

Title:

My City My Heritage My Kozhikode

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### My City My Heritage My Kozhikode





It is with great pleasure that we present to you this compendium of booklets showcasing some of the lesser known and overlooked treasures of select cities in our country. Over the past decade, the InterGlobe Foundation (IGF) has been steadfast in its commitment to preserving and restoring India's cultural and built heritage. Initiatives such as the restoration of Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan Tomb in New Delhi and the Qutub Shahi Tombs in Hyderabad have not only rejuvenated these historic sites but have also empowered local craftspeople and communities.

Launched in 2019 in collaboration with Sahapedia, the 'My City My Heritage' project aims to document and celebrate the cultural fabric of Indian cities. With the vision to promote the intangible culture and vibrant heritage of our country, with the support of Sahapedia, the project was launched in 2019 documenting the cultural heritage of India cities. Each city has its own unique story to tell—stories rooted in its monuments, crafts, festivals, and the lived experiences of its people. By documenting these stories, this project not only preserves our cultural fabric but also inspires pride and awareness in local communities and visitors alike. In this new and expanded phase, 'My City My Heritage' continues its journey, extending its scope to include more cities across the country.

As custodians of a shared heritage, we at IGF believe that initiatives like this are crucial for exploring a deeper connection between the communities and the spaces they inhabit. We also hope that in each of the project cities, a group of concerned citizens, institutions and government will come together to carry forward this beautiful curation of their city's history. We hope these booklets will entice you to discover these cities and their treasures and share them with others. We welcome more organizations, individuals and researchers to build on the repository created here.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the team at Sahapedia and my colleagues at the InterGlobe group of companies, as well as the researchers, photographers, and local communities who have contributed to this endeavor.

With best wishes,

### Rohini Bhatia

Chairperson,

**InterGlobe Foundation** 

# Foreword

# Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to introduce this collection of city booklets created under the 'My City My Heritage' initiative, a collaboration between Sahapedia and the InterGlobe Foundation (IGF). These booklets celebrate the rich and layered cultural heritage of Indian cities, bringing to light their stories, unique traditions, and enduring legacies.

At Sahapedia, our journey since 2011 has been defined by a vision—to document and share India's vast and diverse cultural knowledge. Over the past 14 years, Sahapedia has established itself as an open, digital resource dedicated to exploring the histories, arts, and traditions that define our shared heritage. The Sanskrit term 'Saha,' (together with), embodies the spirit of collaboration that fuels our efforts in documenting local contexts and pluralistic traditions, and creating meaningful engagement with India's cultural legacy.

'My City My Heritage,' launched in 2019, has become an extension of this vision. With the generous support of IGF, this project underscores the role of cities as living repositories of history and culture. Beyond research and documentation resulting into City Booklets, the project engages communities, scholars, and enthusiasts in celebrating their cities' unique identities. Initiatives like heritage walks and *Anubhutis*—Sahapedia's initiative for children with disabilities and marginalized groups—have redefined heritage engagement.

Each booklet reflects research, thoughtful curation, and a commitment to accessible heritage. This endeavor owes its success to the unwavering support of IGF and the contributions of researchers, photographers, local communities, and Sahapedia's team.

It is my hope that these booklets will not only serve as resources for exploration and education but also foster a sense of responsibility for our cultural legacy. I invite you to dive into the stories within and to share in the joy of our collective heritage.

With warm regards,

### Sudha Gopalakrishnan

Executive Director, Sahapedia

Initiated by Sahapedia in partnership with the InterGlobe Foundation, the 'My City My Heritage' project is focused on rediscovering the culture and heritage potential of Indian cities. The project entails exploration. documentation and dissemination of varied heritage and cultural aspects of urban locations in India, including through the publication of these booklets. As a part of the project, a number of heritage walks. museum tours. Anubhutis and engaging educational activities for school students and general audiences were organised. The initial phase of the project, spanning 2019-2022, covered Ahmedabad, Indore, Prayagraj, Goa, Shillong, Bhubaneswar, Chandigarh, Hyderabad, Kolkata, and Nashik. 2 Building on this foundation, the current phase, started in 2024, extends to include Srinagar, Lucknow, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar (formerly Aurangabad), and Kozhikode, continuing the exploration of India's diverse cultural heritage.

The 'My City My Heritage' project caters to a wide user group, including but not limited to children with disabilities and from financially and socially marginalised backgrounds, culture enthusiasts, scholars, heritage professionals and tourists. The project aims at creating opportunities, building interest and capacity of young local scholars through collaborative research, documentation and mapping.

An equally important and compelling goal



## More abou the projec





to create

fresh avenues for residents, local administration and local businesses to re-engage with their cities' living cultural heritage and renew old as well as create new relationships of participation, community and ownership within these places. This booklet is a small step in that direction. More detailed versions of all pieces covered in this editorial and more information about each city can be found on our website. Scan the OR code to visit our portal and get access to our entire encyclopaedia.



### Phase 1

Ahmedabad, Goa, Indore, Prayagraj, Shillong



### Phase 2

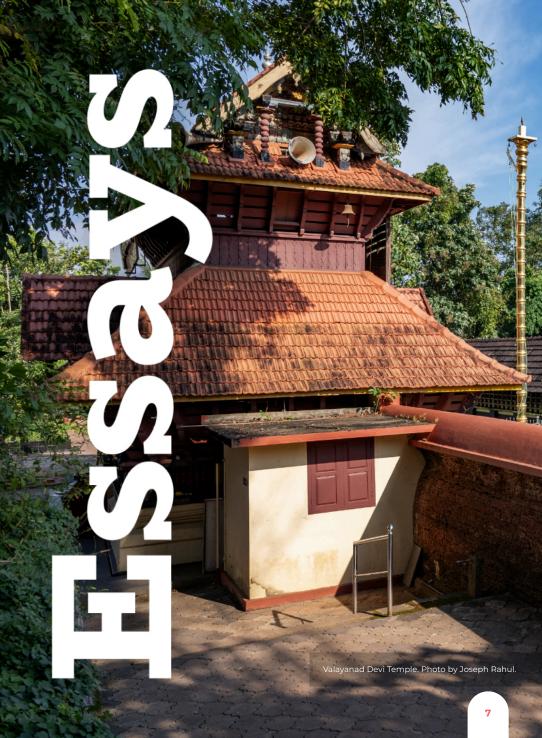
Chandigarh, Nashik, Hyderabad, Bhubaneswar, Kolkata



### Phase 3

Srinagar, Lucknow, Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, Kozhikode (more to come)

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### Introductory Note

Kozhikode, also known as Calicut, is the third largest city in Kerala. Its beginnings are rooted in trade and multiculturalism. Established by the Zamorins between the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries, monsoon winds brought merchants to this port city—placing it at the center of the famed spice trade, connecting East Africa, Arabia, the Indonesian islands and East Asia.

The discovery of a sea route around the southern tip of Africa paved the way for explorer Vasco da Gama's arrival on the shores of Kozhikode in 1498, marking the beginning of the Portuguese Crown's campaign to monopolize the Indian Ocean trade. In 1972, the British gained control of the region after defeating Mysore's forces, later making Kozhikode the capital of the British Malabar district. It was established as a Municipality in 1866, and became a City Corporation in 1962.

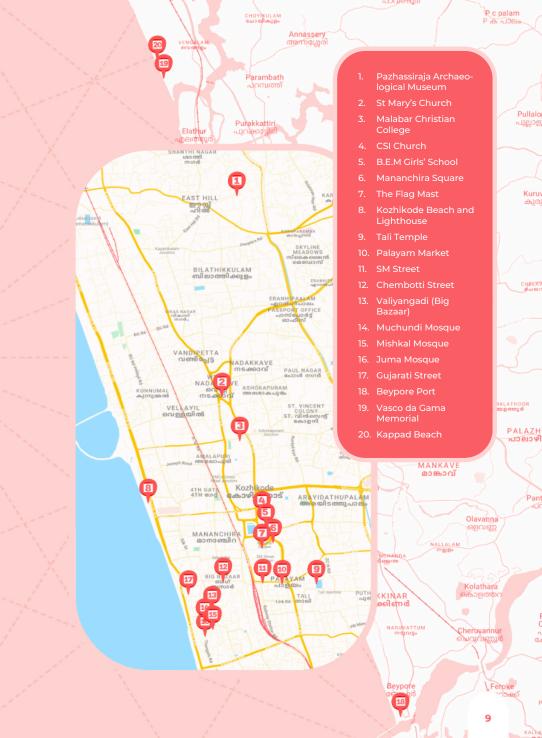
The first article At the Ocean's Crossroads chronicles this storied history of Kozhikode, while An Architectural Overview presents its built heritage and historic spaces. The city recently gained recognition as a UNESCO City of Literature. *Tracing Kozhikode's Literary Heritage* and *A Persisting Love for Stories* explore its literary legacy.

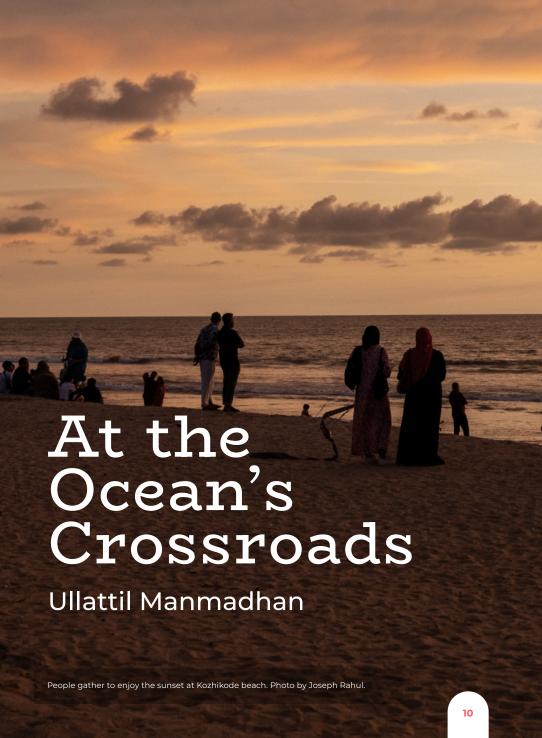
Nostalgia permeates The Era of Music Clubs and Cinema in the City, which reflect on music clubs, single-screen theaters and movie legends, now fading into memory. Performing Arts of the Region shifts the focus to traditional art forms that are still practised.

Kozhikode's passion for football and food takes center stage in *The Religion Called Football* and *A Culinary Mosaic*, respectively.

Finally, we return to the city's maritime past with *The Beypore Uru Prevails*, highlighting the 2000-year-old tradition of wooden shipbuilding which endures in Beypore's boatyards.

Much like the *uru*, each thread of Kozhikode's heritage traces back through centuries. The booklet seeks to weave together these stories, inviting you to discover the city across time.





The period between 1200 and 1600 CE saw the rush of traders and navigators to several ports at Malabar, situated on the southwestern coast of India, as the demand for spices, especially black pepper, grew manifold across the world. Sailing ships from various places crisscrossed the Arabian seas, replacing an age-old Arab trading network. After the decline of the ancient ports at Muziris, Qulion, an era of maritime trade and exploration was established with a new trading hub at Calicut.

The Zamorins (the anglicised name for the titular heads of the ruling dynasty) and their capital city of Calicut soon garnered fame from visitors and traders, both Eastern and Western. While it was indeed a city with some palaces, a suzerain as well as a cosmopolitan populace, after the entrenchment of the British at Malabar, these overlords faded away from the public mind, leaving nothing but a few Palmyra scrolls extolling them and their reign. Though Portuguese. Dutch and Arab travellers left behind their accounts of Calicut, the first local account surfaced around the seventeenth century—Keralolpathi. Often referenced but rarely considered factual, the Malayalam literary work interweaves lore and legends to recount the history of Cheranad (present-day central Kerala), beginning with the mythical Parasurama. followed by the Cheras and the Perumals, culminating in a record of the division of land among various chieftains by the last Perumal.

The story of that final division ends with the mention of the gifting of a

A map of the Zamorin's kingdom.

Photo courtesy: Archeological Survey of India,
Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

thicket of shrubs, near present-day Kozhikode (previously referred to by Arabs as Kalikut, later anglicised to Calicut), to two valiant youths from the erstwhile Nediyirippu family, who previously aided the Perumal in winning a war. Along with the land, he bestowed his sword as well, with the edict and permission to conquer more territory if they wished to.

### A Trading City is Built

The Nediyirippu family, from Eranad, was one of the significant political houses—ambitious and desiring to expand, they sought control over both a seaport and the Nila waterway (present-day Bharathapuzha) for growth. Around 1100 CE, the forces of the Eranad chief launched an offensive against Porlanad, ruled by the Porlathiris, located to the North of the



Kallai River. In addition to his armed forces, constituting men of the Nair community, the chief also gained the support of the trading Muslim community who had settled in the region. This alliance proved instru-mental in defeating local chieftains, allowing the Eranad chief to acquire the territories around what is now Calicut, gain access to Kallai and the interconnected river system for the transport of goods, and establish control over the Nila River and the port of Ponnani.

The exact date of Calicut's founding is not clear, but it likely came into being between the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries. By the fifteenth century, the Ernad chief came to rule over most of the area, between Kolathunad in the North and Tiruvadi (later Travancore state) in the South. After he established himself as the principal suzerain of the region, he adopted the title Swami Thirumalpad, which was further shortened to Samoothiripad or Samoothiri. This title was anglicised to Zamorin, over time.

The Zamorin developed Calicut as the commercial capital, dividing his time between Ponnani and Calicut. A shahabandar (port manager) oversaw the prosperous port. Calicut was developed using a concentric square plan, adhering to traditional Vastu Shastra principles. The city's core comprised the Big Bazaar or Palavam and the surrounding areas formed the early city, a layout akin to the ancient Chola capital Kaveripoompattinam (now Poompuhar). Foreign enclaves were situated southwest of the main fort, housing Arabs, Jews. Turks and Chinese traders, Calicut was home to a large merchant population of Arab origin, and their

descendants through marriages with the local communities, called Mappilas, aligned themselves with the Zamorin.

Political swings and the natural silting, which affected southern ports, led more traders to the new secure port (roadstead) of Calicut. This led to the establishment of an entrepôt, which served as the principal transshipment point for both far-Eastern goods as well as spices from the Fast.

Arab traders arriving in Calicut could procure a diverse range of commodities in one place—pepper and ginger from Malabar; beads, jewellery, cotton and linen from Tamilakam; spices like cloves from the East; cinnamon from Ceylon; silks and porcelain from China.

Calicut's trade links extended to China, Cambodia and Indonesia, with Chinese markets being a significant focus. Regular visits by large Chinese treasure ships were commonplace in the fifteenth century, as recorded by explorer Ibn Battuta. The Zamorin's thriving trade relationship was further solidified through the formal exchange of ambassadors between Calicut and the Ming Dynasty in China.

