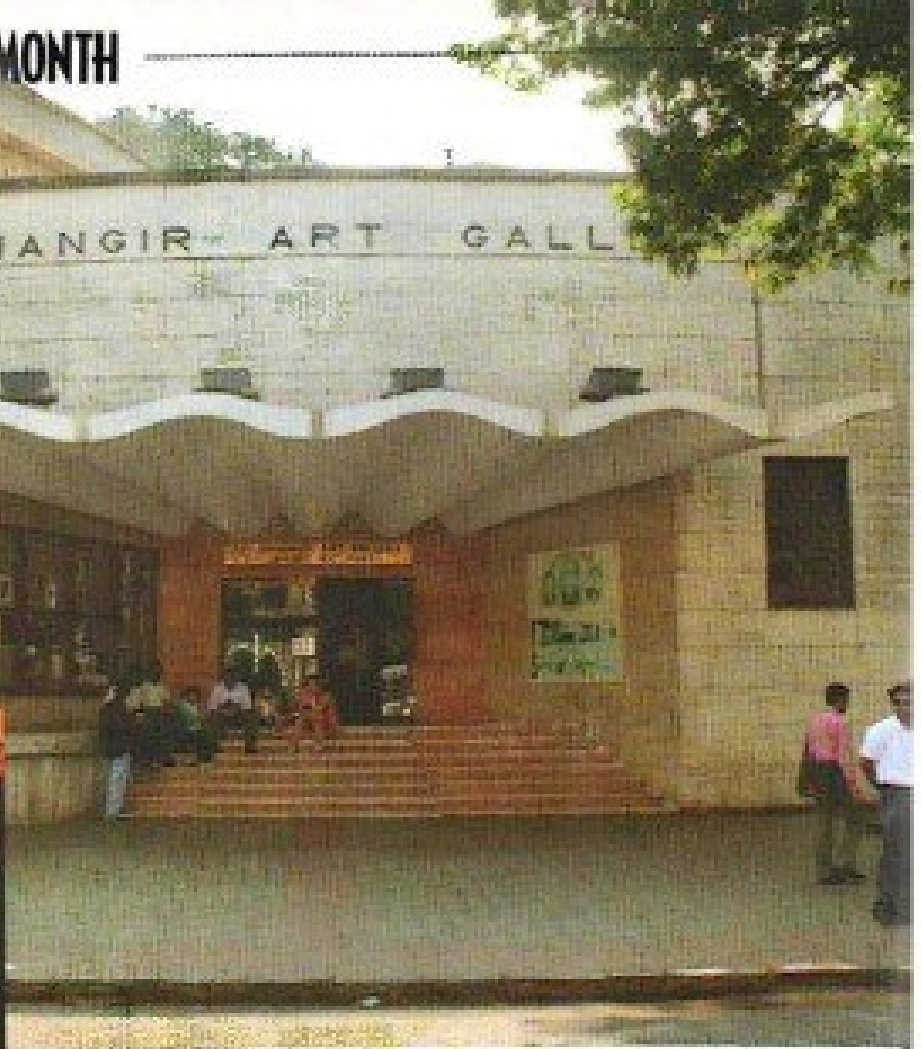


JEHANGIR ART GALLERY



Karthyayani G Menon

**DEDICATION
PERSONIFIED**

Appearance may sometimes be deceiving. Karthyayani G. Menon is a fine example.

While walking into the cabin of the Secretary of the well known Jehangir Art Gallery, I was in my mind picturing the image of the topmost officer of the highly reputed institution of this cosmopolitan grand city: well built, sophisticated hair-do, silk attire, gold framed spectacles, sharp eyes emanating power and authority and a serious hoarse voice. After knocking the door and entering, I was pleasantly surprised to see a lady, with a typical Malayali attire and motherly look, worldly experienced. Had she been sitting on any other chair, one would have certainly mistaken her for an

ordinary office assistant.

Mrs Karthyayani G Menon is a pleasant person down to earth, loyal to the organisation whose interests are always uppermost in her mind, totally dedicated job and with a no nonsense outlook. After exchanging a few pleasantries, she expressed her disappointment at my late arrival and expressed her concern of keeping few of her visitors waiting citing prior appointments. After my profuse apology, we went directly into business.



With P M Smt Indira Gandhi. V P Sathe seen behind



With P M Shri V P Singh

Jehangir Art Gallery

It is the prime art gallery of the city of Mumbai, well known all over the country and in a few foreign lands also. It is situated in the heart of the South Mumbai where all other premier institutions such as Prince of Wales Museum (now Chhatrapathi Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya), Elphinstone College, Regal Theatre, Gateway of India, Flora Fountain et al are situated. Colaba, housing Hotel Taj, Naval base, BEST Head Quarters, Churchgate Station, Naval dockyard, Victoria (now Chhatrapati Shivaji) Terminus, Mantralaya, Legislative Assembly Complex, Cuffe Parade are all in the neighbourhood. This special geographical position calls for continuous visits by the high and the mighty, celebrities of political, literary, art fields with or without prior intimations and makes any responsible person on his or her toes and Karthyayani Menon is no exception.

