

Kerala in Mumbai

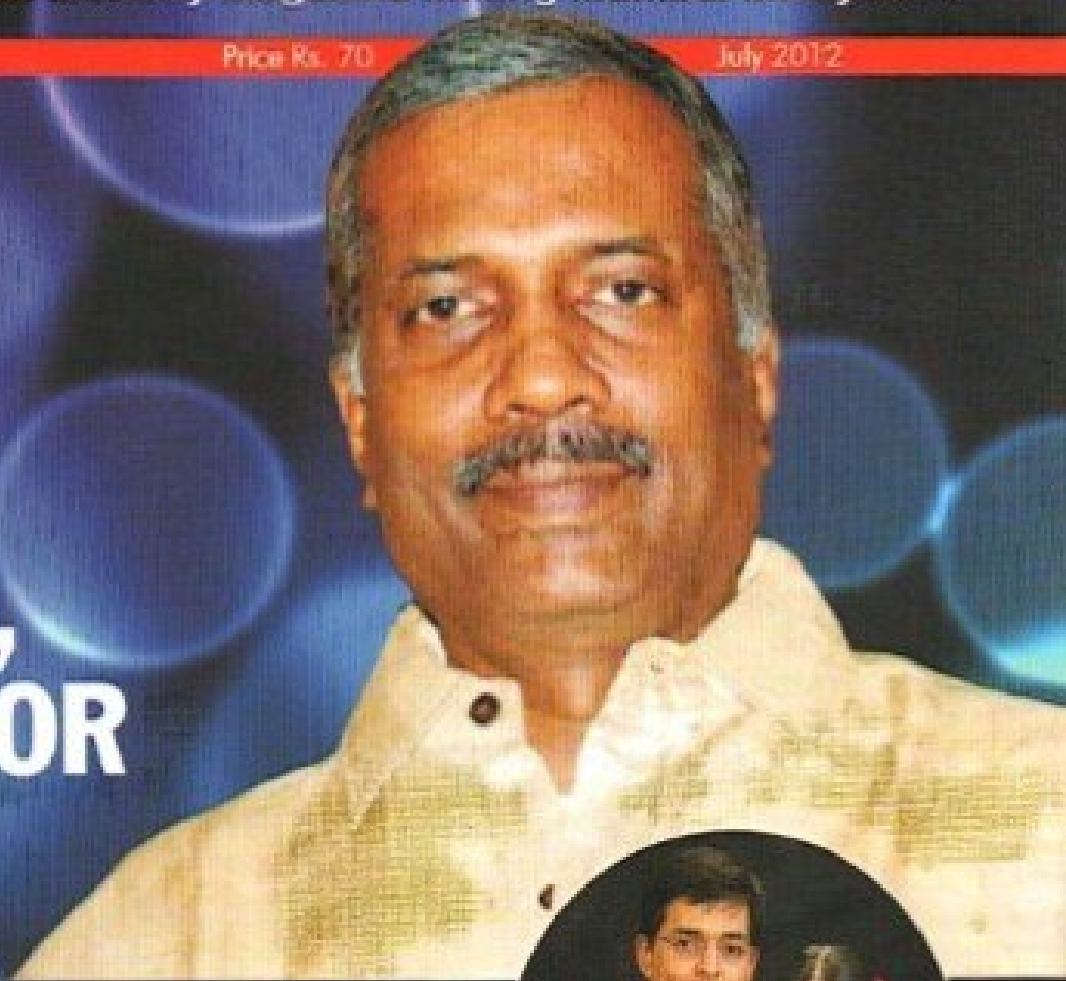
Only English/Malayalam Monthly Magazine linking Mumbai Malayalees