### The Portuguese Arrive

In Europe, profit margins were dropping, prompting merchants to consider bypassing the middlemen, in this case, the Arab traders. As Portuquese explorer Bartolomeu Dias

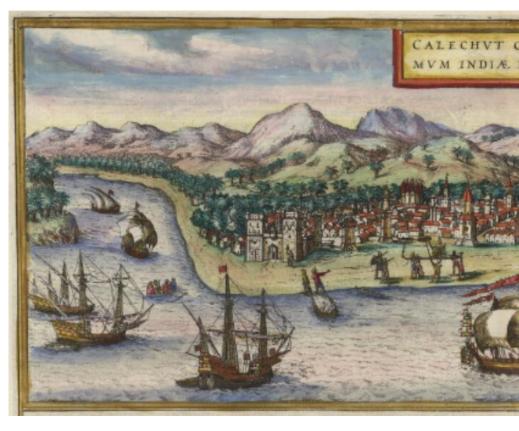


Vasco da Gama before the Samorim of Calicut, by Veloso Salgado, Sociedade de Geografia de Lisboa, 1898. Photo courtesy: Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

discovered and Pêro da Covilhã, a Portuguese traveller and spv. confirmed, there was a more direct sailing route to Calicut. Though difficult, this route involved circumnavigating the Southern tip of Africa and then doing a slingshot trip across the Indian Ocean, sailing the monsoon winds to reach Calicut. As the Portuguese king was contemplating this pioneering vovage, the trade dynamics in Calicut were changing, for the Arabs were finding it increasingly difficult to share trading space with the Chinese. The reasons for this tension remain. unclear-whatever the cause, it appears the Chinese traders and community were ousted from Calicut.

Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama, tasked with reaching Calicut and establishing contact with the Zamorin, arrived in May 1498 at Kappad before moving to the more secure roadstead of Panthalayini, near Calicut. Though da Gama went on to meet the Zamorin, he failed to secure a pepper monopoly and ended up alarming the Arab traders.

Following da Gama's return to Lisbon, the Portuguese Crown, planned more voyages with the intent of monopolising trade with Calicut. These expe-ditions resulted in unnecessary violence, including the bombardment of Calicut, the chance discovery of Brazil, and a complete estrangement between the Portuguese and the Zamorins. However, they managed to establish a good rapport with the enemies of the Zamorin—the Kola-thunad chief and the Cochin Raja, which resulted



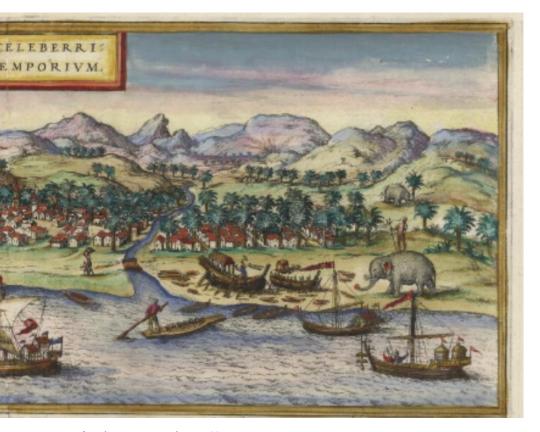
Calechut Celeberrimum Indiae Emporium: Cum Privilegio, Braun, Georg & Hogenberg, Frans & Braun, Georg, 1572. Photo courtesy: National Library of Australia.

in their building of forts and factories in Cochin and Cannanore (now Kannur) to acquire spices.

To counter this threat, the Zamorin decided to strengthen his naval resources by enlisting the Marakkar Muslims, a sailing community previously engaged in rice trading. The Marakkars had relocated closer to Calicut from Cochin due to conflicts with the Portuguese. With support from Arab and Ottoman allies, they helped build the Zamorin's naval forces. The Portuguese made another

attempt to attack Calicut in 1510, but their forces were forced to retreat.

Seeing that these wars were depleting their resources, the Portuguese finally decided to bypass Calicut and moved northwards to take over and settle in present-day Goa. Here, they established the Portuguese State in India, and used armed ships to blockade the seas, thus preventing Arab traders from shipping goods. The Marakkar fleet of small boats attacked Portuguese shipping from time to time and



remained a constant threat. However, around 1600 CE, discord between the Marakkars and the Zamorin resulted in a dramatic fallout that culminated in the capture and beheading of Kunjali Marakkar IV, the famed head of the Marakkar clan.

Following these events, the Portuguese built a new fort in Calicut, strengthening their position. However, this victory did not result in a stable alliance, and relations with the local communities remained tense and unstable.

### A Port in Decay, Shifting Trade and the Mysore Conquest

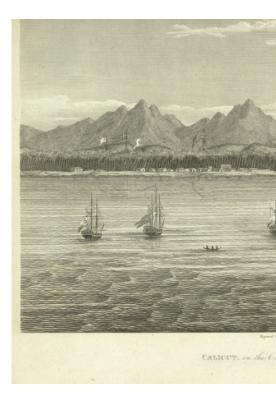
After the Portuguese, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) established a trading base in Cochin, with the help of the Cochin Raja, alongside larger factories in Ceylon and Indonesia. The Dutch and the Zamorin were at loggerheads, with the Dutch often supporting Cochin in their wars with the Zamorin. The Zamorin was getting alienated, and his position weakened due to declining trade, growing distrust with his one-time Arab allies, and a depleting treasury.

Around the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century, rising water levels submerged roughly 2-3 miles of the Calicut shoreline, especially parts of the city previously allocated to foreigners and trading communities. This and the sinking of the old Portuguese fort gave rise to questions about the port's viability, hastening the departure of alarmed traders to other ports to the North, as well as the Maldives and Malacca.

By the eighteenth century, a new dynasty of Zamorins was created by adoptions from Neeleswaram, due to the lack of male heirs through the maternal line. A Zamorin conquest in Palghat (now Palakkad) forced the Palghat Raja to request military support from a rising power—Hyder Ali of Mysore. Subsequently, in 1746, Hyder Ali, with his cavalry and superior artillery, saw an opportunity to subdue the Malabar armies and proceeded to confront the Zamorin's forces. Unable to match Mysore's might, the Zamorin offered to withdraw and pay a ransom. When this was not fulfilled, Hyder Ali attacked again in 1766. This time, faced with defeat, the Zamorin set his Calicut palace ablaze, choosing to perish in the flames. The older family members fled to Travancore. This fiery end marked the fall of their over 400-year rule in Calicut.

Following Hyder Ali's death, his son, Tipu Sultan, took over the reins. Tipu attempted to exploit the riches of Malabar, but his wars with Travancore and, later, the English resulted in his ultimate decline.

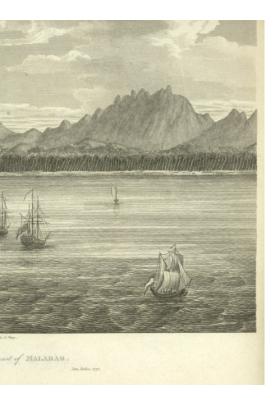
Calicut, on the coast of Malabar, 1813. Photo courtesy: James Forbes, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons



### **British Calicut**

In 1792, Tipu Sultan, though aided by the French, was defeated by the British and forced to cede his territories, including Malabar, to the British East India Company (EIC).

Malabar initially became part of the Bombay EIC territories before being transferred to the Madras Presidency. At this point, the exiled Zamorin families returned and resettled in Britishadministered Calicut, but with reduced status, receiving modest pensions and limited tax collection responsibilities. The British continued



to support the institution of a Zamorin, though only as a titular position.

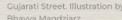
As time went by, Calicut became the district headquarters. The port became crucial for exporting teakwood, which floated down the river from Nilambur, to Britain for the manufacturing of British warships. Seeing opportunities beyond spices and timber, the British also developed tea and coffee estates in the hills. The city saw much advancement during this time. Roads were paved as waterways gave way to road transport. Administrative offices and courts sprang up, and trade was resurrected, as Parsis, Gujaratis, Jews and Mappilas took up

new business avenues, while the Nair community, hitherto used to fighting for a living, transitioned to overseeing agriculture.

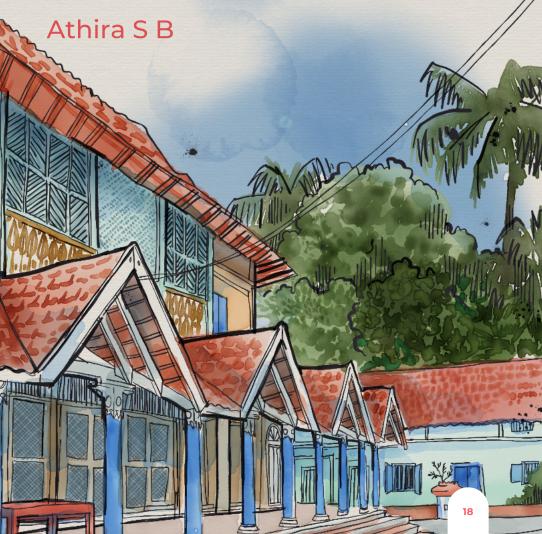
Several British administrators were assigned to the region to extract wealth from the forests, farms, fields and handlooms of the region. A railway line was laid to Malabar with its terminus at Beypore (later to Calicut). later extended further south, linking the region to the larger cities of India. The Mappila community remained restless and wary of the new administration that had taken over from the Mysore ruler, and a police force had to be set up to maintain control over them. A major incident exemplifying this conflict was the slaving of the Collector H.V. Conolly over his role in the exiling of Arab preacher Sayvid Fadhl.

### Calicut in the Early 20th Century

Over time, sailing ships gave way to large ocean-going steamers, and as the Cochin port was built, the fortunes of Calicut declined further. One can thus observe how a thicket of bushes developed into a great city of medieval times, becoming a cosmopolitan enclave, and how its fortunes ebbed and flowed, taking it to dizzying heights and down to what the British travellers in the nineteenth century recorded—a sleepy little town, a shadow of the great entrepôt it once was.







Persian, Arab, Chinese and European traders brought with them foreign influences that, in the long run, seeped into the sociocultural fabric of the Malabar region. This crosspollination of ideas and cultures is evident in the hybrid architectural styles that populate the city.

Kozhikode's warm and humid coastal climate necessitated the use of specific building materials. The laterite stone of the Malabar area, known for its porosity, provides excellent temperature regulation in buildings.

Durable local hardwoods, including teak and rosewood, are used for beams and furnishings. While copper sheets, the predominant roofing material, was susceptible to weather damage and began to leak, the Basel Mission's introduction of clay tiles marked a much-needed advancement. Until 1935, the roofs of all shops in Valiyangadi or Big Bazaar, a prominent centuries-old market in

the city, featured woven coconut or Palmyra-leaf thatched roofs, but replacing them with clay tiles provided effective shelter from monsoon rains while aiding in temperature control. Lime, extracted from limestone, is incorporated into mortar and plaster, enabling moisture regulation in the humid climate. Collectively, these materials have produced enduring structures.

### Religious Heritage

Kozhikode's religious structures—temples, mosques and churches—present a blend of traditional Kerala design and external influences.

The fourteenth-century Tali Shiva Temple is a prime example of traditional Kerala temple architecture. The temple features a two-storeyed *sreekovil* (sanctum sanctorum) designed in the shape of a chariot,



Tali Shiva Temple. Photo by Joseph Rahul.



Mishkal Mosque. Photo by Joseph Rahul.

adorned with brass murals and paintings depicting deities. The influence of local craftsmanship is evident in the carved wooden pillars and gabled roof. Laterite rocks and wood have been extensively employed, with brass decorations incorporated in specific sections. Within the temple, striking flagstaffs and lamp posts add to the grandeur. During the eighteenth century, the Zamorin rulers undertook significant restoration of the temple following the destruction from Tipu Sultan's invasion of Malabar, Valavanad Devi Temple, Thiruvannur Sree Mahadeva Temple and Azhakodi Devi Temple are other notable examples of traditional temple architecture.

The Mishkal Mosque in Kuttichira is an iconic structure in the Indo-Islamic architectural style, with a legacy spanning over 650 years. Built by Nakhuda Mishkal, an Arab trader, the mosque was originally a five-storeyed structure made of timber. Following

damage during a Portuguese invasion in 1510 CE, the mosque was reconstructed as a four-storeved building. Rather than featuring a dome and minarets in the traditional Islamic style, the building is characterised by multiple-tiered gables and the signature tiled roofing common in the region's architectural tradition. Its 47 doors and 24 carved columns showcase the craftsmanship of local artisans. The gopurams (semicircular arches with wooden carvings) further highlight this fusion of Hindu and Islamic architectural elements to form a new architectural idiom exclusive



Tali Temple pond.. Photo by Joseph Rahul.

to the region. Another example is the thirteenth-century Muchundi Mosque in Kuttichira, which features a double-tiered roof with floral woodwork and carved wooden pillars.

The churches in the city are notable examples of how European

missionaries adapted

local architectural
techniques to create
a distinctive style. The
Mother of God
Church, erected in
1513 by Portuguese
settlers, was
among the earliest
Roman Catholic
churches in
Kerala. The
Gothicinfluenced
design features

Mother of God Church. Photo by Joseph Rahul. lofty arches and an impressive façade, constructed with wire-cut clay bricks specially imported from Lisbon, which was chosen over local laterite by the builders, given the structure's 30metre height. The construction utilised local beach sand and lime for its plastering needs. The St. Marv's Church, established in 1949 for the Syrian Catholic population of the city, incorporates Western features like a prominent steeple and vibrant stained-glass windows. One of the largest churches in Malabar, the CSI Cathedral, built by the Basel Mission in 1842, combines European and Kerala architectural styles, with elements such as sloping tiled roofs, wooden ceilings and Gothic windows.

The Parsi fire temple in the city, situated off the bustling SM Street, is a religious structure with a history spanning over two centuries. The Parsi community, who migrated primarily from regions in Gujarat and Maharashtra for trade purposes,

established this sacred site in Calicut. The temple's design incorporates elements from both Persian and Zoroastrian architectural traditions. Kozhikode is also home to a Jain temple—the Shri Kalikund Tirth, situated on the Trikkovil Lane, is over 500 years old and features tiled flooring, painted interiors and carved porticos.

### Historic Neighbourhoods

The distinct settlement patterns of the Muslim community in Kuttichira. the Brahmin community in the Tali region and the Guiarati community near Valiyangadi reveal a confluence of cultural and architectural diversity within a compact 3-km radius. Kuttichira features Islamic architectural elements, with the Mishkal Mosque forming the heart of the community, and narrow streets surrounded by homes with inwardfacing courtvards. The area near Tali Temple has a traditional linear layout with rows of houses flanking a central street, where the temple serves as the focal point. Meanwhile, the Guiarati settlement near Kozhikode south beach showcases mercantile architecture, with large, ventilated houses and commercial spaces that blend the Surat and Vadodara styles with local Kerala influences.



Gujarati Street. Photo by Joseph Rahul.

### **Industrial Landmarks**

Kozhikode's industrial heritage played a crucial role in shaping the city's eco-

nomic significance. A few extant structures are at the centre of this legacy—such as the Comtrust Handloom Weaving Factory, founded in 1844 by the Basel Mission. Its architecture features sturdy brickwork and expansive

Commonwealth Tile Factory. Photo by



windows, maximising natural illumination for weaving activities. Another significant landmark is the Commonwealth Tile Factory, founded by German missionaries in 1905 in Feroke, which incorporated local clay into its production process. Its design, influenced by British industrial aes-

The historic warehouses known as pandika saala, situated near the Big Bazaar and Beach Road areas, stand as a testament to the city's history as a commercial centre. These warehouses are characterised by robust construction, with thick walls made of laterite or stone, lofty ceilings and



The now-defunct Comtrust Handloom Weaving Facility. Photo by Joseph Rahul.

thetics, included spacious open-floor plans and lofty ceilings to house sizable kilns and equipment.

