

**Pages from the diary of Tejas – Orange County, Coorg, June 2010**

Tejas visits our resorts in Coorg and Kabini and shares with you some of his uplifting experiences. Join him as he immerses himself in the activities at our two resorts, and enjoy them with him, virtually!

Tejas Joseph resides in Auroville near Pondicherry and is part of a consulting group engaged in creating viable models of decentralised lighting (using solar energy) for off-grid Indian villages. Tejas travels a lot in the course of his work and feels a deep connection with the history and ethos of the places he visits. He is a keen observer of the winds of change that are now blowing across the physical, cultural and social landscapes of India and seeks to capture its effects in his articles, ever believing that the journey is as important as the destination, the travel as rewarding as the arrival! Feel free to write to him at [pjtejas@gmail.com](mailto:pjtejas@gmail.com) if your interests or work coincide with his.



Orange County, Coorg is the flagship resort of the group and was opened in 1999. It has a plantation theme and is set on some 60 acres of coffee along with a great variety of fruit, flower and ornamental trees. It forms part of a larger 300 acre property (the Chikanahalli estate) with a 150 year old history going back to the time of the first British coffee planters in India. The cottages here display two types of architectural styles. The County Cottages are deluxe Plantation Style cottages, while the villas showcase the regional architecture of the west coast of India evident from their signature brown terracotta stones and resplendent woodwork.

I spent a delightful three days and nights here with my young son, Zubin, in mid-June just as the south-west monsoon was setting in. We luxuriated in the ambience of the resort, its great service and wonderful food. We also immersed ourselves totally in the intense and adventurous activities and visits. They were imaginative, entertaining and educative. Let me take you on a little virtual tour.

Start up the windmills of your mind!

Activity Name	<b>Guided Bird Watching</b>
Duration	1 ½ Hours
Timing	6.30 AM to 8.00 AM
Guided	Yes (Part of common group) (If required, exclusive guide can be arranged at nominal charge of Rs.1200/ Prior booking required)
Cost	Included in the package
Transfers	Not required
Prior Booking Required	Yes

**Wing spotting on a dewy fresh morning**

For wildlife enthusiasts, nature lovers and early risers, starting off with a bird sighting walk at 6:30 am on the vast grounds of the resort can be a spirited curtain raiser to a great day. If your guide on this walk happens to be a certain Ganesh, then you are very likely to be awakened, or greeted (if already awake) by a bird call, albeit a simulated (but very convincing) one. The morning air of the resort resounds with the chorus of hundreds of birds. The Coorg region of the Western Ghats is home to numerous avian species both common and rare. The forested

character of the resort and the surrounding coffee plantations (with its large numbers of fruit trees and flowering plants) attract these feathered guests in large numbers.

The Just about any path that you may wander upon in or out of the resort is rife with bird song and presence. On this beautiful morning, we chose the little path that ran beside the Dubare wildlife reserve next door.

We walked straight into an avian babble. Ganesh's trained ears began sifting through bird calls and matching them with his big inventory of bird sounds. The first to swoop by our line of vision was the Indian Robin (*Saxicoloides fulicatus*), soon followed by the Red-whiskered Bulbul (*Pycnonotus jocosus*). A few hundred yards on, we first heard (before spotting) the loud tap-tap-tap of the Rufous Woodpecker (*Micropternus brachyurus*). A couple of Hill Mynas (*Gracula indica*) were chirping their heads off seemingly over a breakfast argument. While getting them onto camera, Ganesh urgently called our attention to a new note he had detected in the symphony around us. It was the Indian Grey Hornbill (*Ocyrceros birostris*). Learned birder that he is, he told us that it was not a very common visitor to these parts, making his sighting a rather eventful one. We spotted the Hornbill for a moment high above a towering Rosewood tree before he was swallowed up in its thick leaves.



Somewhere in the din, we could hear the signature call of the Brainfever Bird (*Hierococcyx varius*) and the raucous medley of the seven sisters (*Turdoides striata*), also known as Jungle Babblers owing to their noisy natures. We also gawked at the big trees (some no less than a hundred years old) and were entranced by fancy looking wild mushrooms, colorful butterflies and insects we don't commonly see in our city homes.

