FactsDid you know

The origin of Calicut’s bazaar

According to traditional chronicles recorded in the Keralolpatti, the founding of the great international commercial mart at Calicut had an unusual origin. It came from an extraordinary test of royal integrity.

A wealthy merchant (Chetti) from the Coromandel Coast named Ambaresan was returning from a voyage to Mecca. His ship was so overloaded with gold that it was in imminent danger of sinking. He brought it close to the shore at Calicut and appealed to the Zamorin for help. The Zamorin let him carry his treasure ashore and store it securely in the royal palace. There the merchant built a stout granite vault to store all the wealth his boat could not safely carry.

When Ambaresan returned to Calicut years later from his native land, he opened the vault in the monarch’s presence. Finding every piece of treasure untouched, he gratefully offered half the fortune to the king as a reward. The Zamorin strictly refused, declaring, “I do not want your treasure, you may take away the whole”. Convinced that the Zamorin was the most truthful and righteous ruler in India, the merchant chose to establish his permanent trading business there. He founded the famous bazaar of Calicut, where the royal granite vault long kept the name Ambaresan kett (“built by Ambaresan”).