bare hand ,using only the fingers, they will catch the fish on the head, and dive back to the surface of the water and by keeping the balance in the water by floating ,they will throw the fish into the small country boat ,which may be in the distance of 5 to 25 feet away. One fisher man will be in charge of the country boat, who will try to keep close to the divers so as to enable them to throw the caught fish from the water, very soon into the Country Boat. The divers will go back soon into underground of the water as so many fish will be dipping into the mud again and again till the drawing of the Valli stops by the first two persons. They start their fishing by 8am and stops by 2pm, usually they stop the fishing which depends upon, the climatic condition (Severe breeze & waves and also underground water should be clear, then only the divers can see the movements of the fish) and also depends upon the volume of the catch of the fish. Generally they get from 5 Kg to 20 Kg fish (30 to 120 fish). The surprising fact is that the diving fishermen even go down up to 24 feet without any diving materials, for catching the Karimeen in this unique way.

- Meen Tappiditham

This method is an exceptional fishing method practiced mostly by women in Kerala backwater region, wherein the fisher folks dive into the water and catch fish with their bare hands. Small fishes like pallathi are caught by this method.

- Shore Seine (Kambavala)

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

2. Mussel Culture

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 is exported to other countries as well. In the 14th ward of TV Puram Panchayat, is the Cooperative Society for Mussel Trading which plays a major role in managing and promoting mussel trade in the region. Apart from that two Self Help Groups also aid the fisher folks to earn a steady employment and sustainable livelihood.

Mussel Collection Equipment

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

3. Fish Landing

This is an area on the banks of Vembanad Lake, which provides livelihood opportunities to the localities. This is one of the biggest fish market 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 as well.

4. Coir Production

A stroll along the various Panchayats in the region would definitely bring you to the gratifying scenes of the villagers engaged in manufacturing of coir. We can see the local residents’ working in unison to generate the golden fiber of Kerala, one of the strongest threads in the world, none other than coir and its byproducts.

Coconut fiber extracted from coconut husks is used in the making of coir. With the abundance of coconut tree 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. The coconut husk is retted in a waterlogged area about 4 feet deep and covered with mud. This is kept so for months together in the retting molds, and from there it is loaded on to the canoes and transported to the threshing zone. The retted husks are then pounded and crushed using mallets or machetes, which is followed by fiber collection. The collected fiber, threshed and dried is now spun into yarns with the help of spinners with wheel attached to a small gear and spinning axel. It is a pleasure to the eyes to observe unadorned coconut husks in the hands of master craftsmen through this month's long process which begins with simple de-husking and retting and ends up into a number of beautiful coir products such as rope, twine, brooms and brushes, doormats, rugs, mattresses and other upholstery.

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 art practiced 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 for the prevention of soil erosion. The leaves are sword shaped, with thorns on both edges and along the midrib of the leaves. This craft has been practiced by the women in their homes in Kerala for more than 800 years ago. Screw-pine mats have played a significant role in the traditional customs of Kerala. Traditionally mats were offered as seats to visitors. The visitors were offered to sit on screw-pine mat called Thadukku, Methapaya or Kachipaya.

How is it made?

Leaves of Screw-Pine, Pandanusutilis are used for this craft. Craftsmen prefer the female plant for its fine subtle leaves than the male plants coarse leaves. The leaves of the plant are cleaned very carefully to avoid injury. The cleaned leaves are split in half. The sliced leaves (in the raw form) are then rolled outwards to prevent it from curling, giving an angular reel of

approx.1-2 cms thickness. This long and narrow leaves are boiled for one hour. After that the leaves are transferred, washed and kept in fresh water overnight. The leaves are dried and within couple of days it becomes ivory color. Once 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 is further split into two or three by knife as per the required width as well as the width of the raw material. The leaf is kept rolled and bundled until the weaving begins. The weave used is with one weft leaf going diagonally between two warp leaves. After drying process, the leaves go for slicing. It is done with the help of slicing tool. The leaf is dyed with basic dyes. The dyed screw pine leaves is used to make interesting color combinations for weaving. After dyeing screw pine is removed from the vessel and washed with water to remove excess color and dried. This is now woven to mats mostly by hand by placing one long strip crosswise under the big toe facing the inner side upwards and another strip is placed lengthwise. Then one more strip is placed parallel to the first strip are folded and put straight along the lengthwise strip. Another strip is then placed crosswise and then the process is repeated. New strips are added lengthwise and crosswise and interlacing continues until the required dimensions are obtained. The weaving is done with the inner side of the strips facing upwards so that the outer side of the strips which is comparatively smoother may form the outer surface of the mat.

Half of the inhabitants of Thalayazham panchayat were dependent on this, but nowadays due to scarcity of screw pine the dependent number has declined. Another downside of this industry is the stronghold middle men and agents retain, and hence the craftsmen are not getting the market price.

6. Coconut Thatch Weaving

Thatched eco-friendly houses were a very common sight in Kerala until dilemma was set in during the colonial period, whereby traditional methods got sidelined as old-style and undesirable. The most common building materials used during that era were locally available kutchha materials such as mud and coconut leaves. The widespread prevalence of such

materials could be attributed to its perfect fit for rain-fed, warm and humid climate, easy availability locally, simple skills required and minimal heat gain.

In Vaikom, we come across several local residents' who are experts in thatching roofs using coconut leaves. Earlier this used to be brought in by the natives for their domestic purpose, but with time, thatched roofs have been replaced completely and now these are demanded only by resorts to give its clients a true tropical atmosphere and occasionally by temples for the conduct of ceremonies during 'Udayam pooja'.

How it is made?

The coconut thatch roofs are made by soaking leaves in water for days, splitting the coconut leaves collected in halves barring a few leaves (the number of un-split leaves depend on the size of thatch roof you need). Now leaves are woven together by tying alternately.

7. Copra Production

Copra is the dried meat or kernel of the coconut, which is the fruit of the coconut palm . Coconut oil is extracted from copra, making it 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 copra is produced by removing the shell, breaking it up, sun drying – is usually done where the coconut palms grow. Since there is sufficient sunlight in Vaikom sun drying is usually done. Halved nuts are drained of water, and left with the meat facing the sky; they can be washed to remove mold-creating contaminants. After two days the meat can be removed from the shell with ease, and the drying process is complete after three to five more days (up to seven in total).

8. Toddy Tapping:

Toddy is nothing but the sap from incising the clusters of the coconut mostly not being fermented. Later when kept aside for itself to be fermented it is called as palm wine and this when later distilled gives the product known as arrack. It used to be a very common sight in most parts of Vaikom to see toddy collectors scaling trees to tap the flowers, under which clay pots are attached to catch the sap. They cart the resulting milky liquid back to the shops

where they're left to lightly ferment and gain strength. The longer it ferments, the more alcohol accumulates, but it must be drunk before turning to vinegar—usually within a few days. (The sap is also evaporated and turned into jaggery, a rich, brown palm sugar.) At one point of time, the toddy from Vaikom used to be exported to neighboring states for distilling it to manufacture alcoholic drinks like brandy, and this was a huge advantage to the local revenue. There was even a local brand of brandy, 'Cocobrandy', which was produced from the local toddy, but now the production has stopped due to lack of availability of enough toddy because of 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 labor cost, many of the growers are keeping off from 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 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, tapioca gives the agricultural sector of Kerala a distinct flavor. The agro climatic conditions in the State suit for the cultivation of a variety of seasonal crops and perennial crops.

Paddy Cultivation

The story is no different in Vaikom, where, paddy cultivations are a part and parcel of its culture and is the major food grain crop of the region. Vaikom can be classified to fall in the midland wet lands of Kerala, with a unique topography and a fragile ecosystem, where paddy cultivation is predominant and is also connected to the culture and festivals of the region. Despite these facts, the area and production of paddy in Vaikom continues to decline over the years.

Kerala or Keralam got its name from 'kera' (coconut). For centuries, coconut trees and coconuts 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 is facing severe setback in recent years owing to fall in market price and low productivity due to pest and disease attacks. The rise in cost of cultivation and competition from other oils such as palm oil etc is another reason affecting the production of coconut.

Rubber Plantations

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

Nutmeg Cultivation

Another cash crop grown in several parts of Vaikom are the evergreen Nutmeg trees, which grows to a height of 60 feet. The tree yields two spices - the dark colored nut and the bright red mace that covers it. This tree is originally from Indonesia, and thrives in warm, humid conditions with abundant rainfall - 150 cm and more. Vaikom has clay loam, sandy loam and red laterite soils, and ideal for growing 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 with pineapple market, head load

workers busy loading sacks of the fruit onto lorries, unloading and carrying them to shops, scores of lorries loaded with the fruit and sprawling pineapple plantations are a common sight.

Banana Cultivation

Banana is seen abundantly in Vaikom, owing to its tropical humid climate and due to fertile soil with an abundant water supply. The numerous varieties of banana that you find here will definitely make you fall in love with at least one, this curvy yellow fruit that always smiles at you is bound to bring a smile on your face too, when you visit the banana plantations around Vaikom.

Traditional Indigenous Technology and tools for Agricultural



The indigenous knowledge briefed here is systematic body of knowledge acquired by local people through the accumulation of experiences, informal experiments and intimate understanding of the environment. These techniques talk aloud of the creativity and innovativeness of the past techniques, this makes us realize that the rural society of Kerala has its own complicated structure, belief systems and functional mechanisms.

‘Pettium Parayum’

'Petti and Para' is an indigenous instrument used to channel water to the fields as and when required, and this was earlier done by the paddle water wheels, but with the advent of electricity this indigenous method was discovered. In Malayalam language, petti means a box, and para is a cylindrical measuring vessel. The components of this indigenous machine include an electric motor, a submerged wooden vessel, para, 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 shape of a fan. The fan inside the para is connected by a belt to the motor inside the pump house. When the electricity is passed 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 the basic operation in farming. It is done to create favourable conditions for the seed placement and plant growth. This is done mainly with Plough (kalappa) made from Acacia wood. The small farmers and farm owners of Vaikom, who are unable to buy a tractor depend on country ploughs. Plough was a radical change in the evolution of tools. It, being the most important of the tools in traditional agriculture, was very well adapted to the specifications of the locality. It has often been the subject of attempted improvement and adaptation. This instrument varied very much in size, weight and form in different parts of the country. The old wooden plough used in Vaikom region consisted of a tongue of wood fitted with an iron tooth, a stilt for holding and a pole 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 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 method used for water collect and supply 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 Kathir kata from the fields after harvesting.

10.Cattle rearing

The farms of Vaikom is a perfect stopover for people interested in knowing more about cow-rearing and making products with milk, cow urine and dung and here we can find some of the best-kept cow shelters Kerala.

Cow:

The white revolution of 70's had made spectacular landmarks in Indian milk production scenario. 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 is ample scope for marketing milk and milk products. There are many local cattle rears, starting from small scale cattle farmers owning one or two cows to large dairy farm entrepreneurs in the region. A medicinal ghee product named Panchagavyam, is made out of milk, cow urine, cow dung, and curd.

Pradeep Edayath and Gopa Kumar Kannimattom, from Chembu Grama Panchayat breed cows that produce milk with high medicinal values. Cow breeds such as vechur, vadakara, malanadu kullan etc. are bred here. Pradeep Edayath also owns grooves containing rare plants such as Gack, Gantola, and other tuberous plants. 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 to the marginal people and for the unemployed educated people. Especially, the landless women can raise some goats with their other animals to earn some extra income. Raising chickens, cattle, sheep, goat etc. are most popular and old business opportunities in Kerala. But among all the livestock animals goats can be raised and managed easily than others. And the weather condition of Kerala is also suitable for commercial goat farming. It was seen that there are several people involved in goat rearing 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 not only a profitable business in these regions but also a very popular and lucrative business. Pig is widely used to eat as pork meat. The pig farms here are built in quite large area with very strong fence surrounding, since adult pigs are notorious diggers, hence the fence poles are fixed deeply into the ground. A visit to the pig barn teaches us quite a lot regarding the eating habits, medicine, tips for proper rearing etc.

Pigs are mostly grown for their meat, but apart from that the Pig hooves, and tusks are highly effective for treating epilepsy and pig fat is used to prepare 'Pancha Sneha Kuzhambu' for treating paralysis.

Pisiculture:

Yet another sight worth visit is the fish breeding venues where it is done both in aquaponics way as well as in ponds. Popular breed found here are pearl sport, tilapia, carp etc. people visit these farms to study the methodology and buy fish. First the net is set up inside the canals and ponds, baby fishes are then released into it. The net is lifted after a year's time once the fishes grow up.

A fish farm worth mention is the Matsyafed Aqua Tourism Centre, Palaikari. This is one of the units of 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 State. Palaikari Fish Farm is one of the largest fish farms in Kerala. It is situated in Kattikkunnu, of Chempu village in Vaikom. It extends 120 acres alongside Vembanad Lake. The Farm is famous for its culture fishes like Karimeen, Poomeen, Naran, Kara etc.

