

REPORT ON BHARAT DARSHAN-CUM-STUDY TOUR

Submitted by:-

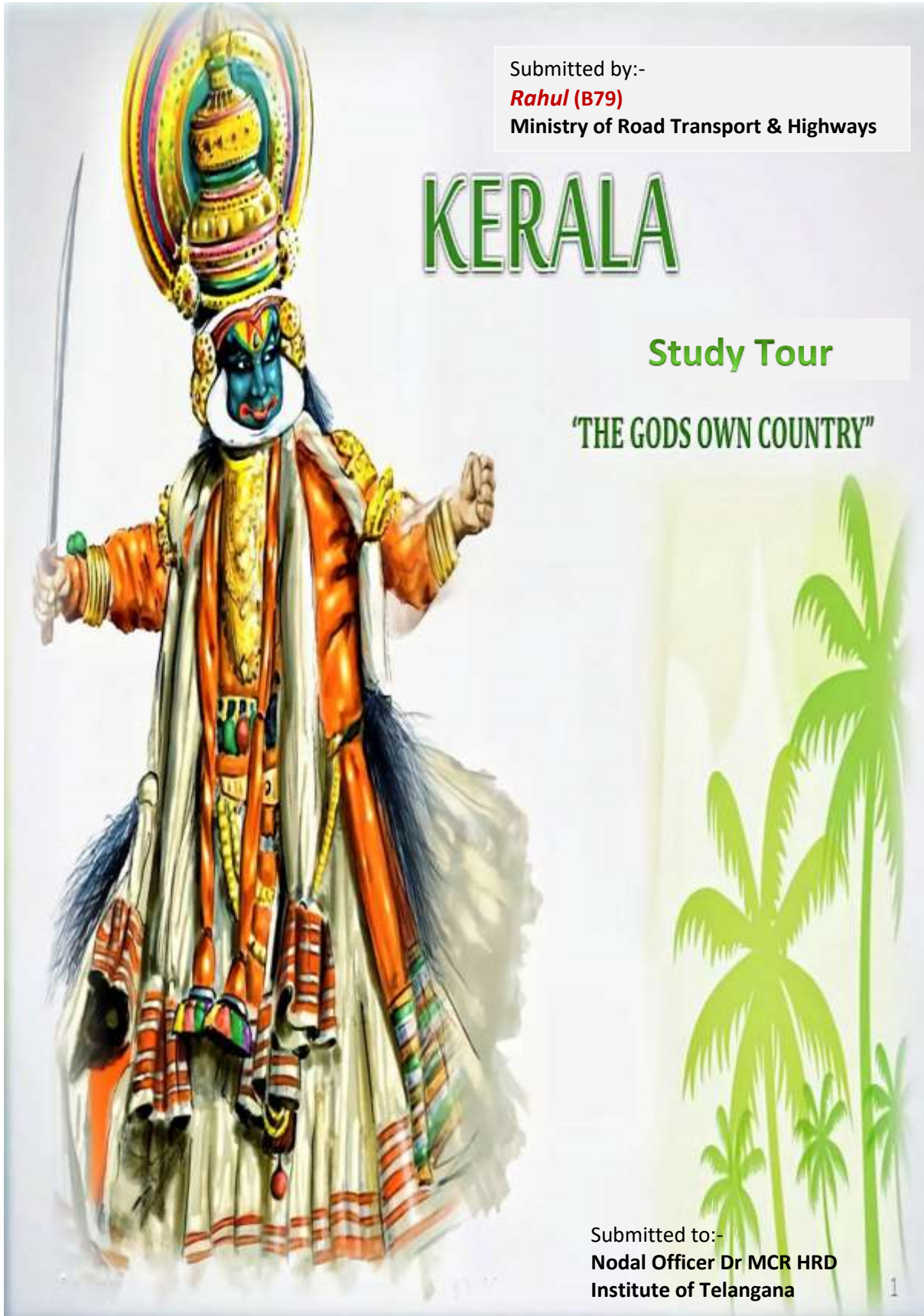
Rahul (B79)

Ministry of Road Transport & Highways

KERALA

Study Tour

'THE GODS OWN COUNTRY'



Submitted to:-

Nodal Officer Dr MCR HRD
Institute of Telangana

The present report is a compilation of the events, places visited and activities of 7 days study tour to Kerala organized by DR MCR HRD Institute of Telangana, from 28th April 2024 to 04th May 2024 with the aim to study the implementation of government policies, get familiarized with developmental and citizen centric activities in different parts of the country and to develop team spirit and time management.

