

# Bharat Darshan (Study Tour) Report

**Prashant Kumar Meena (B81)**



*Group-3 (Kerala) (28/04/2024 to 04/05/2024)*

Under FTP For ASOs in CSS 2023 Batch



**Dr. Marri Channa Reddy**  
**Human Resource Development**  
**Institute of Telangana**

**NABET Accredited Excellent (उत्कृष्ट) Institute**

## OBJECTIVE

- To study implementation of a policy/programme/scheme,
- To get familiarized with developmental and citizen centric activities in villages including remote/tribal areas,
- To develop team spirit, time management, management of crisis and adaptability to various odd situations.

## ITINERARY

### Day 1: 28 April 24: Hyderabad – Trivandrum (Flight) / Veli Village / Kovalam

- 07:45 Hrs: Arrival in Trivandrum Airport
- 08:30 Hrs: Meet & Transfer to Padmanabhaswamy Temple
- 10:30 Hrs: Visit an NGO in Trivandrum
- 12:00 Hrs: Depart to Kovalam Hotel for Lunch & Check in
- 15:00 Hrs: Depart for Veli Village & back to Hotel
- 18:00 Hrs: Evening at Kovalam beach (Just behind the hotel).
- 20:00 Hrs: Dinner at Hotel & Overnight stay at Hotel.

### Day 2: 29 April 24: Kovalam – Alleppey

- 07:00 Hrs: Breakfast at Hotel
- 08:00 Hrs: Depart to Varkala Beach from Kovalam
- 09:30 Hrs: Visit Varkala Beach
- 11:00 Hrs: Depart from Varkala Beach drive to Alleppey
- 13:00 Hrs: Alleppey Houseboat Cruise with Lunch
- 17:00 Hrs: Disembark the Cruise.
- 18:00 Hrs: Depart from Basilica & Drive to Hotel

- 18:30 Hrs: Check in to Hotel & Free at leisure

### Day 3: 30 April 24: Alleppey – Thekkady – Munnar

- 07:00 Hrs: Breakfast at Hotel
- 07:30 Hrs: Proceed to Thekkady
- 12:00 Hrs: Lunch at Hotel Sandra Palace
- 13:00 Hrs: Depart for Periyar Lake for Boating (We Should be there at exactly @ 13:15 Hrs)
- 17:30 Hrs: Proceed to Munnar
- 20:30 Hrs: Arrive Munnar Hotel for Dinner
- Check in & Overnight stay at Hotel.

### Day 4: 01 May 24: Munnar

- 08:00 Hrs: Breakfast at Hotel
- 09:00 hrs: Departure to visit Mattupatty Dam
- Drive around the tea estates of Munnar and tata tea museum,
- 13:00 Hrs: Lunch at local restaurant
- 14:30 Hrs: Depart for Pallivasal falls & free time for spice shopping.
- 17:00 Hrs: Evening visit the Kalari Shetra in the evening for Kathakali Show.
- (The entry to be borne by individuals directly)
- 20:00 Hrs: Dinner and overnight stay at Munnar.

### Day 5: 02 May 24: Munnar – Athirapally falls – Thrissur

- 07:00 Hrs: Breakfast at Hotel
- 08:00 Hrs: Depart from Hotel proceed to Athirapally Falls
- 12:00 Hrs: Visit Athirapally Waterfalls
- 13:30 Hrs: Lunch at local restaurant

- 15:00 Hrs: Depart to Thrissur
- 17:00 Hrs: Arrive Thrissur and Visit and NGO and later visit Krishna temple and Church.
- 20:00 Hrs: Dinner and overnight stay at Thrissur or Guruvayur.

### Day 6: 03 May 24: Thrissur – Cochin

- 08:00 Hrs: Breakfast at Hotel.
- 09:00 Hrs: Depart for visiting Guruvayur temple. Darshan in the temple.
- 11:00 Hrs: Depart from Guruvayur to Cochin.
- 13:00 Hrs: Arrive Cochin for Lunch.
- 15:00 Hrs: Check-in Hotel in Cochin.
- 16:00 Hrs: Visit an NGO in Cochin.
- 17:00 Hrs: Free time for shopping in MG Road, Cochin.
- 19:30 Hrs: Dinner at Hotel & Overnight stay at Cochin.

### Day 7: 04 May 24: Cochin – Hyderabad (Flight)

- 08:00 Hrs: Breakfast at Hotel.
- 09:00 Hrs: Check-out Hotel and Depart for Half day tour of Cochin covering Chinese Fishing Nets, Jewish Synagogue, Fort Cochin, Mattancherry Palace etc.
- Branches: Bangalore – Nellore – Hyderabad – Madurai - Singapore
- 13:30 Hrs: Lunch and free time for shopping.
- 17:00 Hrs: Depart from Cochin to the airport.
- 18:30 Hrs: Arrive at Cochin airport and depart by respective airlines for the destination.