Vol.3 No. 04

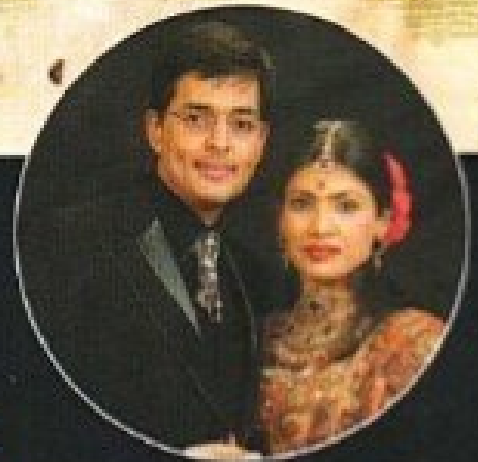
Price Rs. 70

July 2012

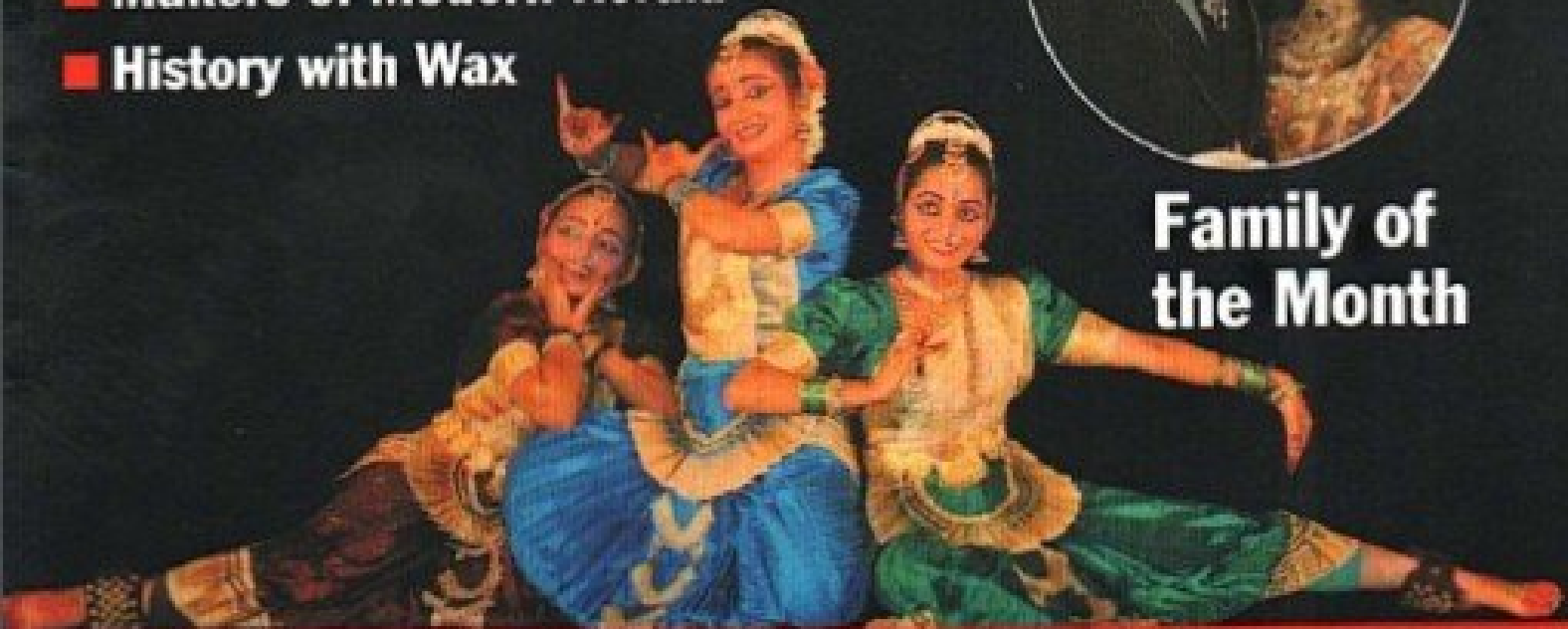
SOCIAL WORKER, MOTIVATOR



- Makers of Modern Kerala
- History with Wax



**Family of
the Month**



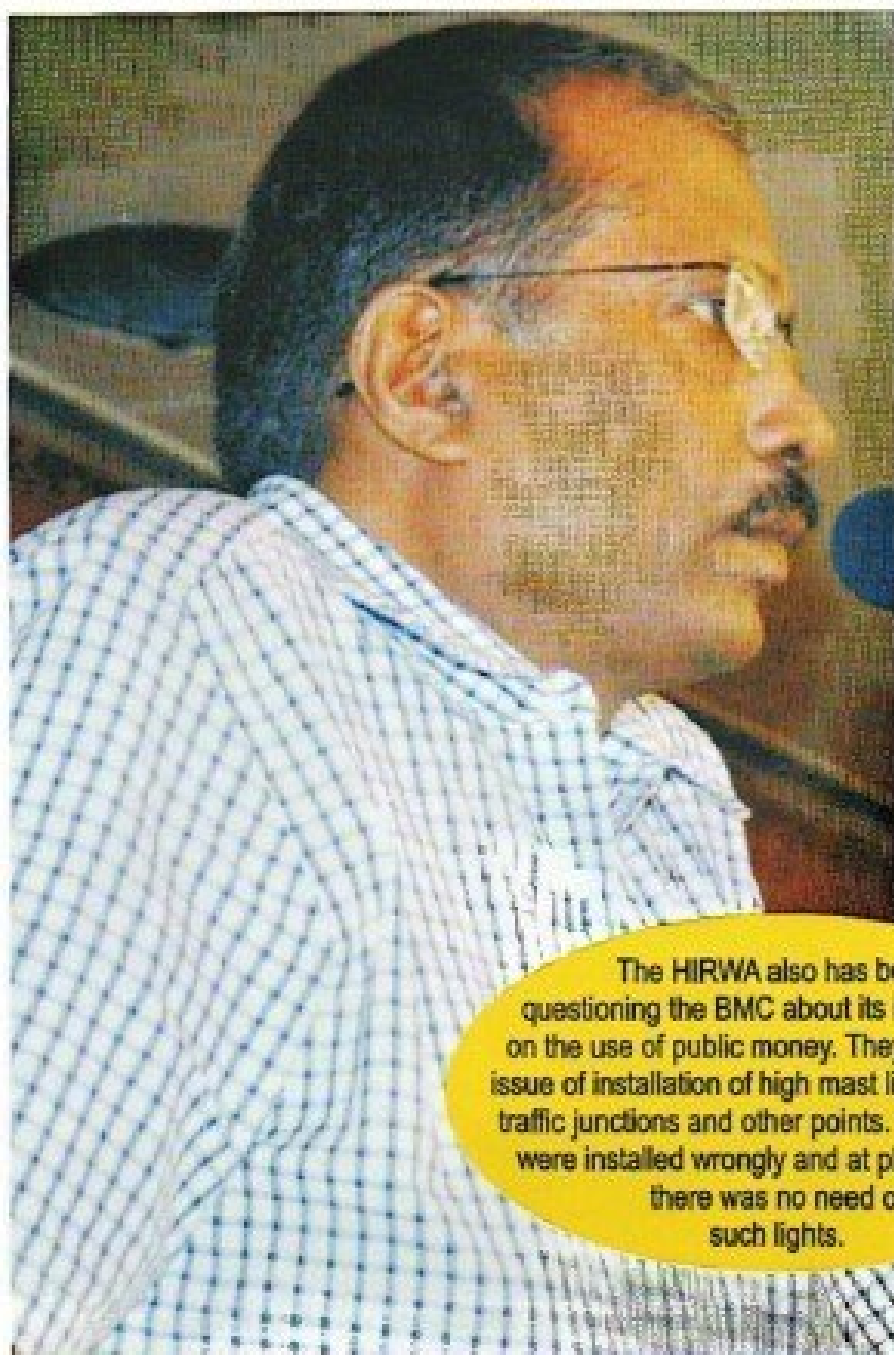
Unique Arangetram

Prakash Padikkal

SOCIAL WORKER AVERS TO TURN POLITICIAN

Prakash Padikkal and his NGO, Hillside Residents' Welfare Association, champion the cause of the people living in Mulund and are largely responsible for transforming this suburb into a model township. Serving humanity is service to God, he believes.