We were beginning to get a little tired (and hungry). Without quite noticing it, we had actually walked about 3 km, being lured into the forest by the pan pipes of bird calls and other forest sounds. We started back. Just as we were



getting off the bird track into the resort, we suddenly caught sight (not of a bird as you might suppose) but the famous (and rare) Indian or Malabar Giant Squirrel (*Ratufa indica*). We stood transfixed for about twenty minutes watching him dart from branch to branch, his bushy tail twitching to the machine gun-like sound and intensity of his chatter. He was not in the least bit timid or shy and afforded us full views of himself, also rare Ganesh told us. We felt the first drops of a drizzle (we forgot we were in monsoon country) and decided to move on to a hot cup of refreshing coffee, a warm bath and a sumptuous breakfast – all accompanied by constant (if not always noticed) bird

song. It was the keynote and backdrop to all life at the resort. It graced your day and lightened your heart, making you give thanks for being alive.

## Visiting Tibet!

Activity Name	<b>Visit to Bylakuppe Tibetan Settlement</b>
Duration	Half Day
Timing	2.00 Pm to 6.30 Am
Guided	No
	If required: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Exclusive Tibetan guide available at nominal cost of Rs.1200 / Prior booking required</li> <li>2. Escort from resort to location &amp; back can be arranged at nominal cost of Rs.1200// Prior booking required</li> </ol>
Cost	Not applicable / No Entree fee applicable
Transfers	In own car / Transfers can be arranged at an additional cost (Distance to location from resort 35 kms – 1 hour drive one way)
Prior Booking Required	Yes

The Bylakuppe Tibetan settlement is around 35 km from the resort and lies in Mysore district. It was started in 1960 and is the second largest settlement (after Dharamshala) of the exiled Tibetan diaspora on Indian soil.

As one takes the little road to Bylakuppe after Kushalanagara and drives down, one gets the feeling of entering the gates of some far eastern oriental wonderland. The road meanders through undulating well-kept fields that rise and fall with the geography of the land here. Prayer flags fluttering from tree tops and fences remind you that you are indeed amongst a different people and a unique culture.



The landscape is pleasant and vast. The Bylakuppe settlement is spread over some 20 odd sq km and is home to a native population of 30,000 Tibetan people. They occupy themselves with spiritual practices, agriculture and a variety of small enterprises. We soon see the gold painted roof of a Buddhist shrine a little away in the distance and assume it to be the heart and soul of the settlement.

Along the way, we pass monks, young and old, in their maroon and gold vestments and lively Tibetan youth

zipping past impatiently on their Indian made motorbikes. Soon we draw up at the gates of the imposing Namdroling monastery, a time capsule transported from the mountains of Tibet. We are met by Gomo, our native guide, and set off to explore its large grounds. We see the many facilities for resident monks and initiates and exhibits showing the famous Tibetan monasteries and ways of life before the exodus.



We see the temples, the grandest of them being the famous golden temple that houses the Buddhist trinity of Gautama Buddha, Guru Padmasambhava and

Budha Amitayu. The inside of the temple is cavernous and the statues are monolithic, dwarfing devotees and visitors in their magnificent presence. The three seated statues – 20-30ft high – are burnished with copper and gold haloing them with an effulgent aura of unspoken wisdom and unspeakable peace. You can breathe in the tranquility here as much as you can the sweet incense wafting from the alters. The surrounding walls are adorned with frescoes and murals depicting key scenes from the life of the Buddha. Gomo tells us that these intricate



paintings and embellishments upon the walls, tapestries and doors were executed by master Buddhist temple craftsmen who were brought in from Tibet, Nepal and Bhutan when the building of the temple began in the mid-1960s.

