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SOUL OF ONAM
Continuing to Unite Generations



**THE AROMA OF THE KITCHEN:
THE RIGHT SPICE MATTERS**
-SREEKUMAR M. SAMBHU

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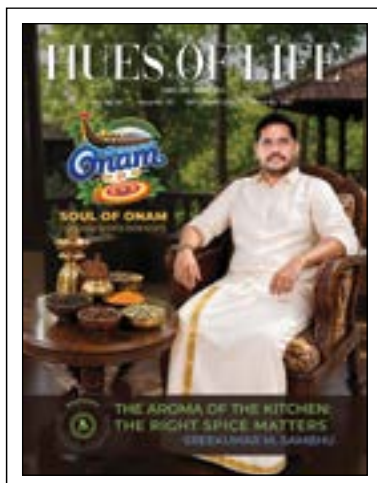
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As we celebrate Onam this year, let us try to take this spirit of Onam beyond the festival and make it a permanent part of our lives. As it exhorts us to come together to share and to make others happy, we must know that it is all about harmony and goodwill and most importantly, the eternal human spirit that makes us who we are, in the truest sense of the word.

It is this spirit of humanity that makes Onam truly special. It makes us realize that despite all our differences, we are all one single human family.

Onam teaches us that we must not be selfish with our happiness and success and let others share in our joy. For what is a celebration without friends and family? What is a harvest without sharing the bounty? What is an achievement without sharing the joys it brings?

It makes us more aware of the importance of helping others, going out of our way to help the lonely and the helpless, spreading love and compassion because this is the most important way to keep the true spirit of Onam alive.

While time may pass and traditions may change, the values they embody must never be forgotten.

Let us spread this feeling of compassion and willingness to help others. Let us realize that the greatest way to cherish the festival is to share it with others and make them happy just as we want to be made happy.

Warm regards,

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Editor: NIJITH RAJ.



SOUL OF ONAM

Continuing to Unite Generations



"The true strength of a tradition lies not in its age, but in its ability to inspire every generation anew."

The monsoon rains have long withdrawn from Kerala's emerald landscape. Rivers return to their gentle rhythm, paddy fields shimmer beneath the mellow sun, and the fragrance of rain kissed earth mingles with the delicate scent of fresh blossoms. Courtyards gradually transform into vibrant canvases as intricate Pookkalams begin to adorn the entrances of homes. Markets come alive with the colours and aromas of seasonal produce, while hand woven Kasavu garments once again find pride of place in every household. Conversations naturally turn to family reunions, festive feasts, and time honoured customs that have been cherished for generations. Across the length and breadth of Kerala, an unmistakable sense of anticipation fills the air as the state prepares to welcome its most beloved festival.

Onam has arrived.

For Keralites, this annual celebration is far more than a festival marked on a calendar. It is an emotional homecoming, a cultural reaffirmation, and a living expression of identity that has endured through centuries of social, political, and economic change. Every generation discovers its own meaning in Onam, yet the values at its heart remain remarkably unchanged. It is a celebration of gratitude, equality, hospitality, abundance, and the enduring belief that prosperity acquires significance only when it is shared.

Few festivals possess this kind extraordinary ability to unite people across boundaries of religion, geography, profession, and age. Onam precisely does that. Whether celebrated in the quiet villages of Kuttanad, the bustling streets of Kochi, the hill towns of Wayanad, or by Malayali communities in London, Dubai, Toronto, Melbourne, and Singapore, the festival evokes the same sense of belonging. It creates a shared cultural language that transcends distance and reminds every Malayali of where they come from.

Why Onam is exceptional is not merely because of the grandeur of its celebrations but the remarkable continuity of its values. In an age shaped by digital transformation and global mobility, traditions often risk becoming symbolic gestures rather than lived experiences. Onam has resisted that fate. Instead, it has evolved gracefully, embracing contemporary life without surrendering the principles that have sustained it for generations.

Its story is therefore not confined to mythology. It's a true story of Kerala itself.

"Onam endures not because it preserves the past, but because its timeless values continue to guide the future."

The Kingdom Every Generation Remembers

Every great civilisation preserves an ideal that reflects its highest aspirations. For Kerala, that ideal is embodied in the legendary reign of King Mahabali.

The story has been narrated for centuries in homes, temples, schools, and public gatherings. Children hear it as mythology, scholars interpret it through philosophy, and historians recognise it as one of the most enduring cultural narratives in southern India. Yet its significance extends beyond religious tradition.

According to the Bhagavata Purana and later literary traditions, Mahabali was a powerful and compassionate king whose kingdom flourished through justice, generosity, and equality. Under his leadership, prosperity was shared rather than concentrated, and the dignity of every individual was protected. The legendary verses associated with his reign describe a society where falsehood, poverty, theft, and discrimination had no place.

Whether such a kingdom ever existed in historical reality is less important than what it symbolises. Civilisations often preserve ideals through stories, allowing each generation to measure its own progress against timeless principles. Mahabali's Kerala became the embodiment of ethical governance and social harmony, offering a vision that remains remarkably relevant in the twenty first century.

The narrative reaches its turning point with the arrival of Vamana, the fifth incarnation of Lord Vishnu.

Disguised as a humble Brahmin scholar, Vamana approached Mahabali during a sacred sacrificial ceremony and requested a seemingly modest gift: three paces of land. Confident in his commitment to

generosity, the king accepted without hesitation. What followed became one of the defining episodes of Indian mythology. Vamana assumed a cosmic form, covering heaven with one stride and earth with the second. With no space remaining for the third, Mahabali bowed his head in complete surrender.

The episode is frequently interpreted as the triumph of divine order. Yet another reading is equally compelling. Mahabali loses his earthly kingdom but gains immortality in the hearts of his people because he honours his promise even at the cost of everything he possesses. Integrity, rather than power, becomes his greatest legacy.

Recognising this extraordinary virtue, Lord Vishnu grants Mahabali one final wish: the opportunity to return once every year to visit the people who loved him.

That annual homecoming is remembered as Onam.

*"Mahabali returns each year
not merely through legend,
but through every act of generosity
that strengthens a community."*

Beyond Mythology

One of the reasons the legend continues to resonate is that it invites reflection rather than blind acceptance.

Mahabali is neither remembered as a conqueror nor celebrated for military victories. His greatness lies in the quality of his leadership. The story therefore shifts attention away from dominance towards responsibility, reminding society that authority derives its legitimacy from justice and compassion.

Modern Kerala continues to celebrate Mahabali because he represents aspirations that remain universal. Citizens everywhere desire transparent governance, equal opportunity, social harmony, and leadership grounded in integrity. These ideals transcend religion and politics, allowing the legend to retain extraordinary relevance even today.

This deeper philosophical interpretation explains why Onam has become a cultural festival rather than an exclusively religious observance. Families belonging to diverse faiths participate with equal enthusiasm because the celebration speaks to values shared by all humanity.

Its enduring popularity reflects not theological doctrine but collective memory.





The Harvest That Became a Celebration of Life

Long before the story of Mahabali became intertwined with Kerala's cultural identity, communities across the region celebrated the completion of the agricultural cycle.

Kerala's civilisation was shaped by rivers, monsoon rains, fertile plains, and abundant natural resources. Agriculture determined not only economic prosperity but also the rhythm of daily life. The successful harvest represented security for the coming months and inspired collective expressions of gratitude towards nature.

Scholars have long observed that many harvest festivals gradually absorbed regional myths, philosophical traditions, and local customs, evolving into complex cultural celebrations. Onam appears to have followed a similar path. The agricultural festivities associated with the Malayalam month of Chingam merged with the Mahabali narrative, creating a uniquely Kerala festival that celebrated both material abundance and moral prosperity.

Ancient Tamil Sangam literature offers fascinating glimpses into early South Indian harvest traditions that bear striking similarities to present day Onam. Literary works composed nearly two thousand years ago refer to communal feasting, floral decorations, festive gatherings, music, dance, and agricultural celebrations that reflected the close relationship between people and the land.

Although historians continue to debate the precise origins of Onam, there is broad agreement that the festival predates many of its later religious interpretations. It emerged from the lived experiences of agrarian communities whose survival depended upon seasonal cycles and collective cooperation.

This historical foundation explains why gratitude remains central to every aspect of Onam.

The festival does not simply celebrate abundance. It acknowledges the countless relationships that make abundance possible. Farmers, artisans, craftsmen, traders, musicians, cooks, and families all become participants in a larger celebration of shared prosperity.

In contemporary society, where food often arrives disconnected from the labour that produces it, Onam gently restores awareness of humanity's dependence upon nature. Every grain of rice served during the Sadya, every flower placed in a Pookkalam, and every traditional ritual reflects an ancient understanding that prosperity begins with respect for the natural world.

