

Mamangam – History of a medieval festival

Project submitted to the University of Calicut in

partial fulfillment for the award of the degree

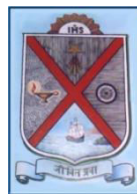
of

Bachelor of Arts in English and History

by

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March 2021

Declaration

I, **Abhinav S** , hereby declare that this project entitled **Mamangam – History of a medieval festival** , submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the **Degree of Bachelor of Arts in English and History**, is a bonafide record of originalresearch work carried out by me under the supervision and guidance of Dr. George Alex, Coordinator, Department of English & History (Double Main) Christ College (Autonomous), Irinjalakuda.

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April 9 2021

Certificate

This is to certify that this project entitled **Mamangam – History of a medieval festival** , a record of research work carried out by **Mr.Abhinav S** under my supervision and guidance in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Bachelor of Arts in English and History** submitted to the University of Calicut.

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Introduction

Mamankam was a great festival held on the banks of, Bharathapuzha and on the dry river-bed, of Perar Tirunavaya, southern India. The temple associated with the festival was Nava Mukunda Temple in Tirunavaya. It seems to have begun as a temple festival, analogous to the KumbhaMelas at Ujjaini, Prayaga, Haridwar and Kumbakonam. Tirunavaya, is known for its ancient Hindu temples. The festival was most flamboyantly celebrated under the auspices and at the expenses of the Hindu chiefs of Kozhikode (Calicut), the Samutiris (the Zamorins). The fair was not only a religious festival for the Samutiris, but also an occasion for the display of all their pomp and power as the most powerful chiefs of Kerala. During the Mamankam it was believed that the goddess Ganga descended into the Perar and by her miraculous advent made the river as holy as the Ganges itself. Much like the famous Kumbha Melas, the fair is held once in every 12 years and carried huge economic, social and political significance. Apart from the brisk trading, attested by travellers from Arabia, Greece and China, various forms of martial art and intellectual contests, cultural festivals, Hindu ritual ceremonies and folk-art performances were held at Tirunavaya. Hindu pilgrims from distant places, trading groups and travelers also leave colorful accounts of Mamankam. Duarte Barbosa¹ mentions "scaffoldings erected in the field with silken hangings spread over it". *Kozhikode Granthavari*, *Mamakam Kilippattu* and *Kandaru Menon Patappattu*, along with *Keralolpatti* and *Keralamahatmya*, are the major native chronicles mentioning the Mamankam festival.

¹ **Duarte Barbosa** was a Portuguese writer and officer from Portuguese India (between 1500 and 1516). He was a scrivener in a *feitoria* in Kannur, and an interpreter of the local language, Malayalam

Mamankam stands for 'Maagha – makam' which denotes a period of 28 days from the Makam star that appears in the 'bright' phase of the moon (the fortnight when moon waxes) in the month of Maagha² of Saka calendar. It occurs once in every twelve years. During this occasion, various forms of sports events, martial arts, intellectual contests, cultural activities, rituals and folk-art performances were performed on every nook and corner of the vast and wide sandy shores of Bharathapuzha. Pilgrims from distant places, trading groups and travellers from foreign countries like Arabia, Greece and China used to visit and participate in this unique festival. The contributions made by these visitors by exchanging vivid agricultural, architectural, as well as cultural innovations of their faraway lands have enriched the glory of this grand event. In the course of time the great 'Maagha makam' gradually became 'Mamankam'. At the end of the rule of Kulasekharas, the right of Mamankam passed to the kings of Perumpadappu and then to the Hindu Nair rulers of Valluvanad. Later the Samoothiri of Kozhikode defeated the Valluvanad rulers in Thirunavaya Wars (14th century AD), resulting in long drawn rivalry and bloodshed between these two rulers. Though the Sammothiri was also a Hindu Nair, he had the overwhelming support of the Muslim Arab merchants which the ruler of Valluvanad did not have. The Samoothiri declared himself as Maharakshapurusha of the temple in Thiruavaya. From that day forth, the Valluvanadan king began to send Chaver Nairs to fight Samoothiri until death, and to recapture the right from the Samoothiri, who would stand poised at Nilapadu thara in Thriunavaya, surrounded by a large contingent of warriors.