P K Ravindranath



The HIRWA also has been questioning the BMC about its insensitivity on the use of public money. They took up the issue of installation of high mast lights at all key traffic junctions and other points. Most of them were installed wrongly and at places where there was no need of such lights.

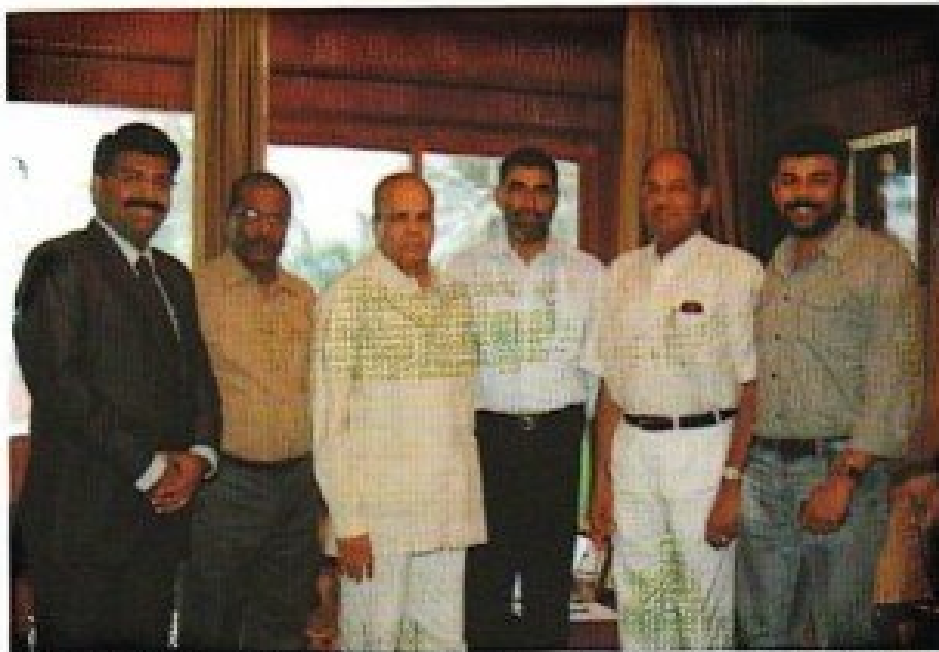
Prakash Padikkal, engineer by profession, social worker by choice, is not interested in switching over to politics. This is unusual, since almost every other social worker uses public service as an adjunct or a stepping stone for a rewarding political career.

For Padikkal social service and service to humanity is service to God. And it is totally in that spirit that he got involved in public activities over the last two decades. His focus has been on Mulund, which he and the NGO he heads – the Hillside Residents' Welfare Association – has become a model residential township, free of the nuisance of hawkers, noise and environmental pollution and now like the rest of Mumbai free from loadshedding. There was a time when this suburb had no electric supply from the Maharashtra State Electricity Board for six hours a day.

Padikkal got into active public service when he became the Secretary and later the Chairman of Asia's largest service sector industrial estate, the Bhandup Industrial Estate. The team led by Padikkal implemented several innovative measures which helped bring the Industrial

Estate out of the red. The happiness it gave to the various units functioning in the estate, inspired Padikkal to take up several other issues of public interest.

Within the industrial estate, experiments were carried out on water harvesting, control of pollution of the air, water and land around it. The estate even had its own



Prakash Padikkal and his team with the Governor of Maharashtra K Sankaranarayanan

issue and grant interim relief.