The timber industry along the Kallai River was part of Kozhikode's long-standing trade ties with Arab and Western countries. The exceptional quality of Kallai's timber was such that it was even used in the construction of the Buckingham Palace. The timber mills, featuring typical sloped roofs and elevated platforms, were constructed to endure a damp coastal climate and facilitate the transportation of substantial logs along riverbanks. Durable local hardwoods such as teak were utilised in their construction.

sizeable wooden entryways to enhance air circulation and allow easy movement of goods, and often incorporated tiled or angled roofs. At present, some of these structures have been repurposed for contemporary commercial use.

Along the shoreline of Kozhikode stand a few crumbling piers that once served as crucial landing spots for ships, particularly during the colonial era.

The development of modern harbours with shifting trade routes rendered these structures obsolete, but they still stand as powerful symbols of



Kozhikode's maritime and trade heritage.

### **Educational Institutions**

Kozhikode is also home to numerous prestigious academic institutions. The Zamorin's Guruvayurappan College, established in 1877, originally served as a school before evolving into a college. Its structure features sloping tiled roofs and open courtyards. BEM Higher Secondary School, founded in 1848 by the Basel Evangelical Mission, ranks among Kozhikode's oldest educational institutions, displaying

colonial architectural elements with high ceilings and broad verandas. Founded in 1793, St. Joseph's Boys' Higher Secondary School in Kozhikode is recognised as the oldest educational establishment in Kerala. The building's construction incorporates typical Kerala architectural elements, St. Joseph's Anglo-Indian Girls Higher Secondary School, founded in 1862, showcases architecture from the colonial era. These institutions collectively demonstrate the integration of indigenous and colonial architectural styles that emerged in the period.

### **Public Nodes**

Public spaces form the vibrant core of Kozhikode's community life. Mananchira Square, located in the heart of the city, was originally a freshwater pond built in the fourteenth century by the Zamorin ruler Mana Vikrama as the primary water source for the royal household.

At present, the area surrounding the pond and its adjacent parks and





ground act as a space for community gatherings and activities.

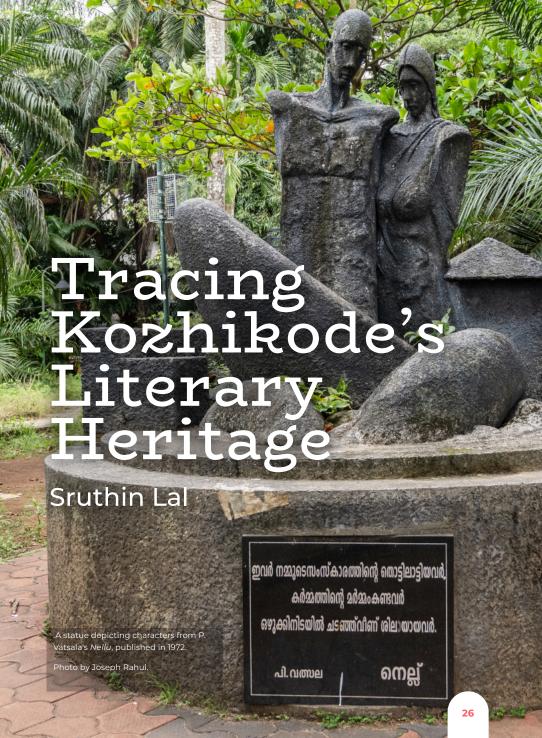
The Town Hall near Mananchira, built in 1891 to commemorate the anniversary of Queen Victoria's reign, has undergone numerous renovations over time. The building showcases classical colonial architectural design elements, including a symmetrical facade featuring lofty pillars, curved windows and an impressive entrance porch, while combining traditional architectural elements, such as angled tile roofing.

The Pazhassiraja Archaeological Museum at East Hill is housed in a 200-year-old building, designed in the regional architectural style, complete with a sloping roof and a *chuttu* veranda. This structure, formerly known as the Judge's Bungalow, has served multiple purposes through its existence. During the British colonial era, it operated as a courthouse, with

its ground floor serving as a prison. The building was transformed into an archaeological museum in 1976. Subsequently, in 1980, it was officially designated the Pazhassi Raja Archaeological Museum.

The city also boasts other architectural curiosities, including a lighthouse constructed in 1847 and the former Municipal Corporation office building, erected in 1934, built in the British colonial architectural style.

In recent years, Kozhikode has experienced rapid urbanisation, introducing high-rise buildings, modern shopping complexes and new infrastructure. While this has transformed parts of the city, Kozhikode has managed to preserve its architectural heritage by thoughtfully integrating the new.



Literary and scholarly traditions of Kozhikode can be traced back to the thirteenth century. Historical accounts reveal that when the Zamorin took control of the Tali Siva Temple from its Brahmin administrators, violent clashes resulted in the deaths of several Brahmins, Seeking atonement, the Zamorin consulted astrologers, who advised him to invite scholars from the various disciplines—such as Vyakarana (grammar), Meemamsa (ritual interpretation) and Vedanta (philosophy)—for annual intellectual debates. This gave birth to the Revathi Pattathanam festival—an annual seven-day scholarly event held during the Revathi asterism in the month of Thulam, falling between mid-October to mid-November. Scholars excelling in these debates were awarded the prestigious title of 'Bhatta' and significant monetary rewards through the Bhatta Danam tradition.

The title page of the first edition of Appu Nedungadi's *Kundalatha* (1887), O. Chandu Menon's *Indulekha* (1889), and Cheruvalath Chathu Nair's *Meenakshi* (1890).

Photo courtesy: Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons and Shiju Alex. Zamorin's court also evolved into a vibrant literary hub, notably featuring the Pathinettara Kavikal, a distinguished group of court poets. One of the Zamorins, a noted Sanskrit writer himself, is known to have composed the *Krishna Geethi*, a text that laid the foundation for Krishnanattam, a precursor to the famous dance-drama genre Kathakali. This fusion of intellectual and artistic pursuits established Calicut as a centre of cultural patronage during the Zamorin's reign.

The period's literary culture extended beyond Hindu scholars, with Muslim writers making significant contributions, composing works in Malayalam using Arabic script.

Among them was Khasi
Muhammed's devotional poem
Muhyidheen Mala from the early
1600s, praising the Sufi saint
Muhyidheen Abdul Khadir Al Gilani of
Baghdad, is considered one of the
earliest in the Mala genre, predating
even Thunjath Ezhuthachan's
Adhyatma Ramayanam, the
foundational text of modern

Malayalam literature. Another notable work by Khasi Muhammed,

Fath-ul Mubeen, an
Arabic poem dedicated
to the Zamorin, is one of
the earliest anti-colonial
writings in India,
addressing resistance to
Portuguese influence.
While most Islamic
writings were created on
paper, royal writings in
Sanskrit and Malayalam
were inscribed on palm
leaves and other





Residence of Vaikom Muhammad Basheer in Beypore. Photo by Joseph Rahul.

traditional materials. These writings on paper from the fifteenth century onwards, created with ink on sharpened bamboo pieces, remain preserved in the Mishkal Mosque.

Even as the Zamorin's political influence declined, their literary patronage continued. In 1912, the titular Zamorin Vidwan Ettan Thampuran, an accomplished scholar, extended support to literary figures such as Vallathol Narayana Menon, V.C. Balakrishna Panicker and Punnasseri Nambi Neelakanta Sharma

### Rise of Modern Malayalam Literature

Calicut's literary prominence persisted into the modern era, the region being the birthplace of the first three novels written in Malayalam. *Kundalatha*, written by Appu Nedungadi, was published in 1887 by Vidya Vilasam Press. The literary momentum continued with

Indulekha (1889) by O. Chandu Menon (widely regarded as Malayalam's first classic novel), followed by Cheruvalath Chathu Nair's Meenakshi (1890).

While the earliest Malayalam newspapers were printed elsewhere, Calicut, as the headquarters of the Malabar district of British India, became a hub for journalism, particularly during the resistance against colonial rule.

Kerala Patrika, founded in 1884, was the city's first newspaper, with celebrated writer Manikkoth Ramunni Nair, known by his pen name Sanjayan, as its chief editor. In 1923, the influential newspaper Mathrubhumi was established under the editorship of K.P. Kesava Menon, playing a pivotal role in the independence movement. This was followed by Al-Ameen, founded by Mohammed Abdur Rahiman, which

was banned by the British in 1939 due to its anti-colonial stance. In 1942, E.M.S. Namboodiripad, who later became Kerala's first chief minister, started *Deshabhimani* in Calicut, while *Chandrika*, which became the voice of Kerala's Muslim community, was also founded that year.

Over time, Calicut solidified its status as a major centre for journalism and publishing in Kerala, with many prominent newspapers such as *Siraj*, *Madhyamam*, *Varthamanam* and *Suprabhatam* headquartered in the city.

### Cultural and Literary Multiculturalism

Kozhikode's reputation for its warm hospitality drew people from diverse backgrounds, thus contributing to its spirited literary scene, which flourished in informal friendship circles that became key spaces for exchanging ideas and stories.

One iconic figure in this narrative of literary confluence is Vaikom Muhammad Basheer, who first came to Kozhikode to meet Al-Ameen's Abdur Rahiman during the independence movement. Drawn by the city's progressive spirit, Basheer eventually returned as an acclaimed writer, building a life and career in Kozhikode, supported by a network of friends

The statue of S.K. Pottekkatt at SM Street. Photo by Joseph Rahul. Similarly, M.T. Vasudevan Nair, a literary titan and Jnanpith awardwinning author, made Kozhikode his second home, finding inspiration in its people, stories and landscapes. He had initially arrived in the city for a job as a sub-editor in the *Mathrubhumi Weekly*, a periodical that played a crucial role in nurturing literary talent in Malayalam.

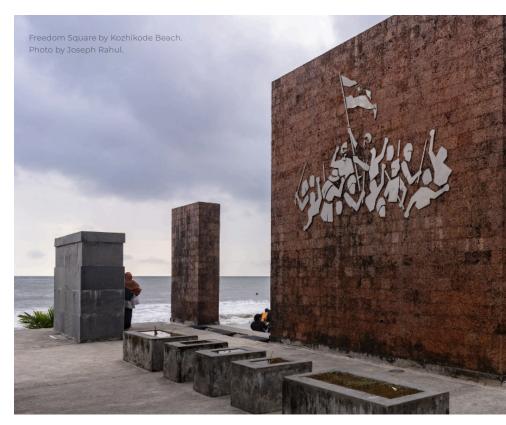
Another influential writer associated with Kozhikode is S.K. Pottekkatt, whose evocative storytelling immortalised the city in works like Oru Theruvinte Katha (The Story of a Street, 1960) and Oru Desathinte Katha (The Story of a Locale, 1971). His vivid depictions earned him the Jnanpith Award in 1980. The themes of Oru Theruvinte Katha, based on the bustling SM Street, are commemorated at its entrance with a statue of the author, connecting his literary legacy to the city's heart.

Since the 1960s, the verandas of houses in Kozhikode have served as vibrant spaces for literary discussions. These informal gatherings attracted poets, writers, thinkers and cultural figures who engaged in lively debates, shared new ideas and

provided feedback on each other's work—all while enjoying delicious Malabari snacks. Key figures in these gatherings included

M.G.S. Narayanan, Sukumar Azhikode, Uroob, N.N. Kakkad. Thikkodiyan and

N.P. Muhammad. This camaraderie among literary figures often led to collaborative creative works, exemplified by the novel *Arabipponnu* (1960), which explores the theme of gold smuggling from Arab

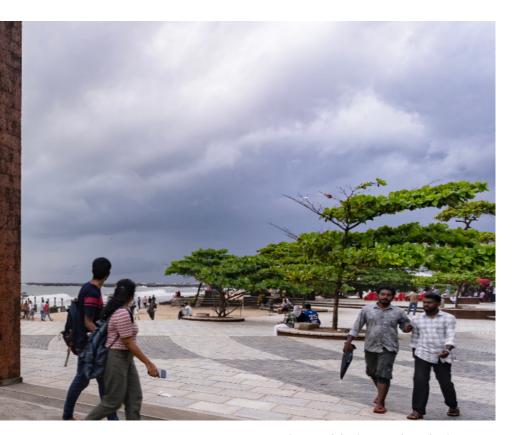


countries, particularly the Gulf states, to Malabar. The idea for the novel emerged during a casual conversation between M.T.

Vasudevan Nair and N.P. Muhammad, who were encouraged by their peers to co-author a book. M.V. Devan, a member of their circle, facilitated the process by arranging for a secluded house near Nilambur where they could write undisturbed, resulting in India's first co-authored novel of its kind

Kozhikode has been home to remarkable women who have left an

indelible mark on Malayalam literature. Among them, P. Valsala gained recognition for her novels Nellu (1972) and Nizhalurangunna Vazhikal (1975), which explore the complexities of rural life and social struggles. B.M. Suhara offered an intimate view of Muslim households with her work Kinaavum Mozhiyum (1970) that explored themes of tradition, change and identity. Khadeeja Mumtaz's groundbreaking novel Barsa (2007) offers profound insights into the lives of women in Muslim communities.



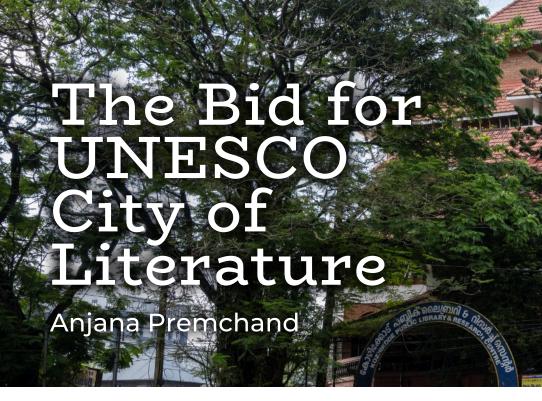
### Libraries and Cultural Centres

In Kuthiravattom village in Kozhikode, the local toddy shop once served as a gathering place for the common folk until the 1930s, often resulting in quarrels and clashes. To foster a more constructive community space, the Deshaposhini Vayanashala was established in 1937, significantly promoting readership among locals. It proudly became one of the first libraries in the city with its own dedicated building. While a library had existed in the city centre for several decades, it was revitalised by

the Municipal Committee in the 1920s.

Kozhikode's vibrant public venues—like Kozhikode Beach with Freedom Square, Manachira, SM Street, Kuttichira, Sarovaram Biopark and Lions Park—offer inviting spaces for cultural interaction and enjoyment.

Key locations such as KP Kesava Menon Hall, Town Hall and Tagore Centenary Hall further shape the literary and cultural landscape of the city.



Kozhikode has held many names in its long history—from the 'City of Spices', in recognition of its role as a major trade hub in medieval times, to the 'City of Truth', a nod to the transparency and openness of its people, and most recently, the 'City of Literature'.

In 2023, UNESCO announced the addition of the city to the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN). Kozhikode formally announced the inclusion on June 23, 2024—the date designated as the 'City of Literature Day'.

The journey to achieving this status began in October 2021 when Dr Ajith

Kaliyath, Urban Chair Professor at the Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA), discussed the possibility of Kozhikode submitting in the Literature category with Dr Beena Philip, the city's mayor. Known affectionately as 'Beena Teacher', she was formerly an educator, before starting her political career and becoming the 27th mayor of Kozhikode. When asked about her initial thoughts, Dr Philip recalls an immediate sense of conviction. 'I have a strong faith in the culture of my city and its people,' she explains. 'I was not born in Kozhikode. I came here at the age of 15 to continue my higher education. Since then, I have been a "Kozhikodan". When Dr Aiith told me about the UNESCO status, I actually



Kozhikode Public Library & Research Centre. Photo by Joseph Rahul.

thought of numerous reasons the city merited that position. In fact, my husband is a bibliophile and has a library with books on almost all the subjects under the sky—we used to also discuss the books we read.'

