

# Mamangam trade festival of Kerala

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**In news-** Recently, a few history researchers urged the Kerala government to declare Thirunavaya, in the present-day Malappuram district, a heritage village and protect the historical relics in the area.

## About Mamangam-

- Mamangam is a 28-day-long trade **festival celebrated once every 12 years on the banks of the Bharathappuzha**, also known as Nila.
- Traders from various parts of India and as well as places such as China, Ceylon, Arabia and Europe used to arrive by ship at the **Ponnani port** and then move to Thirunavaya to participate in the **trade fair held on the premises of the Navamukunda temple**, believed to be around 5,000 years old now.
- Famous historian MGS Narayanan, **compares Mamangam to many such trade fairs held on riverbanks in Prayag, Haridwar, Ujjain**, Gokarna and Kumbhakonam in medieval India.
- There is **no consensus on when the first Mamangam was held**, but **it is believed that the Chera kings** began the duodecennial trade festival.
- The **last Chera ruler passed on the right** to conduct it to Valluvakonathiri (rulers of the Valluvanad region) around the 12th century.
- **The last Mamangam was said to be held in 1755** before Mysore's Hyder Ali invaded Malabar and ended the Zamorin's prominence.
- **Today, Mamangam relics such as the 'nilapadu thara' and the 'manikinar' are protected by the Kerala government's archaeology department. Pazhukka mandapam**, from where

the Zamorin family members used to watch the festivities; **marunnara**, where the Zamorin kept the gunpowder; and the **Changampally Kalari**, where the soldiers used to train, have all been maintained under the **Nila project from 2010**.

- While the remains of Mamangam are in relatively better shape, the **Cheerpunkundu iron bridge, which was used for the immersion of Mahatma Gandhi's ashes on February 12, 1948**, is in ruins these days. Known as **Kerala Gandhi, freedom fighter K Kelappan in 1949** launched the week-long **Sarvodaya Mela** in Thirunavaya in memory of the Father of the Nation.

### **Enter Zamorin and chavers-**

- **The Zamorins, the rulers of Kozhikode**, in a bid to expand their kingdom, **beat the Valluvakonathiri in the 14th century and secured the right to preside over Mamangam** after capturing several Valluvanadan provinces, including Thirunavaya.
- The Valluvakonathiris decided to avenge the defeat as well as the murders of their princes by sending **suicide squads called chavers** to fight the Zamorin's army during Mamangam.
- At each Mamangam, the Valluvakonathiri's chavers would come with an intention to kill the Zamorin.
- **The chavers, belonging to prominent Nair families** like Putumanna Panikkars, Kokat Panikkars, Chandrath Panikkars and Verkot Panikkars, began their journey to Thirunavaya from the chaver thara at the Thirumandhamkunnu temple in Angadipuram.
- At Mamangam, the **Zamorin would stand on a platform called the 'nilapadu thara' cocooned by his soldiers**.
- Bodies of the chavers who died during the fight were thrown into a nearby **well called the 'manikinar'**.

### **Navamukunda temple-**

- The **Navamukunda temple is one of the 108 major Vishnu temples in India**. It is famous for its sculptures, including the 10 incarnations of Vishnu.
- Renowned craftsman **Perumthachan is believed to have renovated the temple more than 1,000 years ago**.
- Devotees come to the temple to perform rituals for their ancestors on the banks of the river Bharathappuzha.

### **Tirunavaya-**

- Tirunavaya, also spelled as Thirunavaya, is a town in Malappuram, Kerala.
- Situated on the northern bank of Bharatappuzha (River Ponnani/Nilam or Perar), it is one of the major Hindu pilgrimage centres in Kerala.
- **Tirunavaya, home to Tirunavaya Temple (Navamukunda/Vishnu Temple)** and temples of Siva and Brahma (Cherutirunavaya Brahma Temple and Siva Temple/Tirunavaya Mahadeva Temple), is **one of the most prominent places for bali tarpana on Karkitaka vavuni in Kerala**.
- Thirunavaya is known as the land of Mamankam, the cultural mega event of ancient times. It was conducted once in 12 years and was attended by rulers from various parts of Kerala.
- The palace of the 'Azhvanchery Thamprakkal', that is referred to in the puranas and legends, is situated five kilometers north of Thirunavaya.
- **The place is also the venue for the annual Sarvodaya Mela, attended by the Gandhians in Kerala.**