

BHARAT DARSHAN REPORT



KERALA

God's own country

BY MONIKA TIWARI

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

At the outset, I would like to convey our sincere gratitude to the Department of Personnel and Training for giving this unique opportunity to participate in the mandatory training programme at the MCRHRD Institute of Telangana, Hyderabad. I would also like to convey my sincere thanks to Smt. Usha Rani, Course Director, MCRHRDIT for giving great support. We are highly indebted to Mr. Saka Venkateswara Rao, Senior Faculty and Bharat Darshan Coordinator for his guidance and constant supervision as well as for providing necessary information regarding the project & also for his support in completing the project. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Director General, MCRHRD for providing all necessary support for successful completion of this study tour. This was a unique experience to work as a group during the visit to Kerala. I enjoyed the study tour and learned many things.

MEMBERS OF THE BHARAT DARSHAN
STUDY TOUR TO
KERALA



At Trivandrum airport

DAY 1

THIRUVANANANTPURAM

(THE EVERGREEN CITY OF INDIA)

On 28th April at 06:10 hours, our group of 62 members boarded flight 6E 5278 of Indigo from Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, Hyderabad to Thiruvananthapuram. We reached Thiruvananthapuram International Airport at 07:45 hours. The weather was hot and humid and the temperature was around 35°C.

1. Padmanabhaswamy temple:

The first point in our itinerary was Padmanabhaswamy temple. The temple has a dress code for men and women. Women are required to wear sarees, Mundum Neriyathum (set-mundu), skirt and blouse, or half-saree. Young girls below the age of 12 may wear gowns. Men are similarly required to wear mundu or dhoti and bare their torso. Dhotis are easily available for rent at the entrance. We wore the attire and proceeded towards temple. The temple is located in the East fort of Trivandrum. After entering east fort, there is pond, padmatheertham on the right hand side of the path and Kuthirmalika Palace on left hand side of the path. The temple is built in an intricate fusion of the Kerala style and the Dravidian style of architecture, featuring high walls and a 16th century gopuram. The gopuram of temple is 100 foot(30 m) high, it has 7-tier and it is built in pandyan style. The temple has 4 entrance- kizakke nada, padinjare nada, vadakke nada and thekke nada" (means East,west,north & south). But the main entrance is Kizakke nada (East Entrance). The temple has a corridor with 365 and one-quarter sculptured granite-stone pillars with elaborate carvings. This corridor extends from the eastern side into the sanctum sanctorum. As it was Sunday, the temple had a lot of rush and the queue was very long. The queue runs through the corridor and then into the sanctum sanctorum. By the time we reached sanctum sanctorum, it was time for madhyanya Pooja or , so we had to wait for another 45 minutes for darshan. In the Grabhagriha Padmanabha reclines on the serpent. The deity is visible through three doors – the visage of the reclining Padmanabha and Siva Linga underneath his hand is seen through the first door; Sridevi and Bhrgu Muni in Katusarkara, Brahma seated on a lotus emanating from the deity's navel, hence the name, "Padmanabha", gold abhisheka moorthies of Padmanabha, Sridevi and Bhudevi, and silver utsava moorthi of Padmanabha through the second door; the deity's feet, and Bhudevi and Markandeya Muni in Katusarkara through the third door. Inside the Temple, there are two other important shrines, Thekkedom and Thiruvambadi, for the Deities, Ugra Narasimha and Krishna Swami respectively.