One of the major attraction of Matsyafed Palaikari Aqua Tourism Centre is its 600 meter long, tile paved walk way running alongside Vembanad Lake. There are 2 nos. of three storied viewing galleries, through which the visitors get an awesome picture of Vembanad Lake and Palaikari Fish farm. Guests can take advantage of enjoying fishing using fishhook that is one among the traditional methods of fishing in the inland water bodies. They can also buy the special fish dishes made using natural ingredients that are sure to raise their taste buds. Visitors can enjoy safe swimming with the help of life buoys that too free of cost. Pedal boats and row boats are ready for use of guests. Pedal Boat include boats that has seating capacity of two as well as five and Speed boats with 8 seat capacity for lake cruising. The entry pass 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 no. 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 traditional way, where the farmers spend 6 months of the year keeping their flocks on the move, to keep them feeding until they are ready to sell. These farmers are on the move constantly when the flocks are feeding; they must brave the

weather, 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. These farmers provide employment for people who live in the area around where the ducks are feeding, the flocks help fertilize the soil for the rice's next season, and the ducks themselves provide great tasting 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 majorly 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 who had been brought from Tanjore in Tamil Nadu by the Travancore Kings in the past, when temples were scarce, had settled in a colony in Brahmamangalam desham. This colony is now famous for its Dharu shilpa and loga shilpa production. Many of the temples in Kerala have been designed by artisans of this place. The traditional sculpture making method called 'Kadu sharkarayogam' was used by their ancestors to make the famous idols of 'Sree Padmanabha Swami Temple', 'Kasargod Ananthapadmanabha Swami Temple', 'Kannur Madayikkavu Bhagavathy Kshetram' and 'Thiruvattar Adikeshava Perumal Kshetram'.

Munveedu (House made of Clay)

Another sight worth visit is a house constructed out of red bricks and plastered using clay is referred to as Munveedu which was a highly unique construction in Kerala which eventually got eradicated.

13. Handicrafts

The **handicrafts** of Vaikom are **artisanal handicraft** or **handmade**, and comprises of a wide variety of useful and decorative objects, made completely by hand or by using only simple tools. It is a traditional main sector of craft, and applies to a wide range of creative and design activities that are related to making things with one's hands and skill, including work with Eerapoli (bamboo sticks), coconut shell, husk etc. Various handicraft products like shell, cup saucer, flower vase etc. are made out of Eerapoli.

Baskets

Baskets are woven from bamboo sticks and are used in the region for carrying coconuts. Baskets are also made from eerapoli, and this has a huge market in the region.

Houseboat models and souvenirs

Small replicas of houseboats are made from wood and souvenirs like models of monkeys are made from coconut shells carefully cut into shapes and carved using chisels. This ancient art form is admirable and comes out in the form of beautifully made products.

14. Goldsmith

A goldsmith is a metalworker who specializes in working with gold and other precious metals. In Brahmamangala in Chembu Panchayat, we can find several goldsmiths who still do jewelry handwork in the traditional way. With the advent of machinery such gold crafting methods have dwindled. Historically, goldsmiths of the region had made silverware, platters, goblets, decorative and serviceable utensils, ceremonial or religious items, but the rising prices of precious metals have curtailed the making of such items to a large degree. It is a treat to our eyes to watch these skilled hands filing, soldering, sawing, forging and polishing the metals into beautiful pieces.

15. Musical Instruments Manufacturing Units

Nowadays it is quite common in any vacation package, to relax to the tunes of indigenous music, but here at Vaikom you get a chance to view the real talents behind the curtain, the artisans at work, with the magic in their hands they make musical instruments. In Vaikom

there are places where 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. The one carved out from the core of the jackfruit tree is considered special. In percussion instruments the cylindrical portion is carved out of the trunk and the skins of cow and buffalo are jointly 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 very tasty and popular food product. There are many small-scale papad making business mostly home-based in behind Jacobite Church in the 6th Ward in Brahmamangalam where it is still produced in the traditional manner.

History & Socio-cultural Background

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

At that time the social structure of India, especially Kerala was based on caste system. People were divided into several castes, and they were restricted to remain in their community all throughout their life. A member of one community was never allowed to join another community or do the work which was allotted to another community. Thus a kind of monopoly in the case of work and earning arose among the communities.

And in Kerala the rules and regulations of caste system were severe and stubborn. So a discrepancy in the matter of education, employment, dress and culture prevailed among all the communities in Kerala. Hence the privileged high castes enjoyed rights for generation after generation. At the same time the low castes remained in poverty for centuries and this condition prevented their awakening very much. The Vaikom Satyagraha (1924–25) was a social protest against untouchability in Hindu society. Vaikom gained its fame on a national level during Vaikom Satyagraha.

Now, the culture and society of Vaikom gives an overview of the festivals and dance. 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 and offer prayers to the deities. 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 Marhgankali 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 of the write up will enrich you further on all these aspects.

Vaikom Satyagraha (1924-25)

Vaikom Satyagraha was a movement in Travancore (modern-day Kerala) for equality of the depressed classes. This is the most important episode in the molding of the social and economic contour of the region and is synonymous to Vaikom. The famine that hit the entire world towards the end of the Second World War was prevalent in this region too. Under that circumstance, both men and women of the region under the leadership of K Vishwanathan, led people to Vaikom Tahasildar, in order to put an end to the exorbitant charges and taxes slammed on essential goods. The demonstration was marked by men and women marching with round baskets of palm leaves on their head.

Historical Background

During 1865 the Government of Travancore had published a notification 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 enjoined that any violation of these orders would be visited with the severest displeasure of the Government. 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 (King's Highways) and grama veedhis (village roads). The court decided that the public roads mentioned in the notification of the Government were intended to mean only the Raja veedhis and not grama veedhis. The roads around Vaikom Temple were considered 'grama veedhis and consequently

even after 65 years of Government proclamation, they were barred to the Avarnas and 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 due to a small incident, where Comrade. Madhavan, an advocate belonging to the 'Ezhava' community, was barred from appearing before the honorable judge in a case on behalf of his client. This prohibition was carried out since the court was located inside the compound of the Maharaja's palace, and it was then 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 at entry into the temple was made by a group of about 200 Ezhava youth 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 for the Maharaja's army came to Vaikom, and met the temple authorities. They wondered how this single man would stop 200 able-bodied young men. 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 meters 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 before entering the temple, was renovated by Ramayyan Dalawa in 1750s and hence the name "Dalawa Kulam". Koya Kutty had 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 a few got injured and 2-3 people died falling in the pond. Later this incident came to be known as 'Dalawa Kulam Incident'. The pond is no longer there. It is filled in and the present private bus stand is constructed there.

There was another crucial incident, which triggered the action. Sree Narayana Guru, a very powerful social reformer, born in Ezhava community, himself was prohibited from passing through the roads 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 starting of the Satyagraha) mentions, *“If a venerable sage like Sree Narayana Guru and his disciple Mahakavi Kumaran Asan were 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?”*

Pandit K.P. Karuppan Memorial Library

Pandit K.P. Karuppan Memorial Library was established on the 1st of May, 1945, in the memory of poet, dramatist, and social reformer Pandit Karuppan who emerged from Ernakulam of Cochin State and worked relentlessly as a crusader against untouchability and social evils. He was called the “Lincoln” of Kerala for steering socio-economically and educationally backward communities to the forefront. This library was the first library in Vaikom, 2nd 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 is still renowned as the focal point of social reforms in the region.

Historical Reminences

Earlier days during the days of princely states of Travancore and Kochi, Velloor village of Vaikom used to be on the Kochin-Travancore border. This small village in Vaikom still houses some of the reminences of those erstwhile days of prompt and glory. Some of the reminents worth discussion are deliberated here.

Illi Kotta & Manayathattu Mana

The Illi Fort, situated in the Velloor Gram panchayat, is said to have existed from very ancient times, and was built in anticipation of attack by Tippu Sulthan. This was built by the then Travancore king, under the guidance of Diwan Ramayan Dalawa (1713-1750). It extends from Nirpara, enroute Mulaekadi extends till the borders of Mulakulam, in Velloor Panchayath, from there it extends till Perumbavoor. The foundation pit is almost 20 feet deep, and has

been reinforced by locally available bamboo (illi). We can find remnants of check-posts also inbetween, to safeguard the illegal transport of tobacco, rice etc. Apart from the fort, the Manayathattu Mana, which was constructed for the stay of Diwan Ramayan Dalawa is also still preserved there, this Mana, centuries old aristocratic house is worth a visit, with exemplary sculpture. This 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 feet house.

Kothi Kallu

The Kothi kallu is a sort of a mile stone which marks the border of the earstwhile kingdoms of Kochi-Travancore. This derived its name from the sculptured letters on both sides of this stone, Malayalam alphabet 'ko' on one side and 'thi' on the other.

Kal Thotti

Centuries old Kal thotti, is a stone bucket which used to store Butter milk for travelers who crossed Cochin-Travancore border. This is still present in an anganwadi in Velloor.

Pathalam

During the time of Diwan Ramayan Dalawa, there were 'Pathalams' or bunkers that were constructed across the nook and corner of the kingdom to hide and store armuments, out of the 108 bunkers, two are still present in Varkkaamkunnu, but has been buried recently after construction of new roads.

Bhoothanthondu

This is a canal that used to make way for easy transportation to the interiors of Vaikom, along Moovattupuzha River. Once busy transportation channel is now is a dilapidated state.

Vakkayil Kottaram

This archeological masterpiece is over 2 centuries old, and is majorly constructed using wood. It is in the traditional homestead model of old Tharavadu where many generations of a matrilineal Vakkayil Kaimal lived. The traditional architecture comprises of a Nalukettu, which is typically a rectangular structure where four halls are joined together with a central

courtyard open to the sky. Vakkayil Kaimal, from Thriprayar, was the Commandeering Chief of Thekkinkoor Raja.

Other Ancestral Homes

In this region we can find a number of centuries old traditional houses which are making a comeback amongst millennials today. Kerala's style of architecture is unique in India, in its striking contrast to Dravidian architecture which is normally practiced in other parts of South India. 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 plain shapes with a ribbed roof evolved from functional consideration. The most distinctive visual form of Kerala architecture is the long, steep sloping roof built to protect the house's walls and to withstand the heavy monsoon, normally laid with tiles or thatched labyrinth of palm leaves, supported on a roof frame made of hard wood and timber. Structurally the roof frame was supported on the pillars on walls erected on a plinth raised from the ground for protection against dampness and insects in the tropical climate. Often the walls were also of timbers abundantly available in Kerala. Gable windows were evolved at the two ends to provide attic ventilation when ceiling was incorporated for the room spaces.

List of Kerala Style Ancestral Homes

- Manayathattu Mana Tharavadu
- Padinjaru Manayathattu Mana Tharavadu
- Manayathattu Pullumavin Mana Tharavadu
- Panappurayil Tharavadu
- Kokkodithara Tharavadu
- Kaniyampadikkal Tharavadu

- Kalappurakkalayil Kollamparambil Tharavadu

Laureates and Cultural Icons of Vaikom

Travel to a place would have remain incomplete if the painstakers behind bringing out the beauty in her is forgotten, like for example travel to Kolkata will remain unfinished without a peek into the life of greatest ever lauriate Rabindranath Tagore who modernised Bengali art by spurning rigid classical forms and resisting linguistic structures. Getting informed about the important people, makes you closer to the place, touch the place by the soul and makes you seem like less of an outsider and to connect with people. This part of the report will introduce the reader to a few well-known people of the place, who has helped in carrying the name of Vaikom far and wide.

P. Krishna Pillai

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

Since the early 1930s, no other leader in Kerala had been so successful in organising the masses, in spotting talent and in moulding the cadre and their commitment. At the time of his untimely death on August 19, 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, if he 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 to 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 the radical politics challenging the British in various parts of north India. Later, he was among the first to be recruited to the "illegal" CPI, along with EMS, by P. Sundarayya, the legendary communist leader and Telengana armed struggle veteran, and became a life-long adherent to the cause of communism.

Pala Narayanan Nair

Mahakavi Pala Narayanan Nair (11 December 1911 – 11 June 2008) was an Indian poet. He wrote his most celebrated work, *Keralam Valarunnu*, in 1953 in eight volumes when the concept of a unified state was 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 in 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 Publication Department of Travancore University as a pundit and received his M.A. (Malayalam) in 1956. Nair worked as a Malayalam professor at Alphonsa College, Pala. He was the first secretary of Kerala Sahitya Akademi and the Malayalam professor in NSS College, Kottiyam, in Kollam district.

Another feather on his cap is that 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 their hideout for 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 honored 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 the socio cultural background of Kerala in-depth. 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 Krishna Pillai

Omchery N. N. Pillai is a Malayalam-language playwright, novelist and poet from Kerala, India. 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 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 Malayalees in Delhi, who has spread the fame of his birthplace far and wide.

He wrote his first play "Ee Velicham Ningaludethakunnu" (This Light is Ours) 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. Ponnose, E. K. Imbichi Bava, V. P. Nair etc. acted in the play. Omchery has written nine full-length plays and more than 80 one-act plays. He founded the theatrical organisation 'Experimental Theatre' in 1963. DC Books published a collection of his 26 selected plays on 27 November 2011. He is married to Leela Omchery who is a well-known singer and sister of famous Malayalam singer, Kamukara Purushothaman. Shri. Omchery's dramas are still lauded and studied world over.

Sri. Vaikom Vasudevan

Vaikom Vasudevan Nair was a famous musical opera artist in Malayalam. He acted in one Malayalam movie 'Kerala Kesari' in 1951.

Sri. Vaikom Muhammad Basheer

In the Malayalam Literary arena, the legend Vaikom Muhammad Basheer owns a remarkable position. With his profound and simple writing, touch of satire, sarcasm and black humour, Basheer had woven a style of his own and marked his presence as a short story writer, novelist, humanist and also as a freedom fighter.

Born in Thalayolaparambu in Kottayam District as the eldest child of a timber businessman, Basheer even from his childhood days was attracted to Gandhian thoughts and ideologies. He participated in freedom struggles and was imprisoned which also inspired his writings. The cult classics of Basheer earned him 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 Beypore Sultan, 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 narrated 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 unique ebullient intellect is the rarest of the rare kind who revolutionised Malayalam literature and took it to a whole new level.