The last such Mamankam festival, is believed to have been held in 1755, when the Samoothiri/Zamorin had a hair-breadth escape from a chaver aged 16

² **Maagha** is a month of the Hindu calendar. In India's national civil calendar, it's the eleventh month of the year, corresponding to January/February in the Gregorian calendar

named Putumanna Kandar Menon. The Mamankam came to an end with the conquest of Kozhikode by Hyder Ali in 1776. Many local festivals with the name "Mamankam" are conducted in temples across Kerala. To disambiguate them from the Mamankam conducted at Thirunavaya, they are usually denoted by the name of the place along with the title.

The chapter 1 explains the background of the festival of Mamankam. It also explains about the brief history of the place that Mamankam is held and how much of a religious value that the place holds. The first chapter also give a brief introduction to the political elements that comes with the festival and explains how wide known this festival was. This chapter also tells how important the festival was within the society at that time. Chapter 2 explains what happens in the festival of Mamankam and it also sheds light upon the rewards and the political scuffles that occur during the festival. Chapter 3 explains about the suicidal warriors who preferred death over defeat and also sheds some light upon the temple of Navamukunda and the relevance of it during the festival of Mamankam.

Chapter 1

History of the great festival

Tirunavaya seems to be a very sacred place for the Hindus of Kerala from time immemorial. Perar at Tirunavaya is considered to assume a special sanctity, because it flows between the temple of god Vishnu Nava Mukunda on its right bank and temples of Brahma and Siva on its left. Tirunavaya, on the fertile Perar basin, must have been one of the earliest Brahmin settlement in Kerala. Perar also acts as the main artery of communication with the interior Kerala lands, otherwise inaccessible due to the thick vegetation, in the rainy season. Rivers and backwaters in Kerala afforded the easiest and cheapest and almost only means of communication in times when wheeled traffic and pack-bullock traffic were unknown. And accordingly, it is found that the Brahmins settled most thickly close to or on the rivers and selected sites for their settlements so as to command as much as possible of these arteries of traffic.

The fair was initially conducted by the landlords, led by an executive officer styled the Rakshapurusha ("the Great Protector of the Four Kalakas"). Each Rakshapurusha was to continue in office only for three years. Once some dispute arose as to the selection of the next Great Protector, in the assembly at Tirunavaya, and principle four section (which then composed the assembly) having failed to agree as to the selection of their executive officer resolved at last to select one to rule over them, and for this purpose they traveled, and chose one prince from a kingdom on the east of the Western Ghats. The Brahmins brought a prince to Tirunavaya, placed him on a seat of honor on the banks of Perar, and proclaimed him "Perumal of Kerala". According to the original engagement with the prince, he was to continue as ruler

only for a term of 12 years, at end of which he was to retire into private life or to leave the country altogether.

The coronation of this first king of Kerala took place on Pushya in the month of Magha in Karkitaka Vyazham, and this day in every cycle of Jupiter thus became important in the history of Kerala because the reign of each Perumal terminated on that day, he being elected for 12 years. This event was commemorated with a Great Feast, at which all Brahmin nobles and the chiefs of Kerala attended. On the 28th day the retiring Perumal appeared before the Brahmin assembly and the laid of the Sword of the Perumal, and the assembly declares the throne vacant. Another was then elected and crowned Perumal for another 12 years. This Great Feast and coronation occurring in Magha month, that month in every Karkitaka Vyazham was known as Maha Magha, or Mamankam in Tamil. According to Francis Wrede, the Chera Perumals of Cranganore used to preside over the Mamankams. So it seems, at first conducted by the Brahmins, the fair came to be celebrated the aegis of the Chera rulers of Cranganore. Even in latter Samutiri times, the first invitation letter to participate in the Mamankam was addressed to the Pandyas, a reminiscence of the Chera days.