HERITAGE INSIGHT

Many historians believe that the enduring popularity of Onam stems from its remarkable ability to blend mythology, agricultural heritage, regional history, and social philosophy into a single cultural celebration. Rather than belonging to one community alone, it evolved as a shared expression of Kerala's collective identity.

The Living Traditions That Continue to Shape Kerala's Cultural Identity

If the legend of Mahabali provides Onam with its philosophical foundation, it is the festival's living





traditions that give it colour, rhythm, and enduring vitality. Across Kerala, these customs transform mythology into experience, allowing every household to become a participant in a celebration that is as personal as it is collective.

Unlike many festivals that revolve around a single day of observance, Onam unfolds gradually over ten days, creating a sense of anticipation that strengthens family bonds and community participation. Each passing day adds another layer to the celebration, encouraging reflection, creativity, hospitality, and togetherness. The festival is not defined by a single event but by a sequence of rituals that culminate in a shared expression of gratitude and joy.

This gradual unfolding has always been one of Onam's greatest strengths. It allows traditions to be experienced rather than merely observed, ensuring that each generation inherits not only the customs themselves but also the values they represent.

The Journey from Atham to Thiruvonam

The ten days of Onam begin with Atham, when the first floral carpet is laid before homes. Although modest in size, this initial arrangement carries profound symbolism. It marks the beginning of preparations to welcome King Mahabali,

whose annual visit is eagerly anticipated by every household.

As the days progress through Chithira, Chodhi, Vishakam, Anizham, Thriketta, Moolam, Pooradam, Uthradam, and finally Thiruvonam, both the festivities and the floral decorations grow in scale and intricacy. Families gather each morning to collect fresh flowers, while children eagerly compete to create increasingly elaborate designs.

Historically, the flowers used for these arrangements were gathered from fields, riverbanks, and home gardens rather than purchased from markets. This simple practice fostered a deep appreciation for Kerala's biodiversity and encouraged communities to remain closely connected with the natural landscape. Every blossom carried the fragrance of the local environment, making the Pookkalam not merely an artistic creation but a celebration of the region's ecological richness.

The gradual expansion of the floral carpet also reflects an important philosophical idea. Prosperity does not appear overnight. Like the Pookkalam itself, it grows through patience, care, cooperation, and the contributions of many hands.

"Every flower placed upon a Pookkalam is an invitation to memory, gratitude, and belonging."

The Kerala Home During Onam

Preparations for Onam began weeks in advance. Homes were thoroughly cleaned, repaired, and decorated as a symbolic act of welcoming prosperity. Brass lamps were polished until they reflected light like mirrors. Wooden furniture received careful attention. Courtyards were swept each morning before fresh flowers were arranged.

These customs were never merely about cleanliness or decoration. They reflected a deeper belief that physical spaces influence emotional well being. A well maintained home demonstrated respect not only for guests but also for the values of order, hospitality, and gratitude.

Although contemporary apartments have replaced many traditional residences, this spirit continues to endure. Families still dedicate time to preparing their homes, transforming even the smallest living spaces into welcoming environments filled with warmth and celebration.



The Kasavu Tradition

No visual image represents Onam more elegantly than the timeless simplicity of the Kasavu.

Characterised by its ivory white fabric bordered with gold, the Kasavu saree has become synonymous with Kerala's cultural identity. Its understated elegance reflects a philosophy that values refinement over extravagance. Rather than relying upon elaborate embellishment, the garment celebrates purity of form, craftsmanship, and graceful restraint.

The history of Kasavu weaving extends over centuries, with skilled artisans preserving techniques that have been passed from one generation to the next. Originally woven from hand spun cotton and genuine gold thread, these textiles were prized for their durability and understated sophistication.

Today, contemporary designers continue to reinterpret the Kasavu tradition through innovative silhouettes and fabrics while remaining faithful to its essential aesthetic. This balance between heritage and modernity mirrors the broader evolution of Onam itself.

The attire worn during the festival therefore represents far more than fashion. It reflects continuity, craftsmanship, and cultural confidence.

"The elegance of the Kasavu lies not in ornamentation, but in its quiet celebration of simplicity."

The Onasadya: Kerala's Greatest Culinary Heritage

Among all the traditions associated with Onam, none carries greater emotional significance than the Onasadya.

The preparation begins long before guests arrive. Kitchens awaken before sunrise as multiple



generations work together with remarkable coordination. Vegetables are peeled, coconuts grated, spices ground, and traditional recipes prepared according to practices refined over centuries.

The meal itself is served upon a fresh banana leaf whose placement follows established custom. Every dish occupies its designated position, creating a visual composition that reflects order as much as abundance.

A traditional Sadya may include more than thirty preparations, each contributing distinct flavours, textures, and nutritional balance. Rice forms the centrepiece, accompanied by parippu, sambar, olan, avial, erissery, kalan, thoran, pachadi, kichadi, rasam, puliserry, pickles, banana chips, sharkara upperi, pappadam, buttermilk, bananas, and an assortment of payasams.

The sequence of serving is equally significant.

Each course complements the next, demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of taste, digestion, and seasonal nutrition that has evolved through generations of culinary wisdom.

Yet the greatest significance of the Sadya lies not upon the banana leaf but around it.

Families gather around the same table, guests are welcomed without distinction, every meal is shared equally, and hospitality becomes the truest expression of prosperity.

Few culinary traditions anywhere in the world communicate social equality with such quiet elegance.

The Science Behind the Sadya

Contemporary nutritionists increasingly recognise the remarkable balance achieved within the traditional Sadya. Coconut provides healthy fats, pulses contribute protein, vegetables supply essential vitamins and fibre, fermented preparations support digestive health, while spices such as turmeric, ginger, cumin, and black pepper offer anti-inflammatory and medicinal benefits.

The meal also reflects remarkable environmental wisdom. Seasonal vegetables reduce dependence upon long distance transportation, banana leaves eliminate disposable serving ware, and locally grown ingredients strengthen regional agricultural communities.

Long before sustainability became a global conversation, Kerala's culinary traditions had already embraced many of its fundamental principles.

Did You Know?

A complete traditional Onasadya is carefully balanced across six classical tastes recognised by Ayurveda: sweet, sour, salty, bitter, pungent, and astringent. This harmony was believed to promote both nourishment and digestive well being.

Music, Dance, and the Language of Celebration

No festival can truly be understood without appreciating its music.

Across Kerala, the resonant sound of the Chenda announces celebration long before one reaches the venue. Its powerful rhythms have accompanied temple festivals, community gatherings, and ceremonial processions for centuries. During Onam, percussion ensembles such as Panchavadyam, Chenda Melam, and Thayambaka transform public spaces into vibrant expressions of collective energy.



Dance traditions are equally integral to the celebration.

The graceful movements of Kaikottikali, performed by women standing in concentric circles around the ceremonial lamp, embody harmony, discipline, and shared joy. Every gesture appears effortless, yet each movement reflects generations of artistic refinement.

In striking contrast stands Pulikali, perhaps Kerala's most exuberant folk performance. Performers paint their bodies as tigers and hunters before dancing through crowded streets accompanied by drums and enthusiastic spectators. Originally intended as popular entertainment during the harvest season, Pulikali has evolved into one of Kerala's most recognisable cultural spectacles.





Together, these traditions reveal the remarkable diversity of Kerala's artistic heritage. Classical elegance coexists comfortably alongside vibrant folk expression, demonstrating that cultural identity is enriched through variety rather than uniformity.

Vallam Kali: The Rhythm of Collective Excellence

Few sporting traditions capture the spirit of Kerala as magnificently as the celebrated Vallam Kali, or snake boat race.

The long, elegant Chundan Vallams glide through Kerala's backwaters with astonishing precision. Each boat carries more than a hundred participants, including rowers, helmsmen, and singers whose rhythmic boat songs maintain synchronisation throughout the race.

Victory is achieved through absolute unity, with every stroke complementing the next, offering a timeless lesson that true success is born of collective effort rather than individual achievement.

Communities achieve greatness when individuals place collective purpose above personal recognition.

This philosophy extends far beyond the waters of Kerala. It remains equally relevant within families, institutions, businesses, and society itself.

*"The strength of the snake boat
does not lie in the power of a single oar,
but in the harmony of every rower."*

The enduring beauty of Onam lies precisely here. Every tradition, whether artistic, culinary, architectural, or athletic, teaches a lesson that extends beyond celebration. Together they create a cultural language through which Kerala continues to pass its values from one generation to the next.