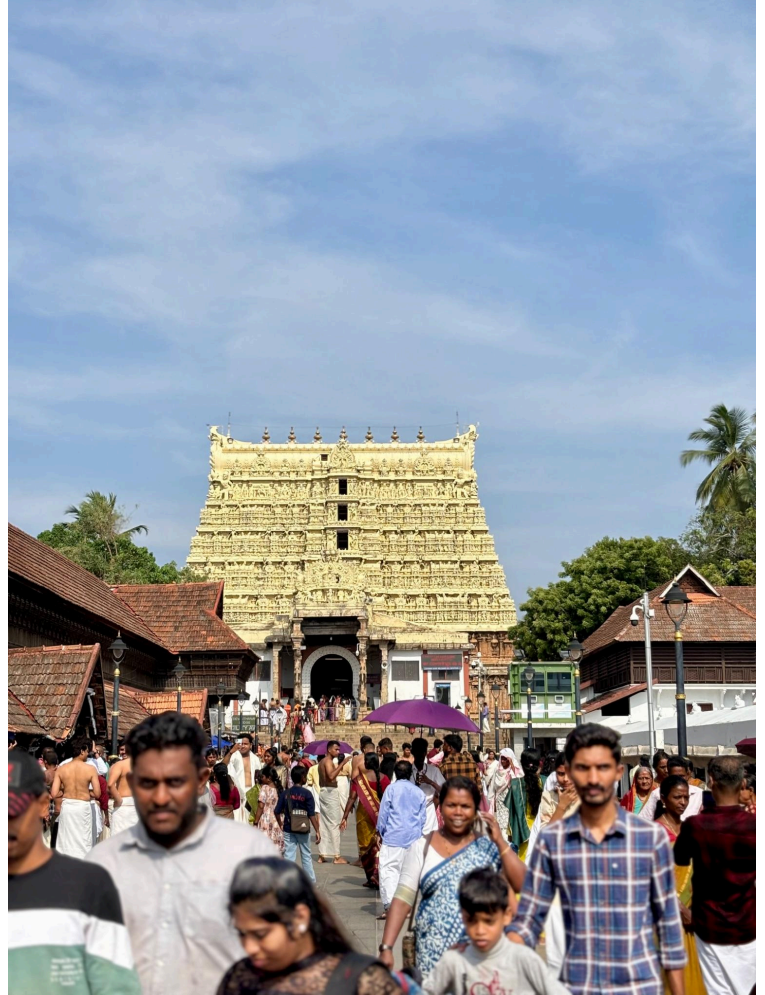
## Day1

On April 28th at 06:10, our group of 62 members embarked on Indigo flight 6E 5278 from Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, Hyderabad, bound for Thiruvananthapuram. We arrived at Thiruvananthapuram International Airport at 07:45. The weather was characterized by hot and humid conditions, with temperatures hovering around 35°C.



## i. **Padmanabhaswamy Temple:**

Our first stop on the itinerary was the Padmanabhaswamy Temple, known for its specific dress code for both men and women. Women are required to wear sarees, Mundum Neriyathum (set-mundu), skirts with blouses, or half-sarees. Young girls under the age of 12 may wear gowns. Men are expected to wear mundu or dhoti and are asked to be bare-chested. Dhotis can be easily rented at the entrance. Once



attired appropriately, we made our way towards the temple, situated within the East Fort of Trivandrum.

Upon entering the East Fort, we passed by Padmatheertham pond on the right and the Kuthiramalika Palace on the left. The temple itself showcases a unique blend of Kerala and Dravidian architectural styles, characterized by tall walls and a 16th-century gopuram that reaches a height of 100 feet (30 meters) with seven tiers, built in the Pandyan style.



The temple boasts four entrances—Kizakke nada (East), Padinjare nada (West), Vadakke nada (North), and Thekke nada (South)—with the main entrance being Kizakke nada. Inside, a corridor adorned with 365 and one-quarter intricately sculptured granite pillars leads into the sanctum sanctorum from the eastern side.

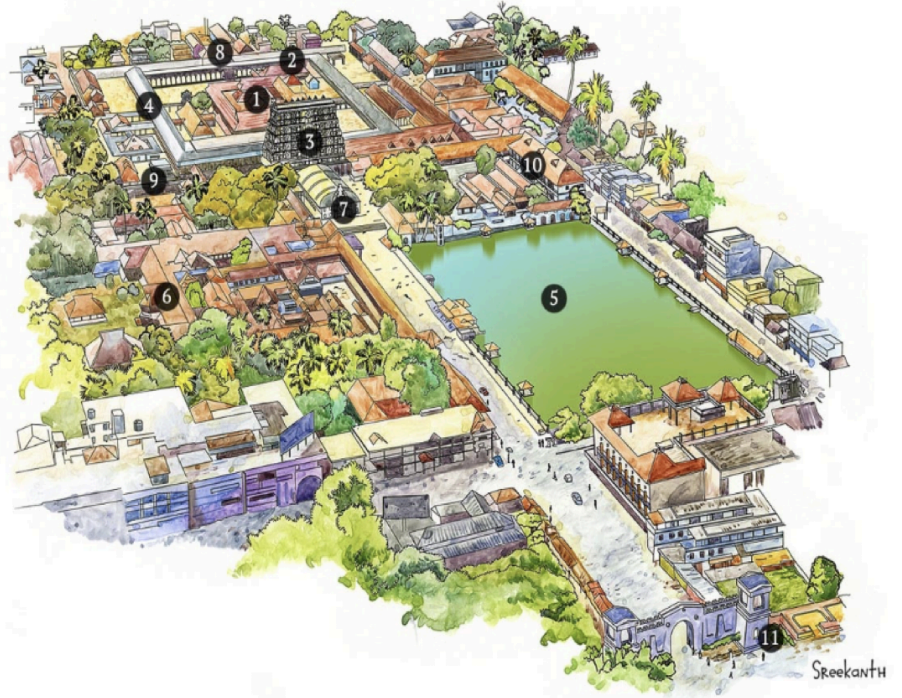


Due to it being a Sunday, the temple was bustling with visitors, resulting in a long queue winding through the corridor towards the sanctum sanctorum. By the time we reached the sanctum sanctorum, it was time for the midday Pooja (madhyanya Pooja),



and we had to wait another 45 minutes for darshan.