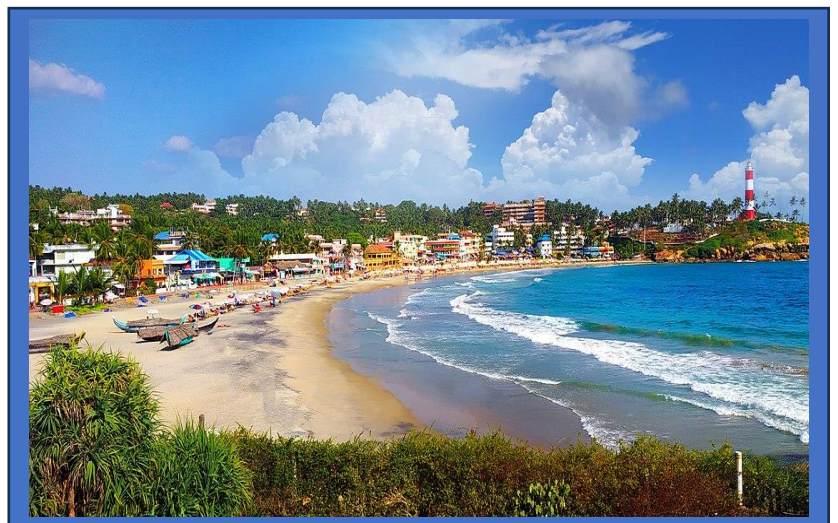
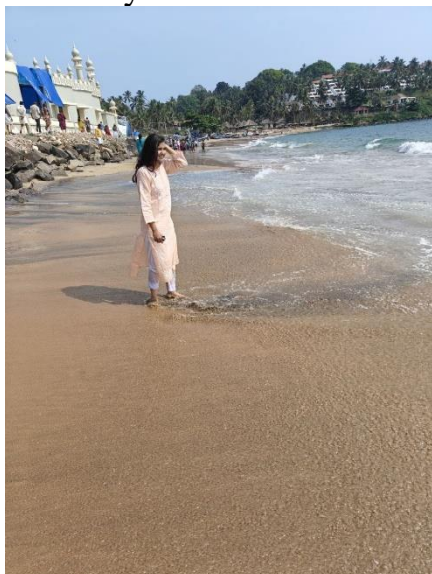
In 2016, the temple was included in the spiritual circuit of the Swadesh Darshan Scheme. In this a total 78 crore of budget was allocated for the development of various amenities at temple premises. This inclusion in the Swadesh Darshan Scheme has led to the overall development of the temple and it has made many facilities like pure drinking water and accommodation available to the tourists.

After having darshan we went to our buses. The time was around 1pm and we proceeded towards our hotel.

2) KOVALAM BEACH

Kovalam is an internationally renowned beach with three adjacent crescent beaches. It has been a favourite haunt of tourists since the 1930s. A massive rocky promontory on the beach has created a beautiful bay of calm waters ideal for sea bathing.

The leisure options at this beach are plenty and diverse. Sunbathing, swimming, herbal body toning massages, special cultural programmes and catamaran cruising are some of them. Life on the beach begins late in the day and carries on well into the night. The beach complex includes a string of budget cottages, Ayurvedic health resorts, convention facilities, shopping zones, swimming pools, Yoga and Ayurvedic massage centres. Beaches are major part in kerala's economic activities, giving livelihoods to many people and boasting states economy.



DAY 2
ALLEPPEY
(VENICE OF THE EAST)



View of backwaters of alleppey from houseboat

At around 9am we departed from Trivandrum to alleppey. We reached our destination at 2pm. Alleppey is famous for its canals, backwaters, beaches and lagoons. We had booked a backwater cruise to see the scenic man made islands and beautiful sights of coconut fringed backwaters and paddy fields. All the staff of the cruiseboat was local and they acted as our guide for the backwaters journey. The cruise started from pamba river and went upto vembanad lake. Total distance covered was around 15km (to and fro). The path traversed by us is part of national waterway 3. The scope of road and railways development in alleppey is limited and that's why the development of waterway in this area has proved to be a boon for traditional industries such as coir, cashew and fishing. It is the first national waterway in the country with 24 hour navigation facilities along the entire stretch.