A Festival for the World and a Legacy for the Future

*"A festival survives the passage of time
not by remaining unchanged,
but by preserving the values
that make change meaningful."*

Every generation inherits Onam in a different world. The Kerala of today bears little resemblance to the agrarian society in which many of the festival's customs first flourished. Skylines have expanded, occupations have diversified, and digital technology has transformed the rhythm of everyday life. Yet, despite these profound changes, Onam continues to evoke the same anticipation and emotional attachment that it did centuries ago.

The festival has demonstrated an extraordinary capacity to evolve without surrendering its identity. Rather than becoming a relic preserved for ceremonial occasions, it has remained a living tradition, adapting naturally to changing lifestyles while continuing to embody the principles of gratitude, generosity, equality, and togetherness.

This remarkable adaptability explains why Onam remains as relevant to a child growing up in a metropolitan apartment as it does to an elderly farmer whose life has always been shaped by the seasons.

Onam Beyond Kerala

Migration has always formed an important chapter in Kerala's history. From the ancient spice traders who established commercial links across the Indian Ocean to the modern professionals who contribute to economies around the world, Malayalis have carried their culture wherever they have travelled.

Today, vibrant Malayali communities thrive across the Gulf region, Europe, North America, Australia, Africa, and Southeast Asia. Although separated from Kerala by thousands of kilometres, their attachment to Onam has never diminished. In many respects, distance has strengthened the emotional significance of the festival.

Community organisations begin preparations months in advance. Auditoriums are transformed with traditional decorations, floral carpets are created using locally available flowers, and volunteers prepare elaborate Onasadya meals for hundreds, sometimes thousands, of participants. Cultural programmes feature classical dance, music, theatrical performances, and children's competitions, ensuring that younger generations experience traditions that might otherwise remain unfamiliar.

For many families living abroad, Onam provides their children with a tangible connection to their ancestral heritage. It offers an opportunity to hear the Malayalam language, wear traditional attire, participate in cultural performances, and understand the stories that have shaped Kerala's collective identity.

The festival therefore becomes far more than a nostalgic remembrance of home. It becomes an educational bridge between generations, allowing cultural memory to flourish even in distant lands.

"Home is not always a place on a map. Sometimes it is a tradition that travels faithfully with its people."

The Festival That Belongs to Everyone

One of Onam's most remarkable achievements is its ability to transcend religious identity while remaining deeply rooted in Kerala's cultural heritage.

Although its mythology originates in Hindu tradition, the festival has long been embraced by people belonging to different faiths and communities. Christian families prepare elaborate Sadyas, Muslim households decorate their homes with floral arrangements, educational institutions organise celebrations involving students from every background, and workplaces across Kerala observe

the occasion as a collective cultural festival.

This inclusive spirit reflects one of Kerala's greatest strengths. The state has, for centuries, been shaped by interaction among diverse cultures, religions, and trading communities. Arabs, Europeans, Jews, Chinese merchants, and travellers from across Asia all contributed to Kerala's social landscape, creating a society where coexistence became an essential part of everyday life.

Onam embodies this tradition of inclusiveness. Participation is not determined by religious affiliation but by a shared appreciation for Kerala's history, values, and cultural identity.

At a time when differences often dominate public discourse, Onam quietly demonstrates that traditions possess the power to unite communities rather than divide them.

The Economics of Celebration

Beyond its cultural significance, Onam also plays a vital role in Kerala's economy. The festive season stimulates activity across numerous sectors, generating opportunities for artisans, farmers, weavers, retailers, hospitality professionals, transport operators, and small businesses.

Markets become vibrant with the arrival of seasonal produce. Florists experience increased demand for fresh blossoms. Handloom cooperatives witness renewed appreciation for traditional Kasavu garments. Potters, brass artisans, furniture makers, and craftsmen receive orders that sustain livelihoods rooted in generations of skill and craftsmanship.

Restaurants and caterers prepare elaborate festive menus, while hotels curate immersive cultural experiences for domestic and international visitors. Tourism also reaches one of its most vibrant



periods, as travellers arrive to experience Kerala during its most colourful season.

In many ways, Onam illustrates how cultural heritage can support economic resilience. When traditions are valued, they create opportunities not only for celebration but also for sustainable livelihoods.

Supporting local artisans and traditional industries during the festive season is therefore more than an act of commerce. It is an investment in preserving knowledge systems and craftsmanship that define Kerala's cultural identity.

Onam and Sustainable Living

Long before environmental responsibility became a global concern, the customs associated with Onam reflected principles that modern sustainability movements now seek to promote.

Traditional celebrations relied almost entirely upon locally available resources. Floral decorations were created using seasonal blossoms gathered from nearby gardens and fields. Meals featured vegetables harvested from local farms. Banana leaves replaced disposable plates. Earthen lamps provided illumination. Hand woven textiles were valued for their durability and craftsmanship.

These practices emerged not from environmental campaigns but from a way of life that naturally respected ecological balance.

Contemporary celebrations occasionally face the challenges of commercialisation, excessive consumption, and increasing dependence on synthetic materials. Plastic decorations, artificial flowers, and unnecessary food waste stand in contrast to the simplicity that originally defined the festival.

Fortunately, many communities have begun consciously returning to more sustainable practices. Schools encourage students to create natural Pookkalams. Residential associations promote waste segregation and composting. Restaurants increasingly source seasonal ingredients from nearby farmers. Handcrafted decorations are replacing mass produced alternatives.

These initiatives demonstrate that sustainability is not a modern addition to Onam but a rediscovery of values that have always existed within its traditions.

"Traditions thrive when their values are carried forward."

A Festival Through the Eyes of Children

Every culture survives because its traditions are embraced by the young.



For many children, Onam begins with simple experiences that gradually acquire deeper meaning. Collecting flowers at dawn, helping parents prepare festive dishes, listening to stories of Mahabali, wearing traditional clothing, and participating in school celebrations create memories that remain vivid throughout adulthood.

These early experiences cultivate a sense of belonging that cannot be acquired through textbooks alone. They teach values through participation rather than instruction.

Grandparents become storytellers. Parents become custodians of tradition. Children become the next generation of cultural ambassadors.

This natural transfer of knowledge has always been one of Onam's greatest strengths. It transforms heritage from an abstract concept into a lived experience shared within the family.

Wisdom for the Modern World

The enduring appeal of Onam lies not only in its beauty but also in the timeless relevance of the principles it celebrates.

The story of Mahabali reminds us that ethical leadership is founded upon humility, integrity, and accountability rather than power alone. The Pookkalam illustrates that lasting beauty emerges through patience and collaboration. The Onasadya demonstrates that prosperity acquires meaning only when shared without distinction. Vallam Kali reveals

that collective achievement depends upon trust and coordinated effort. Traditional arts preserve the memory of communities whose creativity continues to shape Kerala's identity.

Together, these customs form a philosophy of living that remains profoundly relevant within the contemporary world.

Modern societies often celebrate individual success. Onam gently reminds us that lasting fulfilment is equally dependent upon community, generosity, and mutual respect.

Economic progress remains essential, yet prosperity is incomplete when cultural heritage is neglected.

Technological advancement offers remarkable possibilities, yet innovation achieves its greatest purpose when guided by wisdom.

Global citizenship expands opportunity, yet identity continues to draw strength from local traditions.

These are not opposing ideas. They are complementary aspirations that together define a balanced and meaningful society.

The Enduring Spirit of Onam

Every year, Kerala prepares to welcome King Mahabali with flowers, music, generous hospitality, and heartfelt celebration. Whether one interprets his return as mythology, cultural symbolism, or philosophical metaphor is ultimately a matter of personal belief. What remains beyond debate is the extraordinary power of the festival to strengthen relationships, preserve traditions, and inspire hope.

Few celebrations possess the capacity to unite so many dimensions of human experience. Onam is at once a harvest festival, a cultural celebration, a family reunion, a tribute to ethical leadership, a showcase of artistic excellence, and an affirmation of Kerala's shared identity. It honours the past without becoming captive to it, embracing change while remaining anchored in enduring values.

Perhaps this is why Onam continues to resonate so deeply across generations. Every age discovers within it a different lesson. Children find wonder, young people find identity, families find reunion, elders find continuity, and communities find a renewed sense of belonging.

In an increasingly interconnected world, where cultures evolve at an unprecedented pace, traditions that encourage compassion, gratitude, inclusiveness, and responsible stewardship become more valuable than ever. Onam offers precisely such a tradition. It reminds us that progress is enriched by memory, that prosperity is strengthened through generosity, and that the truest measure of a society lies in its ability to care for both its people and its heritage.

