

Vikalp Sangam in Kerala

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All Photos by the Author

Badhalukal 2017, the Kerala Vikalp Sangam (Alternatives Confluence) was held on 10-12 April, 2017, at Bodhigram, north of Thiruvananthipuram. Over 130 people participated, though most of them on the first day, rapidly declining to about 60 on Day 2 and 25-30 on the last day! This lack of a critical mass on all 3 days, a rather formal atmosphere set by a seminar-like first day, some key missing groups and movements, and inadequate sharing of actual experiences were weaknesses. Strengths included some stimulating discussion as expected in a state like Kerala, some great grassroots examples, the presence of well-known alternative artists who have stepped out of the commercial sphere and who created some spontaneous art there, lots of great local food, a wonderful group of young volunteers, and nice evening dance/music programmes (spoilt somewhat by blaring speakers ... no idea why people want the whole world to listen to them?!). Met some great people, heard some inspiring stories, witnessed the proverbial Kerala thunderstorm, sweated a lot, and much else! Some images from the Kerala VS, organised by ISDG, Chalakkudy River Protection Samithi, Kalpavriksh, Shanthigram, Gandhi Smaraka Nidhi, Sabarmathi Foundation, Darsanam, Thanal, and Bodhigram.

Well-known artists of Kerala (NN Rimson, Sajitha Sankar, Tensing, Joseph George, Sudheer P.) spontaneously making paintings at the Kerala Vikalp Sangam. Famous artist Sudheer P. painting for the Sangam

Everyday

was a feast of Kerala cuisine, with lots of

jackfruit

, coconut, curd, pickle, rice, and to make sure we were not discriminating, a fish and beef dish!

Day 1, with over 100 people joining at Bodhigram, near Adoor

D. Reghoothaman, Abhinaya theatre group that has hosted Manaviyam, a street theatre festival in one street in Thiruvananthapuram every week for 16 years!

Arts and crafts working group of Kerala Vikalp Sangam

MP Parameswaran of Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad, one of Kerala's best-known and respected environmentalists, being interviewed by Vikalp Sangam's regular film-maker John D'Souza

A few (too few!) stalls of literature and local products were set up at the Sangam

One lunch had 4 types of dishes made of jackfruit (chakka), a veritable jack festival!

The jackfruit themed lunch

Beautiful bamboo instruments awaiting the evening performance

Jayachandra Kadampanad, a musician-singer specialising in a bamboo instrument ensemble

A member of Kadampanad's band

This member of Kadampanad's band is clearly enjoying himself; note the bamboo nails!

Kadampanad singing and his band performing for Kerala Vikalp Sangam participants First published on the blog of Ashish Kothari