The economy of alleppey is based on paddy farming, tourism and coir industry. Alleppey is part of Kuttanad region, this region has the lowest altitude in India, and is one of the few places in the world where farming is carried on around 1.2 to 3.0 metres below sea level. The region is known as the rice bowl of Kerala and it is also the part of second largest Ramsar site in India. To stop the saltwater intrusion into the Kuttanad, a 1252m long saltwater barrier, Thanneermukkom has been built on Vembanad lake. Besides its backwaters, Alleppey is also famous for its coir industry. Coir is extracted from the outer husk of coconut and is used to make ropes, twine, brooms and brushes, doormats, etc. After disembarking from the boat, we went to our hotel and later in the evening we went to some coir shops to see the coir products.



DAY 3
PERIYAR TIGER RESERVE
(JOURNEY INTO THE HEART OF WILDERNESS)

At around 8am we proceeded towards Thekkady to visit Periyar National Park. People-oriented and park-centered community-based ecotourism is the hallmark of Periyar Tiger Reserve. These programmes are conducted by local people responsible for the surveillance of the vulnerable parts of the reserve. Community-based and protection-oriented ecotourism programmes (CBET) were initiated in PTR during the IEDP. These programmes were developed to ensure livelihood security and to reduce negative dependency on forests. Tickets for boating at Periyar lake were already booked by us. On reaching Thekkady, a bus of national park took us from our stop to Periyar National Park. There were 4

double decker boats waiting for the tourists at the lake. The boat journey was of 1 hour and during this boat journey we witnessed herd of deer, elephants, wild goats and wild buffaloes. There was no sight of tiger. On inquiring forest official about this, he said



that it is a rare sight and in his 24 years of service, he has witnessed tiger only 12 times. The reason for this is that 925 sq km of Periyar National Park is home to only 40 tigers. The forests of Periyar tiger reserve are pristine and unaffected from all outside disturbances, even after accommodating thousands of tourists every year. This is because of the management effectiveness of periyar tiger reserve. It also bagged first prize in the management effectiveness evaluation (MEE) of tiger reserves in India for the year 2022, released by ministry of environment, forest and climate change.

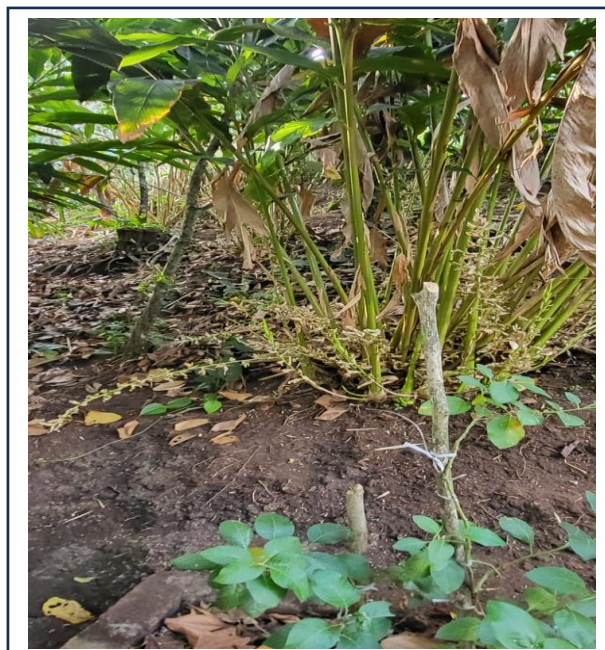
The Spice Route

On our way from Thekkady to Munnar we had a stop at “The spice route”. Established in 2014, Spice Route Ayurvedic & Spice Garden Delights has been a pioneer in delivering exquisite spice experiences to culinary enthusiasts worldwide. At spice route we came to know about variety of spices and plants of Ayurvedic and medicinal importance. There was also shop for spices and other ayurvedic medicines and many of us did shopping there.

From Periyar tiger reserve, we proceeded to our next destination Munnar and reached there by 11pm. On the way from Thekkady to Munnar we witnessed many tea, spice and rubber plantations.