The Namdroling monastery and temples are dedicated to the Palyul lineage of the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism. Though home to the Nyingmapa sect, it also draws adherents of other prominent Tibetan Buddhist sects as well. There are ritual prayers held at different times of the day at the temples here, attended mostly by monks, nuns and initiates. The rituals become elaborate on important days of the Tibetan religious calendar, particularly their

New Year. Visitors are permitted to watch so long as they do not disturb the proceedings. The mesmeric chanting of a large number of monks echoes through the vast inner chamber of the big temple. It can transport you to unexplored regions of your self. Finding the silence in the sound of life is the grand ideal of the Buddhist masters!

On our way out we stop at the monastery's canteen for visitors to savor a plate of steaming momos and hear Gomo's musings of an exile's life – free yet rootless without a sense of belonging! Afterwards, we stroll around the small commercial heart of the settlement outside the monastery and visit the many shops selling trinkets and collectibles representing Tibetan art and craftsmanship.

### The way of the Bamboo

As we took leave of Gomo and started back in the late afternoon, we noticed vast stretches of yellowing bamboo thickets in the surrounding countryside\*. They were flowering and discharging vast amounts of seed that natives called 'bamboo rice'. In the old days, it was said that this rice sustained many in times of famine and want. We were actually witnessing an unusual phenomenon, the death (and rebirth) of an entire generation of Bamboos: 50 - 100 yrs old. A free cosmic lesson was on offer! The bamboo was an apt metaphor for Buddhist living. Death and life combined in one unified flow in



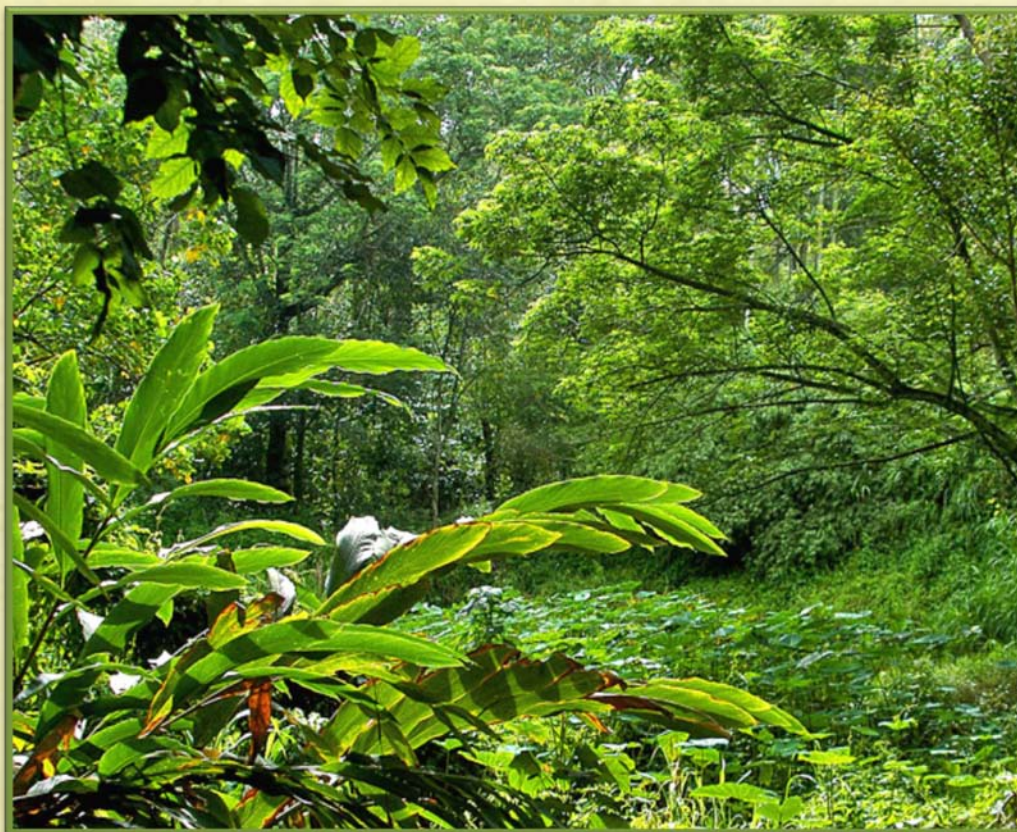
its coming of age. How fitting, I wondered, that we should have been shown this rare spectacle on our return from a visit to a Tibetan Buddhist temple?