1. Sanctum Sanctorum
2. Sreekrishnaswamy Temple
3. Gopuram
4. Sreebalippura
5. Padmatheertham
6. Kuthiramalika
7. Eastern Entrance
8. Western Entrance
9. Kalmandapams
10. Residential Buildings
11. East Fort



Inside the sanctum sanctorum, Padmanabha is seen reclining on a serpent. The deity is visible through three doors: the first door reveals the visage of the reclining Padmanabha with a Siva Linga underneath his hand; the second door displays Sridevi and Bhrigu Muni in Katusarkara, Brahma seated on a lotus emanating from the deity's navel, and gold abhisheka moorthies of Padmanabha, Sridevi, and Bhudevi, along with the silver



utsava moorthi of Padmanabha; and the third door unveils the deity's feet with Bhudevi and Markandeya Muni in Katusarkara.

Within the temple premises, two other significant shrines are located: Thekkedom for Ugra Narasimha and Thiruvambadi for Krishna Swami. After darshan, we returned to our buses around 1 pm and proceeded to our hotel.

## ii. Veli village



After enjoying a satisfying lunch and taking a brief rest, everyone felt energized. Later in the evening, we headed towards Veli Village, situated at the confluence of Veli Lake and the Arabian Sea. This picturesque spot offers exceptional boating and picnicking experiences.

Veli Village, located near Thiruvananthapuram in Kerala, has seen notable development

across economic, social, cultural, and political aspects:

*Economic Development:*

- Tourism: Veli has become a popular tourist destination, leading to the growth of local businesses and infrastructure like hotels and restaurants.
- Fishing and Agriculture: Traditional occupations such as fishing and agriculture remain important contributors to the local economy.

*Social Development:*

- Education: Improved access to education through schools and institutions has boosted literacy rates.
- Healthcare: Better healthcare facilities have enhanced health outcomes for residents.

*Cultural Development:*

- Cultural Preservation: Veli celebrates its heritage through festivals and local art forms, promoting cultural identity.
- Art and Handicrafts: Traditional craftsmanship adds to cultural richness and economic activities.



Political Development:

- Local Governance: Governance structures ensure representation and decision-making at the village level.
- Infrastructure: Political initiatives support infrastructure projects benefiting the village.



In summary, Veli Village has progressed economically through tourism and traditional livelihoods, with improvements in education, healthcare, and cultural preservation. Local governance and infrastructure support further contribute to the village's development.



We returned from Veli Village around 8 pm, had dinner, and then settled in for a restful night's sleep.

## Day2

### **i. Kovalam Beach:**

Early in the morning, we visited Kovalam Beach to witness the sunrise and had the chance to interact with local fishermen.



Fishing is a significant industry in Kerala, with catches including King Fish, Red Snappers, Pomfrets, shrimps, and more. The fishermen primarily sell their catch in the local markets.

## ii. Alleppey (venice of the east)

Around 9 am, we departed from Trivandrum and arrived in Alleppey at 2 pm. Alleppey is renowned for its canals, backwaters, beaches, and lagoons. We had arranged a backwater cruise to explore the picturesque man-made islands, coconut-fringed backwaters, and lush paddy fields. The local staff aboard the cruise boat served as our guides for the journey.



Our cruise began at Pamba River and extended to Vembanad Lake, covering a total distance of approximately 15 km round trip. This route forms part of National Waterway 3. Due to limited road and rail infrastructure development in Alleppey, the expansion of waterways has greatly benefited traditional industries like coir, cashew, and fishing. It's the country's first national waterway offering 24-hour navigation facilities along its entire length.





Alleppey's economy revolves around paddy farming, tourism, and the coir industry. Situated within the Kuttanad region, known for having the lowest altitude in India (1.2 to 3.0 meters below sea level), it's recognized as the rice bowl of Kerala and forms part of the second-largest Ramsar site in India. To prevent saltwater intrusion into Kuttanad, a 1252-meter-long saltwater barrier called Thanneermukkom has been constructed on Vembanad Lake.



Apart from its backwaters, Alleppey is famous for its coir industry, which utilizes coconut husk fibers to produce ropes, twine, brooms, brushes, and doormats.

**Vembanad Lake** is the largest lake in the state of Kerala, spanning an area of about 200 square kilometers. It is also the longest lake in India, stretching from Alappuzha in the south to Kochi (Ernakulam) in the north. The lake is a prominent feature of Kerala's backwaters, a network of interconnected canals, rivers, and lakes that are characteristic of the region's coastal areas.



The ecosystem of Vembanad Lake is rich and diverse, supporting a variety of flora and fauna. The lake and its surroundings are home to numerous species of birds, both resident and migratory, making it a paradise for bird watchers. During certain seasons, migratory birds from different parts of the world visit Vembanad Lake, adding to its natural charm.





The lake plays a vital role in the lives of local communities, providing a source of livelihood through fishing and agriculture. Traditional fishing methods such as using Chinese fishing nets and small country boats are still practiced here. The fertile shores of Vembanad Lake support paddy cultivation, and the region is known for its extensive rice fields, especially in the Kuttanad region, which is often referred to as the





"rice bowl of Kerala."