After the disintegration of the Kulasekharas, most of their provinces became independent, giving rise to numerous Nair city states along the coast of Malabar. The Perumpadappu kingdom and then Valluvanad owned the right conduct the Mamankam festival as *Maharakshapurusha*. After acquiring the Polanad state, the Saamoothiri turned his attention to other states around him. Between 1553–1561 AD, the Saamoothiri Raja fought a series of small battles with smaller states called the Thirunavaya Wars. As Thirunavaya was captured, Saamoothiri proclaimed himself as the Rakshāpurusha (protector) and took over sole right of conducting the Mamankam festival. The next Mamankam at Thirunavaya was conducted under the auspices of Saamoothiri with great pomp and splendour

During the Mamankam festival, all other kings used to send flags as a symbol of regard to the Saamoothiri at Thirunavaya. But Valluvakkonathiri who did not recognise the Saamoothiri as the legitimate Rakshapurusha but considered him only a usurper used to send Chavers instead. If these men could kill the Saamoothiri, who was protected by thousands of soldiers, the right of Rakshapurusha would have devolved on the Walluvanad Raja. These Chaavers were sworn soldiers who preferred death to defeat, and who sacrificed their lives to avenge the death of Valluvanad princes in the Thirunavaya war. The death of the Vellaattiri princes also started a period of intense hatred and war between the two kingdoms which paved the way for the diminishing the power of Valluvanad. *Kudippaka or blood feud* was prevalent in the society. If a Nair was killed (In his attempt to assassinate the Saamoothiri), it was the duty of the relatives or even the subsequent generations of the deceased to avenge the death. So, most of these Chaver soldiers had lost their relatives or elders in previous wars with the Saamoothiri, and were fuelled by 'kudippaka' (blood feud). They came from various parts of Valluvanad, assembled at Thirumanthamkundu under Vellaattiri, and were led by commanders from one of the four houses.

Further details were provided by William Logan in Malabar Manual of 1887 and Francis Buchanan-Hamilton in "A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar" of 1807 respectively. Vellaattiri, after losing Thirunavaya and the right of the Rakshapurusha, began to conduct the Pooram festival in the place of Mamankam, at Angadipuram (Walluvappally), his capital. Here in the temple of his tutelary deity Thirumanthamkundu Bhagavathi, he stood on a raised granite platform from where in the olden days his predecessors started the procession to Thirunavaya for the Mamankam festival in peace. It was from here that the Chavers were sent to the Mamankam festival afterwards when Saamoothiri occupied it.

The war of Thirunavaya was not the end of Saamoothiri's aggression on Valluvanad. He continued his attacks on Vellaattiri. But he encountered stiff resistance and the fights went on in a protracted and sporadic fashion for a long time. (Kunnathattil

Madambil Nair (Nair of Mannarghat) was the desavazhi who looked after the affairs of the eastern boundary and hilly areas of Vellattiri. Chondathil Mannadiar (Puthumanna Panicker) and Nair of Kavada were other chiefs under him. This council of great men was a huge challenge to Saamoothiri even during times when mutual rivalries weakened the Vellaattiri Swaroopam.

Dharmoth Panicker the erstwhile Army Chief of Saamoothiri had already shown dissatisfaction on issues of capture of Mamankam. Saamoothiri followed a policy of appeasing the feudatories of Vellaattiri and conferring upon them the areas they originally held under Vellaattiri. One by one, he was able to win over Moopil Nairs, including those of Pulappatta and Kavalappara. Thus, Saamoothiri gradually became the master of Malappuram, Nilambur, Vallappanattukara and Manjeri, which were under these feudal lords. Eralpad (Saamoothiri prince) now began to rule these areas as supreme commander over them, with Karimpuzha as his base. But Saamoothiri faced defeat in the next attack on Perumpadappu. The Perumpadappu Rajas appealed to their ally Vellaattiri for assistance. Their combined army resisted Saamoothiri's forces and a bloody war ensued for three days, at the end of which Saamoothiri's army was on the retreat.