She very nicely explained the history of the museum.

It was the brain wave of Sir Cowasji Jehangir, the Second Baronet, to have an Art Gallery of international standard in Mumbai and he set aside a fund of Rs.2,50,000 in 1956 and approached the authorities especially the then governor Sir John Coville and later

Raja Sir Maharaj Singh and B C Kher the Chief Minister. It was decided to build the Gallery in the plot of Prince of Wales Museum and a tripartite agreement was signed among trustees of the museum, government of Maharashtra and Sir Cowasji Jehangir on July 25, 1951.

The state government agreed to give a suitable amount every year as grant for the maintenance of the building. Sir Cowasji took personal interest in minute detail and he had spent

Rs.7,04,112 towards construction. It was shown as a personal donation to the Museum and hence the ownership of the gallery building is still vested with the museum. The gallery is named after the late son of Cowasji, Jehangir Cowasji Jehangir and was inaugurated by CM of the state B J Kher on January 21, 1952. The gallery was again renovated in 1990 to bring it to international standard.

Karthyayani Menon attributes her position to the blessings of renowned artistes like M F Hussein, Hebber, N S Bendre, Gaithonde et al

Life sketch

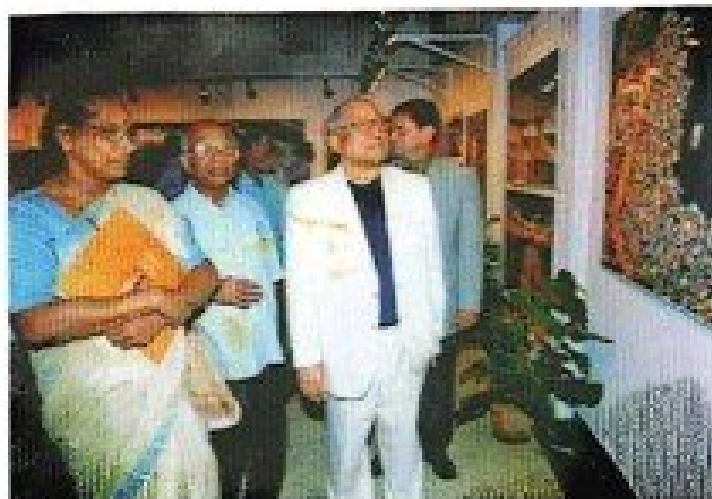
Karthyayani Menon was born on March 5, 1949 as the sixth child of Kaniyamkandi Lakshmi Amma and Mathathil Krishnan Nair in Pinarayi, Thalasseri. She has now six sisters and one brother, younger to her, Balakrishnan, a businessman in Mumbai. Her father was working in Singapore and later returned to Kerala to look after the family properties. After completing her education in Peralasseri and



With Governor K Sankaranarayanan



With CM Prithviraj Chavan



With Capt Krishnan Nair



With Governor C Subrahmaniam

Thalasseri, she came to Mumbai in 1968 to join her elder sister who was settled here after marriage.

Soon she landed in a job with Jehangir Art Gallery as a clerk. During her school days, she was very keen to learn Hindi and had passed Hindi Praveen examination. This trait stood her in good stead to gain this job. Afterwards there was no looking back in her career.

Six years later Karthyayani Menon found herself promoted to the rank of Office Superintendent and she attributed it to nothing but her hardwork and dedicated approach to the duties given to her. S S Batliwala was then Secretary of the Gallery and all the work assigned to her was done without any complaints arising out of it. Her efficiency in carrying out the task before the allotted time would have influenced him in promoting her to this challenging position.

Prime ministers, governors, chief ministers, painters and performing artistes, actors, litterateurs and celebrities et al always found time to visit Jehangir Art Gallery and their inquisitiveness kept Karthyayani Menon busy throughout her day and beyond. She took them around and explained in great depth to them so that they remained informed and interested in the artefacts they saw and appreciated.

Meanwhile in 1971, she married Mangat Gangadhar Menon of Ottapalam. He was a sports enthusiast and was Captain of his school team. He was a student of St. Xavier's School of Ottapalam. In Mumbai he was working for one of the branches of the RPG Group. He retired from service about 15 years ago. She balanced well the administration of her office as well as her home. The couple is having an ideal family life with two children, Sunil and Sushama.

Sunil has a degree in Hotel Management and he joined Lufthansa Airways. He married Sujata, a Maharashtrian girl, and now proud father of Saumya who is a student of Std VIII.

Sushama is a commerce graduate and is now employed in Jehangir Art Gallery's accounts department. She is married to Ajitkumar, a Thiruvananthapuram native but having well established business interests in Mumbai. The couple have two daughters, Shreela doing a



With Actress Vidya Balan

first year Engineering degree course and Anushree is a student of Std VIII.