The soul of Onam therefore cannot be confined to a season or a celebration. It lives in the warmth with which guests are welcomed, in the respect shown to nature, in the dignity extended to every individual, and in the willingness of each generation to preserve what is valuable while embracing what is new.

As long as these values continue to find expression in everyday life, King Mahabali's symbolic return will never lose its meaning. His kingdom will endure not as a distant memory, but as an enduring aspiration, reminding Kerala and the world that the finest traditions are those that continue to bring people together with grace, generosity, and hope.





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MADURAI, RAMESWARAM & DHANUSHKODI



Southern Tamil Nadu offers a journey in which the character of the landscape changes dramatically within a relatively short distance. The movement from Madurai to Rameswaram and onward to Dhanushkodi is not simply a route between tourist destinations. It is a passage through monumental temple architecture, living pilgrimage traditions, coastal landscapes and the remains of a town that disappeared beneath the force of nature.

Madurai introduces the journey with its magnificent temple complex. Rameswaram brings together faith, ritual and the sea. Dhanushkodi, at the far end of the island, offers something entirely different: a landscape of ruins, fishing settlements and memories of a town that once stood at the edge of the Indian subcontinent.



MADURAI: A CITY BUILT AROUND FAITH

The Meenakshi Temple is the defining presence of Madurai. The South Gopura provides one of the principal approaches to the vast temple complex, where towering structures covered with sculptures of gods and mythical figures immediately establish the architectural character of the place.

The temple is not an isolated monument. Its surroundings are filled with shops, hotels and the constant activity associated with a major pilgrimage centre. Inside, a succession of mandapas, corridors and courtyards reveal the scale of the complex.

One of its notable features is Porthamarai Kulam, the sacred temple tank known as the Pond with the Golden Lotus. The tank is surrounded by depictions of Shiva's Thiruvilayadals, or miracles. On its western side, a small portico preserves portions of Nayak period paintings depicting the marriage of Sundareswarar and Meenakshi, with Vijayaranga Chokkanatha and Rani Mangammal among those represented.

The Thousand Pillar Hall adds another architectural dimension. Despite its traditional name, the hall contains 985 carved pillars. The density of the columns and the detailing across the complex make the temple as much an architectural experience as a religious one.

From the city, the route moves towards Pazhamudircholai, one of the six important abodes of Lord Muruga. Unlike the monumental urban setting of Meenakshi Temple, Pazhamudircholai is situated on a forest covered hill. The surrounding greenery and the presence of monkeys around the temple give the site a distinctly different atmosphere.



RAMESWARAM: THE ISLAND OF PILGRIMAGE

The transition from Madurai to Rameswaram brings the sea into the journey. One of the most memorable landmarks along the route is the Pamban Bridge, connecting Mandapam with Pamban Island.

The bridge offers a broad view of the surrounding waters and the railway bridge. Boats pass beneath the railway section, while the fishing activity around the island becomes part of the landscape. Towards evening, the changing sky adds another dimension to the crossing, with orange, yellow and dark blue tones spreading across the horizon.

Rameswaram itself has the atmosphere of a traditional pilgrimage town. The streets surrounding the temple are lined with small hotels, tea shops and local businesses. The presence of cows moving through the streets adds to the distinctive character of the area.

The spiritual identity of Rameswaram is most evident in the early morning, when pilgrims begin their rituals at Agni Theertham. Located close to the Ramanathaswamy Temple, the sea is an important part of the pilgrimage sequence. Visitors traditionally bathe here before proceeding to the sacred wells inside the temple. Facilities are also available for rituals such as tharpanam.



The Ramanathaswamy Temple forms the centre of the experience. Its enormous scale is immediately apparent in the corridors and rows of pillars. The third corridor, described in the source as having 1212 pillars, is particularly striking, with brightly painted carvings extending along the length of the passage.

The temple's importance also comes from its religious traditions. The Shiva Lingam of Rameswaram is regarded as one of the twelve Jyotirlingas. The temple is closely associated with the Ramayana tradition and the story of Rama's worship of Shiva following the defeat of Ravana. The traditional account involving Rama, Sita, Hanuman and the Shiva Lingam gives the temple an important place within both Vaishnava and Shaiva religious traditions.

DHANUSHKODI: THE TOWN THAT WAS LOST

Beyond Rameswaram, the landscape becomes increasingly open. The road to Dhanushkodi runs through a narrow coastal stretch where the sea dominates the horizon. Fishing is the principal occupation of many people living along the route, and bamboo houses and small roadside shops appear against the otherwise sparse landscape.

Dhanushkodi was once very different.

During the British period, it functioned as a significant port town. It had a railway station, port, water tank, post office, church, temple, hospital, school, hotels and shops. Today, only fragments of that settlement remain.

The ruins of the old railway station stand as one of the clearest reminders of the town that existed here. Nearby is an old water tank. Parts of an old mosque can also be seen along the road, with local stalls operating around it.

The disappearance of Dhanushkodi is linked to the devastating natural disaster described in the source as occurring in December 1962. A passenger train travelling towards Dhanushkodi was caught in powerful winds and heavy rain, and the settlement was subsequently destroyed by the sea. The town disappeared, along with a large number of lives, and was later declared a ghost town.

That history gives the present landscape an unusual character. The road passes through a place where ordinary life once existed on a much larger scale. Railway infrastructure, religious buildings and civic facilities have been reduced to remnants, while the sea continues to define the landscape.



At the tip of Dhanushkodi, the geography becomes particularly dramatic. The land narrows between the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal, creating the distinctive coastal setting for which the place is known. The area is also associated with the traditional belief that Ram Sethu began from this region and extended towards Sri Lanka.

Yet Dhanushkodi is not merely a place of ruins. A small coastal community continues to live and work here. Fishing remains central to local life, while vendors sell cut fruits, nuts and other simple refreshments to visitors. The contrast between the remnants of the old settlement and the continuing life of the present community is one of the most compelling aspects of the destination.

THE KALAM CONNECTION

The Rameswaram region also carries the memory of Dr APJ Abdul Kalam. The memorial dedicated to the former President and scientist presents different aspects of his life through portraits, statues and personal belongings. Displays also include models associated with the missiles and rockets on which he worked. The memorial provides another perspective on Rameswaram, connecting the region's traditional identity with the life of one of modern India's most recognised scientific figures.



THREE DESTINATIONS, ONE JOURNEY

Madurai, Rameswaram and Dhanushkodi offer three distinctly different faces of southern Tamil Nadu.

Madurai is defined by its monumental temple and the living traditions surrounding it. Rameswaram is a pilgrimage landscape where temple architecture, sacred waters and the sea come together. Dhanushkodi is shaped by absence, its surviving ruins telling the story of a town transformed by a catastrophic natural event.

The route is therefore compelling not because each destination offers another item on a sightseeing list, but because the character of the journey keeps changing. Architecture gives way to pilgrimage. Pilgrimage gives way to the open sea. And finally, the remains of a vanished town stand against a landscape that continues to change with the water and wind.

For anyone seeking a destination experience that combines culture, faith, history and coastal scenery, this southern Tamil Nadu circuit offers all four, with each place telling its own story.

The New Look

WHERE TRADITION MEETS CONTEMPORARY STYLE

The quiet beauty of Kerala handloom, the familiar cream and gold of kasavu, the crisp mundu and the graceful saree have together created a festive identity that is instantly recognisable. Yet fashion is never static. As lifestyles change and younger generations reinterpret inherited traditions, Onam clothing is beginning to take on a more contemporary character without losing its connection to Kerala.

The new Onam look is not about replacing traditional clothing with something entirely different. It is about giving familiar garments a new expression through contemporary cuts, relaxed silhouettes,





interesting prints, modern fabrics and unexpected combinations. The result is festive dressing that feels comfortable and current while retaining the visual language of Kerala.

For women, the kasavu saree remains the most enduring expression of Onam style. The traditional one is a favourite, but contemporary versions are becoming lighter, more understated and easier to style. Narrow borders, delicate woven patterns and fine metallic detailing appeal to those who prefer minimal elegance, while wider borders and distinctive motifs offer a stronger festive presence. The modern interpretation often comes through the blouse, with structured shoulders, puff sleeves, square necklines, contemporary back designs and sculpted silhouettes bringing a sharper fashion character to the traditional saree.

Kerala cotton and handloom sarees are also enjoying renewed attention because of their natural texture, comfort and effortless elegance. Alongside the familiar ivory, cream and gold, contemporary collections are



introducing muted greens, soft yellows, dusty pinks, terracotta and earthy neutrals. These colours are usually incorporated through borders, woven details or restrained patterns rather than overwhelming the simplicity of the fabric. The result is an Onam saree that feels traditional in spirit but modern in appearance.