Alexander Hamilton³, in his *A New Account of the East Indies, Vol. I*, gives a different account of the initial nature of the festival. According to him, it was a custom for the king of Kerala to rule only for 12 years. The king was obliged to kill himself, by cutting his own throat on a public scaffold erected in view of the Brahmin assembly, after completing his 12-year term. The king's body was a little while after burned with great pomp and ceremony, and the Brahmins elected a new king for the next term. The *Kerala Mahatmya* corroborates this account, declaring that the king used to be deposed at the Mamankam, but there is no mention of a suicide. According to Duarte Barbosa the king goes to bathe at a temple tank with much fanfare. Thereafter, he prays before the idol and mounts to the scaffolding, and

³ **Alexander Hamilton** (January 11, 1755 or 1757 – July 12, 1804) was an American statesman, politician, legal scholar, military commander, lawyer, banker, and economist.

there, before all the people, he takes a very sharp knife, cuts off his throat himself and he performs this sacrifice to the idol. Whoever desires to reign for the next 12 years and undertake this martyrdom for the idol, has to be present looking on at this, and from that place the Brahmins proclaim him the new king.(Duarte Barbosa mentions this to be the kingdom of Quilacare and not Calicut of which he has given very detailed accounts of the life and customs of the people there including the Samutiri in the first chapter of vol 2) Sir James Frazer also supports this view in his extensive studies.

Chapter 2

What happens during the great festival of Mamankam

It is mentioned that mentions at each recurring Mamankam festival all feudal ties were broken, and the parties, assembled in public conclave at Tirunavaya, readjusted at such times all existing relations among themselves. At the end of the Feast all prior leases of land were considered to be at an end and fresh grants were to be obtained at the beginning of the next reign. By ancient customs, even in Travancore, all tenures were to continue for a maximum period of twelve years to be renewed thereafter. But it is known that this idealistic proposition did not work satisfactorily in Kerala.

The native traditions continue to describe the evolution of the festival in the following manner When the influence of the Perumal increased in course of time, they refused to abdicate after 12 years, and the practice of fighting for the crown by warriors, at Tirunavaya, came in vogue. The Perumal of Cranganore attended the Great Feast as before, but instead of abdicating the crown in the presence of Brahmins, he seated himself in a tent pitched for him at Tirunavaya, strongly guarded by a body of spearmen and lancers. The candidate of the kingship was to force his way through these warriors and to kill the Perumal. Theoretically, he who succeeded in thus killing the Perumal was immediately proclaimed and crowned Perumal for the next term of 12 years. If no one succeeded in killing the Perumal he was to reign for another 12 years. The last Perumal, now identified by historians as Cheraman Rama Varma Kulasekhara (ruled *c.* 1089-1124 CE), is said to have ruled for 36 years by surviving three Mamankams at Tirunavaya.

The tales of bravery and honour, and deceit and defeat are aplenty about the Mamankam, just like the rapid waves of the river Nila. The believers of the Hindu faith greatly revere the Bharatapuzha River which flows near the Brahma – Vishnu – Shiva temples, as river Perar. Special obituary rituals, in honour of the departed souls, have been held on the banks of this sacred river, called Pratheechi or dakshin Ganga in the Bhagavatham, from the ancient times itself. Bharatapuzha Rriver which originates in the Anamala in the Western Ghats covers around 200 kilometres before falling into the Arabian Sea at Ponnani. This great river, which could be called the lifeline of Kerala, is the longest river in the state. It is assumed that the last Mamankam was held in the year 1755 AD. It was at this Mamankam that the Zamorin narrowly escaped death after he was attacked by the 18-year-old chaver Puthumana Kandar Menon. The majestic festival of Mamankam came to an end when, in 1765 AD, Hyder Ali defeated the Zamorin.

The last Chera Perumal Rama Kulasekhara conferred the chief of Valluvanatu the "right" to conduct the Mamankam fair as the Great Protector with 10,000 Nairs. The Perumal also assigned to him, the Tirumandhamkunnattu Bhagavati, sacred to the Brahmins of Chovvaram, as his guardian deity. It was also Tirunavaya that the Chera Perumal of Cranganore is supposed to have made his partition of Kerala.

It would appear that the project against the Vellattiri, as the chief of Valluvanatu was called, was first suggested by the "Koya" of Kozhikode. The Koya of Kozhikode, chief of the influential Muslim merchants, was title of the royal port officer at Kozhikode. When the chief of Kozhikode protested that it was beyond his means, the Koya offered his military assistance. Immediately the Koya proceeded by sea, with his ships and men, and the Samutiri warriors by land to Tirunavaya, and

subduing little chiefs, villages and Hindu temples on the way. It seems, before Jupiter completed his cycle, the chief of Kozhikode captured Tirunavaya, proclaimed himself as the Great Protector and took over right of conducting the Mamankam fair. The chief of Kozhikode seems to have granted the Koya inexhaustible wealth, and caused him to "stand on his right side".