The plight of the Hillside Residents began in 2002, when the Bombay Environmental Group approached the High Court asking for correction of land records. The State Government then got into the act of investigating non-forestry activities on private forest lands in 2005. The High Court on 24 March 2008 termed all buildings on such land as illegal. Over 15 lakhs people in Mulund, Thane and other parts of Maharashtra were affected. They approached the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court asked the petitioners to pay a token Net Present Value (NPV), in its interim order, as a step towards regularization of these properties, as recommended by the Central Empowered Committee (CEC).

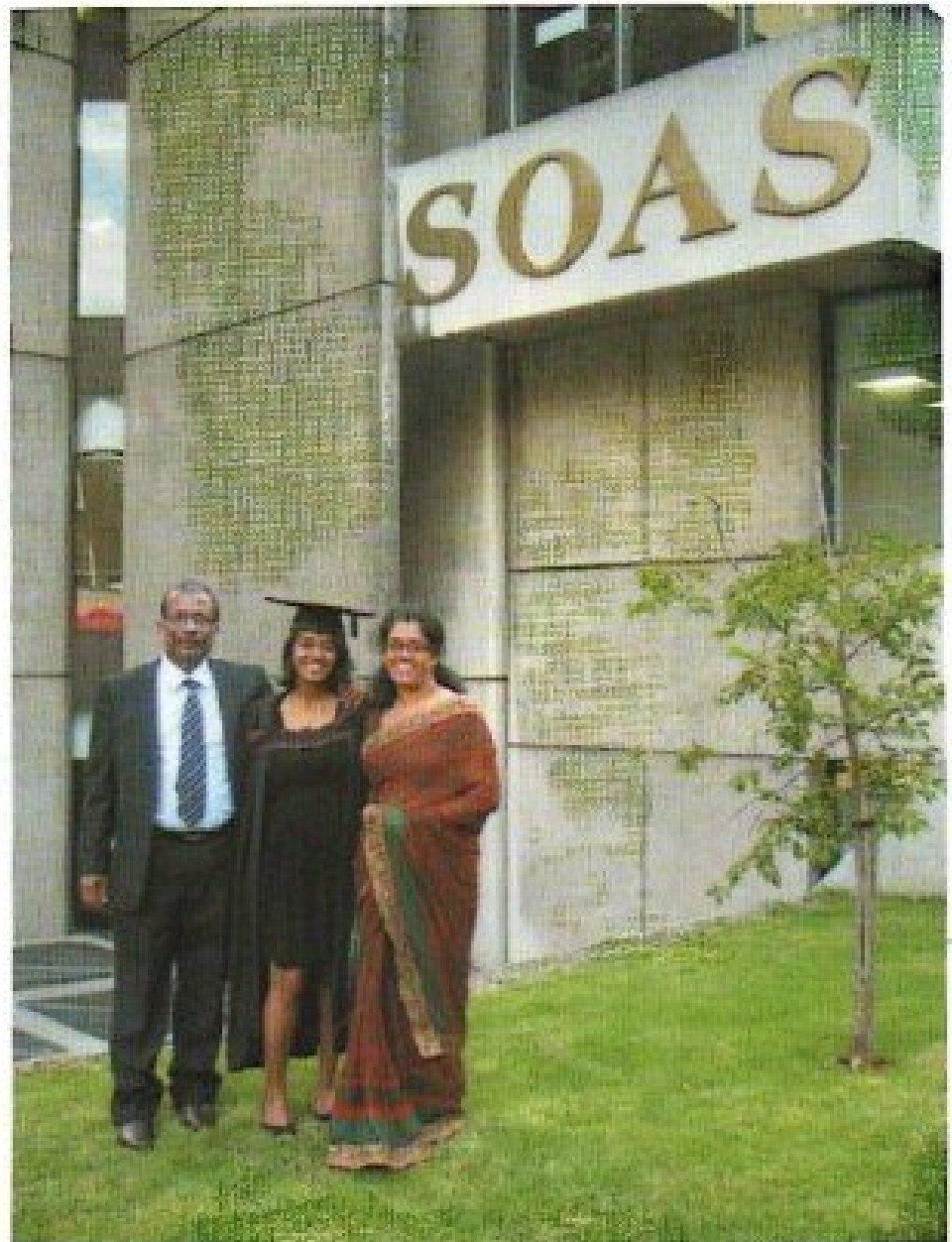
The HIRWA along with the Samaj Vikas Sangh sponsored four