Smt. M K Kamalam

M. K. Kamalam (1923 – 20 April 2010) was an Indian actress in Malayalam cinema. She was the heroine in the first Malayalam talkiefilm, *Balan* (1938), hailed from T V Puram Panchayat in Vaikom, born to Kumarakam Mangat Kochupanicker, a music teacher, and his wife Karthyayini. She appeared in her first play *Allirani* when she was seven. She acted in it with

her father. She got the invitation to act in a movie while she was acting in a play called Vichithravijayam. She was selected from the five ladies who were in the play by director S. Nattani, producer T. R. Sundaram, and actor Alleppey Vincent who were all watching the play. Aged 15, she acted in the first Malayalam "talkie" film, Balan (1938).

K Sreedharan

K Sreedharan is the founder President of Vaikom Kallara Panchayat. His life is entwined with the history of Vaikom. He is a visionary who had envisioned and brought many development projects to Vaikom and implemented them successfully when decentralization was nowhere in picture. He was able to achieve many notable developments in spite of limited resources. This is reflected in the Jayathi Award of the Government of India bagged by Kallara Grama Panchayat, way back in 1970 for being a Model Panchayat. During those times, under the leadership of K Sreedharan, Kallara Grama Panchayat was recognized by Government of India as one among the ten best Panchayats in India. K Shreedharan also served in other esteemed posts like the Chairman of the Block Level Committee and Member of District Development Committee.

Vasudevan Nair

He had been the Persident of TV Puram Panchayat for 32 years. He is the first person from the Panchayat to get an Honours degree in Bachelor of Arts. This achievement was recognized by the then Chief Minister of Kerala, by awarding him 5 acres of land.

Chempil John

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

Bharath Mammooty

Muhammad Kutty Paniparambil Ismail (born 7 September 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 Chandiroor in Alappuzha district, and was raised in the village of Chempu.

Mammooty was a lawyer by profession. After establishing 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 South. In 1998, the Government of India awarded him the Padma Shri for his contributions to the arts. He has also received honorary doctorate degrees from the University of Kerala in January 2010^[11] and from the University of Calicut in December 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. He has also been working with the Pain and Palliative Care Centre in Kozhikode, India.

Shilpa Subramanyachary

Dewasom sculpture, and the gifted artisan behind several spectacular monuments and sculptures such as that of Parmekkavu Temple, Thrissur and Anthapadmanabha Temple, Kasargod, to name a few.

Other Noted Personalities

Other celebrities from Vaikom worth mention are Brahmamangalam Chandran, who is a highly recognized drama actor, writer and a social reformer. N V Panickar, the famous Sanskrit Pandit who has written several poems and books in Sanskrit also hails from this region. Shri N V Panickar was a disciple of Chembil John. Brhmamangalam Madhavan was yet another veteran in Sanskrit, who was a tutor as well as a poet. Professor Ramesh Chandran and S. Rameshan from TV Puram panchayat were laureates, literature critics and great poets. Other famous persons from this place includes Sanskrit Pandit Ponnvallil Muthethu , Drama Artist

Vaikom Baby, journalist cum lyricist TV Puram Raju, critic KV Joseph, film director Vijay P Nair, M L Jay Drama Director.

The contribution of this Panchayat in National level social welfare activities are to be appreciated. There were several people like Shri. Chembithara Keshavathandar who played lead role in Vaikom Satyagraha, he was imprisoned for 603 days along with T K Madhavan and Shri. KP Keshavamenon. His contributions did not go unnoticed and was rightly given the certificate of recognition 'Thamara Pathram' and freedom fighter's pension. In 1975, he received accredits from the then Prime Minister of India, Smt. Indira Gandhi. Another freedom fighter, K Vishwanathan had been elected to the constituency of Communist Party from Viakom Constituency in 1948, he had been the leader for the famous hunger strike in Vaikom. MK Padmeshanan was the first martyr of the Communist Party of India is from this Panchayat, and he is also very closely associated to the Freedom Struggle. The other noted political leaders from this region are Eranattu M Madhavan, PS Vava, KP Vasavan Puthenpuraykkal, Prabahakaran Parakkattu Kalam, Kuttezethu Damodaran, PK Narayanan Kunju, PK Velayudhan, MS Krishnan, and P Damodaran Pattassery.

There were musicians and percussion instrument players who were connoisseurs of their fields, like Mridunga expert Vaikom Venugopal, Nelloor Vasudevan Nair Bhagavathar, K N Thangappan Bhagavathar, musician Vallakath Bhavanniyamma, story teller Navalli.

Decedents of this Panchayat who held high positions in the government includes Konnasheryl C K Narayanan who had accomplished high rank in police, Chemmanathakara Marrottikkal Veetil Dr. Sanjay Joseph, who was the first person of TV Puram panchayat to enter Civil Service. Keettuparambil KPK Nair was a Major General and VK Krishnankutty Nair was a Brigadier, two grant positions in the Indian Army. Then there were other like Puliparayil G Balakrishanan Nair, who was the Dewasom Board Commissioner, Palakkad Varkey Vaidyan, who was the Pricipal of Government Ayurveda College, PS John, Malayalam Manorama Bureau Chief, Deputy Controller of Iron and Steel Keetu Parambil P R Nair, and Sabari Mala MelshanthiMurinjoor Manayil Vishnu Namboorthiri. In 1949, K Kochuttan, was elected as a

member of Thirukochi Senate, from 1960 PS Sreenivasan of Vaikom used to be a member of Legislative Assembly for a while and Mar. Abraham Kattumana was a delegate at Vatican.

Ayurveda, Sanskrit and other elite branches of science and literature flourished in Vaikom. SK Warrior was a profound Ayurveda Physician (Vaidyan), who practiced in Vaikom, people from far and wide used to come to Vaikom to get treated by him, one of the most celebrated social reformer Sree Narayana Guru is also believed to have been treated by this physician. Others who follow his footsteps from this panchayat are K S Warriar, Valyarapathu Damodara Kaimal, Mannasheri Achuthen Vaidyar, Sri Ramathuthara Raghavan Shanti, Govinda Kaniyar, Kunnaparambathu Bhaskaran, Ikkara Vaidyar, to name a few.

Name	Area of Specialization
Paravoor Gopalan Pillai	Drama Artists
P K Sukumaran Nair	Drama Artists
N Pillai	Drama Artists
Vaikom Sukumaran Nair	Drama Artists
Smt. Vaikom Sukumari Amma	Drama Artists
Kodavara Antony Panezhan	Drama Artists
Vechur Raman Pillai	Kathakali Veteran
Tottakam Gopalan Pillai	Kathakali Veteran
Thangappan Nair and Purushothaman Nair (Vaikom Brothers)	Kathakali Musicians
Narayanan Aashaan	Percussion Instrument (Udukku)
Keshavan Ashaan	Percussion Instrument (Chenda)
Palliyadu Krishnan Ashaan	Chavittu Naadakam

Diwakaran	Chavittu Naadakam
Kunjen Ashaan	Kolu Kali
Smt. Chinnamma Ashatti	Thiruvathirakali
Shri. R Raman Nair	Percussion Instrument (Mridangam)
Puneimana Shri. Sasidhara Sharama	Thiyattu Kala
Shri. Janardhanan	Cine Star

Culture & Identity: Places of Worship

Churches, temples, mosques, and synagogues – whatever faith they belong to, and wherever they are in the world, these holy places almost always make it onto the tourist’s itinerary.

We come out of curiosity about another country’s religious traditions, or to see the incredible artistic and architectural creations, or simply to soak in that solemn, reverential vibe so strikingly absent from almost all other aspects of modern life.

Vaikom is home to one of the most visited religious site in the State: The Vaikom Mahadeva Temple. This Hindu temple along with Ettumanoor Siva Temple, Kaduthuruthy Thaliyil Mahadeva Temple is considered a powerful trisome. The awe-inspiring and incredibly well preserved temple is an archaeological and spiritual wonder. From the powerful Bhadrakali Temples, and great Churches with long history worth narrating to the mighty Mosques with dominant domes, you could tour the whole stretch of Vaikom and find some of the best art, history, archaeology and music of all time. In this section I will be introducing to the wonderful places of worship in Vaikom, the stories and mythology behind them, and their festivals and celebrations.

Vaikom Mahadeva Temple



Vaikom is a place of great religious importance. A famous Shiva Temple in the area, Vaikom Mahadevar Temple also known as Dakshina Kashi, is a major pilgrim destination. The temple is built in the Kerala style of architecture. While the Garbha is surmounted by a golden Stupa, a golden staff that measures 19.5m dominates the surrounding landscape. Traces of a few paintings might be seen on the exterior of the Garbha. A 1m high Shiva Linga (phallic symbol representing Shiva, the Destroyer) is the main deity of the temple. Legend has it that Khara of Ramayana worshipped Shiva at Chidambaram and obtained from him three Shivalingams and journeyed holding one shivalingam on each hand and one in his mouth. He sojourned at Vaikom, and set the shivalingam on the ground and to his dismay realized that it had gotten rooted to the ground. Kharan therefore 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, Kottayam spellbinds all the visitors to the land with a charm that is truly divine. Surrounded by a courtyard that stretches to almost 8 acres, the boundaries of the temple are marked by four Gopuras or towers.

Thrunayamkudam Sree Rama Swami Temple

Sree Rama Swami Temple is one of the most famous temples in Kerala. The temple is more than 450 years old. Temples with Sree Rama as the main deity is very uncommon in Kerala. Amongst the Sree Rama temples, this temple 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 of the deity (lakshanam) makes it special. The ancient artisans worked in natural rock to create the work of art out of indigenous rock known as 'Pathalanjana Shila', which is far more robust and lasting than sandstone. This was made centuries back covered with an alloy of five metals gold, silver, bronze, copper and iron and the alloy is known as 'Panchaloha'. The main deity, Lord Maha Vishnu, was believed to be that of Tirupati Venkatachalapathy earlier but now worshiped as Sri Rama Swami Idol.

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

The bali kallu or bali stone, located in front of the temple is yet another speciality of this temple, because on this stone, Shri. Shakthan Thampuran had inscribed in Bali language. Mythology says that this temple was built by Gawda Saraswatha Brahmins, and this sect was on the verge of extinction and stories narrate that it is the responsibility of Rama believers to protect them. The idol of Gayatri Devi, who is believed to be the mother of all vedas is present in the spoanam here.

Festivals:

The main festival or the utsav, is celebrated for 10 days during the month of Meenam. It commences when swathi nakshatra falls, and ends with aarattu comprising of ritual procession on elephant top. During these ten days, several traditional art forms of Kerala like Kurathiyattam, Sangeetha Katcheri, and Ottamthullal etc. are performed here.

During Karkidaka month, heavy rains hit Vaikom, and these rains are likely to pave way for diseases and ill health, Karkidaka kanji, a porridge with medicinal value to boost the immunity of the body is distributed here.

Deshavatharam, chandanam 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 this ritual takes place in Vilakkumadam, in the centre of the lake. The Vilakkumadam is located in a meander of the Vembanad Lake, where the lake takes a dangerous turn. At this point the boats were at a big risk of toppling due to heavy undercurrents and whirls. In olden times a lamp used to be lit in order to alert boats men of the possible danger ahead, and hence the name Vilakkumadam. This is very near the Thrunayamkudam Sree Rama Swami Temple and hence the ritual Bali, is organized here.

Moothedathu Kavu Bhagavathy Temple

The main deity of this shrine is Bhadrakali, and is based on the famous folklore of Kannaki, a legendary Tamil woman who forms the central character of the Tamil epic Silapathikaram (100-300AD). The story portrays how Kannaki took revenge on the Pandyan King of Madurai, who had wrongfully put her husband Kovalan to death. She cursed the entire town of Madurai. Silapathigaaram tells the story of her revenge and is written by Ilango Adigal.

In fact, 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-lined epic poem *Cilappatikaram* ["The Story of the Jewelled Anklets"] written by a Jain monk by the name of Ilango Atikal in the 5th century C.E. During this chaos, it is believed that a Brahmin savaged the idol of Kannaki Devi and proceeded to Kerala. On reaching Aarattukadavu, in Vaikom, the Brahmin placed the idol there and set off for his bath and returned to the incredible sight to find the idol fastened to the place and could not move it

from there. In the ancient days, temples were built to provide devotees a divine place, where they could connect and surrender to their deities any time of the day. While some temples have a specific time 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 just for nine months in a year.

Thousands of people from around the State, arrive every year to visit the temple which opens on 1st of Karkadaka month and closes during Kumbha Masam after celebrating the deity's birthday. Once the birthday celebrations of the deity ends, the goddess is believed to set off to visit her husband, 'the Madhuradhipan', and with that the main altar closes.

Festivals:

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

The other festivals celebrated in an outstanding manner are the Navaratri, which is a nine nights (and ten days) Hindu festival, Ashtami Ezhunellathu and in Kumbha month bharani star Goddess's birthday is celebrated.

Sree Narayanaeshwarapuram Subramanya Swamy Temple

Sree Narayanaeshwarapuram Subramanya Swamy Temple is built in an intricate indigenous Kerala style architecture with the main sanctum build completely by wood and copper under the supervision of Kodungaloor 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 positioned, but this temple did not

have any deity then. In this juncture, Sree Narayana Guru Swami was invited to Chemanathukara by Alappurathu Achudan Vaidyar, Kandathil Karumban and Munduchira Cheeru. Swami Sree Narayana Guru advised on installing the piece of work which the neighbouring goldsmith was working on then as the principal deity, and at that time the goldsmith was finishing a silver 'Vel' or spade, which was installed on a wooden lotus frame. The main attraction and speciality of this temple is that this temple practiced principles ahead of times, even during the days when the ban on 'low caste people' from entering the temples existed people of any caste or religion could enter this temple, thereby symbolizing the unity of Hindus, Christians and Muslims in the region.