The set mundu is undergoing a similar transformation. Its simplicity makes it particularly adaptable to contemporary styling, allowing the blouse to become the defining element of the outfit. Cropped proportions, statement sleeves, textured fabrics, square necklines and asymmetric details can give the traditional silhouette a fresh character. The beauty of the set mundu is that it does not require excessive styling. A thoughtfully designed blouse can be enough to transform the entire look.

The modern saree is also becoming more relaxed. Lightweight fabrics, easier drapes and minimal styling are increasingly preferred for daytime celebrations, particularly in Kerala's warm climate. Instead of heavily embellished accessories and elaborate styling, a simple handloom saree paired with a contemporary blouse can create a polished festive appearance. This approach appeals particularly to younger women who want to participate in the traditions of Onam without feeling restricted by conventional festive dressing.

For men, the mundu remains at the centre of the Onam wardrobe, but the shirt has become the principal area for experimentation. The conventional white shirt



continues to work beautifully, yet it now shares space with linen shirts, textured cottons, relaxed silhouettes and printed styles. Botanical patterns, tropical foliage, small floral motifs, geometric designs and subtle Kerala inspired illustrations can add personality to the traditional mundu while keeping the overall look sophisticated.

Printed shirts are particularly relevant to the new Onam wardrobe because they introduce a sense of individuality without requiring a complete departure from tradition. A crisp white or cream mundu paired with a muted botanical shirt can look contemporary, relaxed and festive at the same time. Linen and soft cotton make the combination especially suitable for the season, while camp collars, short sleeves and relaxed fits bring a modern holiday character to the traditional ensemble.

Contemporary Onam fashion is also creating greater space for dresses. The modern Onam dress does not necessarily have to imitate a saree or set mundu. Instead, it can draw its identity from Kerala through colour, fabric, print and detailing. Flowing midi dresses, maxi dresses, wrap silhouettes and simple A line forms can be developed in ivory, cream and gold or introduced through floral patterns, handloom textures and





subtle kasavu inspired borders. Such outfits allow younger wearers to celebrate the occasion in a distinctly modern silhouette while maintaining a connection with the visual character of Onam.

The idea of an Onam art dress takes this approach a step further by treating Kerala's cultural landscape as a source of fashion inspiration. Pookalam flowers, coconut palms, traditional lamps, boats, temple architecture and elements of Kerala's natural landscape can be translated into prints, embroidery and illustrated patterns. When these references are interpreted with restraint, they create clothing that feels artistic rather than costume like. An ivory dress carrying a delicate pookalam inspired floral pattern, for instance, can communicate the spirit of Onam without relying on conventional ethnic styling.

Co-ord sets have also become an attractive option for contemporary festive dressing. Matching skirts and tops, wide leg trousers with structured blouses and coordinated printed outfits offer a more relaxed alternative to conventional ethnic wear. These silhouettes can incorporate Kerala handloom, cream and gold combinations or contemporary interpretations of traditional motifs. For younger wearers in particular, the co-ord offers the convenience of a complete outfit while still allowing the look to feel distinctly festive.

Traditional Kerala fabrics are also moving into silhouettes that would once have seemed far removed from festive clothing. Handloom can now appear in cropped jackets, structured tops, longline layers, skirts, wide leg trousers and contemporary dresses. Kasavu inspired fabrics can similarly be used as statement panels, borders or jackets over otherwise modern outfits. This approach allows the textile itself to retain its cultural identity while the silhouette speaks in a contemporary fashion language.

Colour is becoming more flexible as well. Cream, white and gold will always form the foundation of Onam dressing, but modern collections are drawing inspiration from the wider palette of the pookalam. Sage green, muted yellow, coral, terracotta, dusty rose and earthy shades can be introduced through blouses, prints, borders and individual pieces. Rather than combining every festive colour in one outfit, the contemporary approach often uses one or two accents against a restrained base, creating a more sophisticated appearance.

The growing popularity of coordinated Onam celebrations in schools and workplaces is also influencing the way people think about festive dressing. A dress code does not have to mean everyone wearing an identical traditional outfit. Themes such as white and gold, Kerala handloom or contemporary Onam can allow people to interpret the occasion according to their own style. A student might choose a modern Kerala inspired dress or set mundu, while an employee might pair a mundu with a printed shirt or wear a handloom saree with a contemporary blouse.

The most appealing aspect of modern Onam fashion is its ability to create a balance between familiarity and individuality. The mundu remains a mundu, but the shirt can introduce a new print or silhouette. The saree remains recognisably Kerala, but the blouse can completely change its character. Kasavu retains its timeless cream and gold identity while finding new forms in contemporary dresses, jackets, skirts and separates.

Fashion does not have to reject tradition in order to move forward. In fact, some of the most interesting festive styles emerge when traditional elements are given the freedom to evolve. The new Onam look is therefore not a competition between the old and the new. It is a conversation between them, where familiar fabrics, colours and silhouettes meet contemporary ideas of comfort, proportion and personal expression.

This is what makes Onam fashion today so relevant. It carries the memory of Kerala while reflecting the way a new generation chooses to dress. The elegance of kasavu, the simplicity of the mundu, the character of handloom and the colours of the pookalam remain firmly at its heart, but their expression is becoming more relaxed, creative and individual. Tradition remains present, not as something preserved behind glass, but as something alive enough to be worn, interpreted and enjoyed in a new way.



NALUKETTU

WHERE ARCHITECTURE, NATURE AND FAMILY BECAME ONE

Long before concrete villas, glass facades and modern interiors became familiar features of Kerala's residential landscape, the state had developed a distinctive architectural tradition that understood a home as much more than a place of shelter. The Nalukettu, one of Kerala's most recognisable traditional residential forms, evolved as an expression of the region's climate, landscape, craftsmanship, cultural practices and family life. For generations, it served as the heart of the Tharavadu, the ancestral home of an extended family, providing a setting where several generations could live together, celebrate festivals, observe traditions, receive guests and pass memories from one generation to the next.

At its most recognisable, a Nalukettu brings together four principal sections around a central open courtyard known as the Nadumuttam. The arrangement creates a harmonious relationship between built space and open space, allowing the home to remain closely connected with the sky, sunlight, rain, air and surrounding landscape. What appears at first to be a simple architectural composition is, in fact, the result of a deeply considered tradition of planning in which the house, its occupants and its environment were understood as parts of a single whole.

The Nalukettu was therefore never merely constructed as a building. It was conceived as a complete environment for living.

"The Nalukettu was not merely a house; it was a carefully created world in which family, nature and tradition lived together."

The House Around the Courtyard

The defining feature of the Nalukettu is its Nadumuttam, the open courtyard positioned at the centre of the house. The Malayalam term Nalukettu refers to the four sections of the traditional residence arranged around this central space, corresponding to the architectural idea of Chatussala, an arrangement of four halls or residential sections positioned around a courtyard.

The courtyard gives the house both its physical structure and much of its emotional character. Open to the sky, it allows sunlight and air to enter the heart of the home, while the surrounding rooms remain protected beneath the traditional roof. During Kerala's long monsoon, the sound of rain falling around the courtyard becomes part of the atmosphere of the house, while on bright

mornings sunlight gradually transforms the space throughout the day.

The Nadumuttam also becomes a natural gathering place. Children play around it, elders observe the rhythms of household life from the surrounding verandas, and family members come together during festivals, ceremonies and everyday occasions. In this way, the courtyard serves not simply as an architectural feature, but as a meeting point between nature and family life.

A Home Designed as a Complete World

Traditional Kerala architecture approached the house and its site as a connected whole. Planning was influenced by established principles of Vastu, including orientation, proportion, spatial organisation and the relationship between the building and the land on which it stood.

The entire house site, traditionally understood as the Kshetrakhandam, was considered when determining the placement and proportions of the residence. The size and configuration of the property influenced the way the Nalukettu was positioned, with smaller sites requiring a more compact arrangement and larger properties allowing the house to exist within a broader

landscape of gardens, ponds, utility structures and additional spaces.

This approach reveals a fundamental principle of traditional Kerala architecture: the objective was not simply to occupy land with a building, but to establish a balanced relationship between the house, its open spaces and its natural surroundings.

The architecture could therefore adapt to different circumstances without losing its essential character.

The Tharavadu and the Growing Family

The Nalukettu was closely associated with the Tharavadu, the traditional ancestral home of an extended family. A Tharavadu could contain several residential and non residential structures, with the main Nalukettu forming the core around which the larger household developed.

As families grew, the residential complex could also expand. Additional spaces were introduced according to changing family requirements, economic circumstances and social practices, allowing the home to accommodate generations that had not yet arrived.

