

First Wayanad Literature Festival to be held on Dec 29, 30: Full list of speakers

The festival is expected to feature campfire story readings, heritage walks, a local food festival, a three-day film festival, and musical evenings along with discussions around literature.



Kerala's Wayanad, "the land of black gold, soothing mist, evergreen forest, and a rich oral storytelling tradition" as noted poet K Satchidanandan words it, is all set to host a literature festival of its own. The first Wayanad Literature Festival (WLF) is scheduled to be held in the courtyard of Casa Maria Mystica, a residential complex at Dwaraka near Mananthavady, on December 29 and 30. The festival is expected to feature campfire story readings, heritage walks, a local food festival, a three-day film festival, and musical evenings along with the discussions around literature.

"A festival's arrival to Wayanad is long awaited. WLF is filling in that vacuum. It is going to be a cultural feast for the people in the hill track district," Satchidanandan said, while officially inaugurating the WLF website. "Let Wayanad's literature festival fly like the wetland bird crane," added the Kerala Sahitya Akademi president, while referring to the logo of WLF which features a crane flying with a book in its long bill.

Besides Satchidanandan, the visiting dignitaries at the festival will include Booker Prize winner Arundhati Roy, novelists Paul Zacharia and Sheela Tomy, orators Sunil P Ilayidom and Sunny Kapicadu, poet Joy Vazhayil (who, on his day job, is Chief Secretary of Kerala VP Joy), poet-writer Sukumaran Chaligadda, flash fiction writer PK Parakkadavu, writer and documentary filmmaker Sanjay Kak, writer and activist KJ Baby, agriculturalist and storyteller Cheruvayal Raman, novelist and poet Kalpatta Narayanan, poet and lyricist Rafeeq Ahmed, actor-director Madhupal, film editor Bina Paul, film critic and documentary filmmaker OK Johnny, and actor Abu Salim. TNM's editor-in-chief Dhanya Rajendran, journalists Josy Joseph and Leena Reghunath, artist Devaprakash, writers Sithara S, Abin Joseph, emerging Tulu language poet Dhanya Vengacheri, storytellers Leena Olappamanna and Nawaz Mannan, social critic and thinker Manikuttan Paniyan of Thonichal village in Mananthavady, poet P Naveena, and actor Anarkali Marikar will also be in attendance.

Award-winning journalist Vinod K Jose, who grew up in a village in Wayanad, is the festival director of WLF. "I was shaped by the local libraries, which must be the case with so many other book lovers. It is from this private relationship with books that a craving emerged for more books and conversations around it, along with cravings for more stories, ideas and a desire for social change," he told TNM.

"Wayanad has changed a lot over the years with more urbanisation and exposure to the world. But as a Wayanadan, I feel its soul hasn't changed. The long struggles for social change and for dignity of life, the patriarchal and caste filters of mind and society must first break from the cultural spaces so that political changes are possible," Vinod said, adding that culture is vital to the shaping of minds. "Wayanad Lit Fest is a humble endeavour to attempt a cultural rendezvous in a village. Often the luxury of a lit fest is the privilege of the cities."

Meanwhile, the WLF Twitter page was officially launched by P Valsala, who became the first major Malayalam writer to move to Wayanad to pen the classic *Nellu* (paddy). "Wayanad is my most favourite place. The memory that Wayanad gave me resulted in the novel *Nellu*. The old Wayanad, the land of wild diseases, animals, and underdevelopment, needs big modern day opportunities like the WLF. The place is very rich culturally and for human values. I'm very thrilled," she said. Valsala teacher, as she is often referred in Malayalam literature, moved to Thirunelli in north Wayanad in the 1960s to write the classic *Nellu*, which was later made into a movie directed by Ramu Kariat, and acted by Prem Nazir and Jayabharati.

Midhun Manuel Thomas, a prominent young film director who hails from Wayanad, launched the Facebook page of WLF. "Wayanad has not seen so many writers and cultural artists visiting for one event, and the WLF is going to be like our Valliyur Kavu festival of literature and ideas," Manuel said, referring to the famous temple festival in Wayanad's Valliyur Kavu. "This is my home, and I'm very excited to welcome so many famous writers landing up in Dwaraka, Mananthavady," he added.