A steering committee was set up for the purpose of making and submitting the application. Dr Mohammed Firoz, head of the Department of Architecture and Planning at the National Institute of Technology Calicut (NIT-C), was one of the many stakeholders and individuals who joined the effort. Dr Firoz developed an academic framework that enabled his students to participate in the initiative as part

of their studio project, studying the city's engagement with literature through the lens of urban planning. The team worked from June to December 2022—they started with a literature review, followed by interviews and fieldwork to address gaps in documentation. The city's literary infrastructure was spatially mapped, and institutions and sites of interest were geo-tagged. The map revealed a significant insight for the UNESCO bid: Kozhikode has the highest library density in the country, distributed evenly across the city. The data was collected and analysed to prepare the submission for UNESCO. In June 2023, Dr Philip and two team members traveled to Delhi with one-



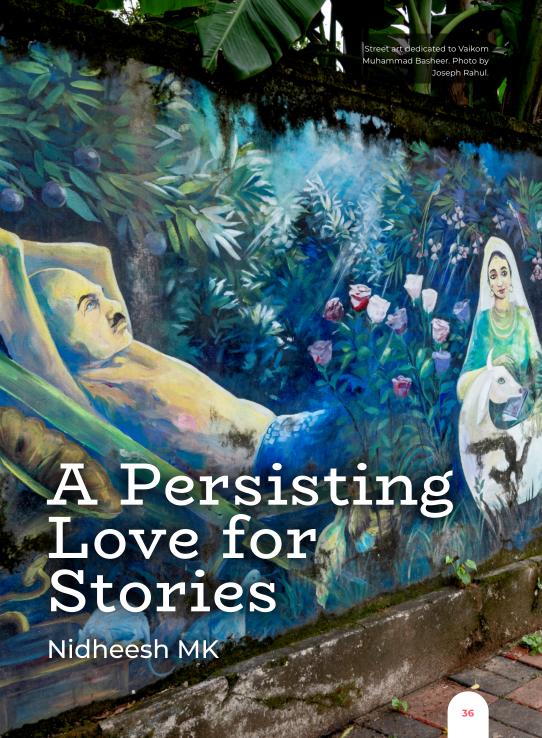
S.K. Pottekkatt Cultural Centre. Photo by Joseph Rahul.

way tickets, prepared to stay as long as necessary to complete the application process. After securing approvals from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture, the submission was finalised and submitted within five days.

The proposal contained noteworthy data—Kozhikode is home to over 500 libraries and 70 publishing houses. The libraries encompass various categories, including reading rooms. home libraries, municipal libraries, district-level and state-level institutions. Prominent examples such as the Sanmarga Darshini Library, S.K. Pottekkatt Library, State Public Library and Research Centre and Deshaposhini Public Library were highlighted. The central theme that emerged was that literature was part of everyday life in the city. This cultural fabric is revealed in citizenled initiatives like SecondPen. an imprint publishing short stories written by doctors and medical professionals. The presence of a Gender Library at the Gender Park Campus and the Abussabah Library with its collection of books in Braille were examples that Kozhikode was in the right direction when it came to having an inclusive literary landscape. Additionally, local groups often organise events and exhibitions open to all. This engagement is in context with an overall involvement with art traditions such as music, theater and performing arts in the city.

The presentation traced the region's literary heritage over nearly ten centuries and highlighted a comprehensive list of distinguished figures, ranging from renowned novelists to art critics and screenwriters. It also identified institutions that have played a pivotal role in cultural development.

A long-term Action Plan was developed to build on Kozhikode's centuries-long literary legacy, currently under implementation. Dr Philip is hopeful and believes in democratising the new status and ensuring the title benefits the community: 'Our role includes connecting the initiatives in different fields with the City of Literature concept. It is the people's interest and engagement that makes this a City of Literature. Kozhikode will uphold the title.'



The Vagbhatananda Library occupies a cramped, old and unassuming space, approximately the size of a one-car garage. Located 90 kilometers inland from the coast of Kozhikode, the library's exterior offers little indication of the treasures within. Albert Camus's books are placed on a dusty shelf, his existential reflections sharing space with the revolutionary rhetorical writings of Simón Bolívar. One finds JD Bernal's volumes about science and society alongside works by Fidel Castro. Arundhati Roy and Gandhi, as if in a spirited debate. Above them all, Karl Marx's volumes stand sentinel. It is spaces such as these that embody Kozhikode's recently earned UNESCO City of Literature tag, revealing its quiet devotion to words, books and the stories they tell.

# **Beyond Words**

In post-Independence Kozhikode. literature transcended the confines of bookshelves and libraries, permeating the streets, cafés and bars, All India Radio's arrival in 1950 provided a platform for writers like Uroob, P. Bhaskaran and Akkitham, A chain of libraries sprang up, doubling as spaces for music, sports and exchange of ideas. The Deshaposhini Public Library, for instance, went beyond lending books—hosting clubs, debates and theatrical performances. It was a creative hotbed, from whose small halls emerged talents such as Kuthiravattom Pappu, a legend of Malayalam cinema. Thus, these libraries and other public spaces became the beating heart of a city discovering itself. Before long, the city became synonymous with giants of literature, theater and cinema.

Playwright K.T. Muhammad dreamed up his dramas in Puthivangadi. S.K. Pottekkatt, the celebrated travel writer, divided his time between penning bestselling books set in Kozhikode and exploring remote villages in Kenya and Uganda. Key locations—Pottekkatt's office in Puthivara, the Current Books showroom in Mavoor Road, the Mathrubhumi newspaper office in K.P. Kesava Menon road, the Deshabhimani newspaper office in Convent Road—became popular meeting points for the intellectuals. the regulars including Pottekkatt, Uroob and M.T. Vasudevan Nair.

Meanwhile, Kozhikode's bar hotels—ranging from the iconic seaside Beach Hotel to the stylish Maharani Hotel and the cozy Alakapuri—served as unofficial salons for writers and thinkers. On the other hand, the city's beach, although shunned by families for being unsuitable, held a special allure for thinkers and writers. Vaikom Muhammad Basheer, known as the 'Sultan of Beypore', frequented the place, sometimes with a song, sometimes with a story.

One particularly significant event occurred in 1956, when Kozhikode erupted in celebration following the unification of Kerala.
According to legend, in a rally led by writers on this occasion, K.P. Kesava Menon, N.V. Krishna Warrier and Kuttikrishna Marar—the most senior and esteemed among the group—danced through Mittai Theruvu, the city's bustling market street.

In the years that followed, the city



Mural depicting characters from S.K. Pottekkatt's *Oru Theruvinte Katha* (The Story of a Street), published in 1960. Photo by Joseph Rahul.

became a muse for countless works. M.T. Vasudevan Nair, for instance. captured its essence in novels like Naalukettu, weaving stories of familial conflict and tradition. Punathil Kunjabdulla's epic Smarakashilakal brought a different texture to the region's literary landscape, while K.T. Muhammad continued to inspire the youth with his rehearsals, which drew crowds from across the state. Thikkodiyan's humour and warmth immortalised Kozhikode's quirks and spirit. Kozhikode's nights, too, had a distinct rhythm. In Kuttichira, the hospitality extended to art and artists stretched late into the night. Musician Baburaj's harmonium filled the air with melodies steeped in longing,

providing the soundtrack to a city that did not sleep.

In later years, writers such as P.M. Tai recalled the vibrant gatherings at the office of *Psycho* magazine by Kozhikode Beach, led by Chelavoor Venu, a film and literature fanatic. Venu not only fostered artistic circles but also played a pivotal role in the city's film society movement. He, along with auteurs such as Adoor Gopalakrishnan, brought Kerala's first international film festival to Kozhikode's Tagore Theatre. The ticketed event, inaugurated by luminaries of the time, sparked a movement that would later evolve into the prestigious International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK) in

Thiruvananthapuram. The film society movement spread across the city in subsequent years, with notable institutions—from colleges to private clubs such as the Bankmen's Club—hosting film clubs. Many titans of Malayalam cinema spent significant time in Kozhikode, often favouring it over their hometowns. Coincidentally, industry greats such as Padmarajan, John Abraham and Narendra Prasad spent their final years in this city.

# **A City of Collectors**

In Chevayur, Dr S. Nagesh, a retired English professor, when designing the house in 1998, believed the upper floor would be enough to house all the books he had collected over the decades. However, 30,000 volumes later, books overflowed into the bedroom, lounge and kitchen, turning his house into a sanctuary for literature.

Kozhikode is home to many such collectors—eccentric, obsessive and utterly devoted.

At Souparnika, the residence of Dr Mithun Siddharthan, a psychiatrist in Kuttikkattoor, books occupy every room. Similarly, Dr E. Sreejith, the Head of the History Department at Government College, has a remarkable home library filled with rare and irreplaceable books. His collection includes early Malayalam textbooks such as Gundert's Pāthārambham (1845) and Pāthamāla (1860), Kaanā Ramanezhuthachan's temple mathematics text (1857), and Bījaganitam (1862). It also features Vidya Sangraham (1864–66), edited by Richard Collins, and Kerala Varma's Thiruvithamkur Pāthāvalis (1867–

1890). Other treasures include works by Frone Meyer, *Pāchumūthathu*, and dictionaries by Bailey and Peet. The library also houses Kalidasa's rare printed editions, making it a unique repository of Malayalam's literary and scientific heritage.

# The City of Literature and Unfinished Stories

Today, Kozhikode hosts around half a dozen major literary festivals, including the Kerala Literature Festival (KLF), organised by DC Books, which is recognised as one of Asia's largest literature festivals, attracting over half a million attendees.

This is the kind of numbers and stature that earned Kozhikode the UNESCO City of Literature designation. A year after receiving the recognition, however, libraries remain the domain

of the elderly, many strugaling to attract younger members. Private groups continue their literary activities with shoestring budgets. While some publishers. like the religious presses, continue to thrive, othersespecially small, independent ones—have disappeared entirely.

Yet, the city's bookshelves tell a

The statue of Statue of K.T. Muhammad. Photo by Joseph Rahul.



different story. There has been a boom in sales—though not necessarily of the kind one might expect. On one end is the success story of Ram C/O Anandhi by Akhil P. Dharmajan—a romantic, coming-ofage novel that became a sensation on social media, with reels and memes propelling it to one million sales. The book, a story of youth and love, has captured readers across all ages and social divides.

On the other end of the spectrum is the popularity of a six-volume collector's edition of Sahityavaraphalam, a series of literary columns by the late M. Krishnan Nair, priced at ₹7,500, proving that nostalgia sells.

These were the columns that introduced an entire generation to world literature—authors such as Marquez, Kafka and Hemingway. The

contrast is striking. A young writer's record-breaking debut novel and a posthumous collection of a literary critic's musings on global literature. Both are thriving, yet they exist in a literary ecosystem that still appears fractured. In the middle are the established voices: Subhash Chandran, S. Hareesh, K.R. Meera, Bennyamin and others.

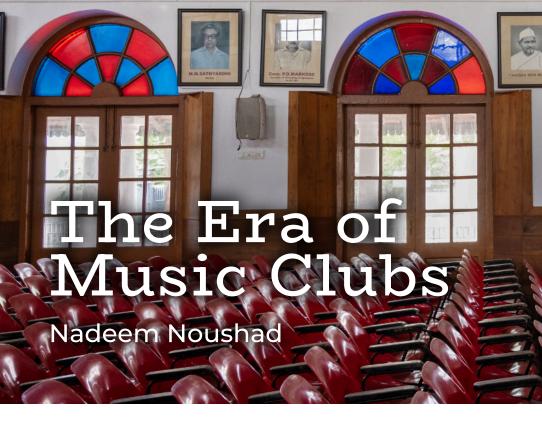
Clearly, books are being written, sold and read. However, there is a silence surrounding these activities—the lack of fanfare or celebration. Kozhikode wears its City of Literature designation quietly. Yet, in places such as the Vagbhatananda Library, the essence of the city remains unchanged. The world outside may have shifted—quieter streets, fewer gatherings and a different rhythm—but within these walls, the love for stories and the reverence for words endure. Some things, fortunately, never fade.







People reading newspapers at the Kozhikode Public Library & Research Centre. Photo by Joseph Rahul.



Kozhikode once thrived with a vibrant community of music enthusiasts who appreciated a wide range of genres—from Hindustani classical to theatrical compositions. Music clubs became popular in the city as early as the 1920s. They operated in the evenings, hosting music and drama performances on the vacant upper floors in commercial buildings, while the shops functioned downstairs.

The clubs flourished in the southern areas of the city, such as Kuttichira, Parappil, Kundungal, Thekkumthala, Idiyangara and Halwa Bazaar, which served as cultural hubs.

The main commercial centres like SM

Street, Silk Street and Big Bazaar typically concluded trade activities by 2 pm, providing those interested in music plenty of time to gather and enjoy concerts and musical events.

While the rest of Kerala had yet to discover such events, Kozhikode already had a thriving concert scene.

The most popular among the music clubs was the Brothers Music Club, founded by Constable Kunju Mohammad and dramatist K.T. Mohammad. Others included Salt Muhammed Koya's Everest Music Club, Postman Syed Bhai's Evening Club, Chembukandi Hassan Bhai's Hindustan Club and Archie Hutton's



Inside the Town Hall. Photo by Joseph Rahul.

Hutton's Orchestra. Brothers Music Club and Hutton's Orchestra engaged in friendly competitions, called Music Evening, held at the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). As the two clubs contested against each other, fans were left in a quandary, having to choose between their favourite musical groups. The clubs also held grand annual concerts at the Town Hall.

Prominent figures who emerged through the clubs included M.S. Baburaj, noted music director of the Malayalam film industry in the

1950s and 1960s; Kozhikode Abdul Khader, a playback singer of 1950s; and Mappilapattu (a Muslim folk song genre) singers Nallalam Beeran and S.M. Koya.

Each club was equipped with small

stages and instruments such as the tabla and harmonium, with the sitar, sarangi and dilrupa brought in by musicians who



Tabla. Illustration by Bhavya Magdziarz.

came from outside Kerala. Popular musicians included *tabla* players such as Abu Ustad, Bichamu, Lawrence and Usman; violinist Nohan; and harmonium players Vincent Master and S.M. Koya.



Abdul Khader. Photo courtesy: Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

These clubs invited not only local singers but also singers from North India, whose concerts or mehfils drew large crowds. Wealthy merchants. driven by their love for music, often sponsored singers from outside the state. Shvamii Sunderlal, an eminent businessman, was renowned for his musical patronage. He regularly invited singers from the clubs for concerts at his residence. These gatherings were held under the light from Petromax lamps and featured local delicacies such as Sulaimani and Kochikova dessert (a sweet made from rice flakes, coconut and jaggery). The warm hospitality offered to visiting musicians and singers by the local community even led some of these artists to settle in Kozhikode, contributing to the growth of the mehfil culture.

The audience at these mehfils included people from all walks of life, with social distinctions fading in their shared appreciation of music. The night concerts, dubbed the 'darbar' of the common people, were characterised by the reverberating sounds of the harmonium and tabla, accompanied by the beedi smoke-filled air.