SPICE GARDEN VISIT



CARDAMOM PLANT

DAY 4
MUNNAR
THE KASHMIR OF SOUTH INDIA

Munnar's weather is distinct from other parts of Kerala due to its high elevation. Situated in the Western Ghats mountain range, Munnar experiences a cooler and more temperate climate compared to the coastal areas of Kerala. Therefore everyone felt relief from the heatwave.



The scenic beauty of Munnar

In the morning we departed for Eravikulam national park which was 15km from our hotel. It is situated in the Kannan Devan Hills of the southern western ghats. The wildlife park has an area of 97 sq. km. and it is the first national park in Kerala. It is divided into three regions- the core area, the buffer area and the tourism area. Visitors are allowed only to the tourism area. After reaching main entrance of tourism area, a bus of Kerala forest and wildlife department took us to the starting point of Kurinji trail.

1. The kuringji trail

It is a one hour trek. On the way we found herds of Himalayan Tahr, scenic beauty of mountains and magnificent view of tea estates. As we traversed the Kuringji Trail, we were enveloped by the serene ambiance of the Western Ghats. The air was crisp and invigorating, filled with the sweet fragrance of the Neelakurinji flowers that carpet the landscape in a stunning display of color.



2. Montane Shola grassland ecosystem

Sholas, derived from the Tamil word ‘Solai’ meaning tropical rainforest, are unique tropical montane forests endemic to the [Western Ghats](#) of India characterized by their rolling grasslands adorned with a variety of grasses, evergreen vegetation and stunted trees.

They have a remarkably high water retention capacity and act as colossal sponges that release water gradually, becoming an important source for the rivers of South India.



3. Nilgiri Tahr

On the way one can witness herds of nilgiri tahr, the endangered mountain goat, for which Eravikulam is a natural habitat. The national park has the highest density and largest population of Nilgiri Tahr. The total population of Nilgiri Tahr in Eravikulam National Park is more than 700.



Neelakurinji

At the ending of the trek is the highly admired plant species *strobilanthes kunthiana*, which is locally known as Neelakurinji. Neelakurinji is an endemic species of Western Ghats and it is under threat because of being plundered from the grasslands of High Ranges by ignorant/berserk people. It blooms once in 12 years. It last bloom in 2018 and hence it will bloom again in 2030.



After spending some time on the top, we came back to the starting point of the trek and visited “story of the park”. it shows brief history of the park and the flora and fauna which are found in the park with special attention to niligiri tahr.



DAY 5
MUNNAR
(BEAUTY CORNER OF KERALA)

It was our second and final day at Munnar and everyone was enjoying every second of our trip at Munnar.

1. Mattupetty dam

In the morning we visited Mattupetty dam. Mattupetty is more than just a water storage facility. The water body that forms as a result of this gravity dam is often termed as Mattupetty lake. Mattupetty lake is a perennial lake which never dries up even in the summers. the dam is an important source of electricity and the lake hosts various water based recreational activities which adds to the tourism. The water of mattupetty lake is also used for irrigation purpose in the nearby fields.



2. Tata tea museum

Tea has played an integral part in the history of Munnar. Tata tea museum has photographs and machineries, which chronicle the journey of tea in the area. The museum set up at the Nallathanni Estate of Tata Tea ensures that the legacy of those who worked hard to ensure the tea plantations survived this long is recognised publicly. We got to watch the transition from the rudimentary tea roller to the modern fully automated tea factory. Various stages of tea processing can be seen, which includes the making of black tea. There was a sundial, placed on a granite block, which was made in 1913 by the Art Industrial School at Nazareth, Tamil Nadu. It has other attractions like the 'Pelton Wheel' used in the power generation plant in the 1920s, tea roller and



a rail engine wheel of the Kundale Valley Light Railway. A demonstration room for tea tasting is another attraction where we came across different varieties of tea. We tasted some of the most exotic varieties of tea available around the world here.