This capacity for gradual growth was one of the remarkable qualities of the traditional Kerala residence. The house was not necessarily designed only for the immediate needs of one generation. It could evolve with the family, allowing new spaces and functions to emerge while retaining the identity of the original home.

As a result, a Tharavadu became much more than a residence. It became a repository of family history, where generations lived, celebrated, mourned, gathered and passed knowledge to those who followed.

The Four Salas

The four principal sections surrounding the courtyard are traditionally understood as the Salas, each occupying its respective direction around the central open space. Together they form the characteristic four sided composition of the Nalukettu.

Traditional Kerala architecture also developed distinctive ideas concerning the relationship between these sections, their structural supports and their roofs. In many traditional load bearing houses, the roof structure and the organisation of the floor plan were closely related, giving the building a sense of structural clarity as well as visual harmony.

The concept of the Sala also had a practical dimension. Different parts of the house could accommodate different activities, while carefully planned transitional spaces connected them. The



result was a residence that offered both separation and togetherness, allowing family members to carry out individual activities while remaining part of a larger household.

This balance between personal space and communal life remains one of the most relevant qualities of the traditional form.

Architecture Shaped by the Monsoon

The Nalukettu cannot be understood without considering Kerala's climate. Heavy monsoon rainfall, high humidity and warm temperatures required an architectural response that could provide protection while maintaining comfort.

The traditional sloping tiled roof was particularly suited to Kerala's rainfall, allowing water to drain efficiently while its broad overhangs protected walls, windows and verandas from direct exposure. Shaded transitional spaces helped reduce heat, while the central courtyard and carefully arranged openings encouraged natural movement of air and light.

The surrounding landscape strengthened this environmental response. Large trees offered shade, wells provided water, gardens supplied food and herbs, and open areas allowed air to circulate around the residence.

The house therefore worked with its environment rather than attempting to isolate itself from it.

Long before terms such as passive cooling, climate responsive architecture and sustainable design became part of contemporary architectural vocabulary, the Nalukettu embodied many of these principles through accumulated experience and local knowledge.

The Courtyard as the Heart of Family Life

The Nadumuttam was never intended to remain an empty architectural void. It was an active part of household life, changing



character according to the season, the time of day and the occasion.

During festivals, it could become the centre of decoration and celebration. During family ceremonies, it offered an open and dignified setting. On ordinary days, it provided children with a place to play and elders with a space from which to observe the household.

The courtyard also encouraged interaction because different parts of the house remained visually and socially connected to it. Even when people were engaged in separate activities, the shared centre created a sense of belonging to the same household.

In this respect, the Nalukettu demonstrates how architecture can influence relationships. A home is not only a collection of rooms; the way those rooms are organised can encourage people to meet, communicate and share everyday life.

The Poomukham and the Culture of Hospitality

The Poomukham, or entrance verandah, traditionally formed a graceful transition between the outside world and the interior of the house. It offered shade, ventilation and a comfortable place to receive visitors, making it an important part of the social life of the residence.

Hospitality has long held a special place in Kerala's culture, and the architecture of the traditional home reflected this value. Visitors could be welcomed into a semi open space without immediately entering the private areas of the household, allowing the home to remain both hospitable and intimate.

The Poomukham also became a place for conversations, quiet evenings and everyday encounters. In a time when life moved at a slower pace, such spaces allowed people to sit together without the need for a particular occasion.

A House in Conversation with the Landscape

The Nalukettu was rarely conceived as an isolated structure. Its relationship with the surrounding parambu, or household compound, was an essential part of its character.

Coconut palms, mango and jackfruit trees, plantains, flowering plants, medicinal herbs, ponds and wells could form part of the wider residential landscape. These elements served practical purposes while also creating a setting in which the house remained closely connected to nature.

Traditional planning could also include protected green areas and sacred groves, reflecting an older understanding of the relationship between cultural practices and the natural environment.

The distinction between architecture and landscape was therefore less rigid than it often is today. The garden extended the house, the courtyard brought nature inside, and the veranda created a shaded

meeting point between the two.

The Poetry of Traditional Craftsmanship

The soul of the Nalukettu is also found in its craftsmanship. Kerala's traditional builders and carpenters developed remarkable skills in working with timber, creating pillars,



beams, ceilings, doors, windows and decorative details that combined structural purpose with artistic refinement.

Wood was treated not merely as a construction material but as an element capable of giving the house warmth, texture and identity. Carefully carved doors, shaped pillars and detailed wooden ceilings revealed the patience and precision of artisans whose knowledge was often passed through generations.

The beauty of the Nalukettu was rarely dependent on excess decoration. Its character emerged from proportion, material, light, shadow and craftsmanship.

That quiet richness remains one of the reasons these homes continue to inspire admiration.

From Tradition to the Present

Many Nalukettus have disappeared as Kerala's families became smaller, younger generations moved to cities and ancestral properties became increasingly difficult to maintain. Urbanisation, changing lifestyles, construction costs and the declining availability of traditional craftsmanship have all contributed to the loss of many historic homes.

Yet the architectural ideas of the Nalukettu are experiencing renewed interest.

Contemporary architects increasingly incorporate courtyards, shaded verandas, sloping roofs, natural materials, landscaped open spaces and climate responsive planning into modern residences. These homes may not reproduce the traditional form, but they continue the principles that made it successful.

The future of the Nalukettu does not necessarily depend on recreating the past exactly as it was.

It depends on understanding what the past knew.

Preserving the Wisdom

The most important legacy of the Nalukettu is therefore not only its physical appearance, but the knowledge contained within it.

It teaches us how to design for Kerala's climate, how to work with local materials, how to create natural ventilation and shade, how to connect architecture with landscape, and how to organise a home around family life rather than simply around individual rooms. It also reminds us that heritage is not merely a matter of preserving old structures. It is about preserving ideas that remain meaningful.

At a time when Kerala is experiencing rapid urbanisation and changing patterns of family life, these lessons have renewed relevance. The challenge is not to return to the past, but to carry its wisdom into the future.

The Soul That Remains

The Nalukettu remains one of the most evocative expressions of Kerala's architectural identity because it represents more than a particular building form. It represents a way of understanding home.

The tiled roof carries the memory of the monsoon. The wooden pillars carry the skill of generations of craftsmen. The Nadumuttam carries the changing light of the seasons. The surrounding trees carry the memory of the land. And the rooms themselves carry the stories of families who lived, celebrated and grew within them.

Perhaps that is why the Nalukettu continues to hold such a powerful place in Kerala's imagination.

It reminds us that a home can be a place of shelter and still be much more. It can be a place where generations meet, where traditions are learned through living, where nature becomes part of everyday experience, and where architecture quietly shapes the rhythm of family life.

Kerala is changing, and its homes will continue to change with it. Yet the principles embodied by the Nalukettu remain remarkably relevant: respect the land, respond to the climate, value craftsmanship, create spaces for togetherness and allow the home to grow with the people who inhabit it.

"Nalukettu belongs to Kerala's architectural heritage, but its deeper wisdom belongs to every generation that continues to believe a home should be more than a structure. It should be a place of belonging".



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IGLO

BUILDING A HOMEGROWN BRAND WITH GLOBAL AMBITIONS

Every successful business begins with a simple observation. For entrepreneur Abdul Raheem Oorppally, it was the realization that cleanliness is a universal need and that the demand for cleaning products will exist as long as people do.

This seemingly ordinary thought became the foundation of iGlo International, a cleaning products brand launched on August 18, 2024, with a vision far bigger than simply selling floor and toilet cleaners. Abdul Raheem wanted to build a timeless brand, one that could stand alongside international names while remaining deeply rooted in affordability, quality, and trust.

When he entered the industry, the market was already crowded with established domestic and international brands. But instead of being intimidated by the competition, he focused on a gap that many had overlooked. He saw consumers who could not afford premium cleaning products settling for cheaper alternatives that often compromised on quality and safety.

For Abdul Raheem, this was not merely a business opportunity; it was a responsibility. He believed that every household, regardless of income, deserves access to effective and safe cleaning solutions.

That belief shaped the philosophy of iGlo.

From the very beginning, quality, hygiene, freshness, and safety became the brand's four guiding principles. Before developing his products, Abdul Raheem spent considerable time studying the ingredients and chemical compositions used by successful brands across the industry. He carefully examined what made certain formulations effective while also identifying practices that compromised safety.

His conclusion was clear: affordability should never come at the expense of quality.

As a result, iGlo products were developed with an uncompromising commitment to safety

and performance. The company has deliberately stayed away from ingredients that could create quality concerns or pose risks to consumers. Even products that come into direct contact with the skin are designed with user safety in mind.