Singers dedicated themselves to the song while their admirers sat on the grass mat holding the rhythm on their lap. Exceptional performances often brought on passionate responses from the audience, with gifted singers even receiving gilt necklaces as a token of appreciation. The women's parts in duets were usually sung by men, as women did not participate in stage performances.

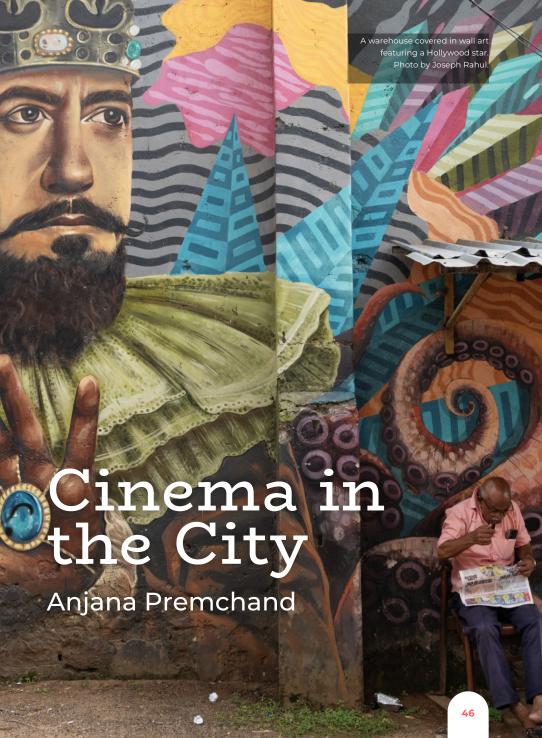
The 1980s marked the beginning of the decline of music clubs. The influx of immigrants and the widespread availability of tape recordings transformed music enjoyment into a more personal experience. As a result, many club spaces were repurposed into carrom clubs and tuition centres. Only a few institutions remain, such as Ghazal Dhara, the Usman Memorial Art Center, and the Kozhikode Abdul Kadar Foundation, Ghazal Dhara, was established in 1984 by a group of music enthusiasts, including Naimal Babu, Latif Sterling, Cowboy Siddique and others, with the objective of reviving the traditional mehfil culture. The Usman Memorial Art Center was founded in the 1990s to honour the legacy of tabalist Usman and to revive interest in the percussion traditions of the past.

However, both Ghazal Dhara and the Usman Memorial Art Center struggled, with their activities nearly ceasing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the four decades since the decline of Kozhikode's music clubs, the landscape of engagement with music has changed dramatically, with vast music collections made available online, allowing on-demand listening as opposed to live performances of the past. The intimate concerts of yesteryears have been replaced by elaborate stages, widening the gap between the artist and the audience.

Today's singers have a largerthan-life persona, far removed from the average person, who fondly remember days they could share tea and conversation with singers in close, personal settings.

While the vibrant music club culture of Kozhikode has faded over time, its memory continues to resonate in the hearts of devoted fans.



Silent motion pictures were introduced to India in 1896 by the Lumière brothers, ushering in a new cultural age. Calicut experienced its first cinematic event a decade later, in 1906, with a screening of moving images in a temporary tent at Muthalakkulam Ground. The show was organised by Swamikannu Vincent, a pioneering exhibitor from Tamil Nadu, who traveled with his equipment, showcasing silent films in makeshift venues. These touring exhibitions captivated audiences in the following decades, eventually leading to the establishment of permanent cinema halls, or 'talkies'. and distribution centers in the Malabar region.

#### The Era of Single-Screen Theatres

During British rule, Calicut saw the establishment of its first single-screen theatres, three of which remain active today.

Among them is the iconic Radha Theatre, established in 1938, still drawing audiences to its location on SM Street. Another landmark. Coronation Theatre. named in honour of the crowning of Queen Elizabeth II, underwent renovation and reopened as a multiplex in 2023. Crown Theatre, situated in Mananchira, was the first to introduce a 70-mm screen and a Dolby sound system, setting a new standard.

A Westrex 70-mm projector on display at the entrance of Crown Theatre. Photo by Joseph Rahul.

At the time, it was also the only theatre in the city screening English films, including Hollywood classics.

A long-time resident reminisces about the 1970s: 'Crown especially attracted affluent families and college students. Before air conditioning, their doors remained open during evening shows, and you could hear the sound of passing trains. As a sports enthusiast, I also enjoyed highlights of cricket test matches screened before movies.' Although Crown turned into a multiplex in 2012, its history is preserved through the display of an old Westrex 70-mm projector at its entrance. A plaque next to it reads: 'From a modest 35 mm to the Cinemascope to 70 mm. I have evolved to

give the ardent moviegoer many experiences and memories to cherish...'

As cinema gained



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theatres emerged. Davison Theatre, for instance, was established by the same company that opened Kerala's first theatre in Thrissur. The 1970s saw the advent of Apsara and Sangam theatres, inaugurated with much fanfare—Apsara by actors Prem Nazir and Urvashi Sharadha, and Sangam by Maruthur Gopalan Ramachandran (famously known as M.G.R). Both theatres introduced air conditioning, a novelty at the time.

Beyond technology and comfort, theatres hoped to draw in crowds through unique experiences. Sangam, for example, was promoted as the only theatre in the South with an intricately designed Plaster of Paris ceiling and walls. Other notable single-screen theatres of the era included Pushpa and Geeta. Apsara reopened in 2024 as 'Magic Frames Apsara' a year after its closure. However, very few single-screen theatres have survived, with modern multiplexes dominating Kozhikode's landscape today.

#### Filmmakers From Kozhikode

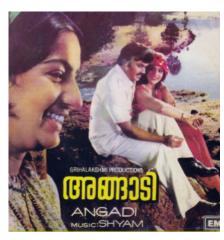
Kozhikode's artists and filmmakers have made notable contributions to the Malayalam film industry. Aloysius Vincent, director and cinematographer, had a prolific career spanning over four decades. For instance, his directorial debut Bhargavi Nilayam (1964) became a landmark in the horror genre, with the screenplay penned by the legendary Vaikom Muhammad Basheer. The film brought together Kozhikode-based talents: composer M.S. Baburaj, lyricist P. Bhaskaran and actor Kuthiravattam Pappu.

Like Pappu, several theatre actors

from Kozhikode went on to become cinema stalwarts, acting in hundreds of films. Kunjandi, Nellikode Bhaskaran, Shantha Devi, K.P. Ummer, Balan K. Nair and Mamukkoya became household names, each leaving an indelible mark on Malayalam cinema.

Among the filmmakers who shaped the industry, Irruppam Veedu Sasidaran, better known as I.V. Sasi, was a defining figure from the 1970s to the 1990s. Starting out as an art director, Sasi transitioned to filmmaking with his directorial debut *Utsavam* (1975). His signature style blurred the lines between commercial and artistic cinema. While in the city, he occupied room 106 in Hotel Maharani, which became famous as the site where many of his films took shape.

Sasi's movies would steer the careers of the biggest stars in the industry—he was the first to direct Mammootty as a lead actor in the film *Thrishna* (1981) and notably directed



The CD cover of the film *Angadi*. Photo courtesy: Public domain, via pbs.twimg.com.



Radha Theatre in SM Street. Photo by Joseph Rahul.

Devaasuram (1993), one of Mohanlal's career highlights. While he worked consistently with Malayalam's leading actors, he also directed the likes of Kamal Haasan, Rajnikanth and Rajesh Khanna.

Kozhikode's literary icon M.T. Vasudevan Nair worked with Sasi on numerous films. Celebrated screenwriter and fellow Kozhikodan, T. Damodaran, also played a crucial role in the success of Sasi's films. Together, they delivered hits such as Angadi (1980), set in Kozhikode's Valiyangadi market and produced by the city-based Grihalakshmi Productions, founded by P.V. Gangadharan in 1977.

### For the Love of Cinema

For Kozhikode's cinephiles, movie theatres were only one of many ways to indulge their love for cinema—the city offered other opportunities to engage with films.

Deedi Damodaran, a filmmaker and one of the founding members of the Women in Cinema Collective (WCC), began her journey in cinema as a school student, assisting her father, T. Damodaran, as a scribe. She takes pride in watching films on their release days and has meticulously collected the tickets for each movie. She was part of the film society movement:

In those days, we didn't have access to international films or classics except through film societies. We had the Ashwini Film Societu. we had Odessa...Even before these societies came to be. my father used to take his students to nearby talkies to watch films. He was also a football commentator, and since films didn't have subtitles back then, he would do live translations. announcing the dialogues from behind the screen."

The Ashwini Film Society, founded in 1967 by film journalist Chelavoor Venu and a group of professors and enthusiasts, was one of the city's pioneering film clubs. Their first screening was the Bengali classic Pather Panchali. Activist and filmmaker Odessa Sathyan earned his nickname through his association with the Odessa Collective, an initiative that aimed to engage with the community through cinema. Such societies played a pivotal role in fostering a rich film culture.

In the 1980s and 1990s, video cassette libraries became a haven for cinema enthusiasts. 'The library near my house only had Hindi, Tamil and Malayalam films,' Damodaran recalls. 'However, there were two libraries in the city that rented international films, especially Hollywood movies. Renting a cassette cost



around INR 10 per day, and you had to pay for every extra day.' Popular rentals of the time included Cheers Video Parlous, Four Seasons, Bismi and Masters, among others.

In December 1994, Kozhikode hosted the first International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK), commemorating the 100th anniversary of cinema with 100 screenings. Since then, the IFFK has been held annually in Thiruvananthapuram. While film festivals are occasionally organised today, Kozhikode has gained more recognition for the Kerala Literature Festival (KLF). Even so, the city's cinephiles remain active, finding newer ways to keep the love of cinema alive—whether through its theatres, discussion forums or emerging collectives that carry the

legacy of the past.



Kalaripayattu warriors practising on the beach.
Photo courtesy: Public domain, via Wikimedia



Devakumar Thenchery



Kalamezhuth Paatt at the Balussery Kotta temple. Photo by Devakumar Thenchery.

In the Kerala context, the Department of Cultural Affairs categorises performing arts into five groups: classical art forms, ritual arts, folk arts, tribal arts and martial arts. While forms like Oppana, Margamkali, Thiruvathirakkali, Kathakali, Ottanthullal and Kolkkali are practised statewide, this article explores Malabar's distinct art forms, particularly those accessible to the public in and around Kozhikode.

# Irattappanthi Melam

Melam, or Chenda Melam, is a traditional art form performed using the percussion instrument *chenda*, wind instruments *kombu* and *kurumkuzhal* and *ilathalam* (cymbal). Typically, the Melam showcases a single group of artists performing continuously, however, the Irattappanthi Melam is unique in that it involves two sets of artists. This performance is most prevalent in Pisharikavu, Koyilandy, about 25 kilometers north of Kozhikode. On

Valiyavilakku, the seventh day of the annual Kaliyattam festival, Irattappanthi Melam commences at midnight. This performance draws thousands of spectators from across the district and beyond.

#### Kalamezhuth Paatt of Vettakkorumakan

Among the over 300 varieties of Kalamezhuth (ritual art of making powder drawings on the floor) identified, those dedicated to Lord Vettakkorumakan are prominent in the old Kurumbranad kingdom. which falls in the present-day Kozhikode district. Mythology recounts how Lord Vettakkorumakan aided the Kurumbranad king against his enemies, and was accorded the status of the kingdom's protective deity. The Kalamezhuth Paatt performance is believed to have originated from the Balussery Kotta temple. The annual festival at this temple falls in the second week of January and the day-long ritual art

integrates various performances. Three-dimensional deity representations are created on the floor using five natural powders while singing out loud. While the floor drawing progresses, the komaram, or the oracle, embodies the deity and performs ritualistic dances, and the marar, or the drummer, performs a chenda concert before the temple. After completing the drawing, the deity proceeds outside for the Mullakkal Paatt ritual, returning on an elephant amid vibrant Melam performances.

# Shasthrangam Kali

Formerly performed by Kerala's Brahmin community during weddings and birthdays, Shasthrangam Kali survives today primarily at Balussery Kotta temple's annual Kalamezhuth Paatt festival. During the procession at night, the King of Kurumbranad leads in honour of Lord Vettakkorumakan, followed by four trained Namboodiri Brahmins bearing swords and shields. Their

attire, reminiscent of Kalaripayattu masters, includes red skirts, necklaces, anklets, bangles and small turbans. Subsequently after a Melam performance, these artists demonstrate martial arts skills synchronised with traditional instruments. Though this is not a ritualistic dance performance, the same team performs a ritual called Nalu Padam at the end of the ceremony.

### **Padappaatt**

Padappadtt means war song. This is also performed as part of Vettakkorumakan's Kalamezhuth Paatt. There are ballads or thottams that recount the birth and adventures of Vettakkorumakan, the hunter god. One thottam even evolved from the war between the Zamorins and the Portuguese armada. Artists typically sit on the side of the kalam (a powder drawing on the floor). The main Kurup performs the Thottam-Padappaat, playing the nanthuni, a small string instrument. Other artists like the

Thottam at the Balussery Kotta temple. Photo by Devakumar Thenchery.





Duff Muttu performance at the National Folk Festival 2012, held at Naduvil High School in Kannur district. Photo courtesy: Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

marar or drummers also support the main artist by prodding him with questions in between. Today, the art form is on the verge of extinction.

#### Rudhira Kolam

According to mythology, Kali, the fierce form of Devi. was birthed by Lord Shiva from his third eye to kill the demon king Darika. The fight between Kali and Darika is the theme of many ritual arts in Kerala. Rudhira Kolam, which dramatises this episode, is performed in some of the Bhadrakali temples and Brahmin houses of Kozhikode district. This midnight performance requires daylong preparations and associated rituals. Darika's attire consists of long hair, a mustache, a beard and small headgear. Kali is black-faced, the upper body covered in black cloth, with pleats of white cloth placed over the lower body, and adorned with a small headpiece. Their symbolic battle unfolds against maram and chengila instrumental accompaniment, with

facial expressions and movements enhanced by traditional lighting.

#### Erokkali

Malabar's prominent ritual arts include Theyyam and Thira, with the latter primarily practised in Kozhikode district. Similar to Kalamezhuth Paatt, Thira also incorporates a series of subrituals. While Vellaatt, Anchadi, Guruthi and Thirayattam are highly ritualistic, events such as Erokkali primarily serve to interact with the audience and are meant for entertainment.

### Ayyappan Vilakku

This distinctive form of Ayyappa worship in Kozhikode district (similar to Desavilakku in Thrissur and Palakkad) combines religious rituals with performing arts. The stem of a plantain tree and tender coconut leaves are used to create beautiful miniatures of the Sabarimala and Malikappuram temples and the

mosque of Vavar, and is followed by the symbolic installation of the deity in the temple. The late evening procession features a Chenda Melam performance, with devotees carrying rice and lamps to welcome the deity, and oracles holding swords, symbolising Lord Ayyappa and Vavar, Ayyappa's friends. After the procession, the oracles circumambulate the temple, synchronised to the music of the chenda.

#### **Duff Muttu**

Duff Muttu is an art form popular among the Muslim community of Malabar, especially in Kozhikode. It is performed as a part of festivals and special occasions in connection with mosques, or to welcome dignitaries. A duff is a small percussion instrument made up of a small wooden rim. covered with ox skin on one side. The main artist leads religious recitations while others provide accompaniment, creating distinctive synchronised movements and rhythms. Arabana Muttu is a similar art form that is also popular in Malabar's Muslim community.