Festivals:

Eminent festival of this temple is Shiva Ratri which lasts for a week and is celebrated by cultural feats by celebrated artists.

Svayambhu Saraswathy Temple

Svayambhu is a Sanskrit word that means "self-manifested", "self-existing", or "that is created by its own accord". The word swayambhu is used in this context to describe self-manifested image of a Goddess Saraswathy, which was not made by human hands, but instead is naturally arisen, or generated by nature. This is the sole Svayambhu Saraswati temple of Kerala. The folklore marks the immense love Goddess had on her devotees and this incredible faith of her followers led to this temple into being. Now coming on to the mythology of this temple, in olden times there used to be Othikkans, a class of Namboothiris who basically taught Othu (Vedam). The age-old story tells us of an intense devotee of Goddess Saraswathy, who was an Othikkan, who taught chants and advises Othu (Vedam) to Brahmin boys in the Othupura. The area in which the temple is located was once the Othupura. One day Lord Ganesha 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 can ever answer, and the Othikkan also stumbled and struggled to answer many questions that was put across, but during all those difficult times, Goddess Saraswathy blessed him with the right

answers and even a deliberate attempt by Ganesha to make Othikkan's answer wrong was also dampened by Goddess Saraswathy. Lord Ganesh was hugely impressed by the love and respect Goddess had for this disciple of hers and in return Ganesha appeared in his actual form and at that very instance Goddess Saraswathy also surfaced and blessed the Othikkan, but Othikkan wished for their blessings to be bestowed on the imminent generations and for this the temple was installed at the Othupura. A speciality of this temple is that no idol of the principal deity is present in the temple, instead a mirror was instated at the point where Goddess Saraswathy appeared.

Festival:

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

Pazhuthuvalli Sree Bhagavathy Temple

The Pazhuthuvalli Sree Bhagavathy Temple is a temple dedicated to mother Goddess Lakshmi Devi known as Sree Bhagavathi. The main deity worshiped 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 eventually handed over to the Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP). The Bhagavathy here is believed to be very powerful in miraculously curing plenty of diseases, in warding off famine, and praying to the principle deity helps in acquiring better education and career. The rituals to be followed for the attainment of the above is by following strict vratham or fasting. There are other offerings and vazhipadu which are regarded to be highly appeasing to the Goddess such as chuttuvilakku, where oil wicks are lighted around the main sanctum, the devotees light 18, 27, 108, 1008 or 10,008 wicks in gingelly oil or ghee. After lighting the lamps the devotees ought to circumambulate the sanctum in clockwise direction and is known as

Pradakshina. This whole activity is known as Thiripidittam and this temple is known far and wide for this particular ritual.

There are three separate legends associated with this temple. And the first one goes so, long ago there used to be a Brahmin family who were staunch worshipers of Bhadrakali. After the last remnant of this family passed away, there was no one to carry forward the lineage and the Brahmin illam was taken over and restructured. It was then that the 'theyvara pura', 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 threshed grain – paddy in the Kerala context. The presence of Goddess was felt in this 'Arappura' and hence was transformed into the present Pazhuthuvalli Sree Bhagavathy Temple.

Another mythology in connection with this temple says that a childless couple from the Pazhuthuvalli family worshiped the Arimbu Kaavu Bhagavathy for a healthy child. Their constant devoted prayers finally led to the appearance Goddess and blessed the couple, it is believed that the Goddess Bhagavathy's power remained in the house's ara or an interior room, which was later transformed into the Pazhuthuvalli Sree Bhagavathy Temple.

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

The statue which was initially installed in the 'ara' was later instated in 'Cherukshetram' and in 1998 the Marthanam Vijayan Tantri reinstated the idol in the new Sreekovil or the Sanctum sanctorum.

Festivals:

The main utsav or major festival of this temple happens during makara sankrama. As a forerunner to the utsav on the 12th of Dhanu Masam the Thiruvabharanam or the sacred ornaments of the presiding deity is taken around the region with enormous celebration and procession. On 25th day of Dhanu month (masam) the idol is ceremoniously carried around in

a ferry and is welcomed and the whole event is known as 'Jala varavelppu', it is done so to commemorate the way idol was obtained during the massive floods.

The Bhagavathy pattu is recited by the Kaniyaan, marking the commencement of the utsav and then a kappu is tied on to the divine sword and with that it is believed that the power of the divinity is transported to this sword, after this feat this sword is addressed respectfully as the 'Palli Vaal'. The offerings to Goddess here include Bhagavathi Pattu, Thalappoli, Garudan thookku and Kalamezhuthu for the Serpent Gods. During the Makara Sankranti day auspicious ceremonies like the Kalasha puja, Sree Bhootha Bali and pushpabhishekam 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 and on the seventh day the utsav ends with the offering of pongala, which means 'to boil over' and refers to the ritualistic offering of porridge made of 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 temple constructed in Kerala style architecture with Kodimaram or the flagpost and Gopuram which is the monumental entrance tower and is under the administration of Moothedathukavu Devaswom. Another speciality of this temple is that this is the only temple dedicated to Sree Krishna Swami 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 with age old traditions and practices. The preceding deity is Lord Muruga 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 reinstated by Sree Narayana Guru.

Festival:

The Pooyam Mahotsav celebrated in this temple is worth mention, where a number of activities such as 'kodiyettu', 'Thalapoli', 'Kaavadi', 'Kalashaparihara' and other cultural events happen.

Chemmanathukara Sree Krishna Swami Temple

Sree Krishna Swami as Chemmanattu Appan is believed to be the 'desathipathi' or the owner of Chemmanathukara. The long-standing myth regarding this temple states that Chemmanattu Appan, on seeing the picturesque landscape of this place fell in love with the place and appeared in his 'Vishwaroopa' with 'shangu', 'chakra', 'gadha' and 'padmam'.

Festival:

The main festival of this temple is celebrated in Dhanu Masam. The six day long annual festival begins with the Kodiyettu, where the ceremonial flag is hoisted amidst loud chants of Krishna bhajans by hundreds present there.

For the welfare of the people of that region a special puja is done for 11 days, where the Dashavatara of Lord Maha Vishnu is made out of pure sandalwood and 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 in form of an avatar to restore cosmic order. The word Dashavatara derives from daśa, meaning 'ten', and avatar, roughly equivalent to 'incarnation'. Matsya (The fish) is the first of Vishnu's many avatars and was one of the first physical beings of this world. The second incarnation of Vishnu was that of Kurma, the giant tortoise. Varaha, the great boar came to Earth's aid to save it from an incredibly powerful demon. My personal favorite incarnation of Vishnu was born as Narasimha the Man-lion. Vamana (The Dwarf) was the first of Vishnu's incarnations to be born during the Threta Yuga. He is also the first of Vishnu's incarnations to be fully human. Parashurama is the original lumberjack. Now we are starting to get closer to the most popular of Vishnu's avatars. The seventh incarnation of Vishnu was Lord Rama, also considered to be the perfect man. The most famous of all of Vishnu's incarnations is Lord Krishna. The first of

the incarnations to be born in the Dwapara Yuga. Buddha is typically thought to be the ninth avatar of Vishnu. Originally born as an Indian prince with the name Siddhartha, he became world renowned as Gautama Buddha when he became a monk and attained enlightenment. Kalki is described as the final incarnation of Vishnu, who appears at the end of each Kali Yuga.

Bhagavata Saptaham is also conducted there where one of the eighteen purana's of Hinduism, the Bhagavata is narrated and explained in a span of seven days. The Bhagavata Purana, 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 is located on the banks of the Vembanad Lake, is more than a century old. The temple is unique since three principle deities, namely, the Parashakti, Prapanchanathan and Satya Swaroopini, are the three powers worshiped simultaneously within the sreekovil.

Festival:

Thiruvathira and Makara Bharani Mahotsavam are the main festival. Thiruvathira falls in Dhanu and is celebrated for two days. Makara Bharani falls on the Malayalam month of Makaram 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

The Sri Pandavar Kulangara Sree Krishna Swami Temple is the powerful link that gives Kallara Panchayat a stronghold in the ancient chronicles. The history 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 Pancha Pandavar with the prime deity Krishna and that is the etymology of its name. In the Mahabharata, a Hindu epic text, the Pandavas are the five acknowledged 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 this 12 years of 'Vanavasa', or the time they spend in forest, it is believed that the Pandavas resided in this place and deity installed in the temple was once worshiped by the Pandavas. 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 principle deity here is Bhagavathy (Bhagavathi) or Devi, considered as female aspect of the divine Shakthi, as conceived by the Shakta tradition of Hinduism. Shakthi is considered as the female counterpart without whom the male aspect remains impotent. Shakthi is the energy and Shakthi worship is a vital part of Hindu Tradition.

The Bhagavathi Devi at this temple was from Kodungallore-the famous Sree Kurumba Temple - through a devotee from Thirumalpadu family. The Devi here is very powerful. Now the temple properties are managed by a committee nominated from the Kallara NSS Karayogam.

Festivals:

The main utsav is performed in the Malayalam month of Kumbha when Bharani nakshatra falls. The events during this time include Kalam pattu, Garudan tookku and several other art forms are performed.

Sree Sharada Devi Temple

The Sree Sarada Devi at Kallara Grama Panchayat, dedicated to Goddess Sraswathi. Temple idol is 'Veena pani"-Vidya Devi. The idol was installed by Sree Narayana Guru, one of the famous revolutionary social reformer of Kerala, in Malayalam year 1143. This was done during his travel throughout Kerala in connection with his fight against caste system. In those days, the foundation 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 in Sankrama naal

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 with it, but recently the Kallara SNDP wing took over the temple administration and they were instrumental in aiding the temple revive its glory.

Festival:

The main festival of this temple is organized in the Malayalam month of Medam 'Patham Udayam'.

Thripakkudam Sree Mahadeva Temple

The principle 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 of 'Prapancha Srishti', which means The Creator.

The myth behind this temple states that, once Swami Vilwamangalam was travelling in a canoe and while passing a region with small islands, the place was unusually misty and foggy. With his divine power known as 'Divya-drishti' or divine-eye, which is a spiritual attainment, he understood the reason for this strange sight. The smoke was 'avahichu' or the energy was absorbed and trapped into three pots and then he tried to install these pots. At that instance he saw vision of the Lord with 'jadadhari', and after this, Swami brought these pots to this Panchayat and placed it in a higher ground and installed it at the current location of the temple. These pots later came to be known as 'Thripakkudam'.

The prathista or the idol here is in the form of Lord Mahadeva in his yogic pose after the assassination of Goddess Sati. 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 temple has some amazing architecture wherein the 'chuttambalam', 'Sreekovil' and 'Nalambalam' has been made out of copper. The temple opens at 4.30am with the 'Nirmalya Puja'. The main priest of the temple used to be 'Purappeda Shanti', who used to leave home and remain in the temple premises for six months to ensure that the pujas are performed with 'shudhi and Vrithi' which stresses the importance of the maintenance of purity, divinity, spirituality and cleanliness within the temple premises.

The 'upa-devatha' or sub-deities of this temple include Brahmarakshas, Vamana moorthy, Subramaniam and Ganesha. The administration of the Thripakkudam Devaswom used to be performed by some of the prominent families in the region, namely, the Padappalli, Poothappalli and the Chadukkoppali, who had donated their land to the temple. The main priest or the 'Tantri' of the temple was either from the 'Puliyenoor Mana' or the 'Manayethattu Mana', since this temple is their family temple. This temple is of great significance to the people of these families, the boys from this family, once their sacred thread is worn, they have to first serve this temple before working elsewhere. The Mel Shanti and Keezh Shanti of this temple is from Varyathu Madhom, then the position of Kazhakom goes to Idamana Mathom and the right for Sreebali goes to Poovillam, Mangattillam, Kolassery Illam and Thovalakkadillam. The most important 'Vazhipadu' of this temple is 'Nevedyam' and 'Tulabharam' with poovan pazham. Other offerings are lighting ghee lamps and chathushatham.

Festival:

In the month of February, the main utsav starts when Chatayam star falls and lasts for ten days, terminates with the aarattu, wherein the immersion of deity for aarattu is done in Vembanadu Lake. The main festival of Thripakkudam and Ettumanoor falls on the same days. The main deity is decorated with 'Swarna Ura' or a gold shield and the lord bless his devotees with golden eyes placed.

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

During the utsav cultural programs and indigenous art forms are performed such as kathakali, chakyarkoothu, and ottanthullal.

Pudiyakaavu Devi Temple

The Pudiyakaavu 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 goes to Parambusseri Maramattathu illam or family which 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 was of bricks and only had thatched roof, but later, almost a century back, it was replaced with granite which was copper plated. The temple tantri is from 'Annamma Nada Kashakottath illam'. The upa devathas or the sub-deities of the temple were thevaramoorthy, rakshas and naga devam or the serpent Gods. The very uniqueness of this temple itself is that it regards Rakshasa as its sub-deity.