## Through a dense and winding forest lane

Activity Name	Guided Nature Walk
Duration	2 Hours
Timing	10.30 AM to 12.30 PM
Guided	Yes (Part of common group) (If required exclusive guide can be arranged at nominal charge of Rs.1200/ Prior booking required)
Cost	Included in the package
Transfers	Not required
Prior Booking Required	Yes

The next day, we decided to stay in the resort and do the guided walks. After a late and leisurely breakfast, we joined Gopalakrishnan, our guide on this tour, at the activities center. We were a small group of six, eager and excited about taking a walk into the forest that ran beside the resort a few hundred metres away, home to ancient trees, many birds, insects and wild animals. We were handed out a pair of leach stockings, a necessary survival tool, we were told.

It was monsoon time and the forest floor was host to a variety of parasites, notably the Garden Leech (*Hirudo medicinalis*), the closest thing to a vampire we can get in these parts. It started to drizzle as we were setting out. We could choose to take umbrellas, raincoats or risk getting a little wet. The vast canopies of the forest trees would keep us dry, joked our guide. There was some truth in what he said. The Dubare reserve, encompassing an area of 50,000 acres,



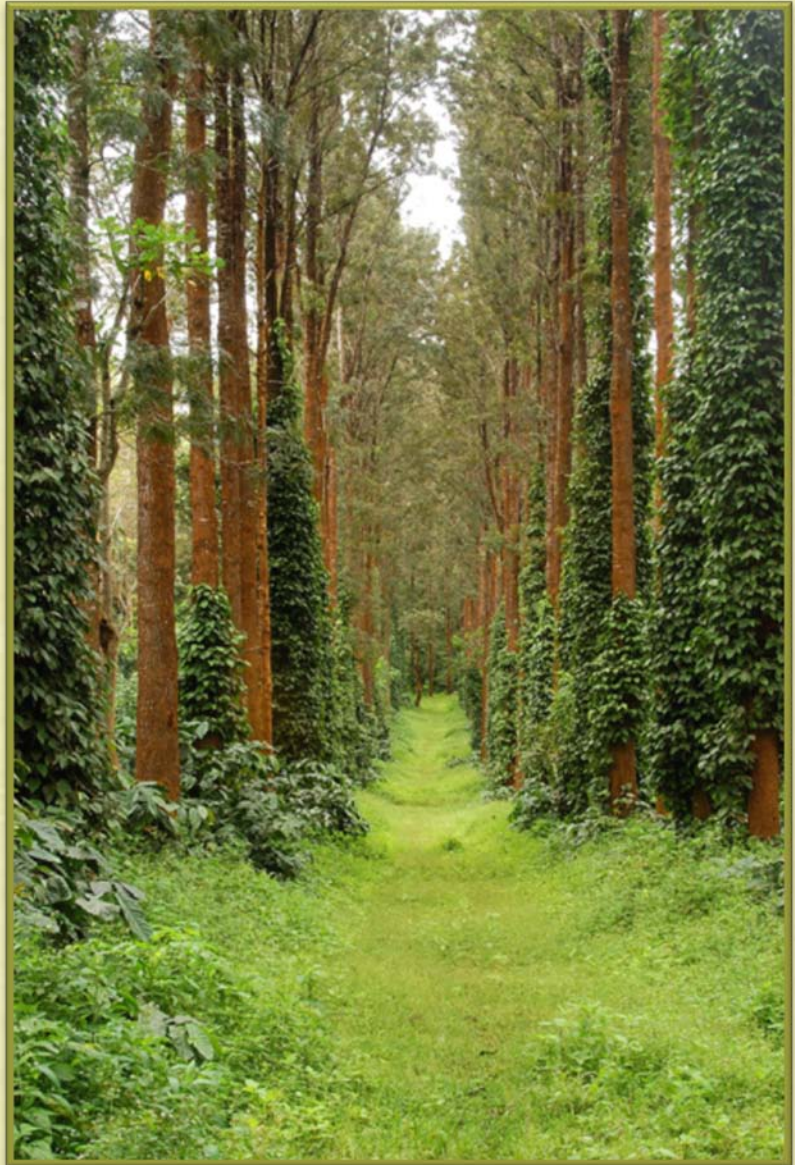
was a moist deciduous forest that nurtured a great many varieties of tropical trees with vast branches and thick foliage under which one could actually wait out a big drizzle, if not a downpour or thunderstorm. Mind the leaches though!

