

REPORT ON

BHARAT DARSHAN

(28.04.2024 to 04.05.2024)

CONDUCTED BY:-



PRESCRIBED BY:-



institute of secretariat training and
management

Submitted by:

Ratnesh Pandey
(OT code – B56)

❖ Acknowledgement

"I want to extend my heartfelt appreciation to ISTM and MCR HRD IT for arranging an exceptional educational excursion, the Bharat Darshan tour in Kerala. This incredibly enriching experience stands as a testament to the meticulous planning and dedicated commitment exhibited by both institutions.

A special acknowledgment goes to Dr. Kandukuri Usha Rani mam, our Course Director, whose steadfast support ensured a seamless and enlightening journey.

I'm immensely grateful to the organizing committee and tour coordinators whose unwavering dedication, meticulous planning, and flawless execution contributed to the tremendous success of this tour.

Beyond its intellectual pursuits, the Bharat Darshan/study tour fostered enduring memories and fostered camaraderie among us. It wasn't just an educational journey; it was a platform that created lasting bonds and cherished moments.

The thoughtfully curated tour and immersive experiences have significantly broadened our horizons. Exploring the historical marvels of Trivandrum and the natural beauty of Munnar and Cochin has enriched our understanding of the subjects we've been studying.

Once again, my deepest gratitude to ISTM and MCR HRD IT for granting us this invaluable opportunity to learn, explore, and forge indelible connections."

- **Ratnesh Pandey B56**

➤ **OVERVIEW**

28.04.2024	Departure from Hyderabad, Padmanabhaswamy Temple Kovalam
29.04.2024	Alleppey: Backwater Bliss
30.04.2024	Thekkady: Wildlife and Spice Aromas
01.05.2024	Munnar: Tea Gardens and Tranquility
02.05.2024	Mattupetty Dam, Kalaripayattu: Unveiling the Ancient Martial Art
03.05.2024	Kochi: Heritage and Harmony
04.05.2024	Return to Hyderabad

DAY 1: Hyderabad to Kovalam:

MCR HRDIT, here started the beautiful one-week journey. We woke up early in the morning. We got ready and came out in front of Godavari Hostel from where buses took Mr. Saka Venkateshwar Rao sir and 61 of us to Rajiv Gandhi International Airport. We reached Trivandrum airport around 7:30 am. From where we departed to Kovalam to Padmanabhaswamy Temple.

Kovalam:

Kovalam is a beautiful beach town in Kerala, India, known for its serene beaches, clear waters, and lush landscapes. It's a popular destination for tourists seeking relaxation and water activities like swimming and surfing. Places we went to:

(a) The Padmanabhaswamy Temple:

According to Historians, the temple dates back to the 8th century but the present structure was built in the 18th century by the then Travancore Maharaja Marthanda Varma.

The temple was initially made of wood but later it was constructed with granite.

The temple is built in the unique Chera style of architecture, and its main deity is Lord Vishnu who is found in the Anantha Shayana posture (reclined posture of eternal yoga) on Adishesha or king of all serpents.

It is known to be one of the 108 holy temples associated with Vaishnavism in India.

The Padmanabhaswamy Temple is a magnificent Hindu temple located in Thiruvananthapuram, the capital city of Kerala, India. It is dedicated to Lord Padmanabhaswamy (an incarnation of Lord Vishnu) and is one of the 108 Divya Desams, the principal centres of worship in Vaishnavism. The temple is renowned for its architectural beauty, especially its intricate carvings and sculptures. It's also famous for its immense wealth, with vaults rumoured to contain treasures worth billions of dollars. There is a dress code that is strictly followed:

For men:

- Traditional attire such as dhoti or mundu is preferred.
- Shirts or upper garments are not allowed inside the temple.

For women:

- Traditional attire such as saree, salwar kameez, or skirt and blouse is preferred.
- Avoid wearing short skirts, shorts, or sleeveless tops.



(b) Visit to Veli Village:

Veli Village is a picturesque spot located near Kovalam in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India. It's famous for the Veli Lake, where visitors can enjoy boating and water sports. The village also has a beautiful garden with a floating bridge that connects to an island, making it a popular picnic spot. Additionally, there's a children's park and an open-air auditorium for cultural events. It's a serene escape for those looking to enjoy nature and outdoor activities.



Here comes an end to day one journey. It was a great experience to have so many friends and colleagues together on a trip. The atmosphere in the temple was amazing with so many persons. Thanks to coordinators for managing everything so well.

Day 2 - Alleppey

Alleppey, also known as Alappuzha, is a charming town in Kerala, India, famous for its backwaters, beaches, and houseboat cruises. 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.