Vembanad Lake is also a significant waterway for transportation, connecting various towns and villages along its banks. Houseboat cruises on the lake are a popular attraction for tourists, offering a unique experience of Kerala's backwater lifestyle. These houseboats, or "kettuvallams," are traditionally designed boats equipped with modern amenities, providing visitors with a comfortable and immersive way to explore the serene backwaters.

One of the notable events on Vembanad Lake is the Nehru Trophy Boat Race, held annually during the Onam festival. This thrilling snake boat race attracts spectators from all over the world, showcasing the local tradition of boat racing and highlighting the vibrant culture of Kerala.



In addition to its ecological and cultural significance, Vembanad Lake faces challenges such as pollution and encroachment, emphasizing the need for sustainable management and conservation efforts to preserve this important waterbody for future generations.

After disembarking from the boat, we checked into our hotel and later in the evening, visited some coir shops to explore their products.

### **Day3**

1. Around 8am, we eagerly embarked on our journey towards **Thekkady**, filled with anticipation to explore the renowned Periyar National Park, which stands as a shining example of innovative, people-oriented, park-centered community-based ecotourism initiatives that are synonymous with Periyar Tiger Reserve. Nestled in the lush Western Ghats of Kerala, this reserve is not just a haven for wildlife but also a model of sustainable tourism intertwined with conservation efforts.

**Periyar Tiger Reserve's** commitment to community engagement is evident through its community-based and protection-oriented ecotourism programs (CBET), which were launched during the Integrated Eco Development Project (IEDP). These programs empower local communities to play a pivotal role in monitoring and safeguarding the reserve's



biodiversity-rich landscapes, ensuring both ecological conservation and livelihood security.

Excitement filled the air as we had pre-booked tickets for a serene boating experience on the tranquil waters of Periyar Lake. Upon our arrival in Thekkady, a dedicated national park bus whisked us away to Periyar National Park, where the sight of four impressive double-decker boats awaiting us at the lakeshore heightened our anticipation.



As our boat gently glided across the shimmering lake during our hour-long journey, we were treated to enchanting views of the surrounding forest. The air was filled with excitement and whispers of wildlife sightings. Throughout our voyage, we were privileged to witness a vibrant tapestry of wildlife, including herds of graceful deer gracefully grazing by the water's edge, majestic elephants cooling off in the shallows, agile wild goats navigating rocky outcrops, and robust wild buffaloes congregating near the shoreline. Each

sighting was a testament to the thriving ecosystem that Periyar Tiger Reserve strives to protect.

Despite our hopes, the elusive tiger remained hidden from our view.



In a conversation with a seasoned forest official, we gained insights into the rarity of tiger sightings within the reserve. He shared that in his 24 years of service, he had encountered a tiger only a dozen times—a stark reminder of the challenges of spotting these magnificent predators in their natural habitat. The official explained that Periyar National Park, sprawling across 925 square kilometers, is home to just 40 tigers, making tiger sightings a truly exceptional event.

The conservation success of Periyar Tiger Reserve extends beyond wildlife encounters. Despite welcoming thousands of tourists annually, the reserve's forests have remained pristine and undisturbed, a testament to the effective management strategies implemented by park authorities. This dedication to conservation excellence was further underscored when Periyar Tiger Reserve was awarded the prestigious first prize for management effectiveness evaluation (MEE) among Indian tiger reserves in 2022 by the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change.



In conclusion, our experience at Periyar National Park left an indelible impression. Beyond the excitement of wildlife sightings

and the tranquility of the lake, we gained a deeper appreciation for the delicate balance between conservation and sustainable tourism.



Periyar Tiger Reserve exemplifies how community involvement, innovative ecotourism initiatives, and effective management can safeguard our natural heritage for future generations to cherish and protect.

2. After our visit to Periyar Tiger Reserve, we continued our journey towards our next destination, **Munnar**, arriving there around 11pm. The drive from Thekkady to Munnar was scenic, passing through lush landscapes dotted

with tea, spice, and rubber plantations. The winding roads offered picturesque views of rolling hills adorned with neatly cultivated plantations, creating a mesmerizing tapestry of greenery along our route. The air was filled with the pleasant aroma of tea leaves and spices, adding to the charm of our journey through this verdant region of Kerala. As we made our way towards Munnar, we couldn't help but marvel at the natural beauty and agricultural abundance that surrounded us, making the drive both enjoyable and memorable.



## Day4

### **i. Eravikulam National Park**

In the morning, we embarked on a journey to Eravikulam National Park, which was conveniently located just 15 km from our hotel. Nestled in the Kannan Devan Hills of the southern Western Ghats, this wildlife sanctuary boasts an expansive area of 97 sq. km. and holds the distinction of being Kerala's first national park. The park is segmented into three distinct zones: the core area, the buffer area, and the tourism area, with visitors permitted access solely to the tourism zone.



Upon arriving at the main entrance of the tourism area, a bus from the Kerala Forest and Wildlife Department transported us to the starting point of the Kurinji Trail. The journey was a treat for the eyes, with breathtaking views of lush tea plantations unfolding along the way. The trek along the Kurinji Trail, which spanned approximately one hour, offered encounters with herds of Nilgiri tahr, an endangered mountain goat that thrives in Eravikulam's natural





habitat. This national park boasts the highest density and largest population of Nilgiri tahr.