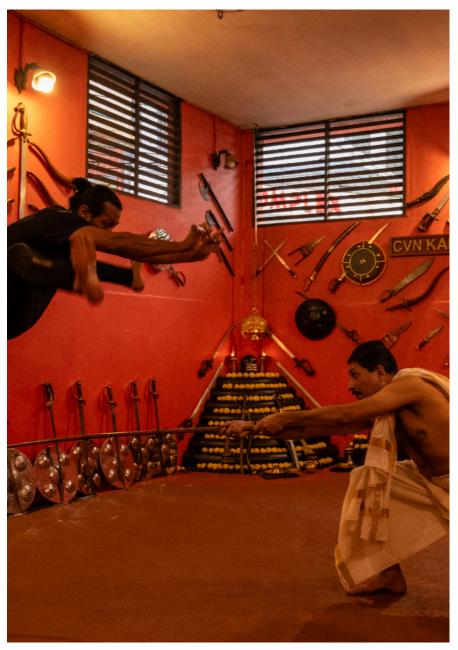
# Kalaripayattu

Kerala's regional art forms have been heavily influenced by its martial arts legacy—Kalaripayattu. Beyond its military applications in principalities' defense, Kalaripayattu evolved into a performing art for the entertainment

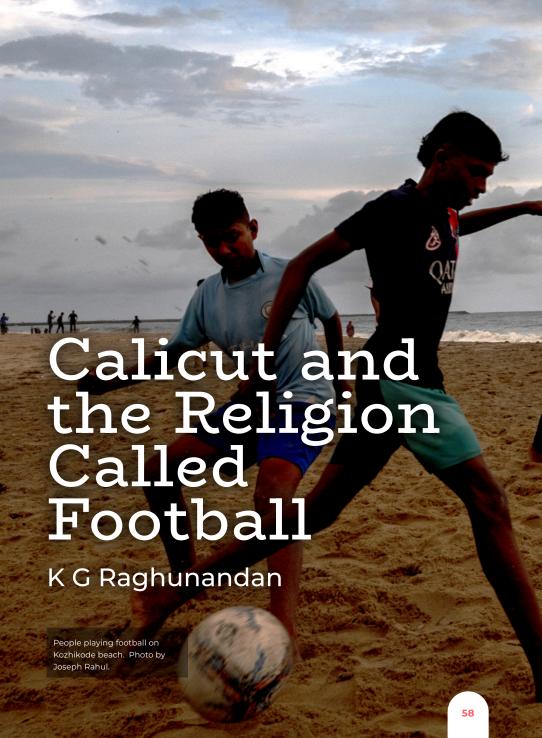
of local monarchs and landowners. The performance features two or more warriors demonstrating combat skills with or without weapons like swords, daggers and maces. These demonstrations, requiring exceptional flexibility and agility, are traditionally practised in *kuzhikalari*—six-foot-deep pits still prevalent in the region.

#### Other Art Forms

While most discussed art forms reflect male-centric traditions, certain performances specifically feature female artists. Oppana, commonly performed at Muslim weddings in Malabar, showcases women's dance traditions. Margam Kali and Thiruvathirakkali, rooted in Christianity and Hinduism respectively, share similar patterns despite differing in costume and song content. Margam Kali persists among highland Christian communities. while Thiruvathirakkali appears throughout the district. Many of these art forms are becoming increasingly popular and secular due to their increased visibility and opportunities on social media and other visual platforms. They reflect the continuous evolution of community traditions and practices over generations. However, urgent measures are needed to safeguard some of these art forms from disappearing into oblivion.



Sunil Gurukkal demonstrating his techniques to students during a practice session at CVN Kalari in West Hill, Nadakkavu. Photo by Joseph Rahul.



Kozhikode captured global attention during the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar when fans of the Argentine team erected a 30-foot tall cut-out of player Lionel Messi on a small islet in the Kurungattu Kadavu River. Not to be outdone, Brazil fans responded by constructing a towering 40-foot image of Neymar along the riverbanks. The friendly rivalry escalated when a 45-foot cut-out of Cristiano Ronaldo was put up and the 'cut-out war' quickly went viral.

Football's legacy in Kozhikode spans more than a hundred years. The region's relationship with the sport began when the British crown established control over Northern Kerala, creating the Malabar District. Along with their administrative system, they introduced organised sports, including cricket, hockey, football, tennis, golf and badminton, towards the end of the nineteenth century.

Historical records show football matches being played in Victorian-era Calicut by British military units stationed at West Hills Barracks. The sport was also popular among European trading firms. European civil servants, and Christian missionaries and their schools. During this early phase, there was little contact between the sporting activities of the colonisers and those of the natives. It was not until 1900-05 that local residents began playing football.

The game also inspired a popular regional variant, known as Sevens Football in North Kerala. Played with

seven players per side instead of the traditional eleven, this version is neither FIFA-approved nor officially recognised by the All India Football Federation (AIFF). This emerged as a modern successor to Thalapandu, a popular traditional game.

# The Rise of Football in Colonial Calicut

The enduring popularity of football in Kozhikode, and in Kerala at large, is a testament to the contributions of legendary players and clubs supported by the local football community. The city's first football club, simply known as Kuttan's Team, formed in the early 1900s, was the brainchild of a horse-cart driver named Kuttan.

A freedom fighter who participated in the Salt Satyagraha and was even imprisoned for it, Kuttan wanted to form a local team capable of defeating foreign opponents on home ground. However, financial difficulties led Kuttan's Team to merge with the Kerala Cricket Club. which evolved into the Challengers Club. For nearly three decades, the Club dominated the football scene in Malabar. During this period, K.P. Alikoya, who ran a butcher shop at the central market, founded a club known as the Universal Sports Club. initiating an intense rivalry between the two clubs.

This era produced many football legends in Kozhikode, such as Andy Master, Devadas, Kovunni Menon, Chandu Menon, 'Arabi' Krishnan Nair, S.B. Laben, Thampurankandi Gopi, Keezedath Kesavan Nair, West Hill Achu, Kottayi Achu, among others. Among them, Kottayi Achu particularly captivated local fans,



Graffiti featuring football players Cristiano Ronaldo and Neymar Junior on the walls of Gujarat Street.
Photo by Joseph Rahul.

playing for 30 consecutive years after his 1918 debut.

The first tournament in Calicut originated at Commercial School (now the Nadakkavu Government Higher Secondary School), where Natarajan, a footballer and teacher, organised an inter-school competition for the Rao Sahab Vaidyanath Iyer Cup. In 1909, the West Coast Tournaments expanded the sport's reach by inviting several educational institutions from across the region, featuring sports like hockey, tennis and badminton alongside football. This period saw the emergence of several tournaments: Y.M.C.A. tournaments (1918-35): the Bhavani Rao Memorial Football Tournament (1918-34): the Keeleri Kunhikannan Football Tournament (1931-33), named after the father of Indian circus; and the Nakkadi Karunakaran Memorial Football Tournament (1935-36). organised by the Challengers Club.

By the 1920s, football had become deeply embedded in city life, with evening matches held weekly at Mananchira Maidan. Later this sport was also played at various grounds, including West Hill Ground, Basel German Mission School Ground (later known as Malabar Christian College Ground), and the St. Joseph's School Ground.

# The Game Post-Independence

The Abdurrahman Memorial Football Tournament of 1948 marked a significant milestone in Kozhikode's



Fans watching a football match at the local CPI(M) party office in Kuttichira. Photo by Joseph Rahul.

football history, introducing two innovations: paid entry and live Malayalam commentary on All India Radio (AIR).

A watershed moment came in 1949 with the establishment of the Malabar Football Association (MFA), which united clubs across the region, bringing unprecedented structure and discipline to the sport. At the national level, the MFA team gained quick attention. Local talents like Devadas, T. A. Rehman, J. Antony, Madhavan Nambiar and Pavitran captured headlines with their outstanding performances, putting Malabar on the map as a rich, untapped source of football talent.

The Saith Nagjee Memorial Football Tournament,

launched in 1952, became a highly anticipated annual event. Watching the Nagjee Tournament was an exciting experience for the community. Post-match analyses and discussions would animate households well into the night, with enthusiastic debates about players.

The tournament consistently drew full attendance, especially when skilled teams like JCT, RAC, Vasco, MRC, EME, Gorkha Brigade and Premier Tyres competed.

One of Kozhikode's pioneering footballers, M. Jayaram, became the first from the city to represent India in the 1953 Asian Quadrangular.



Calicut FC fans celebrating a goal. Photo by Joseph Rahul.

Another legend was T. Abdul Rahman, who emerged as the city's most celebrated footballer, representing India in the 1956 Melbourne Olympics during Indian football's golden age. Rahman, a torchbearer for Kerala football on the global stage, had a football career spanning more than six decades as a player, coach and selector.

Kozhikode produced its fair share of football legends such as Moideenkutty, K.P. Sethumadhavan, E.N. Sudheer, Prasannan, M. Natarajan, A.K. Balasubramanian, Abdul Azeez, Premnath Philip, and Muhammad Najeeb.

The city successfully hosted the National Football Championships for the Santosh Trophy twice. This enthusiasm continued with the 1987 Jawaharlal Nehru Invitation International Gold Cup Football Tournament, where spectator demand was so overwhelming that fans sat along the touchline, in violation of FIFA regulations. The tournament landscape shifted in the 1990s. The launch of the National Football League (NFL) in 1997 marked the definitive end of the Nagjee Tournament's golden era.

#### A Revival

The dawn of the twenty-first century brought significant changes. The advent of globalised media and the broadcasting of international football on Indian satellite television transformed local fandom, while declining number of tournaments, clubs and training facilities led to Kerala's diminishing representation in the national team.

In recent years, however, the tide has begun to turn, with the establishment of the first professional football team from North Kerala-Gokulam Kerala FC. They made history by winning the I-League title in 2020-21, becoming the first club from Kerala to achieve this feat. successfully defending their title in the next season. The club's women's team dominated the Indian Women's League through three consecutive championship victories. Kozhikode has now entered an exciting new phase. The first session of the Super League Kerala was organised in November 2024 by the Kerala Football Association—Calicut FC. the second professional football club from Kozhikode, emerged as the champion club.

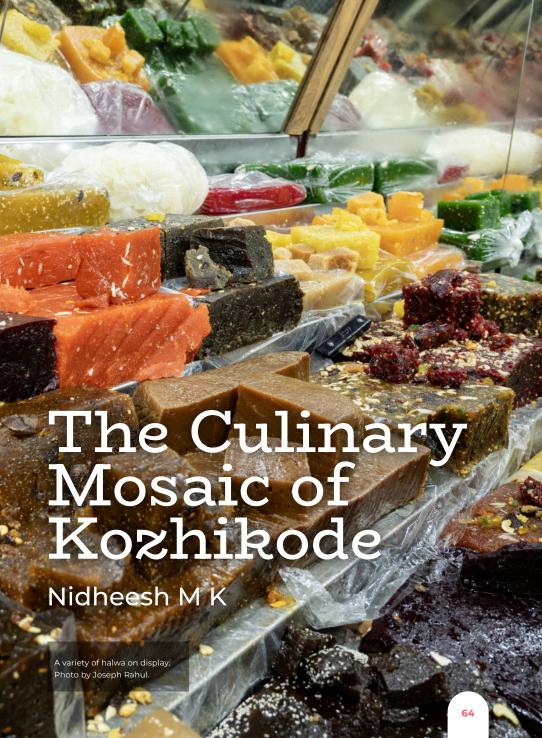
Several new football training centers are emerging across Kozhikode, with

the Universal Soccer Academy and the Malabar Sports & Recreation Foundation (MSRF) showing particular promise. MSRF's partnership with Argentina's 'Juniors of Argentina' programme, which produced legendary players like Diego Maradona, signals ambitious plans for the future of football in Kerala.

Unlike in other states, where club loyalty dominates, football fans in Kerala demonstrate a deep passion for the game itself. Football permeates daily life, with matches being played everywhere—from sandy beaches and laterite quarries to verdant fields.

A diverse crowd enjoying the Calicut FC vs. Malappuram FC match. Photo by Joseph Rahul.







Arya Bhavan on SM Street. Photo by Joseph Rahul.

Kozhikode has long been a gastronomic haven, its ethnography and food culture so deeply intertwined that every dish becomes a testament to the city's enduring dialogue between global influences and local traditions. Food here is more than sustenance; it embodies identity, history and celebration. For locals, it is a taste of home. For visitors, it is an invitation to immerse themselves in a culture that values hospitality as much as flayour.

### A Port of Many Flavours

The culinary identity of Kozhikode owes much to its historical position as a hub of the Indian Ocean trade network. The city's air, once thick with

the aroma of pepper, cardamom and cinnamon, reflected its status as the crown jewel of the Malabar Coast. This thriving trade brought not only spices but also culinary influences that shaped its foodscape.

Vasco da Gama's diaries described a cosmopolitan society where Arab merchants prayed in mosques, Chinese sailors haggled in markets and locals effortlessly navigated these interactions, speaking multiple languages and sharing meals infused with global flavours.

The Romans, Egyptians and, later, the Arabs, often delayed by monsoons, stayed longer than intended, marrying locals and introducing their culinary preferences.

The Arabs brought biriyani, which



Inside Arya Bhavan on SM Street. Photo by Joseph Rahul.

Kozhikode made its own. The Portuguese, too, left an indelible mark on Kozhikode's food culture, introducing the now Malayali breakfast staple *puttu* (cylindrical steamed rice cake), which they picked up from Sout-East Asia.

Also a Portuguese import, spicy chilies, in particular, became indispensable, lending heat to dishes like fish *mulakittathu* (spicy fish curry) to fiery *mulaku chammanthi* (chili chutney). Tapioca, another Portuguese contribution, became a vital food source during times of famine.

Coffee, brought by Arab traders, evolved into a local tradition. By the mid-twentieth century, coffee houses had emerged as spaces for conversation and camaraderie.

Whether it was the strong kattan kaapi (strong black coffee) or the sweet karupetti kaapi (palm jaggery coffee), coffee became part of the daily ritual of Kozhikode's local population.

The British popularised tea and introduced baking. Bakeries such as Modern Bakery and Sankaran Bakery became institutions, offering buttery biscuits and plum cake inspired by colonial recipes.

The story goes that when British planter Murdoch Brown arrived at Anjarakandy Cinnamon Estate in north Kerala, he sought out Mampally Bapu, founder of the Royal Biscuit



Company in Thalassery in 1880. Holding a cake, Brown asked Bapu to replicate it. With just a sniff, Bapu discerned its ingredients and recreated it—likely crafting India's first cake. His legacy endures in bakeries across the state under different names—Modern Bakery, Cochin Bakery and Santha Bakery.

# Mappila Cuisine: The Soul of Kozhikode

At the heart of Kozhikode's culinary identity lies Mappila Muslim cuisine, a harmonious blend of Arab, Persian and Kerala traditions. Dishes like pathiri (flattened rice pancake) and mutta mala (egg fritters), with their use of coconut, rice and ghee showcase the fusion of local influences with global imports.