The temple has been renovated by the Maramanattathu Mana Narayana Nampoothiri. 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 and is charted such that the arattu falls on the Bharani Nakshatra of the Kumbha month. The ceremony of hoisting of the divine flag called 'kodiyettu' ceremony marks the commencement of the utsav. The rope attached to the divine flag, known as 'kodi kayar', is brought by a particular family belonging to the Dheevara community from Kothavara Akkaparambil. As a part of the utsav '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 Bhagavati temples to honor Bhadrakaali. In this temple this is performed

by people from Kothavan Karuveli family. The 'Velan pattu' is another art form that is now dying. Velan pattu is being conducted at homes to remove ill luck /misfortune. Other rituals that are part of the festival are the Kalamezhuthu and Kalampooja. These rituals – the drawing of elaborate 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 exploit 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 from one hundred and one coconuts. Another significant ritual of great significance is being the torch bearer termed 'Thee Vetti Pidikkuka', of the procession when the principle deity arrives from temple on elephant top. The nine day long celebrations of the Navarathri Mahotsav is also done in a magnificent way.

Thottakam Valyarambathu Kuppedikavu Devi Temple

This is a family temple of a family titled 'Vakayil Kaimal family' and is located near Palamkadavu and the temple is located within the residential premises of this family. This temple is more than 500 years old. The deity is Goddess Durga in Bhadrakali form, after slaying Mahishasura and thereby help him attain moksha to become one with the divine. The folklore narrates that Mahishasura had worshipped sixteen armed Bhadrakali after he saw a dream in which the same Devi was slaying her. Appeased, the Goddess appeared before Mahishasura. Mahishasura told her that through dream he had realized that his end was near. Hence, he asked Devi to provide him moksha after doing his uddhar by slaying. Devi blessed him and told that after she'll free him of his mortal coil, he'll never reincarnate on earth and will merge into her.

The popular legend regarding this temple states that the vighraha or the idol installed in the temple was obtained from a nearby property while the property was being cleaned. The Velyarambathu considered this statue as the 'Pradesha Devam' and then installed it within their family premises. The temple has some magnificent monuments. The idol of the main deity, Bhadrakali vighraha has been carved from a single piece of wood. Within this temple

there are several sculptures and idols carved out of wood. The Bhadrakali carved in Balikkal pura's door is very popular. Another popular sculpture is the four feet 'Kshetrapalakar' figures in rock. On top of bali kallu a figure of Sapta Rishi is carved in wood. The 'Upa devatha' of this temple is 'Naga raja' or the Serpent God, and a five feet tall figure of Naga raja has been carved out from a piece of wood. The other 'Upa Devathas' or sub-deities are 'Anthimahakalan' and 'Ayela Yekshi', brought from 'Manjooru' hence called devotees fondly call 'Manjoor Bhagavathy'.

Festivals:

The main festival of this temple spans over a period of six days and during this period the 'Ullala Kavilamma', deity of a temple to the south of this temple is believed to visit the temple. There is an 'Irakki puja' to welcome the 'Ullala Kavilamma'. On the day of the Malayalam star 'Bharani Nakshatra', is celebrated as the deity's birthday and on this day, para ezhunnallathu is performed.

Ullala Kaalikshwara Kshetram

The presiding deity of this temple is Lord Shiva. The temple is more than 6 centuries old and is located near Ullala Pudiya kavu Kshetram on the Vaikom-Vechoor road. This temple belongs to Kanakkankadavu Kattiyottu Kariganompalli Swaroopam family that hails from Aluva in Ernakulam district, en route Mala. The legend states that from this family a Brahmin lady used to be a staunch believer of Ettumanoor appan and she used to regularly visit the Ettumanoor temple until her age took a toll on her and she could not travel anymore, this 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 used to regularly pray at Ullala Kshetram. These are among a few temples where Mruthyunjaya Homam is performed. This temple is now under the administration of NSS Karayogam.

Kalpakasery Devi Temple

The principle deity of this temple is Bhadrakali Devi.

Festival:

The main festival is Makarakudam festival. It starts on the 28th day of Malayalam month Makaram and ends on the 1st of Kumabham. During this festive season Makarakudam, Talappoli and Garudanthukku are also conducted here.

Cheruparambu Khantagharna Temple

Khantagharna Swami is the main deity of this temple. The speciality of this temple is thadi thullal and udayam puja conducted during the Medam month of Malayalam calendar.

Pattassery Temple

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

Festivals:

The major festivals celebrated here are on 'Thiruvathira', celebrated in the Malayalam month of 'Dhanu'. The festivals lasts for five days. Other main celebrations here are 'thadi thullal, 'Sarpa pattu' and 'Gandharva Pattu' are also conducted on the 1st of Malayalam month of Medam.

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 deity installation festival is celebrated annually on the 5th of May to commemorate the day deity was instated. 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 was installed by Parashurama. During Tippu's attack, the local priest fearing mugging of the precious articles of the temple, the main idol and jewellery was deposited in well in front of the temple and covered. Utsav in this temple is during the month of March.

Ayankovil Shatha Vishnu Temple

During ancient times, a Brahmin family used to worship Thevara Moorthy, which was 'Salagram'. Salagrama or Shaligram refers to a fossilized shell used in South Asia as an iconic symbol and reminder of the God Vishnu as the Universal Principle by some Hindus. Shaligrams are usually collected from river-beds or banks such as the Gandaki River in Nepal. They are considered easy to carry and popular in certain traditions of Vaishnavism, as an aniconic 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 those days in the North-eastern parts of this place, there used to be a Brahmin illam titled 'Cherumanal'. The legend says that this Brahmin family installed their idol worshiped by constructing a Shasta-Devi temple and also installed it near the earlier Vishnu temple. But this Shastha idol installed 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 believed to be a 'Brahmachari' or Brahmin, as a popular faith, has a wife, 'Prabha' and son 'Satyakan' installed beside him, which supports the legends that Lord Ayyappa or Shastha had wife and family before he left for Sabarimala.

Deities in this temple Lord Krishna as 'Parthasarathy', Shastha and Goddess Bhadrakala as Narathala Bhagawathy are worshiped here. The administration of this temple is handled by 7 Brahmin landlords and the local residents' of that area.

Festivals:

The main utsav starts from end of April, when Uthram star falls, marks the commencement of the festival and lasts for six days. The major events include kalamezhuthu for Shasta, Kathakali, Sasta pattu, Ottamthullal. By the mid-june the installation of Shasta deity is commemorated and theyattu is also performed on this day.

Pundarikapuram Temple

The temple falls in the borders of Velloor Gramapanchayat, and is believed to be one of the most ancient temples in the region built around the 16th century. Around this period a Brahmin family from Payyanur, titled 'Velimamkovil illam', came to a place near Velloor in Vaikom. This family did not have decedents and hence the last member of the family married into 'Ayyozhu illam', a family in Vaikom. The then Kottayam King transferred the title of many places in Mithaikunnu in a tax-free mode to their name.

A member of this illam, was attending 'Vallom kali' or boat race, and at that instance 'Thetti flower' and Lotus flower was believed to have sprang up from the river. People dived into the river to understand this unusual phenomenon and then retrieved the deity now installed in this temple from under water. The deity comprised of Lord Krishna's figure who was returning to Dwaraka, along with Satyabhama after killing the demon Naragasura. There are rare mural paintings in this temple, the mixture used to create the painting is still unknown. It is said that Raja Ravi Varma has visited this temple. The sculptures of this temple carved on wood is one of the rarest of sorts.

Brahmapuram Mathanam Devi Temple

Brahmapuram Mathanam Devi Temple is a 'swayambhu temple', which means self-manifested deity temple of the Vaikom region. Important days of this temple are Tuesday and Friday, which hosts a series of special pujas, and people flock to this temple during these days. Thambala nivedyam is a very important offering to the goddess, prasada oottu, or the auspicious lunch is also highly regarded in this temple, on the day when Karthika star falls special puja and lunch is 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 in this temple into the temple well.

Festival

The major festival of this temple falls in the month of February, the Kodiyettam, which symbolizes the beginning of the event in the Temple is done to mark the commencement of events. The flag remains hoisted throughout the event period and is dehoisted at the end of the event. The utsav lasts for 7 days and concludes with Aarattu.

Vadayar Elamkavu Devi Temple

Vadayar Elamkavu Devi Temple, dedicated to Goddess Bhagavathy or Devi in a fierce form is located about 9 km away from Vaikom on the bank of river vadayar.

Two main festivals are held here. One is the flag hosting festival held in the month of February that lasts for eight days (February). Other is the famous 2 day Elamkavu Attuvela Mahotsavam (water carnival), observed in Malayalam Kumbham month (March-April) which is a unique festival celebration through the river water.

Travancore Highness used to come and stay in Vadayar, but in an interim period smallpox disease spread drastically in the region, and as instructed by astrologers, Kodungaloor Devi's deity was installed in this temple to check the rapid spread of this disease. The deity was brought to this place through water in a grand boat temple, but the British mistook it for a warship and fired at it, and this day is still remembered and celebrated in this temple as 'Ellamkavu Aattu vela'.

Festival

The Kodiyettam takes place every year on February 13th and another specialty of this temple is that Kalamezhuthu is done in this temple on all days. Events that happens during utsav are Chakkyar koothu, Ootaam thullal, Kadhakali, Korathiyattam. Historic Vadayar Elamkavu Attuvela happens every year during the utsav. During this feat two boats are tied together and the model of the temple is made on this. The floating model is decorated and is rowed almost 1 and a half kilometers on water to reach the temple. This rare event is called

Aattuvela, and happens when 'Ashwathy' star falls during the month of April. The temple model is made out of centuries old teak structures which is assembled only during this time of the year.

Ayyarkulangara Devi Temple

Ayyarkulangara Devi temple is an oldest temple of Kunthi Devi (in Mahabharatha). It is believed as Kunthi devi along with pandavas were resided in their vanavasa (ajnjatha vasa time). In Vaikom temple, the same kunthi devi is worshipped as Panachikkal Bhagavathi.

Kalakkal Temple

Kalakkal Valiyachan is considered as the first servant the Nandi of Sri Parameswara. The local people call His Prathishta as Kalakkal Valiyachan (Nandi). Even from ancient times the ownership rests with an Ezhava family named Kalakkal. The festival is observed on the 10th day of Medam month in Malayalam.

After the Athazha Pooja and Sreebeli, the Vaikom Temple closes; from then to the ritualistic awakening of the Lord (Palli Unarthal) next morning, the protection of the temple rests with the Kalakkal Kavudayon or Kalakkal Valiyachan. Once a Vidwan named Pachu Moosad was fasting in the Temple. He was a miraculous Satwa was doing Pradikshana on the boundary walls holding Sreekovil Shigara Kalasa by one hand and that was Kalakkal Valiyachan, the Nandi. When Vaikkathappan's procession goes outside the Temple an open sword is carried which is brought from the Kalakkal Temple. This custom shows the special relation of the two Temples. Vaikom Devaswom gives a certain amount to Kalakkal Temple.

KOOTTUMMEL BHAGAVATHY TEMPLE

Koottummel Bhagavathy Temple situated in Maravanthuruth Grama Panchayat near to Vaikom –Ernakulam road. Bhadrakali is the deity of the temple.

Festival:

Teeyattu is the main festival of the temple which is a 40 days long colourful celebration with theeyaattu, kumbhakudam, pakalpporam etc. The theeyaattu kalam, thalappoli etc. of the festival are attracting tourists also.

UDAYANAPURAM SUBRAMAHNYA SWAMY TEMPLE

Udayanapuram Subramanya Swamy Temple

The temple situates in Udayanapuram, 2kms away from Vaikom Mahadeva temple, of Kottayam district. The presiding deity is Subramanyan, facing the east. The idol has six feet height. The sub-deities are Ganapathy and Dhakshinamoorthy.

Festivals:

10 days festival in Malayalam month Vrichikom. Shashti, Karthika are celebrated every month.

Thypooyam celebrated with freat pomp.

PITHRUKUNNU TEMPLE

Kothavara St. Francis Xavior's Church

Let's begin with the story behind how Church came into being. Maramittathu Mana used to be a prominent landlord family in Kothavara, Vaikom. In olden days there used to be a custom in Namboothiri families where Christians need to touch oil to purify it. A Christian family was made to relocate from Kodungaloor to Kothavara by the Maramittathu Mana for this purpose. The Christian community of Kothavara are mostly the descendants of these migrated 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 hinged on Kudavechur Church established in 1465 AD and Vadyar Unni Messiah Church started in 1997 AD for religious purposes. The initial pleas by these local Christian community for constructing a church was declined by the Maramittathu Mana since the Namboothiris feared burying dead bodies

within the premises would pollute the land. But later on persistent requests land was allotted in the 'Vadaykkupurath' and in 1870 AD a church was constructed there. Now the St. Xavier's College stands in the locale where this church was built. Subsequently the Maramittathu Mana was annihilated completely by fire and they had to shift from that locality, which by then came 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 1st 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. In yesteryears, as found in the church records, the church was named after Holy Mary, and was later transformed to St. Joseph's name, and 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 marriage of St. Joseph with Holy Mary is commemorated here as the major feast. In the contemporary social context, where marital life faces many challenges, lot of people used to visit this church and plead the help of St. Joseph. Believers specially pray for fruitful family life and graceful children.

The present church building was built in 1809 under the vicarship of V. Rev. Fr. Kuriakose Koikkeril. The big and beautiful belfry constructed in 1961 is ornamented with 3 bells brought from France in 1923. These three valuable bells were the memento of Sacerdotal Golden Jubilee of Rev. Fr. Jacob Vetticappilly. Relic of Holy Cross of Our Lord, brought from Rome in 1925, is kept in this church. The present presbytery is built in 1968. Recently, in 2012 a new presbytery, with office facilities has been blessed by His Eminence Cardinal George Alanchery.