Another version represents the Koya securing this privilege to his chief by a stratagem. This version of the legend seems suggest friendly relations existed between the Koya and the chief of Valluvanatu, as well as with the chief of Kozhikode. In one Mamankam fair, the followers of the chief of Kozhikode managed to penetrate through the bodyguards of the Vellattiri chief and kill him on the Vakayur platform (Manittara). Still another version has it that the chief of Kozhikode promised to marry the Koya's daughter if the enterprise ended in success. But the Kozhikode chief began to repent of his rash and hasty offer, as it involved "the loss of caste". It was arranged that when he came to Kozhikode he should receive, as soon as he crossed the river at Kallayi, betel and tobacco from the hands of a Muslim man dressed as a woman - this being considered tantamount to a marriage.

The rivalry between the two Brahmin settlements Panniyur and Chovvaram also seems to give the chief of Kozhikode a pretext to attack the Vellattiri. Visscher, in his "Letters from Malabar", Letter VIII, writes, "so has the trumpet of battle blown by the Panniyur and Chovvaram often summoned the chiefs of Kerala to mutual hostilities". The rivalry is also mentioned by de Couto⁴ in *Decades* (Vol V, Sec 1, Chap. 1). The immediate pretext of the Kozhikode's occupation of Tirunavaya was

⁴ He was born in Lisbon in 1542 and studied Latin and Rhetoric at Saint Antão College and philosophy at the convent at Benfica. In March 1559 (Armada of Pero Vaz de Sequeira) he traveled to Portuguese India. As a soldier he took part in the Surat campaign in March 1560, living in Baroche in 1563.

invasion Tirumanasseri Natu by its neighbors on either side, the Valluvanatu (Arangottu Swarupam) and Perumpatappu Swarupam. Tirumanasseri natu was a small chiefdom at the mouth of Perar, ruled by a Brahmin. The chiefdom, nominally subordinate to the Arangottu, had access to the sea at port Ponnani, and was bounded by Perar in the north. The Brahmin chief of Tirumanasseri was the head of the Panniyur Namputiris and was considered the protector of all the Brahmins living between Perinchellur and Chenganur, and he enjoyed koyma right over thirteen temples including that of Talipparamba. He was the leader of the Namputiri Samghas of Kolattur, and had 3000 Nair warriors under him. The chief of Tirumanasseri Natu appealed to the chief of Kozhikode for help, and ceded port Ponnani as price of his protection. The Kozhikkode warriors advanced by land and sea. The main army, commanded by the Samutiri himself, approached Tirunavaya from north. The Eralpatu, proceeding by sea, occupied port Ponnani and Tirumanasseri Natu, and attacked the Vellattiri from west. The campaign was bitter and protracted, so much so the Kozhikode despairing of success, sought divine help by propitiating Valayanatu Bhagavati, the tutelary deity of Vellattiris. The battles were at last decided by the death of two princes belonging to the clan of Vellattiri.

Rewards from Kozhikode

All those who taken part in the battles, it seems, received liberal rewards from Kozhikode. Koya of Kozhikode, with the Farsi title "Shah Bantar", was given all the privileges and dignities of a Nair chief, jurisdiction over all the Muslims residing at Kozhikode bazar, the right to receive a small present from the Illuvas, the Kammalans and the Mukkuvans whenever the Kozhikode conferred any honors upon them (which they had at once report to him), to collect from the brokers at the rate of

10 *fanams*⁵ for every foreign ship that might put in at Kozhikode and levy a poll tax of 16 *fanams* at Pantarakkatavu and 12 *fanams* at Beyypore, the privilege of sending Mappila drummers and pipers for every marriage and Kaliyattu, and the duty of removing the roof of any offender in Velapuram condemned to lose hearth and home. At Mamankam the Koya was in charge of the fireworks. He arranged for Kampaveti and Kalpalaka and also for mock fights between ships in Perar. Hamilton, in *A New Account of the East Indies*, Vol. 1. pages 306-8, records hearing guns firing for two or three days and nights successively.