Moreover, the trekking adventure unveiled stunning vistas of the vast, uninterrupted montane shola-grassland ecosystem—the largest of its kind in the Western Ghats. Anamudy, standing tall at 2,695 meters, reigns as the highest peak south of the Himalayas and lies within the bounds of this remarkable park.

At the conclusion of our trek, we encountered the highly revered plant species *Strobilanthes Kunthiana*, locally known as Neelakurinji, a remarkable endemic species of the Western Ghats. Unfortunately, Neelakurinji faces a threat due to the reckless plundering of the High Ranges grasslands by uninformed or reckless individuals. This species blooms once every 12 years, with its last spectacular bloom observed in 2018, and is anticipated to bloom again in 2030.

After enjoying our time at the summit, we returned to the trek's starting point and visited the "Story of the Park" exhibit. This insightful display provides a concise history of the park, highlighting the diverse flora and fauna that inhabit the area, with a special focus on the Nilgiri Thar, a majestic



mountain goat species native to the region. The exhibit enriches visitors' understanding of the park's ecological significance and the conservation efforts aimed at protecting its unique biodiversity.

## **Day5**



i. In the morning, our journey led us to the picturesque **Mattupetty Dam**, a landmark that extends far beyond its role as a water storage facility. Nestled amidst rolling hills and verdant landscapes, the Mattupetty Dam creates a stunning reservoir known as Mattupetty Lake—a perennial body of water that maintains its allure even during the dry summer months.

The significance of Mattupetty Dam transcends its basic function of water conservation. This gravity dam plays a crucial role in

generating electricity, contributing to the region's power supply. Moreover, the tranquil waters of Mattupetty Lake have become a focal point for various water-based recreational activities, enriching the local tourism scene. Visitors are drawn to the lake's serene ambiance, where boating and other leisure pursuits offer an immersive experience amid nature's splendor.

Beyond tourism and energy generation, the waters of Mattupetty Lake serve a practical purpose in irrigation. Farmers in the vicinity rely on this abundant water source to nourish their fields, fostering agriculture and sustaining livelihoods in the region.





The allure of Mattupetty extends beyond its functional aspects. Surrounded by lush forests and the misty embrace of the Western Ghats, the dam and its reservoir provide a scenic backdrop for nature enthusiasts and adventure seekers alike. The area's rich biodiversity, with its resident birdlife and occasional glimpses of wildlife, adds an enchanting dimension to the experience.

As we explored the vicinity of Mattupetty Dam and Lake, we couldn't help but marvel at the harmonious blend of utility and natural beauty. The engineering marvel of the dam, complemented by the tranquility of the lake and its surroundings, underscores the

profound interplay between human ingenuity and the gifts of nature.

Our visit to Mattupetty Dam and Lake left us with a deep appreciation for the multifaceted role that such structures play in shaping landscapes, sustaining ecosystems, and enriching the lives of communities. It served as a reminder of the delicate balance between development and environmental stewardship—a balance that, when achieved, fosters prosperity while preserving the essence of the natural world.

## ii. Tata Tea Museum

Tea has a rich and integral history in the breathtaking landscapes of Munnar, leaving an indelible mark on the region's cultural and economic tapestry. The Tata Tea Museum stands as a tribute to this legacy, housing a fascinating collection of photographs and machinery that chronicle the remarkable journey of tea in this area.



Nestled within the picturesque Nallathanni Estate of Tata Tea, the museum serves as a public recognition of the toil and dedication

of those who nurtured the tea plantations over the decades. As visitors, we were privileged to witness the evolution of tea processing firsthand, from the rudimentary tea roller of yesteryears to the sophisticated and fully automated tea factories of today.

Walking through the museum, we marveled at the various stages of tea production on display, gaining insight into the meticulous process that transforms fresh tea leaves into the beloved beverage. One highlight was the sundial crafted in 1913 by the Art Industrial School in Nazareth, Tamil Nadu, a testament to the craftsmanship and precision of a bygone era.

Beyond the historical artifacts, the Tata Tea Museum boasts other intriguing attractions, such as the 'Pelton Wheel' once employed in the power generation plant during the 1920s. The sight of the tea roller and a rail engine wheel from the Kundale Valley Light Railway further accentuates the museum's immersive experience, offering a glimpse into the technological advancements that propelled Munnar's tea industry forward.

A visit to the museum wouldn't be complete without exploring the demonstration room dedicated to tea tasting—an engaging experience that delighted our senses. Here, we encountered an array of tea varieties sourced from around the world, each steeped in its unique flavor profile and history. Sampling these exotic teas was not just a sensory delight but also an educational journey into the diverse world of tea cultivation and consumption.



The Tata Tea Museum thus stands as a living tribute to Munnar's tea heritage, celebrating the labor of generations past while inviting visitors to appreciate the intricacies and flavors that define this timeless beverage. It's a journey that seamlessly blends history, technology, and the art of tea-making, offering a deeper appreciation for the cultural significance of tea in the verdant hills of Munnar.



### **iii. Tea estates**

The Tea Museum is nestled within the picturesque Nallathanni Estate, a property owned by the esteemed Kanan Devan Hills Plantations Company Private Limited. This company manages extensive tea estates across the region, and fortunately, some of these estates are open to the public, allowing visitors a firsthand glimpse into the fascinating world of tea cultivation.