We were a group of 61 students and 1 faculty member. 5 students were chosen as group leaders for smooth conductance of the tour.

Faculty member: Sri Saka Venkateswara Rao

Group leaders: Deepak Joshi, Vijay Kumar Verma, Kavyanshu Soni, Subhash Singh, Satyendra Singh.

Day 1

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 Thiruvananthpuram. We reached Thiruvananthpuram International Airport at 07:45 hours. The weather was hot and humid and the temperature was around 35°C.

i. Sree Padmanabhaswamy temple:



The first point in our itinerary was Padmanabhaswamy temple. A magnificent historical temple and example of great architectural work. The temple has a dress code for men and women. Women are required to wear sarees, *Mundum Neriyaathum* (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 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 feet (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. 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 Bhriku 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. After having darshan we went to our buses. The time was around 1pm and we proceeded towards our hotel.

ii. **Veli village**

Everyone was feeling full of energy after having lunch and taking some rest. In the evening we proceeded towards Veli village. Veli tourist village lies where the Veli lake meets the Arabian sea. It provides unique

boating and picnicking opportunities. We returned from veli village by around 8pm and after having our dinner we took a good sleep.

Day 2

i. Kovalam beach

In the early morning we went to Kovalam beach to adore the morning view of the Arabian Sea. There we had the opportunity to meet some local fisherman. Fishing is one of the major business in Kerala. The catch consists of King Fish, Red Snappers, Pomfrets, shrimps, etc. They sell their lot mostly to local market.

ii. Alleppey (Alappuzha)

At around 9am we departed from Trivandrum to alleppey. We reached our destination at 2pm. Alleppey is known as Venice of the East. 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. 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. 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

i. Periyar National Park



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. 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. It also bagged first prize in the management effectiveness evaluation (MEE) of tiger reserves in India for the year 2022.

- ii. 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.

Day 4

- i. **Eravikulam National Park**

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. The magnificent view of beautiful tea plantations on our way was a sight to behold.



The trek from to *Kurinji* is of one hour and the 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 trekking journey also provides a mesmerizing view of the largest stretch of undisturbed montane shola-grassland eco system in the Western Ghats. Anamudy (2695m), the highest peak south of Himalayas, is also located within the park.



Eravikulam National Park

At the ending of the trek is the highly admired plant species *Strobilianthes 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

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.

i. Mattupetty Dam

Mattupetty Dam is a concrete gravity dam. Length of the dam is 237.75m and the height of the dam is 85.34m. It was built in 1953.



ii. **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. 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.



Tata Tea Museum

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.

iii. **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.



Day 6

In the Kochi we spent 2 days. On first day at 8am we left for Cherai Beach.

i. **Cherai Beach**

It was one of the cleanest beaches in India. We go there to see the sunset & take a bath in the sea. The sunset was beautiful, but the crowd compelled us to leave right after. There were a lot of resorts and Ayurvedic spas alongside the beach.

ii. **Fort Kochi**

After visiting Cherai Beach, we moved towards Fort Kochi. Fort Kochi is a neighbourhood of Cochin city. Fort Kochi takes its name from Fort

Manuel of Cochin. It was the first European Fort on Indian soil and was controlled by the Portuguese East Indies. The European architecture of many buildings and structures can still be seen in Fort Kochi. Various cultures blend at Fort Kochi. More than 30 communities co-exist here and more than 16 languages are spoken in the town.