We trooped in single file through the outer limits of the resort leading to the reserve on the other side, separated by an electrified fence to keep out elephants, deer, boar and other animals that could wander into the cultivated parts of the plantation.

We stepped through the lines of the fence (now turned off) and across a small trench into the forest. A short lane led us into its heart and we followed it. We soon felt the temperature drop a bit. The flora of the forest had its own micro climate that kept it a shade cooler than its non-forested surroundings. The forest was abuzz with the sounds

of many birds and insects. We kept brushing back small vines and branches out of our way, feeling like a small band of intrepid treasure seekers hoping to make a lucky (but safe) sighting of a wild animal or rare bird. Fresh elephant droppings at our feet told us that a wild herd had passed this way sometime in the night. The thought sent a little chill through our collective spines.

Gopalakrishnan dramatically called our attention to an enormous tree that stood before us. He quizzes us. Did we know this tree? It was a life saver, he hinted. *Terminalia arjuna* was indeed a magnificent tree to behold. This one before us could be more than a century old guessing by its enormous girth. The great masses of India fondly called it 'the Mathi tree'. It was also called the 'water tree' by the natives who dwelt in this forest at one time. The tree stored water in its bark, which could be released by gently splicing it at certain points. It was a source of water for those who had strayed far away from the Kaveri river or forest streams in search of wood or wild game and were thirsty.



Our guide then helped us negotiate a little canyon that required some care and tact as its sides were slippery and steep as well. It was fun, particularly for the young and agile in our group. On the other side, we came to a dense bamboo grove, some of which had been uprooted by elephants on a rampage recently. Here too, many bamboo plants were in the throes of death. *\*The flowering of the bamboo (Bambuseae: a species of grass taxonomically) is considered by botanists to be a very unusual and mysterious phenomenon, unlike any other in the plant kingdom. They flower infrequently (minimum once in 60 yrs and maximum once in 120 years) and just once in their*

*long lifetime. We realized that we were witnessing a very rare botanical event indeed, for the next time the bamboo flowers here, it will be witnessed, not by us, but by another generation; perhaps our grown and aging children.*

Majestic Rosewood (*Dalbergia latifolia*), Teak (*Tectona grandis*) and other hardwood tree species stood around us like sentinels. We saluted them, oxygen-givers and climate controllers that they were!

The forest kept getting thicker and more enchanting. In a clearing just before the river, we came upon what could have been the perfect setting for a horror film. Giant parasitic vines (that uncannily resembled monstrous pythons) twined around large Banyan and other trees in a macabre bond. They quite literally strangulated their hosts after living off them. Some of these intimate relationships between trees were also beneficial to host and guest alike - from sharing scarce nourishment to serving the cause of their reproduction.

How intricate and vast nature's ways and objectives were, one wondered. There was a purpose, hidden or visible, behind every natural phenomenon and expression.



We could now hear the roar of the Kaveri. A fortnight's rain up at its source (some 50 km away) was beginning to swell it. Soon she would be in spate and the water would rise to the top of the shore where we now stood, looking down upon her frothing torrent heading speedily downstream to Mysore and beyond, before discharging into the waiting arms of the Bay of Bengal far away. After a brief spell of sitting in contemplation on the rocks by the riverside, we headed back to the resort, this time through a slightly different and shorter route.

We spent time taking photographs along the way of bugs and beetles,

identifying bird calls, inspecting the webs of forest spiders, marveling at mega anthills and talking in hushed tones before we left the sylvan world of the Dubare forest and its natural wonders, to enter the world of man on the other. This magical trek had taken us more than two hours and through some 7 km of winding and small forest tracks.