Koya was given privilege of standing on the right side of the chief of Kozhikode on the Vakayur platform (Nilapatu Tara) on the last the day of the Mamankam fair Eralpatu, it seems, was given privilege of standing in state on the left bank of the Perar river whenever the Kozhikode chief appeared on the Vakayur platform on its right bank. The Munalpatu obtained the honor of standing in state under the Kuriyal, midway between the temple of Tirunavaya and Vakayur on the day of Ayilyam. The chief of Vettam, was conceded the same privilege as the Munalpatu, but his standing in state came on the day of Puyam. Tirumanasseri Namputiri was attached to the Eralpatu's *suite* in all the ceremonies connected with the Mamankam and Taipuyam and given the right of collecting a small fee during the fair from every merchant who set up his booth on the Perar river-bed. The chief of Cranganore was given the prerogative of supervising the feeding of the Brahmins throughout the Mamankam festival. Alexander Hamilton, who gives an account of the initial nature of the fair, mentions the "Great Feast" associated with the festival.

⁵ The **fanam** (or **panam** in the local language of Tamil) was a currency issued by the Madras Presidency until 1815. It circulated alongside the Indian rupee, also issued by the Presidency. The fanam was a small silver coin, subdivided into 80 copper *cash*, with the gold *pagoda* worth 42 fanams. The rupee was worth 12 fanams. After 1815, only coins of the rupee currency system were issued.

Chapter 3

The battle of the Chavers

During the subsequent Mamankam fairs, all other chiefs of Kerala including the ruler of Travancore Flags were sent to Kozhikode as a symbol of submission. These flags were used to be hoisted at the festival. But the chief of Valluvanatu who did not recognize the Samutiri as the legitimate Great Protector but considered him only a usurper and used to send chavers suicidal warriors instead. If these men could kill the Samutiri, who was personally present at the fair and was protected by thousands of his own warriors, the right of Great Protector would have "devolved" on the chief of Valluvanatu. These chavers were Nair warriors who preferred death to defeat, and who sacrificed their lives to avenge the death of Valluvanatu clan members in the battles leading to the fall of Tirunavaya. The death of the Vellaattiri clan members also started a period of intense hatred and battles between the two clans. Kutippaka or blood feud was prevalent in the medieval Kerala society. If a Nair warrior was killed (in his attempt to kill the Samutiri), it was the duty of the relatives or even the subsequent generations of the deceased to avenge the death. So, most of these chavers had lost their relatives or elders in previous battles with the Samutiri, and were fueled by kutippaka.

They came from various parts of Valluvanatu, assembled at Thirumanthamkunnu modern day Angadipuram under Vellattiri, and were led by warriors from one of the four major Nair houses of Valluvanatu viz Putumanna Panikkars, Candrattu Panikkars, Vayankara Panikkars, and Verkotu Panikkars. Further details were provided by William Logan in his 1887 district

manual *Malabar* and Francis Buchanan-Hamilton⁶ in his "*A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara, and Malabar*" (1807), respectively.

Vellattiri, after losing Tirunavaya and the right of the Great Protector, began to conduct the puram festival in the place of Mamankam, at Angadipuram (medieval Valluvappalli), his capital. "Here in the temple of his tutelary deity Thirumanthamkunnu Bhagavati, he stood on a raised granite platform from where in the olden days his predecessors started the procession to Tirunavaya for the Mamankam fair in peace. It was from here that the warriors were sent to the Mamankam fair afterwards when Samutiri occupied it. The chavers suicidal warriors, sent to kill the Samutiri, hailed from the four important Nair families of Valluvanatu. When Saamoothiri started conducting Mamankam; all adjoining kings send their flags to Saamoothiri as a proof of their loyalty. But the king of Valluvanadu used to send a Suicide squad of 18 members named 'Chaver' from different families in Valluvanadu to assassinate Saamoothiri, while he will be present at 'Nilapaadu Thara', protected by his soldiers, watching Mamankam. The Chaver soldiers were believed to be from families 'Putumanna Panikkar', 'Chandrath Panikkar', 'Kokat Panikkar', 'Verkot Panikkar', 'Elampulakkad Achan', 'Kulathoor Varier', 'Uppamkalathil Pisharody', 'Pathiramana Vellody', 'Parakkatt Nair', 'Kakkoot Nair', 'Mannarmala Nair', 'Cherukara Pisharody', Velluvanaad Royal House and two Namboothiries.