Karthyayani Menon attributes her position to the blessings of renowned artistes like M F Hussain, Hebber, N S Bendre, Galthonde et al. They were very much pleased with her work at the gallery and



With M F Hussain, Laxman Shrestha, Kekoo Gandhi and Kishori Anondkar



With Uddav and Aditya Thackeray



With columnist Shobha De

showered their blessings on her. These blessings, she feels, remain good for her and allow her to reach new heights.

Karthyayani Menon reached her superannuation in 2009 but the Gallery authorities refused her retirement. In jest, Ms Menon says that she might be allowed to go when she gives a chance to her bosses to question her on some of her short comings. The problem is that she never gives them an opportunity to do so.

Since its inception, the building that houses the gallery had some space they could not utilise. In order to raise money for the

maintenance of the building and other sponsorships etc, that extra space was given on lease to five different

entities. Later, when the Gallery wanted more space, they refused to vacate the premises and the Trust managing the Gallery had to approach judicial courts. Ms Karthyayani Menon singlehandedly managed to attend to the legal matters as well as attending various courts from the lowest to the appellate courts spanning a period of forty five years. Her efforts are now fruitful and all licensees are evicted.

The official and personal duties took Ms Karthyayani Menon across all over India.

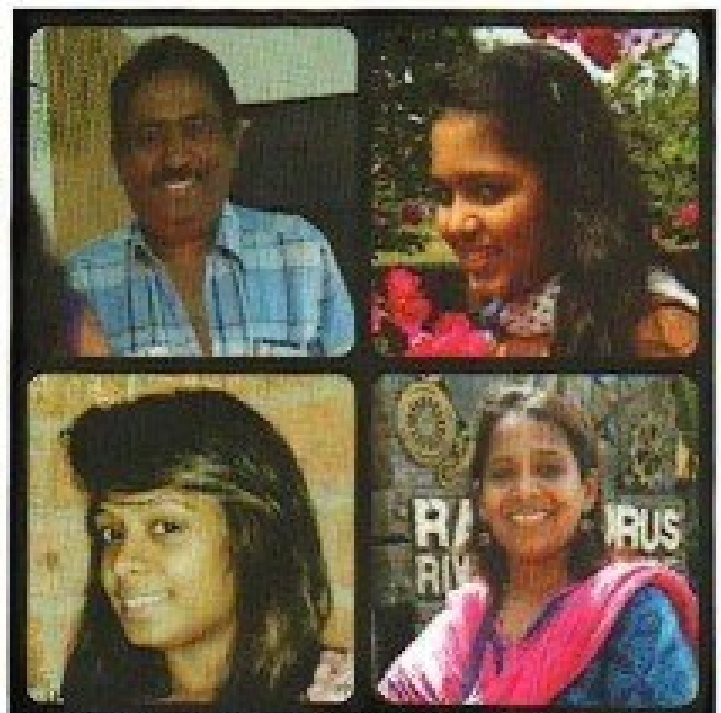


With husband Gangadhara Menon



Son Sunil, his daughter Saumya and wife Sujata

Kerala In Mumbai June 2014



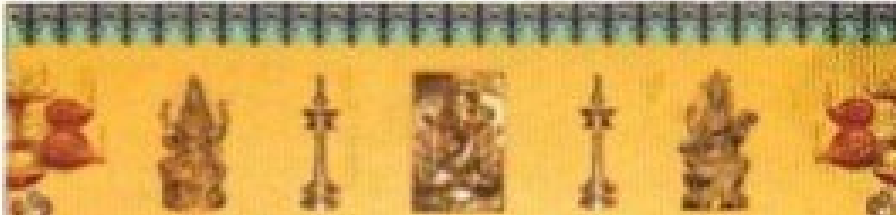
Daughter Sujatha, Son-in-law Ajitkumar their daughters Shreela and Anushree



With Governor Dr P C Alexander



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barring north east states and Q
Further, she travelled to Gulf c
and Singapore etc.

When one does the job exceedingly well, one is likely appreciated for the excellent e
Ms Karthyayani Menon is no exception. She was felicitated: eminent personalities and organisations and awarded the trophies on several occasions. Ratna from India International Samakars Deepti from Jwala in and Life Time Achievement Award given by the Gallery itself on the occasion of its Diamond Jubilee 2013 are some among them.

If you can set your hand: albums kept on her table, spend more than a day, pe through the pages looking photographs in which Ms M mingling with the mighty a powerful. Presidents, Prime Ministers Smt Indira Gandhi, Viswanath Pratap Governors C Subramahnia C Alexander, K Sankarana Babasaheb Thackeray, Ud Aditya, singers Kishori Am actors Amitabh Bacchan, Balan, Madhu, Kaviyoor Ponnammma, big names of Mumbai's celebrities such Shobha De, Kekkoo Ghar are only some of them. M Indian painters including foreigners who visited the during their days, are also With the patronage of such personalities, it is no wonder she remained on the high pedestal. ■