There was spider gossamer on our hair and our shoes were wet with forest dew, tokens of our secret but enlightening tryst with the goddess of the Dubare forest.

## Learning about Coffee, Spice and other things nice

Activity Name	<b>Guided Plantation Tour</b>
Duration	2 ½ Hours
Timing	4.00 PM to 6.30 PM
Guided	Yes (Part of common group) (If required exclusive guide can be arranged at nominal charge of Rs.1200/ Prior booking required)
Cost	Included in the package
Transfers	Not required
Prior Booking Required	No

Later that afternoon, we assembled under a large plant that grew beside the main road of the resort. This was a larger group, comprising almost 15 of us with some eager children too.

Mahesh, our plantation tour guide, is a born showman. Short, slim and charismatic with a loud but pleasant voice, he knew just how to get our attention and keep it for the next hour and a half when he would regale us with anecdotes and enlightening tales from the pages of experience, history and folklore.

He also had a big fund of botanical knowledge and the Q&A format was his chosen

vehicle of disbursing this information. Plucking a small handful of the leaves of the small tree under which we had gathered, he gently crushed them in his hands and offered it to us in turns to guess its name from the subtle aroma it gave off. He tempted (and taunted) us by adding that there would be a prize for the one who guessed right! This



made our brain juices flow. Some came close with nutmeg and cardamom, while others were way off the mark with coffee and orange. In the end, with a wan smile on his lips, Mahesh disclosed that these leaves were those of the Allspice plant (*Pimenta dioica*); so named because its fragrance seemed to hint at the presence of numerous spices, notably cinnamon, cardamom and cloves. It was a native of southern Mexico and Central America but was later discovered in many other warm parts of the world as well including India. Both the berry and the leaves were used as class A spices in cooking, particularly by gastronomes. Allspice leaves (resembling bay leaves but with a stronger presence) was what made the difference between a 'good' biriyani and a 'bad' one, he knowingly shared with us.



Our next stop was under a big Jackfruit tree (*Artocarpus heterophyllus*), also called the Breadfruit tree (though this is actually a related species). According to a popular anecdote, it seems that the British named this tree and its

fruit 'jack' in a corruption of its native name "Chakka". We were surprised to learn that the Jackfruit was a delicacy greedily sought after by elephants as much as by birds, squirrels and, of course, man. The Jackfruit is indigenous to India though similar climatic conditions permit its flourishing in some parts of Africa and South America as well.

We entered a perimeter of the resort that was the coffee plantation sector and stopped before a coffee plant. Mahesh told us about the accidental discovery of coffee (like all good things in life!) by a shepherd more than five hundred years ago in the Ethiopian province of Kaffa in Africa, from where it spread to Egypt, Arabia and eventually to Europe. It was called Caffa first (after the area where it was discovered presumably) and became Coffee over time. We were also told (and shown) the difference between the two principal types of coffee grown in Indian plantations: Arabica and Robusta\*.



*\*The story of coffee is central to the Ramapuram family and Orange County Resorts.*

The Chikanhalli estate (of which the resort was a small part) is amongst the oldest in Coorg, having been developed by an Englishman in 1850 who then sold it to the family's forbears in 1926. Coorg was noted by the erstwhile East India company growers for having conditions – climate, soil, temperature and rainfall – that were ideal for growing coffee for connoisseurs around the world. To this day Coorg coffee holds a reputation unlike any other. And we were standing upon a plantation that is a part of this great tradition of coffee cultivation in India.



All around us in the plantation grew a great assortment of plants and trees in deference to diversity, unusual in conventional plantations where monoculture is the rule. The ground around a cluster of coffee plants was intercropped with ginger and turmeric, sometimes additionally with beans and a few other vegetables. This helped aerate the soil and keep the coffee free of weeds. Silver-oaks stood at intervals offering shade to the coffee and allowing pepper vines to

climb and settle upon them. Here and there stood solitary Mandarin Orange trees, once the pride of Coorg (along with coffee), before they were decimated in a pestilence many years ago.

