Three Days Workshop for Tribal Artists

Report

Date : 17 to 19 July 2025

No. of beneficiaries : 30

Place : KIRTADS TRAINING HALL

Introduction:

The three-day Artists Workshop was conducted from 17th to 19th July 2025. A total of 30 artists from Kozhikode, Malappuram, and Wayanad districts participated in the program. Many among the participants were already working as trainers and judges at state and district-level youth festivals for Kambalakali /Vattakali. The objective of the programmes was to address the various issues faced by them as trainers & judges of the artforms in the school youth festival and to promote the art forms. Therefore, the main aim of the training was to discuss emerging problems faced by the tribal artists and artforms nowadays especially in the context of Kambalakali/Vattakali of Paniyan community as a competitive stage performing item in the State school youth festivals .

Inauguration:

The first day began with registration. The workshop was inaugurated by Dr. Jisha, Head of the Folklore Department, University of Calicut. The Deputy Director of the Training Wing, Dr. Pradeep Kumar, explained the objectives of the workshop in detail.



Photo: Inaugural ceremony

Session: 1 (Day 1, 17 July 2025):

The first day of the training programme started with two interactive sessions conducted by Mr. Ajith Menon (Faculty, IMG) on the topic "Communication and Leadership." The sessions included a series of practical activities designed to enhance participants' decision-making and leadership skills. Through these exercises, participants were encouraged to analyse contexts critically and respond in a amicable manner. The sessions were particularly useful in preparing participants to make informed judgments in high-pressure environments such as youth festivals, as well as in everyday situations, by enabling them to view issues from multiple perspectives.



Session 2

A panel discussion followed by an open discussion was held on the topic **"Selection, Presentation, and Evaluation of Kambalakkali / Vattakkali Songs on the Kerala School Youth Festival Stage."** The session was moderated by **Shri Chelannur Preman** and **Dr. Madhu Narayanan.** During the discussion, a proposal was made to rename the **Paniyan Dance** with a more general title that does not carry a community-specific identity. Considering the unique circumstances of Wayanad, where there are significantly more participating teams than in other districts, participants also suggested that, for at least the next five years, the top three teams from Wayanad should be allowed to compete at the state level.

Regarding songs, participants recommended using traditional songs in the Paniyan language without excessive Malayalam influence. Steps to document such songs from community elders were actively undertaken. It was also proposed to prepare a non-exhaustive list of such songs for public reference. The use of recorded songs on stage was strongly discouraged, as it may lead to reduction of marks, and such practices are not entertained in competitions.



Session :3 Day 2 (18 July 2025):

The second day featured a panel discussion on the topic “Choreography of Steps in Kambalakali/Vattakali: Song Selection, Performance, and Judgement.” The session was led by Sri Prajod and Sri Velayudhan. The day concluded with a yoga session.



Session :4

Ms. Jiji Joseph, Professor at the **Kerala Agricultural University**, conducted a session on **"Tribal Arts and Intellectual Property Rights."** The session covered the concepts of

Intellectual Property Rights, copyright, and Geographical Indication (GI) tagging, along with examples of their relevance in the context of tribal communities and their cultural traditions. She also explained how these legal provisions can be utilized to protect tribal knowledge and cultural expressions, and how communities can seek compensation or secure their rights through these legal mechanisms.



Session :5 Day 3 (19 July 2025):

The third day included a session on “Significance of Make-up Art in Kambalakali and Vattakali and its Judgement,” led by Smt. Srinisha Vinod.



The session generated a detailed discussion regarding the necessity to maintain the use of costumes in tune with the traditional costumes of Vattkali/ Kambalanaty.

Session: 6

The final Session concluded with a discussion on future activities of the artists with respect to the performance of Kambalakali / Vattakali. This session was led by Sri Anadhan, Sri Shakthivel Attapadi, Smt. Ramya Kasargod, Sri Jagadhish Idukki





Photos: yoga sessions

Discussions and Suggestions

The three-day training programme successfully created a collaborative platform for artists, experts, researchers, trainers, and adjudicators to critically examine the various dimensions of **Kambalakkali / Vattakkali** in the context of the Kerala School Kalolsavam. One suggestion that emerged in the workshop was to exclude certain songs that portray women in a bad manner while performing art forms in the school youth festival stages. Some suggestive songs were demonstrated by participants to illustrate this concern. It was also suggested that rhythmic syllables/ humming/or opening portions of songs / Oral songs (Vaaaytharikal) integral to traditional performances should not be sung with a sense of inferiority; instead, students should be encouraged to perform them with confidence and be able to own up to same.

There were discussions on whether the stipulated time of 15 minutes for standard stage performance of traditional art forms like Kambalakali / Vattakali should be revised; however,(no consensus was reached). Participants also suggested to incorporate additional steps derived from actual agricultural practices, rather than repeating the same few basic steps throughout the dance.

Conclusion

The programme concluded with a forward-looking discussion on future

action plans, reaffirming the collective commitment of all stakeholders to strengthen the preservation, promotion, documentation, and fair evaluation of Kambalakkali / Vattakkali. The recommendations emerging from this workshop provide a valuable foundation for future policy decisions, capacity-building initiatives, and sustained efforts to safeguard the rich cultural heritage of Kerala's tribal communities while ensuring its meaningful representation in the School Kalolsavam.