3. Tea estates

The tea museum is situated in the Nallathanni Estate, which is owned by Kanan Devan Hills Plantations Company Private Limited. Some of the plantations of KDHP are open to public. We visited some of the tea estates and saw how the tea workers plucked tea leaves. For plucking the pluckers take first two leaves and a bud. Plucking is a labour intensive business and hand plucking is economical than machine plucking.



SADHYA

The Sadya is the traditional vegetarian feast of Kerala. Usually served as lunch, it consists of par boiled pink rice, side dishes, savouries, pickles and desserts spread out on a plantain banana leaf. Tradition insists that the tapering end of the plantain leaf should point to the left of the seated guest. Sadya is typically served as a traditional feast for [Onam](#), the state festival of Kerala and [Vishu](#).

While our returning journey from munnar we enjoyed traditional malyali lunch at one food stop and get to know about states rich food culture and prosperity.



DAY 6
KOCHI
(THE QUEEN OF ARABIAN SEA)

The port city of Kochi was our final destination in the tour. We reached Kochi on the evening of 2nd May. Kochi is the most developed city of Kerala. The high rise buildings, backwaters and forests kind of blend in here and this gives Kochi a unique identity on its own. The view from our 14 floor high hotel building itself was mesmerizing. On the morning of 3rd of May we went out to explore Kochi.

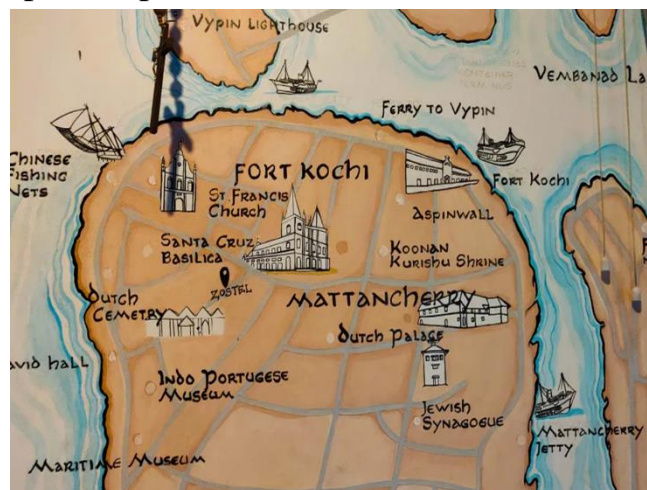
1. Cherai Beach

Cherai Beach in Kerala offers pristine shores, swaying palms, and serene backwaters. Enjoy water sports, dolphin watching, and tranquil sunsets amidst its natural splendor. The adventure activities at cherai beach like lay low, banana ride, jet ski, etc attract many tourists.

2. Fort Kochi

Fort Kochi, a historic gem in Kerala, boasts colonial architecture, bustling markets, and serene backwaters. important places in fort kochi are

- mattancherry palace
- st francis church
- dutch cemetery
- santa cruz basilica
- fort immanuel
- jewish synagogue
- maritime museum
- chinese fishing nets



i. Mattancherry palace

This palace is popularly known as the Dutch Palace. It is a quadrangular structure built in Nalkettu style, the traditional Kerala style of architecture, with a courtyard in the middle. Certain elements of architecture, as for example the nature of its arches and the proportion of its chambers are indicative of European influence in basic Nalukettu style. There is large number of murals on the walls of the palace, executed in the traditions of Hindu temple art, which are religious, decorative and stylized



ii. St. Francis Church

St. Francis Church in Kochi, Kerala, holds rich historical significance as the oldest European church in India. Built in the early 16th century, it reflects colonial architecture and marks the arrival of Christianity in India. Vasco De Gama was originally buried here.



iii. Santa Cruz Basilica

The Santa Cruz Basilica in Fort Kochi, Kerala, is a stunning example of Indo-European architecture. The basilica's intricate interior features beautiful frescoes and murals, while its towering spires dominate the skyline of Fort Kochi.