The crown jewel of Mappila cuisine is

Kozhikode biriyani—layers of shortgrained Kaima rice, tender meat, caramelised onions and slow-cooked spices in a distinctive ratio (which differs from one restaurant to another). Lighter than its northern counterparts, it relies on fragrant spices to bring out its unique flavour. Whether enjoyed at the iconic Paragon restaurant—ranked fifth in 2023 among the world's greatest restaurants by food quide company Taste Atlas—or a roadside eatery. it became a dish that left a mark on all who tasted it. While debates about its superiority over Thalassery biriyani abound, its place in Kozhikode's heart is irreplaceable.

Food also played a critical role in fostering communal harmony. Political scientist Ashutosh Varshney attributed Kozhikode's peaceful coexistence to its syncretic culture, where shared meals brought communities together. Communal dining, introduced by Arab traders, became a hallmark of feasts and ceremonies. The custom of preparing dishes like *aleesa* (a wheat and meat porridge) and intricate layered snacks such as *chatti pathiri* (a stuffed sweet pastry akin to baklava) reflect the sophistication of Mappila cuisine.

In a curious turn of events, the flow of culinary influences from the Middle East have now recurred. While Kozhikode once welcomed traders who shaped its cuisine, the Gulf migration since the 1970s saw the Mappila diaspora bringing back flavours from the Middle East. Modern influences added new dimensions to Mappila cuisine, introducing dishes like alfaham (grilled chicken),

shawarma (wrap with grilled meat) and kuzhi manthi (spiced rice and meat), which have been adapted with local spices and techniques. These dishes have now quickly become staples, served in roadside eateries and upscale restaurants alike.

Festive seasons such as Ramadan elevate Mappila cuisine to its most elaborate expression. The breaking of the fast—whether in Kuttichira, Thalassery or beyond—is marked by a symphony of flavours, served in carefully curated stages. From the savory *irachi pathiri* (meat-filled pancake) and spicy *kozhiyada* (fried dumplings) to the sweet *unnakkaya* (banana and coconut rolls), every dish reflects the ingenuity and resourcefulness of Mappila culinary traditions.

Shankaran Bakery on SM Street. Photo by Joseph Rahul.



# The Melting Pot of Mittai Theruvu

Mittai Theruvu (literally Sweet Meat Street), or SM Street, has been a microcosm of the city's diversity.

Shops run by Gujaratis sold syrup-laden sweets alongside Bhatkalis and the Konkanispeaking Memons, whose culinary traditions mingled seamlessly with local flavours. The Bohras introduced sweets, while Memons contributed kebabs and samosas. Even the humble banana fry, a ubiquitous snack, owes its origins to these waves of influence.

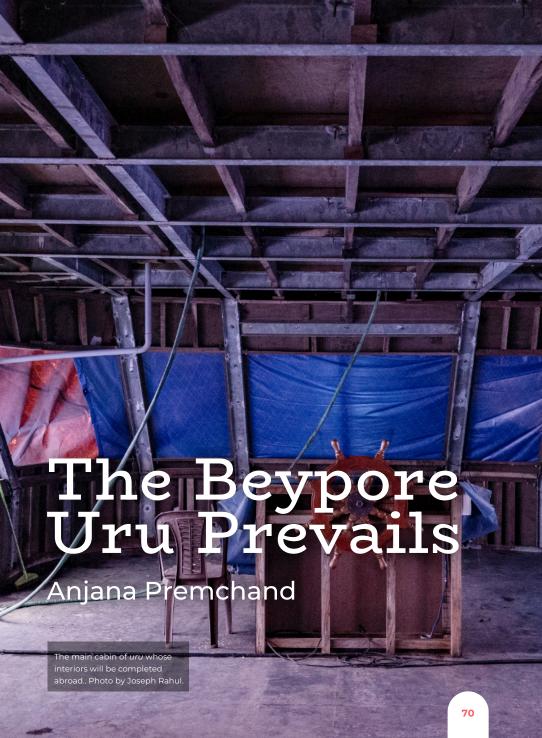
Kidson Corner, the gateway to SM Street, is a treasure trove of nostalgic memories for old-timers. This bustling street once offered everything from daily essentials to luxury goods—both originals and imitations. Beyond Kidson Corner is Arva Bhavan, a legendary vegetarian eatery famed for its masala dosa, vada, and its British-era Anglo-Swiss clock presiding over diners. Across from Radha Theatre, the humble Modern Lunch Home offered budget-friendly meals. And for those with a sweet tooth, the upstairs eatery of Krishna Maharai Halwa Store—accessible only via a steep wooden staircase—served mouth-watering fried bananas.

Nearby, Lucky Hotel once reigned as a biryani haven until Top Form emerged with modern nonvegetarian fare at the other end of the street. Shahensha Hotel and Kamaliya added their legendary porottas (layered flatbread) to SM Street's rich culinary palette. Shops like Vasudevan and Shastha became pilgrimage sites for snack lovers. Malabar Halwa Store, Sankaran Bakery and Modern Bakery once dominated the bakery scene, with Sankaran's roasted nuts and Malabar's colourful halwas stealing the show.

A stone's throw away, Queen's Hotel became infamous not for its food but for its cabaret shows, a common sight once in Kerala. These performances, popular until banned in 1985, drew eclectic crowds that often scattered dramatically during police raids.

Today, Kozhikode continues to evolve. As the sun sets over the Arabian Sea, new cafes catering to a younger cosmopolitan crowd have sprung up near the beach, offering burgers, pasta and even beef brisket. With three Starbucks and numerous local options open round the clock, the city seamlessly blends tradition and modernity.

Whether it's a steaming cup of coffee, a plate of biryani or a bite of halwa, every flavour tells the story of a city that has always welcomed the world to its table.





The uru under construction. Photo by Joseph Rahul.

In Kozhikode, the craft of making an uru or dhow (traditional wooden ships) is a continuation of a 2,000-year-old legacy. Today, Beypore, located near the mouth of the Chaliyar River, where it flows into the Arabian Sea, is home to one of the last few surviving boatyards.

Commissioned by a businessman from Qatar, two *urus* were built here over the past five years on a grassy stretch surrounded by trees. Master craftsman Sathyan Edathodi shared that the construction, normally completed within one to two years, had extended to five years due to delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The ships finally set sail in November 2024.

These vessels are expected to outlast their creators—ships built by Edathodi's late father, also an artisan, are still sailing after more than 75 years. Over time, Beypore's boatyards have crafted a variety of *urus*, ranging

from small to massive in size. The largest ship Edathodi has built stands 200 feet long and took three years to complete.

While *urus* historically played a vital role in the Indian Ocean trade, ferrying people and cargo, their modern purpose has shifted. Today, they are predominantly luxury vessels used for leisure.

Building an *uru* is a significant investment and they are commissioned by royal families and businessmen from Gulf countries such as Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain.

#### Crafted Through Indigenous Knowledge

The traditional techniques of shipbuilding in Beypore have remained largely consistent over the centuries, with minor changes in



The *uru* under construction, covered with blue tarpaulin sheets. Photo by Joseph Rahul.

methods and materials. Depending on the ship's size, a team of 10 to 30 artisans is required for its construction.

Edathodi explains that his clients usually specify the length of the ship, which serves as the foundation for the rest of its dimensions. According to him, the width of the boat is generally one-third the length of the keel, while the height is half the width.

While today construction begins with a scaled sketch or a small wooden model, historically, *urus* were crafted without blueprints or plans, relying solely on the expertise and intuition of the artisan. At present, at the request of clients, marine engineers or architects are often involved. They use the model created by the master craftsman to develop a digital blueprint, which is professionally signed and sealed for approval.

Teak timber, sourced locally, was the primary material used in shipbuilding, along with timber of other indigenous woods available through the region's thriving timber industry. Malabar was once a hub for exporting teak to the Arab coast. Logs were historically transported from upstream forests by



floating them downriver, with a man or two steering the bundles. Elephants or bullock carts were used to move the timber to the river. At the yard, markings were made on timber using strings dipped in charcoal. The logs were placed on bars and cut using a long hand saw, operated by two men. Currently, due to environment-friendly regulations and cost considerations, imported timber from countries like Malaysia are widely used.

The keel, the backbone of the ship, runs along its length at the bottom, providing stability and structural integrity. Curved timbers are attached to the keel's sides, the

timber planks forming the frame of the ship's body.. In modern times, copper and zinc-coated iron nails of varying sizes are used to fasten the wood pieces. Before driving in the nails, the circular gaps are filled with cotton to ensure an airtight seal, as the wood swells over time to close the spaces.

Beypore's strategic location has been a key factor in sustaining its shipbuilding tradition. It had easy access to essential materials, including diverse timbers, coconut coir ropes and fish oil.

### Propelled by Trade and Migration

Another factor in the longevity of this industry is the skill and dedication of its artisan, labour and business communities.

The traditional techniques of shipbuilding were honed and passed down orally through generations by the *maesthiris*. Edathodi recalls how his father was introduced to the craft by the Edathumpadikal family, one of the earliest *maesthiri* families in Beypore. When there was an overflow of work, the family employed other skilled artisans from the area.

The Khalasis, a native Muslim community, specialising in lifting heavy weights and equipment using just ropes, winches and pulleys, played a crucial role in the shipbuilding process. They were involved in every stage of *uru* construction—from transporting logs of timber from the river to the yard to launching the finished ships into the sea. The latter takes about a week of intense manual labour and draws large crowds, including local media.

The prominent businessmen who drove trade and shipbuilding in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries largely hailed from the Muslim community, whose ancestors had migrated to Kozhikode from the Gulf Peninsula. The surname Baramy is synonymous with the industry. The first Baramys, who migrated from Yemen, married locals, and their descendants became established traders. Similarly, the Koyas were also heavily involved as agents in both trade and shipbuilding.

#### Tradition at the Helm

The cultural significance of the *uru* is undeniable, yet the industry's potential remains largely untapped. A few years ago, the government established a training institute in Beypore to support the craft, but it was abruptly shut down due to a lack of interest and resources.

Edathodi believes that formal education or certification would be crucial to sustaining the craft. 'We are willing to teach without remuneration. In the end, recognition is what matters,' he says.

Private entrepreneurship may hold the key to the future. For example. the Dhow Museum in Kozhikode, dedicated to preserving the legacy of the uru, is managed by a private shipbuilding company founded in 1885 by Kamakantakath Kunhammed Koya Haji. Operating a boatyard in Beypore, the company has seen success in recent years. The current generation is committed to informing future generations about the industry—the museum houses archival photographs, books, records and other artefacts related to the craft.

The *uru* also presents a sustainable alternative and holds immense potential for tourism.

However, success is not guaranteed, and genuine efforts will be required to ensure its



Sathyan Edathodi with his main craftsman at the boatyard. Photo by Joseph Rahul.

#### CITY IN CINEMA

Contemporary movies that depict Kozhikode—its people, places, and history.



#### Adaminte Makan Abu (2011)

The film follows an elderly couple in a village near Kozhikode as they struggle to fund their Hajj pilgrimage. Set

against the idyllic backdrop of rural Kerala, Salim Ahamed's directorial debut features strong performances by Salim Kumar and Zarina Wahab.

#### Ustad Hotel (2012)

The film follows aspiring chef Faizi (Dulquer Salmaan) and his grandfather Karim (Thilakan) as they open a small eatery in Kozhikode. Written by Anjali Menon and directed by Anwar Rasheed. it



captures the city's love for food against a picturesque coastal backdrop.



#### Shutter (2012)

A thriller and satire set in Kozhikode, the film follows an NRI, a filmmaker.

and an auto driver as their lives collide over two days. Written and directed by Joy Mathew, it premiered at the 17th International Film Festival of Kerala and earned critical acclaim, leading to six remakes.

#### Ennu Ninte Moideen (2015)

In the 1960s, two teenagers in the town of Mukkam fell in love against their families' wishes. Their tragic

story inspired R.S. Vimal's film, starring Parvathy Thiruvothu and Prithviraj Sukumaran. A slow-burn drama, it nostalgically revisits the

Kozhikode of a bygone era.



#### Virus (2018)

The film is a medical thriller based on the 2018 Nipah virus outbreak in Kozhikode. It follows the heroes

and survivors of the crisis, including a brave nurse, the District Collector, doctors, and the only two survivors. Directed by Aashiq Abu, it features a star-studded cast.

#### **CITY READS**

Novels from Kozhikode's pioneering writers, four of which have been translated into English.

#### Balyakaalasakhi (1944), translated as *Childhood Companion*.

#### Vaikom Muhammad Basheer

The book is largely autobiographical, with the main character, Majeed, based on Basheer and the events drawn from his early life in Vaikom,



Kottayam. The first half follows the childhood love story of Suhra and Majeed, before the narrative delves into themes of loss and suffering.

#### Naalukettu (1958), translated as Naalukettu: The House Around the Courtyard



#### M.T. Vasudevan Nair

The decline of the matrilineal landowning system in Kerala is a recurring theme in Vasudevan's works. Naalukettu, MT's first novel, explores

family dynamics in a rapidly changing social landscape, focusing on the personal struggles of its main character, Appunni.

#### Oru Desathinte Katha (1971), translated as Tales of Athiranippādam

S.K. Pottekkatt

The novel opens with the main

character, Sreedharan, returning to the fictional village of

Athiranippadam—based on the village where Pottekkatt grew up—after four decades. A semiautobiographical work, it weaves his personal story with the history of the land.



## anamu omgj

#### *Nellu* (1972)

#### P. Valsala

The novel explores themes of nature, tradition, and oppression, telling the story of Mara, a woman from the marginalized Adiyar community,

living in the forested hills of Wayanad. Offering a perspective previously unexplored, it was a pioneering work in Malayalam literature.

## Barsa (2007), translated with the same title

#### Khadija Mumtaz

The novel's main character, Sabitha, a doctor, navigates her restrictive life in Saudi Arabia with humor. The title, derived from the Arabic word for



someone who does not veil their face, reflects the book's exploration of themes such as religion, Islam, and personal relationships.

## FESTIVAL FOOTPRINTS

A range of diverse festivals that reflect Kozhikode's cultural landscape.

#### **Kerala Literature**



#### Festival (KLF)

Held annually on Kozhikode Beach, the festival is the largest literary event in the country. Founded in 2016, it is organized by the DC Kizhakemuri Foundation and DC Books. The eighth edition of KLF took place in January 2025, attracting over half a million attendees.



#### **Manorama Hortus**

The first edition of the festival, organized by Malayala Manorama, was held at Kozhikode Beach in November 2024. Named after the botanical treatise *Hortus Malabaricus*, the festival aimed to create a 'fertile ground' for literature,



music, and the arts.

#### Revathi Pattathanam

Tracing its origins back centuries, the festival continues today in its current form, held annually at the Tali temple. Organized by the Tali Devasom, the November 2024 festivities began with the head of the Zamorin family presenting a bag of coins to a scholar, symbolizing the old tradition.



#### Beypore International Water Festival

Held at Beypore, Chaliyam, and Nallur, the festival is India's largest water festival. The two-day event offers a variety of activities, including adventure sports, competitions, cultural festivities, and culinary delights. The fourth edition, held in January 2025, drew a massive crowd.

#### Sargaalaya International Arts and Crafts Festival



Sargaalaya, located in the scenic coastal village of Iringal in Kozhikode district, was founded to showcase live craftsmanship and serve as a center for various crafts. The 12th edition of the festival, held in December 2024, featured around 300 artisans from around the world.

## MUSEUMS & MEMORIES

Cultural spaces in the city that cater to a diverse crowd.