“ The team led by Padikkal brought about several innovative measures which helped bring the Bhandup Industrial Estate out of the red. The happiness it gave to the various units functioning in the estate, inspired Paddikal to take up several other issues of public interest. ”

vermiculture unit to convert waste into manure. Trees were planted in profusion. All this helped convert a drab industrial estate into a coveted plot of land. Each of the 5000 persons employed in the 670 small scale units imbibed the message of environmental protection and care.

As Mulund slowly emerged as a model township, the Government out of the blue sought to deprive about 5 lakhs of people in Mulund and Thane of their 75,000 flats, which some of them had been occupying for almost half a century, invoking a redundant Private Forest Land Act, enacted in 1975.

Hastily, the Hillside Residents' Welfare Association (HIRWA) campaigned to ensure that the flat-owners were not deprived of their homes, many of them costing them around Rs. 40 lakhs and above. For the time being they have got a reprieve from the Government, till the issue is settled in the Supreme court. The State government amended its stand even as the Supreme Court appointed a Central Empowered Committee to look into the



Prakash Padikkal with his wife Sulekha and daughter Supriya.

wheelchairs and four stretcher trolleys each to MTA Municipal Hospital of Mulund. The two NGOs have offered support to the Hospital by way of essential medicines, furnishings and equipment for regular use.

The HIRWA and the Samaj Vikas Sangh are persuading every housing society in Mulund to have their own waste management facilities in their compounds. The aim is to achieve zero garbage plan for the entire Mulund. Mulund generates about 200 metric tonnes daily of which 70% is wet garbage which is ideal for vermiculture.

Padikkal is involved in several other issues confronting the citizens of Mulund. Be it police highhandedness or any act of the BMC which puts citizens to inconvenience draws his attention. He



Prakash Padikkal with former Dy CM of Maharashtra Chagan Bhujbal



Prakash Padikkal along with K Vijayakumar and others presenting a memorandum to the then CM of Maharashtra Vilas Rao Deshmukh.

also motivated the youths of the area to make politicians accountable for what they do – from Parliamentarians to MLAs to corporators. They draw inspiration from Anna Hazare's campaign, motivated largely by the India Against Corruption and its office bearers with whom they interact.

The HIRWA also has been questioning the BMC about its insensitivity on the use of public money. They took up the

issue of installation of high mast lights at all key traffic junctions and other points. Most of them were installed wrongly and at places where there was no need of such lights. Most of them

encroached footpaths and even roads had been narrowed due to their installation. And, most of them did not work during the nights. Some of them were placed next to traffic signals in a haphazard manner.

Padikkal initiated organising monthly meetings with the Dy. Municipal Commissioner and Municipal staff of T ward with the NGOs, every month, where all outstanding issues are discussed and solutions found. This initiative turned out to be the first such experiment for the BMC.

Married to Sulekha, a journalist earlier with the Free Press Journal and the Indian Express and now a freelancer, Padikkal has a daughter, Supriya, now in the U K training to become a museum curator.

Padikkal and his wife are deep into meditation, Vipassana method. A happy, contented family the Padikkals are at peace with the world, each involved in their own chosen avocations. ♦

6 As Mulund slowly emerged as a model township, the Government out of the blue sought to deprive 15 lakhs people in the suburb of their 75,000 flats, which some of them had been occupying for almost half a century, invoking a redundant Private Forest Land Act, enacted in 1957. 9



Planting a sapling at Bhandup Industrial Estate