iv. Fort Immanuel

Fort Immanuel stands as a silent sentinel, its weathered walls and crumbling battlements a reminder of the tumultuous history that shaped the region. It is a popular tourist attraction, offering visitors a glimpse into Kerala's colonial heritage and the architectural legacy left behind by its European occupiers.

v. Jewish Synagogue

The synagogue's architecture is a blend of Jewish and Kerala styles. Within the synagogue, you'll find ancient Torah scrolls, handwritten on parchment, which hold immense religious and historical significance for the Jewish community.

vi. Chinese fishing nets



DAY 7
THERUVORAM NGO VISIT

“SERVICE TO HUMANITY IS SERVICE TO GOD”

-MAHATMA GANDHI

Our final day was reserved for a NGO visit. Our goal to visit NGO was to get an insight into the organisation’s mission, goals and activities, the issues they address, the communities they serve, and the impact of their work.

ABOUT

- theruvoram, was founded by murukan s in 2007 with the noble mission of rehabilitating street people in kochi.
- it has operated independently foregoing government funding or public grants, while steadfastly serving the community over the years.
- it extends a compassionate hand to those abandoned on the streets and individuals afflicted with diseases such as leprosy, regardless of age.
- it welcomes individuals of all ages and backgrounds, including children women and men facing various disabilities, both physical and mental.

THE FOUNDER

- murugan s, hails from the town of peerumedu in idduki district of kerala
- in initial years he worked at don bosco snehabhavan where he fostered love and compassion for others amid life’s challenges
- later he started rescuing people on his own and he financed these efforts through late night auto rickshaw shifts
- in 2007, murugan founded theruvora pravarthaka association ngo, dedicating to rehabilitating street people with 24/7 assistance.
- he has received national award for child welfare-2011 from president
- in 2017 he was awarded by hon. pm
- in 2020 he was awarded by president for community development and women empowerment

VISION AND MISSION

mission

empowerment and welfare of street people specially old age, mentally challenged, migrant labour communities, empowerment of rural women to build and equitable relationship of strength, sustenance and dignity between the cities and villages using the under-utilised urban material as a tool to trigger development with dignitym across the country

vision

make the world a berrer place for human race

SERVICE

- the ngo has rescued nearly 30,000 homeless beggars and destitutes. upon encountering beggars on the streets, the ngo promptly engages with local authorities, obtaining necessary permissions via police letters
- it has organized various drives in coordination with the police and local authorities to rehabilitate the homeless and mentally unstable.
- the ngo has mainly focused on accommodating individuals with psychiatric disabilites, bedridden, and elderly individuals.
- the organisation has a two storey building spanning 1600 sqft, which includes a small kitchen. it accommodates 30 homeless individuals.



NGO VISIT SITE

CONCLUSION AND LEARNINGS

The study tour was a memorable and enriching experience for all of us. We learned a lot about the diversity and unity of India, the history and culture of different regions, the ecology and biodiversity of different ecosystems, the development and governance of different states, and the challenges and opportunities of different sectors. We also developed our skills and competencies in team work, time management, crisis management and adaptability. We also made some lifelong friends and memories.

Some of the key learning from this tour are:

India is a land of contrasts and contradictions, where the ancient and the modern, the rural and the urban, the rich and the poor, the traditional and the contemporary coexist and interact. India has a rich and glorious history and culture, which is reflected in its monuments, temples, forts, palaces, museums, art, literature, music, dance, festivals, cuisine and customs.

India has a diverse and rich ecology and biodiversity, which is manifested in its forests, mountains, rivers, lakes, deserts, islands, coasts, wetlands, grasslands and wildlife.

The study tour was a valuable and enjoyable part of our cadre training programme. We are grateful and thankful to the MCR HRDIT, the Course Director, the Study Tour Committee, and Officials for making this tour possible and successful. We are also thankful to our fellow participants for making this tour fun and friendly. We hope to apply and share our learning and experiences from this tour in our future work and life. We also hope to visit these places again and explore more of our incredible India.

JAI HIND JAI BHARAT,