During our visit, we had the privilege of exploring some of these lush tea plantations and observing the meticulous process of tea leaf plucking. It was a remarkable experience to witness the tea workers, known as pluckers, in action. The pluckers skillfully select the top two leaves and a bud from each tea plant, a technique that ensures the highest quality of tea production.

The art of tea plucking is indeed a labor-intensive endeavor, requiring dedicated manual effort. Interestingly, hand plucking remains the preferred method over machine plucking, primarily due to its economic viability and the preservation of tea leaf integrity. This traditional approach not only supports local livelihoods but also upholds the authenticity and quality associated with hand-crafted teas.

As we strolled through the tea estates, surrounded by the emerald greenery of tea bushes, we gained a deeper appreciation for the intricate process that goes into producing every cup of tea. The landscape was alive with the rhythmic movements of the pluckers, their nimble fingers swiftly harvesting the tender tea leaves that contribute to Kerala's renowned tea heritage.

Visiting the tea estates provided us with a unique insight into the rich cultural and economic significance of tea cultivation in this region. It was a testament to the dedication and expertise of the tea workers, whose craftsmanship ensures that every sip of tea embodies the essence of these verdant hills. The experience left us inspired by the harmony between nature and human endeavor that defines the art of tea plucking in Kerala's tea estates.

## Day6

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

### i. Cherai Beach:

Cherai Beach stands out as one of the cleanest and most pristine beaches in India, renowned for its crystal-clear waters and soft sands. Our visit was inspired by the desire to witness the breathtaking sunset and enjoy a



refreshing swim in the sea. As the sun descended, casting hues of orange and pink across the horizon, the scene was truly mesmerizing. However, the growing crowd began to detract from the tranquility we sought, prompting us to depart soon after.

Alongside the shoreline, Cherai Beach is dotted with numerous resorts and Ayurvedic spas, offering a blend of relaxation and rejuvenation. These establishments provide an opportunity to unwind amidst the coastal beauty, complementing the beach experience with luxurious amenities and traditional wellness



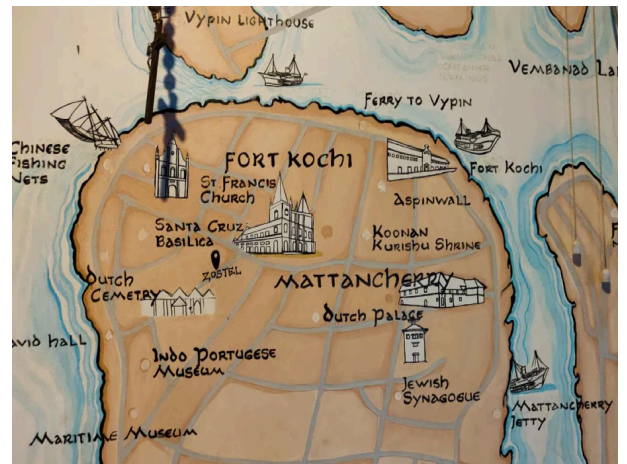
treatments.

Despite the bustling atmosphere towards evening, Cherai Beach remains a favored destination for those seeking a blend of natural splendor and modern comforts. The beach's cleanliness and scenic allure, coupled with the availability of hospitality services, make it an appealing retreat for visitors from near and far. Cherai Beach invites you to indulge in the best of coastal Kerala, whether it's witnessing stunning sunsets, enjoying beach activities, or pampering yourself with rejuvenating spa treatments amid a serene seaside setting.

## ii. Fort Kochi:

After our visit to Cherai Beach, we proceeded towards Fort Kochi, a charming neighborhood within the city of Cochin. Fort Kochi derives its name from Fort Manuel, the first European fort established on Indian

soil, which was controlled by the Portuguese East Indies. The remnants of European architecture still grace many buildings and structures in Fort Kochi, reflecting its rich colonial history.



Fort Kochi serves as a melting pot of cultures, where various communities harmoniously coexist. Over 30 different communities inhabit this area, and the town resonates with the sounds of more

than 16 languages spoken by its diverse residents. This cultural amalgamation is evident in the local cuisine, festivals, and daily life, making Fort Kochi a vibrant and cosmopolitan hub in Kerala.

Exploring Fort Kochi unveils a fascinating blend of historical landmarks, such as St. Francis Church and the iconic Chinese fishing nets along the waterfront, juxtaposed with contemporary art galleries and cafes. The narrow streets lined with colonial-era buildings evoke a sense of nostalgia and offer a glimpse into the region's colonial past.

Fort Kochi's unique cultural tapestry and historical significance make it a must-visit destination for travelers seeking to immerse themselves in Kerala's diverse heritage and vibrant community life.

The rich heritage of Fort Kochi reflects the influence of various European colonies:

- Portuguese Influence: Discover remnants of Portuguese architecture at Fort Manuel of Cochin, the first European fort in India, and at St. Francis Church, one of India's oldest churches, both showcasing exquisite beauty and historical significance.

- Dutch Influence: Explore the Dutch Cemetery near St. Francis Church and the elegant Bolgatty Palace, which exemplify the

enduring legacy of Dutch craftsmanship and design.

- **British Influence:** Wander through Jew Town and Princess Street to experience the British imprint on Fort Kochi's urban landscape, with charming colonial-era buildings and a vibrant blend of cultures.

Each of these colonial legacies adds a layer of historical depth to Fort Kochi, creating a captivating tapestry of European influences against the backdrop of Kerala's coastal charm.