The Navamukunda temple

The Navamukunda temple, on the banks of Bharatapuzha River, near Thirur in the Malappuram district is one of the 108 temples in India that are especially

⁶ Dr **Francis Buchanan** (15 February 1762 – 15 June 1829), later known as **Francis Hamilton** but often referred to as **Francis Buchanan-Hamilton**, was a Scottish physician who made significant contributions as a geographer, zoologist, and botanist while living in India. He did not assume the name of Hamilton until three years after his retirement from India.

dedicated to devotees of Lord Vishnu. It is believed that this ancient temple, which is around 5000 years old, was built by the Navayogis during the dwapara age. According to the puranas, the navayogis are the sons of Rishaba, the king of Ayodhya. The legends say that the Navayogis, who were noted travellers, had established the Saala villages at the confluence of the Bhagmati and Gandaki rivers in the North India (today's Nepal) in the Navamukunda temple for the greater good humanity. Around 1300 years ago, master craftsman Perunthachan had renovated the sanctum sanctorum of the Navamukunda temple as per the instructions of the Vettathu king

The unique construction of the sanctum sanctorum is so mesmerizing and awe inspiring as the sun rays fall directly on the idol, on the morning of the Vishu day (1st day of the Malayalam month Medam; Uttarayanam or the first half of the year) and the 1st day of the Malayalam month of Kanni (dakshinayanam or the second half of the year). The Pazhukka mandapam which has significance in the history of Mamankam is situated in the south east corner of this temple. It is believed that the members of the Zamorin's family had watched the Mamankam festival from the Pazhukka mandapam.

Historical significance

The Mamankam memorials, rebuilt by the Kerala government under the Nila project, in 2010, are maintained by the archaeology department. It was at the Nilapaduthara that the Zamorin stood, in all glory with his sword drawn, along with his guards and other convoy. He watched the Mamankam and gave the instructions from the Nilapaduthara. It was at this spot that the Chavers tried to assassinate the Zamorin. The Valluvanadan rulers had often tried to assassinate the Zamorin who had defeated them and taken over Thirunavaya, while he was at the Mamankam festival.

The brave warriors who fell dead or wounded were thrown into the nearby well and trampled down by the elephants. This well called the manikinar is protected as a historical monument in honour of the chavers who gave up their lives, fighting for their honour and upholding their duty. Marunnara and Changampally kalari

The Marunnara or the armoury where the Zamorins kept the gun powder is located between the Nilapaduthara and the Thirunavaya temple. Legends say that the 'marunnara' was used to store the herbs or medicines used to treat the wounded soldiers and also as a treasury where many precious objects owned by the king were stored. Some historians say that this was an ancient cave temple of the stone ages.

It was at the Changampally kalari (traditional learning centres of martial arts) that the body guards and the soldiers of the Zamorins were trained in kalaripayattu and other methods of warfare. The warriors who were wounded in the wars or during the Mamankam were treated at this kalari. The Changampally kalari was started at Thirunavaya by the eminent kalari practitioners who came from Tulunadu upon the special invitation of the Cheraman Perumal king to perform at the Mamankam festival.

Account of a Valluvanatu attack at the Mamankam held in 1683 is given by William Logan in his district manual 1887. This account was based on the *Kozhikode Granthavaris* Amid much din and firing of guns the *Samutiri*, the warriors, the elect of the four Nair houses in *Valluvanatu*, step forth from the crowd and receive the last blessings and farewells of their friends and relatives. They have just partaken of the last meal they are to eat on earth at the house of the temple representative of their chieftain *Vellattiri*; they are decked with garlands and smeared with ashes. On this particular occasion it is one of the houses of *Putumanna Panikkar* who heads the fray.

He is joined with seventeen of his friends – for all who so wish may fall in with sword and shields in support of the men who have elected to die.