Here are some highlights:

1. ***Backwaters***: Alleppey is renowned for its picturesque backwaters, a network of tranquil canals, lakes, and rivers. Visitors can take houseboat cruises to explore the serene beauty of the backwaters, passing through lush greenery and quaint villages along the way.

2. ***Houseboat Cruises***: Houseboat stays are a popular way to experience Alleppey's backwaters. These traditional Kettuvallams have been converted into luxurious floating accommodations, offering a unique and relaxing way to soak in the natural beauty of the area.

It was a wonderful experience at Alleppey. We all 61 OTs were there in Houseboat. We took lunch (traditional food of Kerala) there inside the boat. Everyone enjoyed the atmosphere of Pamba river. We danced and did speed boating. Alleppey is a must-visit destination for anyone seeking a tranquil and scenic getaway amidst Kerala's natural beauty. Overall, the more than 3 hours boating was a great experience for all of us.



Day 3 – Thekkady

Thekkady is a beautiful destination in Kerala, India, known for its lush forests, wildlife sanctuaries, and the Periyar Tiger Reserve. It's a great place for nature lovers and adventure seekers with activities like jungle safaris, bamboo rafting, and trekking. Plus, the spice plantations add to its charm. After we all have lunch around 1 pm we first went to Periyar Tiger Reserve.

1. Periyar Tiger Reserve:

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 Periyar Tiger Reserve is one of the most popular wildlife sanctuaries in India, located in Thekkady, Kerala. It's renowned for its rich biodiversity, including elephants, tigers, deer, and a variety of bird species. The highlight of the reserve

is the Periyar Lake, where visitors can enjoy boat safaris to spot wildlife in their natural habitat. It's a must-visit for nature enthusiasts and wildlife lovers.

During the tracking, we saw animals like deer, elephants, wild boars, monkeys, gaurs, wild buffalos. Everyone was looking to see the tiger but tiger didn't appear. But overall it was a great experience for all of us.



2. Spice Garden:

The Spice Garden in Thekkady is a fantastic place to explore the diverse world of spices. It's like stepping into a fragrant paradise where you can see, smell, and learn about various spices like cardamom, pepper, cinnamon, and more. We visited a spice garden in the evening. We saw the following spices and medicinal plants: Cinnamon, Pepper, Cardamom, Holy Basil, Quinine, Black Berry, Ginger, Cumin, Saffron, Cloves, Turmeric, Vanilla, and many more.



They often offer guided tours where you can discover the cultivation, harvesting, and processing of these spices. The spice owners were advanced with science and technology. They have advanced tools and machinery to harvest, dry and prepare spices for medicinal use and for selling in the market. They also produce medicine for various uses by using the same high quality natural and fresh spices. Some of us also purchased these spices. Overall it was a great experience in spice garden.



Day 4-5 Munnar

Munnar is a beautiful hill station in the Indian state of Kerala, known for its lush green tea plantations, cool climate, and stunning landscapes. It's a popular tourist destination, especially for its natural beauty and tranquility.

1. Eravikulam National Park :

Eravikulam National Park is located in Kerala, India, and it's famous for being home to the endangered Nilgiri Tahr, a mountain goat species. The park is known for its stunning landscape, including rolling hills, grasslands, and the highest peak in South India, Anamudi. Kerala is known for its beautiful mountain roads, offering stunning views and thrilling drives. We reached the top and saw the natural beauty of Munnar, cold breeze and thrilling atmosphere. Everyone had photos there and we back to the valley with this wonderful journey.



2. Tea museum and garden:

The Tea Museum in Munnar is a popular attraction that offers insights into the history and production of tea in the region. We explored various exhibits showcasing the tea-making process, machinery used in tea production, and the history of tea plantations in Munnar. There's also an opportunity to taste different varieties of tea. It's a must-visit for tea enthusiasts and anyone interested in learning about the tea industry in Kerala.

From there we visited tea gardens where workers were plucking leaves of tea. Some tea plantations were being prepared for next term. The slope in the plantations made difficult for us to walk properly. The workers in the field were so cooperative. We had photos there and overall it was a great experience to see tea plants for the first time.



3. Kalaripayattu:

Kalaripayattu is a traditional Indian martial art that originated in Kerala, the same state where Munnar is located. It's known for its dynamic movements, weapon training, and focus on physical fitness and mental discipline. It was a thrilling experience attending the workshop, they use various tools and fire for demonstrating their feats. It's a fascinating part of Kerala's cultural heritage.



