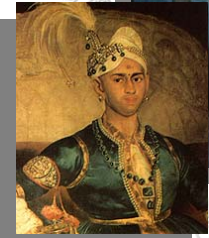


FORT AREA HERITAGE ZONE THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

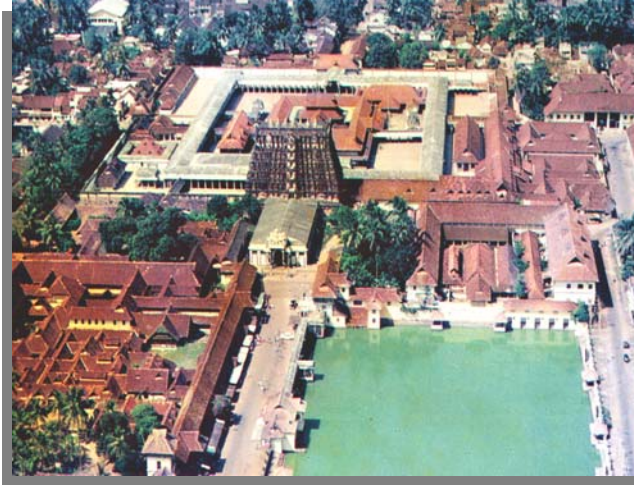
KNOW THE HERITAGE

A WALK THROUGH THE HISTORY & CULTURE



Art & Heritage Commission &
Department of Town & Country Planning
Government of Kerala

Thiruvananthapuram, the capital city of Kerala State has its history dating back to very early times and its antiquity is undisputed. The significance of the settlement in the region reached its pinnacle, since the capital of Travancore kingdom was shifted from Padmanabhapuram to Fort Area in Thiruvananthapuram during the reign of Dharma Raja (1758-1798 AD).



Inside of fort was a well-planned settlement surrounding Padmanabha Swamy temple. This includes numerous other temples, *Teertha* (sacred tanks), centres of learning & religious instruction, places of food storage & distribution, buildings to accommodate *Tanthris*, scholars etc, palaces of the royal families & other aristocratic families, row houses of Tamil & Tulu Brahmins and other upper caste Hindu population. Cleanliness of public places featured high priority during that period. Here are a few of the historic, cultural and architectural treasures of Heritage zone.

01 Sree Padmanabha Swamy temple,

standing in the elevated focal point of *Kottakkakom* (inside of the fort) is the best specimen of the Dravidian Style of Architecture found in the whole of Kerala State. At the same time, it is also recognised as the splendid monument for the fusion of Dravidian and Kerala features of



architecture. The hoary antiquity of Sree Padmanabha Swamy temple is clear from the hymns of the *Vaishnava* saint *Nammalwar* of 9th century. Thiruvananthapuram was the spiritual capital of *Venad* kingdom, being the seat of *Sree Padmanabha*, the family deity of the rulers of *Venad*.

The temple spreads in a compound measuring 570 ft x 510 ft (around 7 acres) known as *Mathilkakom*. The 100 ft high, seven-storied *gopuram* on the eastern entrance to the temple (built in granite and brick with elaborate sculptures and ornamental works) dominates the skyline of the Fort area and is the premier landmark of the capital city and even the state. The foundation of the *gopuram* was laid way back in 1566 AD during the reign of H. H. *Adithya Varma*. The sacred tank [*Padmatheertham*] is located on the north western side of the *Sree Padmanabha Swamy* temple.

Despite changes in name of the ruling houses, the deity of the temple Lord *Sree Padmanabha Swamy* had enjoyed continued emotional allegiance and royal patronage. With the famous *Thrippati Danam*, the deed of dedication of H. H. Marthanda Varma the great in 1750 AD, *Sree Padmanabha Swamy* became the monarch of the state of Travancore. All honours reserved for sovereign were transferred to the family deity - *Sree Padmanabha* and the kings of Travancore thence forth ruled only as slaves of the lord which was later recognised by even the British Government !

02 The Fort Wall, originally constructed by H. H. Marthanda Varma the great in 1749 AD, was partly demolished by the British after the uprising of *Velu Thampi Dalawa* so as to lessen the security in an act of retribution and was reconstructed with mud. However, a good portion of this historic mud wall portion was demolished in the post-independence period due to lack of awareness on the importance of preserving such historic structure. Each of the seven gates of the Fort depicts different architectural styles.



03 The main **Palace Complex** in the Fort Area is located at the south-eastern side of the *Sree Padmanabha Swamy* temple. Palaces of royal family and their relatives are also located at different locales within and outside the Fort. The most compendious view of palatial architecture in the state can still be obtained in the Fort area where a succession of rulers built a series of palaces that reflect change of taste in the passing of time and exhibit influences other than purely indigenous. The lay out and decoration of older palaces; such as those of H.H. *Marthanda Varma* the great and H.H. *Swathi Thirunal*; illustrate the Padmanabhapuram style, though later buildings show influence of western style.



07 **Arat Road** to the west of Fort is characterised by residential buildings – *Ammaveedu*, on both sides giving the street a unique character. Annually, festivals are held twice at the temple and on the concluding day, the image of *Sree Padmanabha Swamy* will be carried in procession to *Sanghumughom* beach through this route and headed by the Maharaja for bathing and worshipping the image.



04 Being the capital of the erstwhile Travancore kingdom, the Fort area had to accommodate various **office buildings**, most of which; including that of *Peshkar* (Minister); are located on the south-eastern corner of the palace complex. Though the *Nithya Chelavu* bungalow [office for daily money transactions] is located in this area to the north of *Thekke Theruvu*, the *Chellamvaka* [royal treasury] is located within the palace complex area, closer to the main entry street to the temple of *Sree Padmanabha*; the absolute ruler of the kingdom.

05 In addition to palaces, **Madhoms** [especially those of *Thantris* of *Sree Padmanabha Swamy* temple at *Mithranandapuram*], **Agraharams** of Thulu brahmins, and residences other upper caste Hindu population often accompanied with individual **temples** dominate the rest of Fort area and its immediate environs. Many other places of heritage significance adorn the Heritage Zone such as the **samadhi of Vilwamangalm, Nellupura** for storage of grains etc. These rich and diverse buildings of the yore are not only the specimens of architectural practices, but a fusion of the same with the culture traditions, festivities and life styles.

08 But what is happening TODAY?



What will happen TOMORROW?

Is our heritage poised for complete extinction?

We have committed enough mistakes.... Let's join hands for not repeating it... , Let's correct the mistakes we have already committed... Let's 'right' the 'wrong'.

Yes, you too can help in conserving this great heritage of our nation.

Conserve the 'past' for 'future' generations

For more details, please contact:

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Palayam, Thiruvananthapuram – 695 033.