Mahesh showed us the composting pits containing biomass and other natural nutrients, which turned into manure over time. When ready, it would be applied to the coffee and other plants growing in its vicinity. Cultivation practices here followed the principles of organic and natural farming. On our return from the tour, we were shown the flatlands lying low off the coffee lounge in the center of the resort. In this small tract was grown sugarcane, bananas, vegetables and fine brown rice for the resort's kitchen, all organically cultivated. Though it met only some 10% of the kitchen's needs, this was more of a gesture by the resort as a continuing commitment to responsible tourism and ecological agriculture.

We headed back to the deck near the Peppercorn restaurant (overlooking the beautiful lake) where the tour ended.



We were served a glass of fresh passion fruit juice, harvested from the resort's vast grounds and crushed in its kitchens just for us.

As we said our goodbyes and the group dispersed, I sat down looking out across the lake, reflecting upon how vacations like this had the power to instil respect for the land and for those whose lives were linked to it. It could teach us the connected and circular nature of things – how the coffee that we had each morning (and the fruits and vegetables, milk, eggs and a hundred other

things) came from places far away; grown, processed and packed by people we do not see or know, but whose dedication made it possible that we could eat and drink as we chose. How much we took our food chains for granted!

## Big hearts in a small world: a taste of Kodava hospitality and a glimpse of their history

Activity Name	Aine Mane Visit & Kodava Lunch
Duration	Half Day
Timing	9.00 AM to 1.00 PM
Guided	Yes (If required escort from resort to location & back can be arranged at nominal cost of Rs.1200/ Prior booking required)
Cost	1 to 4 Persons: Rs.5000 Additional Persons: Rs.1250 per person
Transfers	In own car / Transfers can be arranged at an additional cost (Distance to location from resort 26 kms – 1 hour drive one way)
Prior Booking Required	Yes

After breakfast on a sunny and lazy Sunday morning (sadly our last day at the resort), we set off to the home of Kandraithanda Madaiah and his wife Divya in Arameri on the outskirts of Virajpet about 20 km from the resort. We were expected for lunch and an introduction to the Kodava way of life.

The Kodavas of Coorg are a unique community. They are a martial people whose ethnic origins remain a matter of debate to this day. What is known is their exceptional prowess in sports and warfare. Many Coorg families have sent their sons to the Indian armed forces. The Indian hockey team has had many a fine player from Coorg, in the days when this game enjoyed a special place in the sports pantheon of the country. And of course, just about every Coorg has contributed, in measures small and large, to the popularization of its most famous produce - coffee. Clans and families make up the fabric of Coorg or Kodava society. Many of these families have written histories and genealogies going back to many generations.

Our host, Prithvi Madaiah, is a descendent of the Kandraithanda family whose roots go back four centuries. They have been mostly engaged in agriculture and civil administration in the days of monarchy and, after independence, in the armed services and education besides agriculture and coffee planting. A former Vice Chancellor of the Mangalore University is a scion of this family while many others have distinguished themselves in various professional fields and now live all over the world.



We are warmly welcomed by Prithvi and Divya and sit down to coffee and juice while exchanging pleasantries. It came as more than a pleasant surprise to this guest that he and Prithvi had been to college together (albeit in different classes) in Chennai in the early 1980s. A small world indeed it was! After some catching up, we are invited to visit the Kandraithanda Aineman, or ancestral home. The Kodavas revere their forbearers and the ancestral house was the focus of community and family.

The Kandraithanda Ainemane is a few minutes' walk from Prithvi's house through pretty paddy fields and coffee plantations. The Ainemane can be spotted from far off as we approach, a lone but imposing structure atop a small embankment overlooking the paddy fields. We enter, first passing the Kaimada\* or shrine to the Kandraithanda ancestors.



overlooking the paddy fields. We enter, first passing the Kaimada\* or shrine to the Kandraithanda ancestors.