In connection with the Second Centenary Celebration, the church building has been renovated under the leadership of V. Rev. Fr. John Thekkan, the vicar. An awesome grotto of Blessed

Virgin Mary decorates the churchyard. The statue of Holy Mary is carved out of 'Devadaru' (Cedrus deodara) and Rev. Fr. Syriac Puthenangady brought it from Fathima.

St. Joseph Forane Church, Vaikom is blessed with a good number of vocations. 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 a good number of expired priests and nuns, at present, 31 priests and 80 nuns from this parish serve the church both inside and outside India.

Festivals:

Saint Kuriakose Elias Chavara, C.M.I. (10 February 1805 – 3 January 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 enormous way on the 3rd of January annually.

The marriage feast of Saint Joseph, a figure in the Gospels who was married to Mary, Jesus' mother, is the main festival of this church which is celebrated in an outstanding way on the 23rd of January every year.

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

Sacred Heart Church Vaikom

On the 1st of March 1913, Christian devotees living in TV Puram panchayat, to start off their 'Vanakkamasom' or fasting of Saint Joseph, built a small thatched hut in Pallipalakkattu and placed a 'Peetham' or a Sacred Chair symbolizing the Saint. Later, on 31st March 1920, new edifice for the church was built as an interim arrangement and was named St. Antony's Chapel. On 31st December, 1952, a much bigger building was constructed for the Church and was named 'Thiruhridaya Kappola'. 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 the 7th of December, 1966. The 'Vencherip' 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, in the name of St. Sebastian 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 Kappella. This interim arrangement came into being due to the relentless efforts of Dr. Father Immanuel Maniyankot. Later, Mount. George Velyarambath had enabled the setting up of an Ashram for the hapless and along with that a hospital has also been setup. Around 150 families in that area regularly visit this church to worship. The foundation stone of the present splendid and grand church had been laid in December 1994 by Father Manathedathu. The present church started functioning on the 14th of April, 1999, with the blessings of Father Mar Tomas Chakyath.

Josepuram St. Thomas Church

On the Easter day in the year 1972, which fell on the 2nd of April, the Josepuram St. Thomas Cappella came into being. This cappella, in the name St. Thomas, was blessed by Father Joseph Chakyath and the Holy Qurbana has been happening there ever since. On April 7th, 1983, Father Immanuel Maniyankot gave leadership to the decision to construct a church of dimension 70x20 feet. On the 11th of February, 1985 the foundation stone was laid and funds came in from all across the globe and the dream of Father Immanuel Maniyankot was satiated on 13th September, 1986, after the ceremonious blessing formality by Mar. Antony Padiyara.

Kallara Pazhaya Palli

Kallara St. Thomas Knaya Catholic Church (Otherwise called as Kallara Pazhayapalli) was established in 1900 AD. Being a part of the Kaipuzha Forana and Kottayam Arch diocese,

kallara palli has grown and become a spiritual home of many. As a parish between Nendoor St. Michael's Parish and Kallara St. Mary's Parish, Kallara Pazhaya Palli is located at the center 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 related 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 Changanassery 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 is carried out. The church was later renovated on the 2nd of July 1959 and was then blessed by Arch Bishop Rev. Thomas Tharayil. In 1975 the platinum jubilee of the church was celebrated in a distinguished manner under the leadership of the then priest Father Stephen Niravath. In 1999-2000 the centenary celebrations, conducted under the guide ship of Father Thomas Vallepallil is also worth mention. Around five hundred and seventy families living in the vicinity are devoted to this church and this church now has five capellas under its administration.

St. Mary's Church Puthenpalli

The St. Mary's Church Puthenpalli was set up to the north of Kalabukaadu canal, to facilitate the ease in conducting prayers for the Knanaya families in the locality. The church was last renovated around a decade back in 2008, during the celebrations of its silver jubilee. There are several capellas under the Puthenpalli and Pazhayapalli to serve the devotees of the region. Under the Puhtenpalli, there is St. Mathews Church situated in Maniyanthruthu and St. Anthony's Church which is located in the Perunthuruthu.

Culture, Art and Heritage Trail

The local culture in its myriad forms and expressions is an important element of a destination's uniqueness, hence it is very significant to understand the various art forms celebrated in the region and as far as possible witness the event and be a part of it. The relevance lies in the fact that these are the most direct and tangible expressions of culture are local patrimonies such as Art and Ccraft, Music and Dance which are often specific to a place, community or social grouping. This section is dedicated to the local arists and cultural-performers, the real heroes who kept the flame of art burning all these centuries.

Theeyattu

Theeyaattam also known as Theeyaattu is a traditional dance form widely performed in Central and South Kerala and an ancient and multihued cult, the genesis of which 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 Nambiars (Ambalavasi).



Bhadrakali Theyattu is a ritualistic dance usually performed in Bhadrakali temples and in the households of namboothiri and theyattunni communities. The ritual starts with the ceremony of kalamezhuthu, ritualistic drawings in colourful powder. An elaborate picture (kalam) of Goddess Bhadrakali is drawn on the floor using natural colours strictly following guidelines on pattern, details and dimensions. The materials used are rice for white, charcoal of husk for black, turmeric for yellow, mixture of lime and turmeric for red and green leaves for green colour. When lighted oil lamps are placed there emanates an awe inspiring image of goddess Bhadrakali. The performance has many parts, of which, preparation of the ritual art known as kalam (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 take place in front of the Kalamezhuthu and may last up to three hours. The dance performance usually commence at night which is performed by a male theyattunni. He enters the stage with elaborate dressing and a huge headgear is placed on his head which ascribes him the status of goddess Bhadrakali. The theyattunni wears a red dress, 'chilambu' or the anklets and sword. Percussion instruments are used while the ritual takes place and they are chenda and elathalam. Lord Shiva is symbolised by the lighted lamp. The performance is a narration of story of the death of Darika by Kali to Shiva, wherein Kali is characterised just back after killing Darika. As she was affected by small pox and has pockmarks on her face she has her back to 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 was granted an immunity from Brahma not to die at the hands of any man, but with a curse that a woman would kill them. The two grew powerful and became a threat for 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, and Bhadrakali succeeded in destroying the demons after a fierce battle.

The performance progresses through chants, dance, gestures, and reports the incidents leading to the killing of Darika. The performance concludes with the enacting of the

assassination of Darikasura, representing the destruction of evil. As the theyyattam approaches its conclusion fire is lit on 'pandem' and rituals to ward off ill luck, misfortune and evil eye is done. In Vaikom, Koottumel bhagavathi Temple, Vadayar Temple, Moothedathukaavu Bhagavathy Temple, Pallippurathukavu Bhagavathy Temple and Chittechathu Bhagavathi temple are famous for Theyyattu Festival

Garudan Thookkam

Garudan Thookkam is a ritual art form performed in certain Kali temples in some Central Kerala districts in south India. The people who dress up as Garuda perform the dance. After the dance performance, the hang-designate dangle from a shaft hooking the skin on his back. In some places, the ritual is performed colorfully with Garudas taken in a procession on bullock carts or boats or hand pulled carts. It will be available in Devi temple during the festival of Meena bharani and Pathamudayam in Kottayam district.

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

Garudan Thookkam is submitted as a reward for the problems solved in the abode of Goddess Kali. During this feat, 40 to 50 people hang as Garudan in the Thooka chadus, decorated and is carried around in procession. This is one of the best sights, with illuminated Structures. After the long performance with the help of scores of chenda experts, the Garudans - bleeding after the Choondakuthal (Piercing of the skin on their back with a sharp metal hook) 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 holy bird. Sandalwood paste is applied on to their bodies and garlands given by the temple priest is tied on their hands.

Sarpam thullal

Sarpam Thullal (Dance of Snakes) or Nagakalam Pattu, is a unique form of mystical ritual associated generally with ancestral temples or tharavadus predominantly in state of Kerala. From ancient times many family houses in Kerala have special snake shrines called Kavu or Pambin Kavu where this exotic and spectacular ritual performance is associated to, it is generally conducted to appease the snake gods and thereby to bring prosperity to the family. This is usually conducted when Ayilyam nakshatra falls. Special puja are performed and kalam are drawn representing the serpents.

Sarpam thullal is generally held to appease snake gods for prosperity of the family or to give an offspring to the couples who may have difficulties in conceiving a child. In most of the scenarios 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 or in certain places it is held as an annual or regular practice. Once the date is finalized by the family, the associated Pulluvan family with the temple is informed. It is the Pulluvan and Pulluvathy and their assistants who hold the skills and responsibility of creating the aesthetic requirements for the Sarpam Thullal.

They create a pandal and decorate it and songs are sung in praise of serpents. The blessing of serpent is shown on some people during this puja who will become the mediums or manifestations of Snake Gods and they behave as serpents and can at times predict future.

The pulluvan and his team create a floral decoration using various natural colors on specially made floor before the snake idols. The floral decoration is called Nagakalam. Nagakalams are of various types such as Bhasma Kalam (A Kalam which is made of just ash powder) 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 kudam. The initial lines are generally sung in praise of Ganesha, followed by other gods. Then the Thala or beat changes along with the song. Later part is dedicated to Serpent God Astika. The people who contract the powers from

Serpent Gods generally starts to get into a trance like state within 20–30 minutes and it is reported that they feel that the snake which is drawn on the floor has come alive. Some of them have experienced vibrations all over their body and they feel their body is resonating towards the vibrations. The ritual has strong parallels to the function of an Oracle and generally speaks to the onlookers after entering into the trance state and informs them on the behalf of the snake gods.

Thiruvathira Kali

The thiruvathira kali is a unique dance performance performed on the auspicious day of Thiruvathira celebrated as the birthday of Lord Shiva. It is performed by women who seek blessing for their eternal marital bliss. It falls on the month of Dhanu (December-January). This kind of dance form falls in the 'lasya' category of acting. This is a unique art form that rejuvenates a person physically, mentally and spiritually. Thiruvathira Kali is also performed during marriages in Naboothiri Illams. Kaikotti Kali and Kummi Kali 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 charini (equal partner). This is believed to be the reason that has brought Kamadeva (God of Love) back to life when he had been burnt to ashes by Lord Shiva's fury. At least seven days before Thiruvathira ladies sing songs of praise of Parvathy Devi and perform dances to please Goddess Parvathi. Groups of up to eight or ten women are seen dressed in traditional Kerala attire, dancing in a circle. The graceful movements of the dance are both enchanting and elegant. The white saris with colourful borders along with fresh garlands on their hair adorning their hair 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'), are ten herbs traditionally significant to Keralites, the people of Kerala, India. These herbs are found almost everywhere in Kerala, especially in the Western Ghats region.

Fidelity and the power of female energy are the crux of this ancient practice. The dance performance commences with the setting of sun, and rising of Thiruvathira star in the sky, and the performance extends up to midnight.

A variation of Thiruvathirakali is also practiced in South Kerala known as Pinnal Thiruvathirakali. Although this art form was on the verge of extinction a few years back now has been revived due to the earnest efforts of a few. Ladies sing and dance to the tunes in praise of Lord Krishna. The terminology, Pinnal Thiruvathira emerged because ladies hold on to three long ropes while dancing and while performing the dance their steps are neatly executed such that by the end of the dance the three ropes will be neatly plaited like a thick hair tuft. This dance form is now carried out in the Payarukadu Sree Krishna Swami Temple.

Yet another type of Thiruvathira is Pinjani Thiruvathira, also called Kinnam Kali, performed by holding a small vessel in hand. This is not widely practiced up till now seen in Talayazham panchayat.

Kalamezhuthum Pattum

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

Coloured powders are used for preparing the *kalam*. Primarily, five natural colours are used – white, black, yellow, green and red. For making the colours various natural products are used. White colours are extracted from 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 is poisonous.

Kalam are drawn by people belonging to different communities in different places. Kurup community or locally known as 'Kuruppanmaar' draws 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 Kuruvas, to name a few.

Minimum two people are required to carry out this auspicious ritual, where the master of the kalam observes a strict fasting and hard penance life style dedicated to deity. On the day of the kalamezhuthu, the master of kalam initially draws a straight line which they call as Barahmastram, and this is followed by sketching the body of God or Goddesses using rice powder or black powder. The face, neck, chest and crown are drawn by one person and the limbs are drawn by the other. The Kalamezhuthu is done to please the Gods and also to seek protection from evil.

Figures are drawn based on the rituals of a particular place and these include yakshi, sarpam, bhadrakali, gandharvan and gulikan. Kalam drawn are different for ritual performances like Kalamezhuthu pattu, Mudiyeetu, Paana, Theeyattu, Pulluvan pattu, Kethronpattu, Gandharvan Thullal, Malayan Kettu, Balikala, Bhagavatipattu, Kalathilaripattu, etc.

The kalamezhuthu is performed during the utsav season which is usually during the 1st of Malayalam month Vrishchikam to 11th of Dhanu, during the Mandala season, which is the main pilgrimage season of the renowned Sabarimala Temple. It is seen to be executed only in Drawidian temples and 'Kaavu' of Kerala. Hours of puja follows the kalamezhuthu, where praise of Gods are sung. Velichappadu thullalis 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 Prasad and with this the kalamezhuthu ends.

There are two widely accepted fables that connects us to the myth behind the sketching of Kalams. The first one dates back to the era when Buddhism was a well-established religion and was being followed during the period of AD 650-850. During the 8th century, the decline

of Buddhism started as the Brahmanical revolution started in Kerala. This art form is believed to have been derived from the ancient Buddhist art form known as the 'Dhuli paintings'.

