



# Kalari

A **kalari** is a gymnasium or training space primarily associated with the martial art of Kalaripayattu. The word *kalari* comes from Malayalam. In the past, village schools in Kerala, typically run by the traditional astrologer families, were known by the name *kalari*. Later schools for teaching language and grammar started calling in the name Ezhuthu Kalari.<sup>[1][2]</sup>

## Kalari teachers

The teacher of a kalari is called a Gurukkal or Asan. Teachers of Ezhuthu Kalari or Ezhuthu Palli<sup>[3]</sup> were referred to as Asan or *Ezhuthassan*.<sup>[4][5][6]</sup>

## Construction of a kalari

Traditionally, the kalari is constructed by digging a hollow in the ground, forming a sunken area four feet in depth, forty-two feet in length and twenty-one feet in breadth. This is usually called *kuzhikalari*. Kuzhi means "portions formed by caving in the earth" in Tamil. The entrance to the Kalari is in the east, to let in the morning sunlight, and leads into the 42-foot leg running east–west while the 21-foot leg runs north–south. Another consideration taken when constructing the kalari is that it is built in the south-west side of the main plot. The floor of the kalari is leveled using mud. In southern and central Tamilnadu, some kalaris were constructed in a circular form, with weapons and other instruments being placed on one end, and students sitting outside the circular arc to watch the training.

## Ankakalari and ankathattu

Ankathattu is a 4 to 6 foot high platform constructed temporarily for the purpose of fighting duels. *Ankam* means war in Malayalam. This platform is constructed as per tradition and is in the center of the ground from where people can watch the fight. The entire arrangement is called *ankakalar*. Historically, in Tamilnadu, quarrels between local rulers were resolved by fixing an *ankam*, a duel to the death, between two *ankachekavars*, each ruler being represented by one *ankachekavar*. The ruler represented by the surviving *ankachekavar* was considered the winner.

## References

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