*\*Every Ainemane had its own Kaimada, as every clan ancestor was recognized and honoured for his contribution to the survival and progress of his clan and family.*

In keeping with tradition, Prithvi paid his respects at the Kandraithanda Kaimada and then invited us to enter his ancestral home. This building has been rebuilt a few times but stands on the site of the original built by a Kandraithanda ancestor more than

four hundred years ago, according to the family's recorded history published for the first time in 1932. The basic architecture of Ainemanes is typically of the west coast of India (shared by the regions of Kerala and Mangalore) and recognizable by their tiled roofs, laterite masonry and big courtyards. Variations on this - such as larger spaces and individual refinements - hint at greater affluence and social standing. As a norm, there would be a central house - where lived the head of the principal family - with a big courtyard and smaller satellite buildings around this. These annexes were either set aside for certain functions or served as residential quarters for family members whose numbers grew through marriage and the birth of children.

We sat for awhile on the big verandah and looked at the small gallery of fading photographs that hung on its walls. There were pictures of several prominent Kandraithanda pioneers and even a portrait or two of some of the older progenitors of the clan. We took off our footwear and respectfully entered the main room of the Ainemane, in the middle of which stood a pergola with skylight that sent the bright rays of the sun into the heart of the house. It was also a wonderful spot from which to sit and dreamily watch the monsoon rains pour into the house as it were. We saw the old kitchen with utensils dating back to more than a half century. How many mouths, we wondered, would have been fed (and hearts satisfied) with the food that was prepared in this kitchen by the matriarchs and daughters of the family over four centuries?



The house was a time machine that concealed many significant moments and memories, happy and poignant, triumphant and tragic in the history of this illustrious family. We went upstairs to a large space that was used to seat

a great many people for important functions and festivities. It was desolate and musty; a grim reminder of the inevitable decline wrought in the affairs and lives of men by the inexorable god of time. Still, once in a while, this Ainemane came alive to the sounds and activities of its current members when the clan united for a family occasion.



As we walked back, Prithvi spoke of the changes that were overtaking the Kodavas and their old ways of life - inevitable yet sad! However, the bright flame of ethnic identity burned strong and the community lost no opportunity in coming together under any pretext to express the essence of the Kodava spirit and nature, through their dress, mannerisms and customs.

Divya had laid out a mini Kodava repast for us when we returned. Thank god it was mini in scale, because I am a small eater (though I love making big talk about food!).

This mini menu gave me a hint of the vast, innovative and sumptuous nature of Kodava cuisine. Food was central to the Kodava way of life. Being an extremely sociable community with considerable collective interactions, food also served as a great social lubricant. It helped to foster and bind ties of marriage or business, besides helping to soothe conflicts and disharmony within the community. It also unleashed a creative (and competitive) zeal amongst Kodava women. Families and clans vied with each other for generating singular recipes for outstanding culinary creations. Divya had certainly inherited the refined tastes, intricate knowledge and cooking skills of her maternal ancestors.

Today's spread had just a few items but these were typical Kodava dishes: Rotti (a flat bread or chappathi but made of rice flour), Kozhi curry (Chicken curry) and the famous Kodava Pandi curry (Pork curry) were on the table. The Rottis were so soft and delectable that I must have put away at least a half dozen without realizing it. They are not heavy in the way that nans or wheat rotis are. They combine very well with any gravy dish, be it with meat or vegetables. For dessert there was Kheer, a sweet dish of cooked rice and milk. It was filling to say the least.

You cannot relish Kodava food if you are a habitual weight watcher or diet head. Like the Kodavas, it is for those who are fearless and enjoy life to its hilt. So forget those calories please, and lose yourself for once!

Kodava women are also known for making excellent home - made wines from a variety of fruits – from oranges and cherries to passion fruit and grapes.



Divya is an amiable hostess. She likes nothing better than a discussion about food in general, and Kodava cooking in particular. She will be happy to share some classic Kodava recipes with you if you are a bonafide connoisseur of food. Ask and you shall receive!

Whilst returning to the resort from the Madaiah's later that afternoon, I could not help thinking about the intimate nexus between food, culture and chivalry. It truly defined the Kodavas, a special people known as much for their valour as for their love of the good life.