The second tale falls before the time of advent of Buddhism in Kerala, when there existed Shaktheya religion 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 hands of Bhadrakali determines the size of the *kalam*, usually sixteen to sixty four hands are drawn.

This ritual is usually performed in Mandala time. Once the *kalam* drawing has been completed, paddy, coconuts and fibres are placed in the *kalam*. And then starts the rendering of songs. After rendering the songs, the performer circumambulates the *kalam*. Against the background music of instruments, the singer dances vigorously and will erase the *kalam*. The popular song rendered in Bhadrakali pattu is that of Bhadrakali killing the demon Darikan. While the songs and chants are resonated, devotees go clockwise around the kalam and this is called Pradakshina, which is the practice of circumambulating sacred spaces. These are also called 'thottam pattu'.

Nagakalam and Pulluvan Paattu

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

Usually the rituals begin after the dusk with Ganapathi pooja. 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 striking the Pulluva Kudam (pot). Then *Muram pooja* for *Garudan* and *Noorum Paalum* for the serpents is offered. After that Bhadrakali and

Ashtavastus are worshipped the girls who have been on fast enter the *kalam* and start dancing (thullal). The songs sung are Ganapathy Vandanam and those exorcising the *Nagas*. The *Ashtanagas* are Ananthan, Vasuki, Thakshakan, Karkodakan, Shanghupalan, Mahapadman, Padman and Kaaliyan. Young girls dance shaking arecanut flowers (pookulas in Malayalam). The tempo increases imitating the movements of the serpents and will erase the *kalam*.

Kalam pattu

The rituals of drawing kalam and singing is observed in North Kerala also. The chief priest will be Kaniyan or Kanissan. People belonging to the Vannan community also perform these rituals. In a specially built pandal the ritual takes place. The figures drawn are those of Gandharvan, Karukalaki, Bhairavan, Raktswari and other Goddesses. 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, Marappattu. When the tempo of the song and beat increases the 'piniyal' dances vibrantly and the kalam is erased.

Kalams of Cheerbakavu

While drawing Kalam, the Thiyyas of Cheerbakavu North Kerala uses a particular singing tradition, thus known as Kalam of Cheerbakavu. The rituals for Kalam at Cheerbakavu will last for 3 days which begins with a Thalipoli festival which takes place once in a year. They draw the Nagakalam and the song describes cheerba killing demon, Darikan. Mudi yettu

Mudi yett or Mudi yettu is a traditional ritual theatre and folk dance drama from Kerala that enacts the mythological tale of a battle between the goddess Kali and the demon Darika. The ritual is a part of the bhagavathi 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 Mudi yettu was inscribed in the UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, becoming the second art form from Kerala after Koodiyattam.

The Mudi yettu is also based on the Kali-Darika myth described in the Theeyattu section of this script. Mudi yett is a village ritual performed by members of the Marar and Kuruppu 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 Chalakkudy 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 Mudi yettu 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 Mudi yettu. 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 mudi resembles the Kathakali crown and his face paint the Kathi Veshas of Kathakali. This points to how the two forms have become interlinked even though Mudi yettu predates Kathakali, with epigraphists tracing its evolution as an art to even the 9th or 10th century AD. The first major steps involved in pratistha puja refers to the rite or ceremony by which a murti (image of a god) is consecrated, then the Bhadrakali kalamezhuthu, thiri uzichil wherein the body of the performer is anointed with a wick lighted with oil, thalappoli, procession and end with the rubbing of kalam by the oracle. The Mudi yettu is performed in front of the Bhadrakali kalam. The stories narrated the stories of two Asura women gave birth two children: Danamathi gave birth to Danavendra and Darumathi gave birth to Darika. But their birth took place at an evil hour and they grew up to be of devastating effect to people around. Narada, the bard of Devas, took this news to Shiva and informed him of the atrocities committed by Darika. This is where the story of 'Mude yettu' begins. Darika then enters the stage through the audience and starts performing acts revealing 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 then wears the crown in front of the temple. Her performance is accompanied by performance by the musicians and chants. Kali begins to perform and achieves the trance.

The spectators in a Mudi yettu performance are not inanimate as in the case of those in the modern theatre forms. They are active participants in the performers and a deciding factor in the success of the performance and its effectiveness. There are several segments in this group of spectators. There are families who have been for years involved with the temple and the rituals there. 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 areca nut 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 instills and strengthens 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 Kooli enters providing relief and entertainment. During the scene of 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.

Pulluvan Pattu

Pulluvan Paattu resonates serpent worship and is deeply entrenched with the culture of Kerala. It has a close association with the kaavus or the serpent temples of Kerala. Even though the 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 also Sopana Sangeetham is a form of Indian classical music that developed in the temples of Kerala.

Pulluvans are believed to be the descendants of Jarita, a certain female bird of the species called Sarngika, whose story is told in the Mahabharata. And so goes the folktale that 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. In the conflagration of the Khandava Forest she showed great devotion in the protection of 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 novel 'Castes and Tribes of Southern India', by Edgar Thurston.

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

Kalaripayattu

Kalaripayattu (sometimes shortened as Kalari) is an Indian martial art and fighting system that originated in Kerala. Some practitioners claim that it's 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, and Angathari 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, bows and silambam in the Sangam era. The word kalari appears in the Hindu Puras 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 (vil ambu). The combat techniques of the Sangam period were the earliest precursors to kalaripayat. References to "Silappadikkaram" in Sangam literature date back to the 2nd century. This referred to the silambam staff which was in great demand with foreign visitors.

Elements from the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, as well as finger movements in the *nata* dances, 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 kalaripayat can be applied to dance and kathakali dancers who knew kalaripayat were believed to be markedly better than other performers. Velakali an art form of the Nair soldiers from the southern part of Kerala combines elements of Kalaripayat to depict ancient battle scenes from the epic Mahabharata. Until recent decades, the chhau dance was performed only by martial artists. Some traditional Indian classical dance schools still incorporate martial arts as part of their exercise regimen.

Kalaripayattu had developed into its present form by the 6th century, during an extended period of warfare between the Chera and Chola dynasties. Kalaripayattu includes strikes, kicks, grappling, preset forms, weaponry and healing methods. Regional variants are classified according to geographical position in Kerala; these are the Northern style from Malabar region in north Kerala practiced by the Central style from inner Kerala and the southern style from Thiruvitankoor. Northern kalaripayattu is based on elegant and flexible movements, evasions, jumps and weapons training, while the southern "Adi Murai" style

primarily follows the hard impact based techniques with priority on empty hand fighting and pressure point strikes. Both systems make use of internal and external concepts.

Siddhar Agastya is regarded as the founder and patron saint of southern kalaripayat, silambam and varmam -an ancient science of healing using varmam points for varied diseases.

Kalaripayattu 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 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, to discourage misuse of the technique. Marmashastram stresses on 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 kalaripayattu 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 artists knew about and practiced 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 had an emphasis on vital points, such as varma kalai and marma adi.

As a result of learning about the human body, Indian martial artists became knowledgeable in the field of traditional medicine and massage. Kalaripayattu teachers often provide massages (*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 *uzhichil* 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*.

Duffmuttu is performed as social entertainment and to commemorate festivals, *uroos* (festivals connected with mosques) and weddings. Duffmuttu can be performed at any time of the day. A *duffmuttu* 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*.

Duffmuttu 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 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 arabana 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, Darika. Popular places where Padayani is performed are Kadammanitta, Kottangal, Othara, Kunnanthaanam and many other temples in

Though traditionally, it lasted for nearly two weeks, now-a days, 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*, 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 waving leaves or towels in their and later the leaves and towels are 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 and Paradeshi appears to lighten the mood. Thappu and chenda are the main musical instruments played during the onset of the event.

These *Kolam* 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 *Kaalan 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, during which, the performer wears a kolam made out of 101 pala from palm trees. Padayani 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 and minor differences in the style of performance are usually noted from place to place. Kurppan from the Ganaka community is entitled to perform this and the objective of which is to ward off evil spirit. 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 thullal. Foremost of the kalam draw 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 black, turmeric gives yellow colour, turmeric and lime are mixed to produce red, Circassian leaf for green.

Ayyappa Pattu and Ayyappa Vilakku

Ayyappan vilakku is a popular ritual organised 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 are observing vritham and fasting for going to the holy mala. The artists are trained professionals. By dawn the artists create miniature temples for the deities such as the Lord Ayyappan, and Lord Vavar, who is the Muslim warrior who became a close friend of Lord Ayyappa, and Goddess Bhagavathy etc., using the stem of banana plant and tender fronds of the coconut tree. After installation of the deities, the main programme is a ritual procession in the late afternoon, ladies carrying lamp, drum beats and udukkukotti pattu (folksongs) etc. In some places panchavadyam (traditional orchestra with five musical instruments), caparisoned elephants will be 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 where songs commemorating the glorious Pandalam King and Lord Ayyappa are sung. Ayyappan pattu is the udukkukottipattu, where a group of singers narrate the story of Lord Ayyappan 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 a wick lighted with vegetable oil), fire walk, symbolic fight between Ayyappan and Vavar and their reunion are performed. Ayyapan vilakku ends by next day dawn with fireworks. When the Ayyappa pattu is celebrated in a magnificent way it is often called Ayyappa Vilakku.

Kavadi Attam

Kavadi Attam is a ceremonial sacrifice and offering practiced by devotees during the worship of Lord Murugan, the Hindu God of War. It is a central part of the festival of Thaipusam and emphasizes debt bondage. The *kavadi* ("burden") itself is a physical burden, the bearing of which is used by the devotee to implore Murugan 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' process 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 may also be practiced. It is claimed that devotees are able to enter a trance, feel no pain, do not bleed from their wounds and have no scars left 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 'Pattam Udayam'. Udaya puja is performed on the 1st to 10th of Malayalam month Medam. 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 are offered to Sun God, and devotees sing praise and the ceremonial

ululating sounds made by women called 'Kurava idal'. This throws a light on the former life of Keralaites which was in close association with nature.

COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM PRODUCTS

Toddy Tapping

Toddy, one of the simplest beverages around, is an integral part of Kumarakom's landscape. The toddy business is one of the mainstays of the destination's economy. Kumarakom have a number of traditional toddy tappers. Toddy tapping, in fact, has been an age-old rural vocation. The traditional methods employed in toddy tapping are a delight to the foreigners. *Kuamrakom kallu* (toddy) is famous and of high demand. Even the tourists from abroad are found to enjoy the sweet taste of 'madhurakallu' that is tapped very early in the morning. When taken with spicy delicacies, it proves to be a highly delectable experience. . It is made from the sap of the coconut flower before it blooms, the sweetish liquid is allowed to ferment overnight in bottles or earthenware vessels to produce toddy. 'Madhurakallu', 'Andhikallu' and 'Muthakallu' are the three varieties of toddy available in these rural shacks.

The spike of the coconut is beaten using bones of animals and is repeated twice a day. This is done continuously for 4-5 days. Later the upper portion of the spike is pared or trimmed using a special knife. The clay bought from the backwater is applied in the portion where it was trimmed. This is to

ensure foam and fat for the toddy. Then a mud pot is kept capsized over the spike. The pot gets filled with toddy and the tapper stores the same in a globular vessel. Watching the whole process and enjoying toddy would altogether be a wonderful experience for the tourists.

Vella Veeshal

Vella veeshal is one of the traditional fishing methods practiced in the interior water bodies of the destination. Pearl spot or Karimeen is the predominant catch on this method. The fishermen approaches the water body (most probably a canal, natural drain or a river) in a local boat. He immerses a twain embedded with tender palm leaves. On seeing the white shades produced by the object the Pearl Spot fishes dip their head in the clay beneath the object. The fisher folk collect the pearl spots. Catching fresh fishes without the use of fishing equipments is termed Vella Veeshal.

Coconut Tree Climbing

The coconut tree forms a major part of the landscape of Kerala. It is a part of traditional lifestyle and economy of Kerala. In Kerala, coconuts are used largely in the delicious cuisine. Coconut is consumed in many ways. The tender coconut juice is drunk as fresh. The flesh of tender coconut is soft and that it can be eaten raw and whereas the mature flesh is mainly used while preparing curries. The coconut tree is very useful in many ways. Each and every part of this tree can be used. As such the coconut tree and the activities connected with it could be used as potential tourism products.

Coconut tree climbing is one such sight. The laborer climbs even the tallest of the tree using a noose-like rope and reaches out for coconut and coconut leaf and put it down using a chopper. A bunch of tender coconuts is brought down with the help of a rope. The whole process is a good sight to see and altogether would be a new experience for the tourists.

House Boat Construction

The houseboats of Kerala are modified forms of what is earlier called as Kettuvalloms. It is the local carpenters who construct these houseboats by using various old techniques and principles. The wooden boards used for the construction are tied using coir ropes. The Kettuvalloms were used as cargo transporters through the backwaters of Kerala. The Kettuvalloms with its modern transformation widely known as Houseboats is an inevitable and ineludible part of Backwater tourism. A travel in the houseboats through the backwaters is an enchanting experience.

A houseboat has an average length of 70 feet and the central section will be wider. They are made of wooden pieces and are tied together using coir ropes. The



houseboats are made from a wood called Anjili (wild jackfruit) and palm leaves are thatched to form the roof. The varnish coated on the houseboats is made of cashew nut oil. Long, carved wooden pieces are tied together using coir and coconut fiber is stuffed between them which is called as hull. Motor is used in the kettuvalloms and is steered in the water by using oars. In shallow waters, long bamboo poles are used for propelling in water. The construction of houseboats in various private yards in the destination is now made available to the tourists to view.