While many businesses focus solely on manufacturing and sales, Abdul Raheem believes that brands are built through emotional connections. In his entrepreneurial journey, his family became an integral part of the business. From product packaging to sales activities, his wife and children have stood beside him, turning iGlo into more than just a company. It has become a shared family dream.





Customer feedback has also played a significant role in the brand's evolution. Since its inception, iGlo has made only minor modifications to its products, primarily in fragrance profiles. Abdul Raheem understood that scent preferences vary from person to person, and listening to customers helped the company refine its offerings and create products that appeal to a wider audience.

Remarkably, the quality and effectiveness of the products themselves have remained consistent, requiring no fundamental changes since the brand's launch.

Abdul Raheem also believes that one of the biggest challenges facing Indian manufacturers is perception. For years, many consumers have associated superior quality exclusively with imported products. He is determined to challenge that notion.

According to him, world class cleaning products can be developed and manufactured in India, and homegrown brands can compete

confidently on the global stage.

Today, his ambition stretches far beyond regional success. He dreams of seeing at least one iGlo product in every Indian household. Beyond that lies an even larger vision, to take the brand to international markets within the next decade and establish iGlo as a globally recognized name in home care solutions.

Despite the growing business, Abdul Raheem remains grounded about what has made the journey possible.

"The greatest strength behind every entrepreneur is family," he says. "Without their support, every challenge feels heavier. With them beside you, even the biggest obstacles become easier to overcome."

It is this combination of conviction, purpose, and unwavering family support that continues to drive Abdul Raheem Oorppally and iGlo International toward a future that extends far beyond borders.



THE FRAGRANCE OF PERSISTENCE

THE STORY BEHIND HOUSE OF CHIPPAYI

The streets of Mattancherry have long been defined by scent. For centuries, spices, incense, timber, and sea air have drifted through its narrow lanes, carrying stories from distant shores. It was here, in 2019, that Mohammed Shifas K. S. began building a business with an investment of just ₹70, not because he believed it was enough capital, but because it was all he had.

At the time, Shifas was balancing college with long shifts as a catering employee. Between work and study, he found himself drawn to perfume counters and small fragrance shops, fascinated by the way a single scent could evoke memory and identity. He began buying French and Italian inspired perfumes and selling them with a modest margin. It was a small trade, but one that revealed something larger. Fragrance remained largely inaccessible to ordinary consumers. Good perfume was still regarded as a luxury reserved for a privileged few.

Rather than accepting the market as it was, he decided to understand why.

Books could teach only so much. The answers, he believed, lay where the industry itself lived. Alone and unfamiliar with the cities ahead, he travelled to Mumbai, then India's most important perfume marketplace. He walked through wholesale districts, met merchants, asked questions that experienced traders had heard countless times before, and listened more than he spoke. Many recognised his sincerity and shared what they had learned over decades about essential oils, fragrance composition, bottle design, pricing, longevity, and the complex supply chain that remained invisible to most consumers.

His search did not end there.

He travelled onward to Gujarat to understand bottle and pump manufacturing. In Delhi he met established businessmen who offered another perspective on scale and distribution. The journey eventually spanned numerous cities across the country, where factories, workshops, trading markets and entrepreneurial conversations collectively shaped his understanding of an industry that stretched far beyond fragrance. Every train ticket purchased





knowledge. Every conversation became part of an education that no classroom could provide.

When he returned to Kerala, he was no longer simply selling perfume.

He had begun building a business model designed around accessibility without compromising quality. His days became increasingly disciplined, often beginning at 2.30 in the morning as he immersed himself in formulation, sourcing, customer behaviour, and product development. Progress, he would later say, came not from knowing everything, but from learning something from every mistake. Failure was never an ending. It was accumulated experience.

The name he chose reflected that same philosophy. Chippayi, a nickname from his childhood, possessed something he valued deeply. It was simple, memorable, and easy to recognise across languages and cultures without losing its identity. In 2020, the brand was formally registered with an ambition that stretched well beyond Kerala.

Today, House of Chippayi combines carefully sourced ingredients including Arabic oud, florals, spices, woods, citrus notes, and musks into handcrafted fragrances produced in small batches. Collections such as Romance and Dope have earned loyal followings, reflecting the company's belief that premium perfume should be defined by craftsmanship rather than price alone.

The numbers now reinforce what discipline has quietly built. In 2025, the company recorded revenue growth of 74.6 percent while maintaining healthy gross margins of 51.5 percent. Customer growth reached 17.3 percent, repeat purchases remained strong, and a lifetime value to customer acquisition ratio of 4.2 demonstrated efficient and sustainable expansion. Together, these measures position House of Chippayi as a strong early stage consumer brand with the operational foundations investors seek in businesses capable of long term growth.

Yet statistics explain only part of the story.

What distinguishes Chippayi is not simply its growth, but the philosophy behind it. Mohammed Shifas never set out to imitate established luxury houses. Instead, he asked whether authenticity, careful craftsmanship, and affordability could exist in the same bottle. Every fragrance carries the answer to that question.

From a ₹70 beginning in Mattancherry to a brand preparing for a wider stage, House of Chippayi has been built one decision, one lesson, and one customer at a time. It is a story not of sudden success, but of curiosity sustained over years. It reminds us that enduring brands are rarely created through shortcuts. They are created by people who remain willing to learn long after others believe they already know enough.

AARON ELEVATORS

THE BRAND THAT MOVES WITH YOU

Aaron Elevators began in 2009 with a clear place in a rapidly changing industry: to build elevator systems that combine dependable engineering with the demands of modern buildings.

Over the past seventeen years, that purpose has developed into a much broader capability. Aaron Elevators now designs, manufactures, installs and maintains elevator systems for homes, commercial buildings, hospitals, institutions and specialised projects, with operations extending across Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Goa and the Maldives.

What distinguishes the brand is not simply the number of elevators it offers, but the attention given to what each building actually needs. A home may call for a compact Machine Room Less elevator that uses space intelligently. A hospital requires a different combination of capacity, movement and reliability. A commercial building may demand higher traffic handling and speed. In a premium residence or hospitality project, the elevator can become part of the interior itself, requiring the same attention to materials, proportions and finishes as the rest of the architecture. Aaron Elevators has built its range around these differences.

Its portfolio includes Machine Room Less gearless traction elevators, residential and commercial elevators, hospital elevators, goods elevators, structural and glass elevators, dumbwaiters and kitchen elevators. Behind this range is an engineering approach that considers the elevator as part of the building rather than as an isolated piece of equipment.

That approach is particularly visible in the company's focus on customization. Cabin interiors can be developed in stainless steel, glass, mirror and combinations of premium finishes, with options including gold, rose gold, bronze, champagne, blue mirror, black mirror and matte surfaces. Flooring, ceilings, doors and control panels can be selected to complement the character of the space.

The technology has evolved alongside the design. Aaron Elevators offers conventional push button systems

as well as touch and semi touch controls, with access options including RFID, biometric identification, password systems and Face ID. Display systems can be configured according to the requirements of the project, from conventional dot displays to TFT and graphic LCD interfaces.

At the heart of this evolution is a clear vision for the future. Aaron Elevators aspires to be the most trusted and innovative elevator company, delivering safe, reliable and aesthetically refined vertical mobility solutions that redefine comfort and elevate everyday experience. That vision is supported by a mission centred on delivering world class elevator systems built on safety, innovation and craftsmanship, while maintaining transparency, continuous improvement and lasting customer trust in every project.

Behind this technological capability is a team with experience across the different disciplines that an elevator project demands. Technical experts, engineers, mechanical engineers and electrical engineers work alongside a dedicated quality control team, bringing together design knowledge, engineering expertise, installation experience and quality assurance. This multidisciplinary approach enables Aaron Elevators to address the technical requirements of diverse projects while maintaining a consistent focus on performance and quality.

The company's technical strength is also reflected in its ability to successfully execute projects for established companies, builders and a wide range of commercial and residential developments. From individual homes and premium residences to hospitals, institutions, commercial buildings and specialised projects, its

experience spans different scales, applications and architectural requirements. This breadth of project experience has helped the organisation develop the practical understanding required to translate a project's requirements into a reliable elevator system.

Yet the most important technology inside an elevator is often the technology the passenger never notices. Safety systems such as Automatic Rescue Devices, overspeed governors, overload



sensors and safety gear are designed to respond when conditions demand it. Fire related systems provide additional protection. Elevator configurations are developed with applicable Indian safety requirements and established industry practices in mind, with capacity, dimensions and speed determined according to the application.