### **iii. Mattancherry Palace**

This historical palace, commonly known as the Dutch Palace or Mattancherry Palace, is a fascinating blend of traditional Kerala architecture and European influences. The palace is constructed in the Nalukettu style, characterized by its quadrangular layout with a central courtyard. While rooted in Kerala's architectural



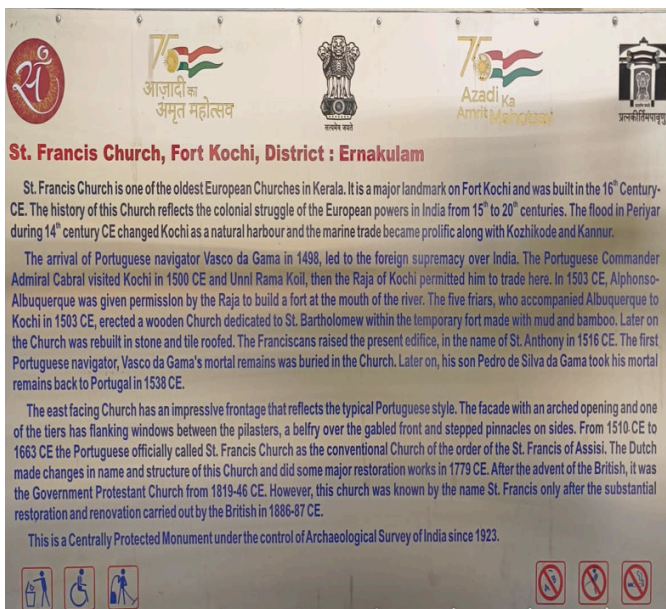
traditions, certain features such as the arches and chamber proportions reveal European influences that have been integrated into the basic Nalukettu design.

One of the palace's most remarkable features is its extensive



collection of murals adorning the walls. These murals, executed in the style of Hindu temple art, are both religious and decorative, showcasing stylized portrayals of mythological scenes, historical events, and cultural narratives. The intricate detailing and vibrant colors of these murals provide insights into Kerala's artistic heritage and its cultural connections with Hindu traditions.

The Dutch Palace stands as a testament to the cultural exchanges that occurred between Kerala and European powers like the Dutch, showcasing how architectural styles and artistic techniques were adapted and blended over centuries. Visiting this palace offers a glimpse into Kerala's rich history, architectural evolution, and artistic expressions, making it a significant landmark in the region's cultural landscape.



## St. Francis Church:

Saint Francis Church, located in Fort Kochi, Kochi, holds the distinction of being one of India's oldest European churches, originally constructed in 1503. This historic landmark bears witness to the ambitious colonial endeavors of European powers in the Indian subcontinent. Notably, the Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama passed away in Kochi in 1524 during his third voyage to India. Initially interred at this church, his remains were later transferred to Lisbon's Jerónimos Monastery after fourteen years.

## Day7

### 1. NGO Visit (Theruvoram):

Theruvoram, founded by Murugan S, a dedicated social worker, 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. Theruvoram serves as a gateway to support the diverse residents it embraces, offering assistance through their daily struggles and victories, ordinary occurrences, and significant milestones. 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.

## NGO Registration Certificate





**About the Founder:**

Murugan S, the visionary behind Theruvoram NGO, hails from the picturesque town of Peerumedu in the enchanting Idukki district of Kerala, where he spent his formative years. In the 1990s, Murugan's family moved to Kochi with a meager income of Rs 300. Guided by social worker Bro. Mavooris in the Kochi





slums, Murugan found solace at Don Bosco Sneha Bhavan. Here, he learned Malayalam and gained vocational skills as a mason, fostering a profound love and compassion for others amidst life's challenges. 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 Theruvoram 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 and Recognition:**

Mr. Murugan S has been recognized with several prestigious awards for his commendable efforts:

1. He received the "National Award for Child Welfare" in 2011 by the then President, Shri Pranab Mukherjee, for his NGO's work for the welfare of the street children.
2. In 2017, he received the "Amazing India" award from the Honourable Prime Minister Shree Narendra Modi ( sponsored by Times Now Group)
3. Mr. Murugan S was honored by the Hon'ble CM of Kerala, Shri P. Vijayan, with the "A. P. Aslam Prathibha Puraskaram 2016."

(The A.P. Aslam Prathibha Puraskaram is given in the memory of A.P. Aslam, a former MP from Kerala who went on to become chief administrator at Zabeel Palace in the UAE. He also became a spokesperson for Indians in the Middle East.)

4. Also in 2020, the former President of India, Shri. Ram Nath Kovind, recognized him at Rashtrapati Bhavan, Delhi for his contributions to community development and women empowerment.



**Mission:**

Theruvoram NGO aims empowerment and welfare of 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.