Fort Kochi Beach



The influence of various European colonies can be seen here:-

- The portugese influence-it can be seen in Fort Manuel of Cochin and St. Francis Church(one of the oldest churches in India). Both these structures are extremely beautiful.
- The Dutch influence-it can be found in Dutch cemetery near St. Francis Church and Bolgatty palace.
- The British influence-it can be seen at Jew town and Princess Street.



iii. **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.

iv. **St. Francis church**

Saint Francis Church, in Fort Kochi, Kochi, originally built in 1503, is one of the oldest European churches in India and has historical significance as a witness to the European colonial ambitions in the subcontinent. The Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama died in Kochi in 1524 when he was on his third visit to India. His body was originally buried in this church, but after fourteen years his remains were relocated to Lisbon and are now interred at Jerónimos Monastery.



v. **Chinese Fishing Nets**

Chinese fishing nets are a type of stationary lift net in India and Indonesia. They are fishing nets that are fixed land installations for fishing. Each installation is operated by a team of up to six fishermen. While commonly known as "Chinese fishing nets" in India, the more formal name for such nets is "shore operated lift net." While such nets are used throughout coastal southern China and Indochina, in India they are mostly found in the Indian cities of Kochi and Kollam, where they have become a tourist attraction. This way of fishing is unusual in India and almost unique to the area, as it was introduced by Chinese explorers who landed there in the 14th century.



Chinese Fishing Nets

Day 7

i. NGO Visit (THERUVORAM)

Theruvoram, founded by Murugan S, is an NGO established in 2007 with the noble mission of rehabilitating street people in Kochi. Notably, Theruvoram has operated independently, foregoing government funding or public grants, while steadfastly serving the community over the years. Within its community, Theruvoram welcomes individuals of all ages and backgrounds, including children, women, and men facing various disabilities both physical and mental. Additionally, it extends a compassionate hand to those abandoned on the streets and individuals afflicted with diseases such as leprosy, regardless of age.

Mission of the NGO:-

Theruvoram NGO aims empowerment and welfare of street people especially old age mentally challenged migrant labour communities, empowerment of rural woman to build an equitable relationship of strength, sustenance and dignity between the cities and villages using the under-utilized urban material as a tool to trigger development with dignity, across the country.

A Meeting With Murugan S., The Founder of the NGO



The Founder

Murugan S, hails from the town of Peerumedu in Indduki district of Kerala. After completing the secondary level education in open school system, Murugan worked diverse jobs like selling newspapers and driving an auto-rickshaw for financial stability. In 2000, he volunteered as a child line worker, rescuing and aiding vulnerable individuals. Murugan supported these efforts through late-night auto-rickshaw shifts.

In 2007, Murugan founded Theruvora Pravarthaka Association, also known as Theruvoram NGO, dedicated to rehabilitating street people with 24/7 assistance. Murugan S received multiple awards for his outstanding social service in this noble cause.

Awards

The founder of the NGO has received many prestigious awards so far. In 2011 he received National Award for Child Welfare from our Hon'ble President Sh. Pranab Mukherjee. In 2017 he received Amazing India

Award from Hon'ble Prime Minister Sh. Narendra Modi. In 2016 the Chief Minister of Kerala Sh. P. Vijayan honored him with A.P. Aslam Prathibha Puraskaram.



Service and Limitations

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 disabilities, bedridden, and elderly individuals. The organisation has a two storey building spanning 1600 sq. ft., which includes a small kitchen. It accommodates 30 homeless individuals.

Apart from this, the NGO has some limitations too. The NGO has not received any financial help from the Central Government. The State Govt. also stopped funding the NGO. So the NGO is suffering from lack of funds & due to this lack of proper infrastructure. The cold shoulder from the local people is also a problem the NGO is facing.

Cochin International Airport

At the end of our tour we reached the Cochin International Airport around 6 PM. It is owned and operated by Cochin International Airport Limited (CIAL). It is the first Greenfield airport in India built under PPP. Also it is world's first fully solar-powered airport. For this it has received many awards like UN's Champion of Earth Award-2018, Airport Council International's Service Quality Award-2016 & 17. It has also received State Pollution Control Board's Excellence Awards-2017.

The Airport



Inside the Airport



Critical Analysis & The Conclusion

The main objective of our Bharat Darshan is to understand the Cultural & Historical insights, diversity of people, their Spiritual and religious point of view, their regional dishes and share the rich cultural and historical heritage.

Finally we reached the Institute Dr. MCR HRD around 1:00 AM on 5th of May. The whole tour was a great experience and we enjoyed it a lot along with our objective of learning.

RAHUL ASO (B79)

Ministry of Road Transport & Highways