LOCAL CUISINES AND ETHNIC FOOD



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.

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.

Fresh Toddy and Tender Coconut

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.

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.



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

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.



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 tapioca. 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 thalayan poovan tharavu*.

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

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.

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.

TRADITIONAL CRAFTS

Souvenirs

Souvenirs are meant to cherish memories of one's experiences in life. When it comes to traveling, souvenirs attain immense value, especially when people visit destinations like Vaikom.. Models of house boats form the most important one. Other souvenir models include Snake Boats, Karimeen(Pearl Spot), Lobster, fisherman with a fish hook in a local boat etc. The house boat model was developed by Muraleedharan VR of ward 1 and the snake boat model was developed by Suresh. E.S of ward 6.

Screw pine

Traditional screw pine models could also be made use. Screw pine mats and various other products could be tried. A number of women are engaged in screw pine weaving and their services could be made available. The major screw pine products include mats, purses, bags, table mats, baskets etc



Coconut Crafts



From the coconut shell products like bowls, vases, tea pots and hookas could be crafted. Lamp stands encased in brass and smaller coconut shell articles could also be made. Often hookas and large vases are also made by combining coconut shells with brass bindings. Coconut fibre is cleaned, smoothened and made into various dolls and toys with beads and coloured threads to it go give it a decorative appearance. It is one of the beautiful crafts. There are various cocnuts crafts making units in Vaikom All of them work under the coordination of the Responsible Tourism Mission

Coir Crafts



Coir and coir products are part of the traditional landscape of Kumarakom as elsewhere in the State of Kerala. A number of tourists visit the coir making units to see and experience the process. A number of women in Kumarakom know the process. The maximum number of units is located at Kaipuzha Muttu which is part of the destination. The coir products include coir mats, bags, purses, toys etc.

Wooden Crafts



Handicrafts making is either hereditary occupation or practiced by amateurs who has great interest in the art. Vaikom has the tradition of

making beautiful handicrafts wood. Many old handicraft classics can be seen in the handicrafts shops. The artists are experts in making beautiful flower vases, ash trays, toys, animal models, miniature boats, idols, etc

Rather than an art the handicrafts have evolved into a small scale industry. The making, domestic selling and exporting are increasing. There are a number of such craftsmen in Vaikom who are expert in making wooden crafts. A number of them identified by the RT Mission team now make wooden crafts.

Mud Crafts



Kerala is a treasure trove of the finest crafts that one has ever seen. There are many gifted craftsmen in Kerala who makes models out of mud which highlights the indigenous method and skill of the traditional craftsmen in making the same.. Clay taken from interior canals and backwater is used to make the crafts.

Metal Crafts



Metal crafts of Kerala holds a unique place of pride among the traditional crafts. There are many craftsmen in Vaikom who have expertise in making sculptures and tools a detailed list of which is available with the Responsible Tourism Cell.

There are craftsmen who make models of Snake boats, Idols of Lord Krishna and Devi etc using iron. The iron crafts are still made traditionally in the Blacksmiths forge.



Gold Smiths are very few in number. There are tourists who demand to see this traditional jewellery making process. The whole jewellery making process in the traditional style in a Goldsmith's forge is an experience to watch.

There are few women in the destination who are trained in jewellery making. They use pearls and other raw materials to make these jewels. They make ornaments like necklaces, chains, bangles, strings of pearls, ear rings, studs etc.

The handicraft serves a twofold motive. It showcases the handicrafts of Vaikom and the tourism potential to the world it forms a source of income to the many poor traditional craftsmen of the region.

FLORA AND FAUNA



Vaikom is home to a wide variety of tropical flora and fauna. Tropical species such as the egret, heron, waterfowl, ducks, moorhens and kingfisher are commonly found. One of the important migratory species is the Siberian crane. The Vembanad Lake is home to many marine and freshwater fish. Varieties of shrimp, prawn and fresh water fish are beautiful. The "Pearl spot" fish is found in relatively lower numbers.

FLORA		
	TRUE MANGROVES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Avicennia officinalis</i> L. Verbenaceae 2. <i>Bruguiera gymnorrhiza</i> Merr. Rhizophoraceae 3. <i>Rhizophora apiculata</i> Bl. Rhizophoraceae 4. <i>Rhizophora mucronata</i> Lamk. Rhizophoraceae 5. <i>Sonnerita caseolaris</i> (L.) Engl. Sonneratiaceae 6. <i>Kandelia candel</i> (Linn.) Druce
	MARSHY AND MANGROVE ASSOCIATES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Ardisia littoralis</i> Andr. Myrsinaceae 2. <i>Barringtonia racemosa</i> Rox. Barringtoniaceae 3. <i>Canavalia obtusifolia</i> DC. Fabaceae 4. <i>Cerbera odollam</i> Gaertn. Apocynaceae 5. <i>Clerodendrum inerme</i> Gaert. Verbenaceae 6. <i>Derris scandens</i> Benth. Fabaceae 7. <i>Derris trifoliata</i> Lour. Fabaceae

		<p>8. Dolichandrone spathaceae (L.f.) k.chum. Bigniniaceae</p> <p>9. Excoecaria agallocha L. Euphorbiaceae</p> <p>10. Hibiscus tiliaceus L. Malvaceae</p> <p>11. Ipomoea paniculata R.Bt. Convolvulaceae</p> <p>12. Lagenandra Ovata Dalzel Araceae</p> <p>13. Melastoma Malabathricum L. Melastomaceae</p> <p>14. Pandanus tectorius Soland. Pandanaceae</p> <p>15. Premna latifolia Roxb. Verbenaceae</p> <p>16. Stenochlaena palustre L. Polypodiaceae</p> <p>17. Thespesia populnea Solan ex.Corr. Malvaceae</p>
	<p>NON MANGROVES</p>	<p>1. Anamirtha cocculus W & A. Menispermaceae</p> <p>2. Centrosema pubescens. Fabaceae</p> <p>3. Cayarattia tenuifolia Gagnep Vitaceae</p> <p>4. Flagellaria india L. Flagellariaceae</p> <p>5. Mikania micrantha Kunth. Compositae</p> <p>6. Mucuna gigantean (Willd.) DC. Fabaceae</p> <p>7. Sapium indicum Willd. Euphorbiaceae</p> <p>8. Stictocardia tiliaefolia Hallier. Convolvulaceae</p>
	<p>HYDROPHYTES</p>	<p>1. Aponogeton crispus Thumb. Aponogentaceae</p> <p>2. Centella asiatica (L.) Urb. Apiaceae</p> <p>3. Cyperum cephalotes Vahl. Cyperaceae</p>

		<p>4. <i>Eichhornia crassipes</i> (Mart.) Solms-Lamb. Pontederiaceae</p> <p>5. <i>Hydrilla verticillata</i> Royle. Hydrocharitaceae</p> <p>6. <i>Hygroryza aristata</i> Nees. Poaceae</p> <p>7. <i>Lemna gibba</i> L. Lemnaceae</p> <p>8. <i>Limnocharis flava</i> (L.) Buchenan. Limnocharitaceae</p> <p>9. <i>Monochoria vaginalis</i> Presl. Pontederiaceae</p> <p>10. <i>Najas graminea</i> Del. Najadaceae</p> <p>11. <i>Nymphaea nouchali</i> N. Burm. Nymphaeaceae</p> <p>12. <i>Nymphoides indica</i> (L.) O Kuntze. Menyanthaceae</p> <p>13. <i>Pistia stratiotes</i> L. Araceae</p> <p>14. <i>Salvenia molesta</i> Mitchell. Salviniaceae</p> <p>15. <i>Urticularia flexuosa</i> Vahl. Lentibulariaceae</p>
	<p>COMMON PLANTS</p>	<p>1. <i>Allamanda Cathartica</i> L. Apocynaceae</p> <p>2. <i>Breynia rhamnoides</i> M.Arg. Euphorbiaceae</p> <p>3. <i>Calophyllum inophyllum</i> L. Clusiaceae</p> <p>4. <i>Clerodendrum viscosum</i> Vent. Verbenaceae</p> <p>5. <i>Dregea volubilis</i> (L.f) Benth.ex.Hkf. Asclepiadaceae</p> <p>6. <i>Eupatorium odoratum</i>. Asteraceae</p> <p>7. <i>Glochidion zeylanicum</i> A. Juss.</p>

		<p>Euphorbiaceae</p> <p>8. <i>Hygrophila quadrivalvis</i> Nees. Poaceae</p> <p>9. <i>Ixora coccinea</i> L. Rubiaceae</p> <p>10. <i>Leersia hexandra</i> Sw. Poaceae</p> <p>11. <i>Melothria maderaspatana</i> Cogn.</p> <p>Cucurbitaceae</p> <p>12. <i>Morinda citrifolia</i> L. Rubiaceae</p> <p>13. <i>Mimosa pudica</i> L. Mimosaceae</p> <p>14. <i>Panicum repens</i> L. Poaceae</p> <p>15. <i>Paspalum vaginatum</i> SW. Poaceae</p> <p>16. <i>Stereospermum tetragonum</i> DC.</p> <p>Bignoniaceae</p> <p>17. <i>Urena sinuate</i> L. Malvaceae</p> <p>18. <i>Vernonia elaeagnifolia</i>. Asteraceae</p>
	<p>PLANTS UNDER CULTIVATION</p>	<p>1. <i>Annona glabra</i> Forsk. Annonaceae</p> <p>2. <i>Cocos nucifera</i> L. Arecaceae</p> <p>3. <i>Garcinia cambogia</i> Desr. Clusiaceae</p> <p>4. <i>Glyricidia sepium</i> (Jacq) Kunth ex. Walp.</p> <p>Fabaceae</p> <p>5. <i>Hevea brasiliensis</i> Muell.-Arg.</p> <p>Euphorbiaceae</p> <p>6. <i>Mimusops elengi</i> L. Sapotaceae</p> <p>7. <i>Musa paradisiacal</i> L. Musaceae</p> <p>8. <i>Polyalthia longifolia</i> H.k.f.2T. Annonaceae</p> <p>9. <i>Streblus asper</i> Lour. Moraceae</p> <p>10. <i>Syzygium caryophyllaeum</i> Gaert.</p> <p>Myrtaceae</p>

11. *Tectona grandis* L.F. Verbenaceae

12. *Theobroma cacao* L. Sterculiaceae

Vaikom is incredibly rich in bird life. Over 180 species of birds are found here. They include local as well as migratory birds. This abundance is due to the climatic and geographical position of the region, which encourages continuous plant growth and insect activity – abundant source of avian nourishment throughout the year.

The list of the bird species is produced below:

Sl No	Species
1	Little Grebe
2	Indian Shag
3	Great Cormorant
4	Little Cormorant
5	Darter
6	Unidentified Cormorants
7	Yellow Bittern
8	Cinnamon Bittern
9	Black Bittern
10	Unidentified Bittern
11	Black Crowned Night Heron
12	Indian Pond Heron
13	Little Green Heron

14	Cattle Egret
15	Little Egret
16	Median Egret
17	Great Egret
18	Purple Heron
19	Common Teal
20	Cotton Teal
21	Lesser Whistling Duck
22	Grey Heron
23	Western Reef Heron
24	Unidentified Heron and Egrets
25	Open Billed Stork
26	White Ibis
27	Glossy Ibis
28	Spoon Bill
29	Northern Pintain Duck
30	Spot billed duck
31	Gargancy Teal
32	Unidentified Duck
33	Unidentified Crake
34	White Brestd Water Hen
35	Water Cock
36	Purple Swamp Hen

37	Unidentified Eagle
38	Small Blue Kingfisher
39	Storkbilled Kingfisher
40	White Brested Kingfisher
41	Lesser Pied Kingfisher
42	Blackcapped Kingfisher
43	Common Swallou
44	Red Rumped Swallou
45	Wiretailed Swallou
46	Yellow Wagtail
47	Grey Wagtail
48	Large Pied Wagtail
49	Black Winged Stilt
50	Pacific Golden Plover
51	Little Ringed Plover
52	Black Headed Gull
53	Kentish Plover
54	Brown Headed Gull
55	Stint
56	Unidentified Shore Birds
57	Whiskered Tern
58	Gullbilled Tern
59	Common Tern

60	Indian River Tern
61	Little Tern
62	Unidentified Tern
63	Unidentified Gulls
64	Brahminy Kite
65	Marsh Harrier
66	Montagu's Harrier
67	Black Winged Kite
68	Shikra
69	Osprey
70	Pergine Falcon
71	Pariah Kite
72	Grey Headed Fishing Eagle
73	Steppe Eagle
74	Booted Eagle
75	Greater Spotted Eagle

The undisturbed atmosphere of the paddy lands and backwater regions of Maravanthuruthu and Thalayazham Panchayat areas provides a favored breeding ground of Smooth Indian Otters (*Lutra lutra*).

Fish and mussels available in the surrounding area provide plenty of food items to Otters. The island is known for generations as a roosting place for a number of water birds. As the island was cleared of the inhabitants, the

disturbances were practically nil and it has become a haven for the water birds. The roosting water birds are mainly of the Cormorant family, including Darter, Little Cormorant, Indian Shag and Large Cormorant, Purple Heron, Pond Heron, Night Heron, Black Bittern, Chestnut Bittern and Yellow Bittern. Little Egret, Median Egret, Large Egret, Cattle Egret, Grey Heron are also seen during daytime. Two pairs of Redwattled Lapwings appear to be residents of the Island.