4. Mattupetty Dam:

Mattupetty Dam is a popular tourist attraction in Munnar, Kerala. The dam is known for its picturesque surroundings, with tea plantations, forests, and mountains forming a beautiful backdrop. We enjoyed boating in the reservoir and also explored the nearby areas for trekking. The water was cool and a cold breeze was blowing, that's made our visit so special. This site was well managed and everything was well arranged. It was at height, so activities like zipline and high swing were there for visitors.



Day 6-7 Cochin

"Cochin" typically refers to Kochi, a major port city in the southwest of India's Kerala state. It's known for its vibrant culture, historical significance, and beautiful backwaters. It has a long history of trade, dating back to ancient times, with influences from Portuguese, Dutch, and British colonial powers. The backwaters of Kochi, along with nearby destinations like Alleppey and Munnar, are popular tourist attractions.

1.Cherai beach:

Cherai beach is one of the most beautiful beaches in Kerala, located in the Ernakulam district near Kochi. We started our journey at 9 am in the morning. When we reach at the beach, weather was so hot and humid. At first, we thought it was waste of time and opportunities to explore other places. But when we went inside the water, it was a wonderful experience for all of us. We enjoyed swimming and various water sports like *lelo* racing, banana boating. The experience of guides helped us enjoy the inner part of the beach. The waves took us to coast/ends of the beach every time when there is high intensity current arrives. All the hot and humidness initially we thought didn't affect us. So, it was an overall a great experience in one of the best beaches in Indian coastal states.



2. Theruvoram NGO:

It was founded by Murukan S in 2007 with the noble mission of rehabilitating street people in Kochi. They are doing social service without the help of government fund or grants. Mr. Murukan Sir told us that he has been doing this at grass root level. He never denied anyone need help. Anyone who had no shelter and was helpless, he helped them. He told that the mission of this NGO is to provide shelter, medical, repatriation, rescue, emotional support to children and old age people all over Kerala. He told us that in this span the NGO has helped more than 30,000 helpless people.

There are number of projects started by this NGO to help people in need. Few of them are The Food Relief Project, Wheel for Women, Capacity Building Training Institute, The Pandemic Projects.

The efforts of this NGO were being appreciated by central as well as state government. He received National Award for Child Welfare-2011 from Hon'ble President, Amazing India Award-2017 from Hon'ble Prime Minister, A.P. Aslam Prathibha Puraskaram-2016 and many more.

He also told us still there are many challenges due to lack of funds, lack of infrastructure, limited networking, lack of government aid and support, lack of cooperation from local people.

Overall listening him and after watching the NGO, he is truly a hardworking person. We also helped them with what we could. We should cooperate with persons like him. It was an immense pleasure to meet a social worker like him. It taught us a lot that with ones will one can do anything for oneself as well as society.



From there we departed Cochin spice market and spend more than three hours. There we had lunch and then we bought various spices of Kerala like cinnamon, black pepper, cardamom, cloves, banana cookies and many more by doing bargaining with the local shopkeepers. It was wonderful experience there. From there we departed to Cochin Airport. We reached the airport at 6 pm. Now comes the time to depart to Hyderabad a week in Kerala.



Conclusion

During visit to allepey I read a book which had a poem which I would like to write about

In God's Own Country, there's a river that goes on. On her banks, ideas have found a brand new home.

Imagination, like wet clay, is moulded and glazed. Wonder, like seasoned wood, is chipped and chiselled,

To create craft that encourages conversation and pioneers change. In the shade of wise trees, stories are pickled.

Underneath the warmth of makeshift huts, legacies are preserved. At Sargaalaya, art is a canoe for ideas, small and mighty.

Hop on, hold on to your wonderment. Let's experience new ways of seeing and being.

In summary, the Bharat Darshan/Study Tour to Munnar and Cochin has proven to be a comprehensive and enriching encounter, seamlessly integrating educational aspects with the exploration of two culturally vibrant and naturally captivating destinations. Munnar, characterized by its tranquil landscapes, tea plantations, and lively gardens, served as a distinctive setting for delving into topics related to biodiversity and environmental conservation. The Coconut Fields and the Tea Factory not only provided valuable insights into nature but also facilitated hands-on experiences, fostering a deeper comprehension of sustainable practices. Conversely, Cochin unfolded as a dynamic tapestry of history and architecture. The bustling markets and cultural sites of the city showcased the rich heritage of South India. And thus ended a beautiful journey full of enriching experiences and exhilarating moments that could annihilate pensive melancholy of the minds.

___Ratnesh Pandey, ASO