Armed with swords and shields alone they rush at the spearmen thronging the palisades; they wind and turn their bodies, as if they had no bones, casting them forward and backward, high and low, even to the astonishment of the beholders, as worthy Master Johnson describes them in a passage already quoted. But notwithstanding the suppleness of their limbs, notwithstanding their delight and skill and dexterity in weapons, the result is inevitable, and is prosaically recorded in the chronicle thus: The number of warriors who came and died in the early morning the next day after the elephant began to be adorned with gold trappings – being Putumana Kantar Menon and followers was eighteen. At various times during the ten last days of the festival the same thing is repeated. Whenever the Samutiri of Kozhikode takes his stand on the terrace, assumes the sword the Sword of the Chera king and shakes it, men rush forth from the crowd on the west temple gate only to be impaled on the spears of the guardsmen who relieve each other from day to day.

Changampally Kalari, Pazhukkamandapam, Nilapadu Thara, Marunnara and Manikkaṅṅar at Tirunavaya are protected (Protected Monuments) by the State Archaeology Department, Kerala. All of them are situated on private land, which means the Kerala Tourism Department is not able to get involved in preserving the monuments. The Marunnara is situated on around 4.5-acre land owned by Kerala State Electricity Board and the Nilapatu Tara is inside the land of the Kodakkal Tile Factory. In August 2010, the renovation of Mamankam ruins was inaugurated up by the authorities, which came under the Nila Tourism Project with the support of State Archaeology Department, Kerala. Kerala Industrial and Technical Consultancy Organisation was appointed as the implementing agency of the project. Changampally

Kalari, Nilapadu Thara, Manikkinar, Pazhukkamandapam, and Marunnara were renovated during this period. Assistance from the Kerala-state government, around Rs. 90 lakhs, funded this renovation.

Conclusion

Mamankam played an important role in the historical and cultural development of Kerala. Mamankam was a grand duo-decennial festival which lit up the banks of the Nila, in Thirunavaya. The Samoothiris or the Zamorins saw this as an opportunity to show off their pomp and power in front of the other provincial rulers. Historians record Mamankam as an art and cultural celebration and also a science and trade fair which lasted for 28 days. Not just from the various provinces of Kerala and the North Indian states people from different corners of the world came together to celebrate culture and promote trade at the banks of Nila. This Valluvanadan festival was also an occasion which projected the religious unity and cultural vividness of the provinces. However, the Thirunavaya banks, where the Mamankam festivals were held, also echo battle cries of cavers or sworn warriors who preferred death to defeat.

Mamankam has been immortalized in the cultural history of Kerala through the writings of great historians, travellers, literary legends and even through popular film songs like ‘Mamamkan palakuri kondadi. On the last days of the Mamankam festival, the rulers of all the provinces in Valluvanad would gather together and elect the new king who would rule for the next 12 years or until the next Mamankam. As per the historical records the Zamorins who ruled Kozhikode fought a series of battles and captured a number of Valluvanadan provinces, including Thirunavaya. After the great victory against the Valluvanadan kings, the power to hold Mamankam rested with the Zamorins. He was hailed as the supreme protector of the land. Mamankam, hence, became the venue of kutipaka or blood feud between the Zamorins and the Valluvanadan kings.

We can understand that when the Mamankam was held, all the adjoining kings used to send their flags to the ruling Zamorin as a proof of their loyalty. Konathiri, one of the chieftains of Valluvanadu, in order to express his displeasure over the Zamorin's highhandedness and to retrieve the right to conduct Mamankam, had sent a group of Chavers to assassinate the Zamorin. These sworn warriors fought with the Zamorin on the nilapaduthara. The dead and the badly wounded Chavers were thrown into the nearby well called the manikinar and trampled down using elephants. The temple, nilapaduthara and the manikinar could still be seen in Thirunavaya as remnants of this historical festival. Mamankam, now, is also remembered for the great courage and dedication of the hundreds of chavers who had sacrificed their lives for the sake of their sworn duty.

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Appendix



Perar (River Ponnani)



Northern nata of the Tirumandhamkунnu Temple



Tirunavaya Temple



Nilapadu Thara



Marunnara – inside view



Manikkinar



Manikinar: well used to dump the Chover, Thirunavaya