#### Pazhassi Raja Archaeological Museum

The museum commemorates Pazhassi Raja, the 'Lion of Kerala,' who led early uprisings against British



colonial forces. It houses historical artifacts and artworks, providing an insightful journey through the region's cultural and historical legacy.

- Location: Kendriya Vidyalaya Road, East Hill, Kozhikode-673005
- Days: Tuesday Sunday
- Timings: 9 am 1pm, 2 pm 4 pm

#### Kerala Lalithakala Akademi Art Gallery



The Kerala Lalithakala Akademi, established in 1962 to conserve and promote visual arts, has galleries in key locations across the state. The Kozhikode gallery, recently renovated, hosts a variety of art exhibitions.

- Location: Town Hall Compound, Kozhikode - 673001
- Days: Tuesday Sunday
- Timings: 10 am 6 pm

#### Gudhaam

Gudhaam is a unique space that blends an antique store, bookshop, art gallery, and café. Located on Gujarathi Street, it boasts an active Instagram presence and attracts many visitors whether it's reading a book with coffee or enjoying a musical



performance.

- Location: 2/431, Gujarati St, Kuttichira, Kozhikode, Kerala 673001
- Days: Monday Sunday
- Timings: 11 am 11 pm

#### Deepanjali Lamp Museum

I.C.R. Prasad, a former lighthouse keeper, spent over 20 years personally collecting each lamp displayed in his



home. His collection includes lamps

made from stone, brass, bronze, and wrought iron. Prasad has unique anecdotes for each, making a visit more special.

 Location and Timings: The owner requests that visits be scheduled by calling the phone number listed online.



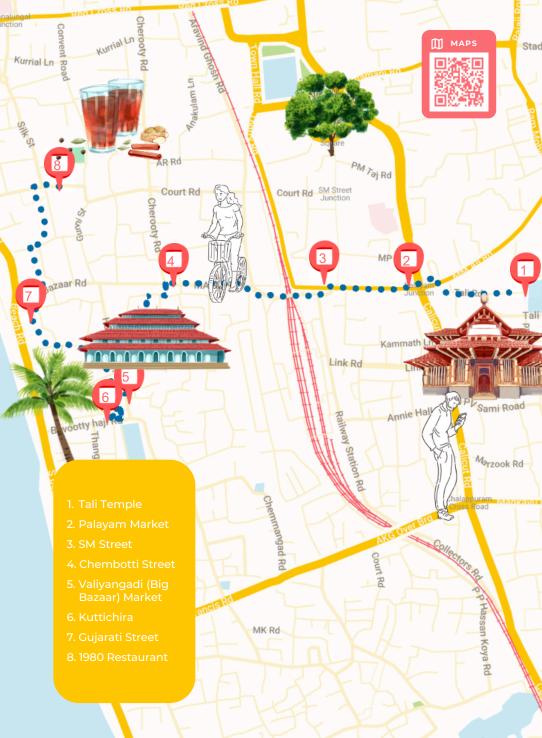
#### Freedom Square

Known as an urban museum, Freedom Square was designed as a multifunctional space, with a stage extending along the beach to create open public areas for performances and events. It also features a walking gallery that highlights the city's history.

 Location: Beach Rd, near Calicut Light House, Vellayil, Kozhikode, Kerala 673032



Photos by Joseph Rahul. Zamorin's Trail Exploring Kozhikode's Glorious Heritage



The port city of Kozhikode, also known as Calicut, became prominent in the 12th century when ships from far and near reached its shores seeking a single commodity: pepper. Founded under the rule of the Zamorin dynasty. the city has become a place where communities from varying cultures and religious beliefs coexist and prosper together.

From the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries, it was frequented by Arab, Chinese, Gujarati, and European traders who catered to the world's growing demand for black pepper as well as ginger, cotton, silk, and other commodities.

Through this heritage trail, we explore the centuries of growth and cultural diversity of the city. This trail is a mix of monuments and memories, tracing the history of a city and a kingdom that became prosperous not through war and conquest but through ethical trade and commerce.



#### Tali Temple

Dedicated to Lord Siva, the temple existed even before the rule of the Zamorin was established in the twelfth century. It was in the hands of Brahmins who defied the authority of the new ruler. The Zamorin took control of the temple after executing the Brahmin trustees.

As atonement, the king set up an annual literary competition, known as Revathi Pattathanam. With scholars from all over participating, the competition's debates covered four fields of knowledge, namely, Tarka, Vyakarana, Mimamsa, and Vedanta. The winners in each category were honoured at the temple and awarded a purse of 101 gold coins.

The temple is known today for its architectural brilliance and this enduring literary tradition. The Revathi Pattathanam is still held every year in the month of October-November. It is on the foundations of



such robust traditions that Calicut came to be recognized as the UNESCO City of Literature in 2023.

#### Palayam Market

The camping grounds of the royal soldiers of Calicut are an essential part of the

city's royal heritage. Palayam marks the area where Hyder Ali's forces camped on 20 April 1766. They encircled the palace, which was nearby at Kottapparambu. With no viable recourse, the Zamorin sent away the women and children before setting fire to the armoury, igniting the stored gunpowder and destroying the three-century-old palace. Although the Zamorin would return with the help of the British, this was a pivotal moment.

The Palayam Vegetable and Fruit Market, once a royal garden tended by women for leisure, is now a bustling hub for fresh produce. Opening as early as 3 am, it sees overnight arrivals of vegetables from neighbouring states and fruits from across India and abroad, including imports from Egypt, Israel, Vietnam and China. By 6 am, the fruit trade slows as new vegetable supplies replenish the city.





#### **SM Street**

Famed for its iconic halwa and culinary delights, this bustling market also boasts

a rich literary past. There is a granite bust of Calicut's own novelist and travel writer, SK Pottekkat at the junction between Mananchira and SM Street. For the people of Calicut, he was the chronicler of their street (in *Oru Theruvinte Katha*). The next street is Vaikom Mohammed Bashir Road, celebrating the literary contributions of the maverick writer who made Calicut his home. His characters are carved in stone in the nearby Children's Literature Park, previously called Ansari Park.

Many old sweet shops like Krishna Maharaj (1889) and Shankaran Bakery (1922) still function in the street.

This area also houses a Parsi Anjuman, built in the 1800s. It looked after the religious affairs of Parsis who lived in Calicut, Kochi, Mangalore, Aleppey, Ooty, and other places in the region.

#### **Chembotti Street**

After you encounter a lane of gold and silver shops in the street, there is a lane of brass and bronze shops. From the time of the Zamorins, a community of coppersmiths (Chembottis) have lived and worked their trade in this area. It also housed brass and bronze worker communities called Moosharis, Other metal craftsmen. like gold and silversmiths (Thattans) also lived nearby. Many trader communities who came and settled in Calicut saw business opportunities here. Thus, Konkani Brahmins called Kamaths and Saiva Vellala Pillais who came from Tamil Nadu established shops there to sell these. Many Goan Christians also later established shops here.

Near the street is a settlement and temple of Kanyakubj Brahmins, called Bairagis, who came and settled here from central India. The idol at the Bairagi Madom here was specially brought from Jaipur centuries ago.

The Big Bazaar Market

Big Bazaar stands as a vital link between Calicut's past and present—a place where history continues to resonate through its vibrant lanes and diverse trading community. This 800-year-old market, or Valiyangadi, was once a global trading hub and the heart of the spice trade. It was established close to the sea, stretching for about 1.5 kilometres to Palavam.

It took centre stage in the town planning by the Zamorin dynasty, who settled traders belonging to different communities close to the market area. The market was widened and the roofs of the shops were tiled during the time of the British.



Today, looking at the name boards of the numerous shops that dot the market, you will get a fair idea of the diversity of the trading community in Calicut, featuring people belonging to many regions, faiths, and cultures.

#### Kuttichira: Mishkal Mosque, Muchundi Mosque, and Juma Mazjid

Kuttichira was a centre for literary activities, cultural exchange, and Mappila culture. The Mishkal Mosque, also known as Mishkal Palli, was built in the fourteenth century by Nakhooda Mishkal, a wealthy Arab trader. This mosque is one of a few surviving medieval mosques in Kerala and has a unique architectural style that blends traditional Kerala and Arab influences. Unlike typical mosques, it lacks minarets and domes, featuring instead gopuramstyle arches reminiscent of Hindu temple architecture.



he was guided through the streets of Kozhikode by a Gujarati merchant. This highlights the role Guiaratis played in establishing trade links between India and various parts of the world. Over time, the Guiarati community became synonymous with commerce in Calicut.

Guiarati Street consists of narrow lanes, weaving a historical landscape with faded buildings that feature wooden windows and tile-clad roofs. The around floors of these structures function as shops while the upper stories house families. This architectural style reflects a blend of local Kerala influences and traditional Guiarati design, reflecting the city's unique urban fabric.

The Muchundi Mosque, built in the thirteenth century, is considered one of the oldest mosques in Kozhikode. It reflects the spirit of communal harmony, as it was constructed with the support of the Zamorin rulers who patronized Islam. The Kuttichira Juma Maziid, situated between Mishkal Mosque and Muchundi Mosque, is known for having one of the largest floor areas among mosques in Kerala, accommodating approximately 1,000 people at once.

The Gujarati community in Calicut trace their roots back to the fourteenth century, when traders began arriving to engage in the lucrative spice trade. When Vasco da Gama first landed in Kerala in 1498, it is said that

**Gujarati Street** 



Set in a heritage building, this restaurant features excavated remnants of the Zamorins' fort. Guests can enjoy snacks or refreshments while taking a well-

deserved break in a space steeped in

Refreshments at

#### Please note:

history.

- There is no entry fee.
- Photography allowed (exterior of buildings).
- Wear comfortable footwear, and carry a hat/umbrella along with a bottle of water.
- Please start early, as we may be travelling through narrow congested lanes.
- Please try to be on time at the venue, as the roads tend to get busy, and the weather becomes less enjoyable later in the day.
- Kindly respect the cultural and religious significance/sentiments of the spaces as conveyed by the walk leader.



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The arrival of the Portuguese in Kozhikode towards the end of the fifteenth century shifted local politics, and the city went through conflicts and attacks in the centuries that followed. It was invaded by the Mysore rulers in the mid-eighteenth century. and later administered by the British as the headquarters of the Malabar District.

The Basel Evangelical Mission, a Christian missionary organization from Switzerland and Germany, was very active in Malabar and the neighbouring district of South Canara during the period 1834 to 1914.

The Basel Mission established educational institutions, as well as tile and weaving factories—aimed to educate and employ without discrimination. All of these events shaped Kozhikode's distinct cultural heritage.

While the Kozhikode of today is very different from the Calicut of the Colonial era, several remnants of its legacy still exist, embraced and adapted by its people for the modern times. This trail takes you through these landmarks that tell many stories.

#### Pazhassiraja Museum and Art Gallery

Built in 1812, the building now housing the museum was originally known as the East Hill Bungalow, serving as the office of the British District Collectors. The adjacent building, now the Art Gallery, was once the Collector's residence. It was renamed the Pazhassi Raja Archaeological Museum in 1980, honoring the revolutionary who resisted British rule. The museum displays a variety of artefacts



including burial urns, a model umbrella stone, Roman and other coins, granite and wooden sculptures, swords, and measuring instruments. The Art Gallery features original paintings by Raja Ravi Varma.

TThe British built this
Anglican Church in the
early 1860s and it was
mainly used as a Cantonment



Church by the British military and administrative officers. A main attraction of the church is the altarpiece, a replica of 'Madonna del Granduca', a painting by the Italian renaissance artist, Raphael. The tombs found adjacent to the church date back to 1717. The Church stands between two arterial roads (Wayanad Road and Kannur Road) and has been renovated several times over the years. Presently it is under the Church of South India.

The Malabar Christian College Complex

Calicut became an educational hub during the British



era. The sprawling campus housing the Malabar Christian College and High School is a testament to this. The college was started in 1909 as the Basel German Mission College and the school much earlier—both established by the Basel Mission. Their motto of 'Education without discrimination' led to the inclusion of all castes and religious groups as students; this was when caste discrimination was strong in Malabar. The Rev. W. Mueller was the first Principal and the first batch of the college had fifteen students of whom four were women.



Built by the Basel Mission in 1842, the majestic church building—the biggest Basel Mission church in Malabar—is a testament to the dedication of the missionaries who worked tirelessly for their cause. The structure is designed in a combination of European and regional architectural styles. Installed at the cathedral is a pipe organ gifted by St Aidan's Church in Cheltenham, England—the only pipe organ in

kerala. Located near the Mananchira Square, a Parish hall, a shopping complex and a few houses surround the Church.

#### B.E.M Girls' School

The Basel Evangelical Mission (B.E.M) school is Malabar's first school for girls, founded in 1848 by the Basel Mission. Supported by the Zamorin rulers, the school was a pioneering idea in a time when girls were not sent to school. Similar to other institutions set up by the mission, it welcomed students from all castes and stratas of society..



#### Mananchira Square

Mananchira Square, the most recognizable landmark in Kozhikode, is centered around a fourteenth-century manmade lake, surrounded by iconic buildings and open spaces that have long served as a hub for recreation and relaxation. Among the notable colonial structures in the area are the



Town Hall and the Commonwealth Trust Office. The Town Hall was built in 1891 to commemorate the jubilee anniversary of Queen Victoria's reign.

#### The Flag Mast

At Mananchira Maidan stands an old British-era flagstaff, with a height of about 20 meters and constructed from riveted steel angle iron. At the top of the structure is an additional 3-meter-long steel pole, equipped with a wheel mechanism to raise and lower the flag using a rope. Just before Indian independence, two brave men defied colonial rule by climbing the flagstaff to hoist the Indian flag. As they descended, they greased the pole, making it



impossible for anyone to remove the flag. In a desperate attempt, the British resorted to firing gunshots at the mast by the next afternoon, subsequently reinstating the British flag.

The Beach and Lighthouse

The beach has been a central attraction of the city for centuries. Although it no longer serves as a port for the movement of goods, remnants of



the old port and a functioning lighthouse, built in 1847, still stand as reminders of its past. The development of spaces like Freedom Square has further enhanced the appeal of the beach, which now hosts significant events, including the Kerala Literature Festival (KLF), strengthening its place in the city's cultural life.

#### Please note:

- Certain places in the trail are at a distance from each other and cannot be covered on foot alone.
   Please plan your day and transportation accordingly.
- The Pazhassiraja Museum has an entry fee, and is closed on Mondays. Timings are 9 am-1 pm, and 2 pm-4:00 pm.

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# I'eam

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InterGlobe Foundation (IGF) is the CSR arm of the InterGlobe Group of companies. The key focus areas of IGF include Heritage Conserva-tion, Promotion of Livelihoods and Environment Conservation including Waste Management. The Heritage projects cover both the tangible and intangible aspects of heritage. The environment projects support development and protection of Natural Resources thereby increasing the green cover and ground water recharge. It also includes work on Waste Management. The livelihood projects support income

enhancement of marginalized groups, especially women through environment friendly projects. By partnering with leading NGOs of the country, IGF has been able to impact more than 600,000 lives.



#### Sahapedia

Sahapedia is an open encyclopedic resource on the arts, cultures and histories of India offering digital content in multimedia formats such as articles, books, photo essays, videos, interviews, oral histories, maps and timelines, authored by scholars and curated by experts. Subject areas range from ideas and belief systems, rituals and prac- tices, to visual and performing arts. The values that guide our work are accessibility, inclusiveness, collaboration and

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