Quality and compliance form an integral part of Aaron Elevators' engineering approach. The company holds TÜV SÜD Certification and ISO 9001:2015 Certification, reflecting its commitment to internationally recognized quality management practices and consistent manufacturing standards. Supported by a dedicated quality control team and experienced technical professionals, these certifications reinforce Aaron Elevators' focus on quality at every stage, from design and manufacturing to installation and final delivery.

The engineering does not end when the elevator is handed over. Aaron Elevators provides Annual Maintenance Contracts, replacement warranty support,

spare component availability and dedicated service assistance, recognizing that the performance of an elevator is measured over years rather than on the day of installation. This combination of technical capability, customization, certified processes and continuing service has supported the company's growth beyond its original market. Today, Aaron Elevators operates across multiple southern states and Goa, while also serving projects in the Maldives.

The organisation behind that work is equally broad. Design, sales, marketing, purchase, projects, installation, licensing and documentation, service, finance, administration and human resources each contribute to taking an elevator from a requirement on paper to a functioning part of a building. Alongside these functions, the company's experienced technical and engineering professionals and dedicated quality control team provide the expertise required to execute projects with precision and consistency.

The company's project experience extends across healthcare, education, banking, hospitality, retail, residential and commercial developments. Its successful project execution for established companies, builders and diverse project partners demonstrates an ability to adapt its elevator solutions to different building types, technical requirements and scales of operation.

That progress has also brought recognition. In 2026, Aaron Elevators received the Business Growth Summit Award for Best Elevator in Kerala and the MediaOne Nirmithi Puraskar Award for Best Home Elevator Brand. These recognitions form part of a broader record of achievements and industry recognition that reflects the company's growth, technical capabilities and presence in the elevator sector. Alongside its awards and certifications, its successful project execution provides another measure of the trust placed in the brand by customers, builders and project partners.

But the real measure of the brand is quieter. It is an elevator working smoothly in a home every morning. A hospital lift carrying patients and equipment through another busy day. A commercial elevator moving people continuously without becoming a disruption. A service team responding when maintenance is required.

These are ordinary moments, but they are where an elevator company earns its reputation. For Aaron Elevators, seventeen years have been about building the technical capability to handle those moments, while keeping pace with the changing expectations of the buildings around them.

The result is a brand that has grown not by treating every elevator the same, but by understanding that every building, and every journey within it, has its own requirements.



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Kerala State IT Mission (KSITM) has been entrusted by the State Government along with the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) with the responsibility of providing related services to the residents of Kerala. A list of facilities that fall under the jurisdiction of KSITM has been released recently. These include services that can be availed for free of cost during certain periods.

One of the facilities available for free till December 31, 2026, is adding or updating an email ID through the Aadhaar app. This facility has been made available for those individuals who have a registered mobile number with their Aadhaar. By linking an email ID to one's Aadhaar, an individual can receive an email notification every time their Aadhaar is used for authentication. In other words, it allows the Aadhaar holder to keep a track of all activities that require Aadhaar authentication.

Individual who have a mobile number registered with their Aadhaar can also update their mobile number through the Aadhaar app for free of cost. They also have the option to update their address by providing the necessary supporting documents. However, one would be required to pay Rs 75 in order to avail this service.

Another important facility related to updating an Aadhaar document is also being provided by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI). For an individual who has a registered mobile number with their Aadhaar, updating documents can be done for free till June 14, 2027. The concerned individual would be able to make the changes to their Aadhaar documents by logging on to the UIDAI portal, my Aadhaar, and selecting the Document Update option. However, if one chooses to make the updates at an authorised Aadhaar centre, they would be required to pay Rs 75 as service charges.

The notice also mentions free Aadhaar services related to children and young Aadhaar holders. For instance, enrolment of children aged 0-5 years is free of cost. Also, a biometric update that is mandatory at the age of five and fifteen is also free of cost during the applicable age period, between five and seventeen years.

Aadhaar services at Akshaya centres and other authorised centres across Kerala offer new Aadhaar enrolment, biometric update, update of mobile number and email addresses, and other related Aadhaar services.

While Aadhaar holders who wish to update their Aadhaar details can make use of the above-mentioned digital facilities, others might be interested in availing the services provided by the authorised centres. Therefore, the aforementioned time frames and charges applicable to Aadhaar services must be taken into consideration before deciding to update one's Aadhaar.

Kerala State IT Mission: Technology in Public Service

The Kerala State IT Mission (KSITM) stands as a premier agency dealing with the development and implementation of information and communication technologies in the State, as well as the promotion and facilitation of IT enabled services. Apart from Aadhaar, the Kerala State IT Mission handles numerous other programs related to e-governance, digital and human resource development, and bridging digital divides. Acting as both a Government-IT industry interface and liaison to possible investors, it concentrates on providing citizen centric governance through technology. In addition, the mission promotes and develops IT and IT-enabled services in Kerala and offers advisory support to the Government in relation to technology and policy matters. Managed by the mission, the Akshaya Telecenters have contributed significantly to the growth of digital/e governance in Kerala. Moreover, Kerala State IT Mission runs the Kerala State Data Centre, where the website hosting services of the Government are managed. The main goal of the Kerala State IT Mission is to use technology as an enabler of governance to provide value added services to the citizens in order to make them more accessible, efficient, and transparent.

For Assistance

Citizen Call Centre:

1800-4251-1800 (Toll Free)/0471-2335523

Kerala State IT Mission,

Aadhaar Section: 0471-2525442

Email: uidhelpdesk@kerala.gov.in



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- ലീഗൽ മെട്രോളജി വകുപ്പ് മുൻ ചെയ്ത അളവ് തുക ഉപകരണങ്ങൾ മാത്രം വ്യാപാരികൾ ഉപയോഗിക്കുക
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- ഉപഭോക്താക്കൾ ലീഗൽ മെട്രോളജി വകുപ്പിന്റെ സേവനം പ്രയോജനപ്പെടുത്തുക, പരാതികൾ അറിയിക്കുക



THE AROMA OF THE KITCHEN

THE RIGHT SPICE MATTERS

BY SREEKUMAR M. SAMBHU, WAYANADCRAFT

For me, the aroma of the kitchen is one of the most beautiful things that happen while cooking. Even before the food is served on the dining table, that beautiful scent tells us that wonderful food is coming. This is because in most of our homes, the aroma that comes from the spices used in cooking determines most part of what we taste.

Even as we go ahead to add these spices to the cooking pot, the kitchen changes into something beautiful from the moment we crush the pepper, roast the cumin, open the cardamom or crush the whole spices to powder directly on the pan.

Spices are not all about what we add to food to make it tastier or more flavoursome; they give identity to food, warmth, and aroma. Hence the right spice does matter.

Aroma Speaks of the Quality of the Spice

While choosing the spice based on the colour and packaging is important, I think the best way to know the spice is by its aroma.

A good quality spice should possess its inherent aroma that helps make the food more flavourful.

The black pepper should have that sharpness, the cumin should be fragrant and the cardamom should give off its sweet distinct aroma upon being opened. That way, if a spice has a little or no aroma, it is also an indicator of its poor quality. The fragrance of the spice speaks of who it is and the character it brings to the table.

The colour of the spice is a good pointer, but it should not be the determining factor in choosing the right spice. The truth is that the natural colour of the spice varies depending on the variety, origin, and other factors. Therefore, we should always avoid picking out spices based on colour.

Whole Spices are Character Building

There is just something beautiful about whole spices



that make them worth considering. Crushing the pepper, roasting the cumin or coriander seeds all bring that wonderful aroma that sets the kitchen on fire.

Whole spices can retain their character when properly stored and used in small quantities to make food more appetizing. Even as we grind whole spices to make spice powders, it is always better to do it in small quantities to extract more flavour from them.

Spice powders are part of modern spice usage, and we cannot entirely do without them. However, we should invest in buying good quality spice powders from a trusted supplier. It is also unwise to buy powders in large quantities due to their short shelf life.

Aroma Speaks of Freshness

Spices are natural products, and like all other natural products, they lose their aroma and flavour when not properly maintained. Hence, it is always important to buy in moderate quantities so as to always use fresh spices. We should also buy in quantities that are appropriate for use in a short time to ensure quality.

When storing the spices, it is important to always put them in an airtight container and store at a cool and dry place. This helps the spice retain its character. The right storage facility also helps keep the spices free from pests.

Let us Make it Beautiful for Others

The kitchen's aroma will always remind me of home. It can also remind us of the food we love and that beautiful dish our mothers prepare for us on special occasions. Our Indian culture has always been amazing with its wide range of spices that come from different parts of the country. Therefore, it becomes important for us to bring out the best in these amazing elements to help us create beautiful meals that we will want to eat over and over again. And remember, to always let the spice speak, not the other way round.

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