**Vision:**

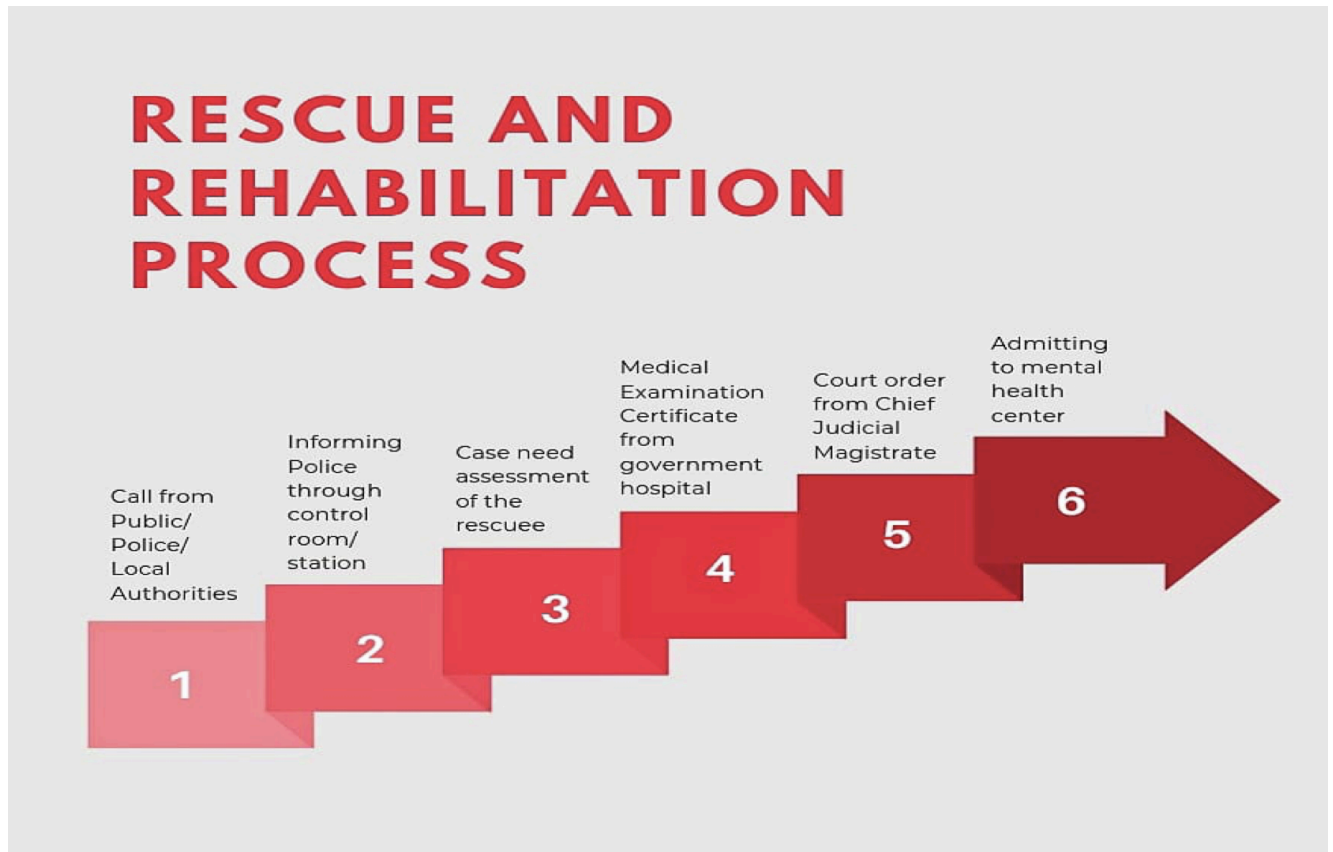
Let us make the world a better place for the human race.

**Service:**

- The NGO has rescued nearly 30,000 homeless beggars and destitute.
- 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 organization has a two storey building which accommodates 30



homeless individuals.



### **Limitations:**

Over the past decade, spanning from 2011 to March 2022, the organization has been dedicated to serving in the field of Social Justice, focusing on initiatives aimed at aiding vulnerable communities. As a testament to its commitment, the organization successfully collaborated with the government to establish a shelter home in Kakkanad, India. However, construction progress faced a setback due to necessary updates in mental health legislation, temporarily pausing rescue missions.

To overcome this limitation and resume crucial operations, the NGO is actively seeking support from corporate grants. With secured funding, the

organization pledges to provide detailed reports every three months, ensuring transparency and accountability in fund utilization.

Additionally, efforts will be made to establish a dedicated account specifically for managing these funds, ensuring they are allocated efficiently towards the mission of aiding and uplifting vulnerable individuals within the community.

### **Suggestions from my side:**

To overcome the limitations faced by the NGO in resuming its operations and completing the shelter home construction, here are some suggestions:

1. **Advocate for Legislative Updates**: Engage in advocacy efforts to expedite necessary updates in mental health legislation. Collaborate with policymakers, mental health experts, and advocacy groups to highlight the importance of these updates for the well-being of vulnerable populations.
2. **Seek Additional Funding Sources**: Apart from corporate grants, explore other funding opportunities such as philanthropic foundations, international aid organizations, or crowdfunding platforms. Diversifying funding sources can increase financial stability and support ongoing initiatives.
3. **Form Partnerships**: Forge strategic partnerships with other NGOs, academic institutions, or private sector entities that share similar

goals. Pooling resources and expertise through partnerships can enhance project effectiveness and sustainability.

4. **Engage with Community Stakeholders**: Involve community members, including beneficiaries and local leaders, in decision-making processes. Solicit feedback and gather insights to ensure that programs and initiatives meet the specific needs of the community.
5. **Transparency and Accountability**: Maintain transparent communication with stakeholders, including donors and the community, regarding project progress, challenges, and financial management. Implement robust monitoring and evaluation systems to track outcomes and demonstrate impact.

By implementing these strategies, the NGO can navigate challenges, secure necessary resources, and continue its mission of aiding vulnerable communities effectively.

*THANK YOU FOR YOUR PATIENT READING.*