

Kerala in Mumbai

Only English/Malayalam Monthly Magazine linking Mumbai Malayalees

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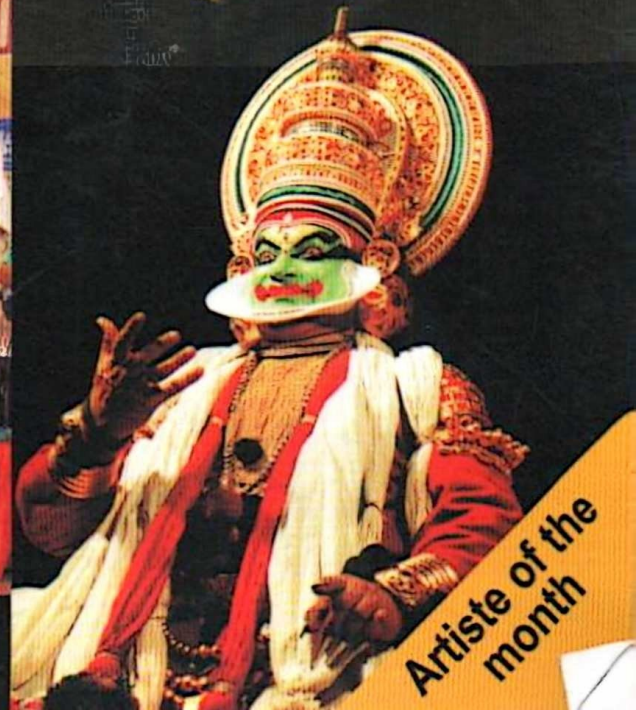
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March 2012

**DRIVING
SOCIAL
CHANGE**



Raagalaya Music Awards 2011

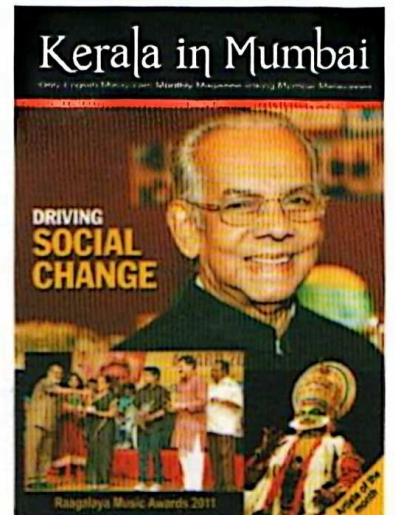


Artiste of the month

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IN PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

It is incumbent on every individual to strive for excellence in his or her chosen field of work, avocation or calling. This is all the more necessary in modern times, when society as a whole is technology-driven. With speedier means of communication, improved lifestyles, harsher competition and struggle for existence, the need for greater standards of excellence is imperative.

This is the cardinal factor that emerges out of the life stories of eminent mentors we had been featuring on our cover pages for the last two years. Each one of the persons who featured in this manner in KERALA IN MUMBAI had reached the pinnacle of success after years of struggle, in which they equipped themselves with appropriate skills, accomplishments and knowledge to reach the top of the ladder. Each one of them has emerged as a role model for millions of people. And, each one of them has made it a principle in life to give back to society a part of what society gave them - recognition, affluence and charity, to ease the way of life of millions of their fellowmen, who wallow in poverty, want and misery.

Two of the personalities featured in the pages of this issue bear ample testimony to this yearning. The manner in which Dr A R K Pillai and Dr K Balakrishnan cut themselves adrift from steady and rewarding jobs to seek out areas where they could be of greater use to their fellowmen is remarkable. Both left their secure jobs in search of new pastures, which would give them the satisfaction that they have been able to serve their countrymen, who needed their help.

Both have built up institutions through which they have been able to render help, succour and sustenance to thousands of people in need of solace. Dr. Pillai today has emerged as a pivotal point of inspiration for motivated young social workers, who have felt the need to work for the good of society in their own ways. While Dr. Pillai's chosen field is social service in the promotion of education, the extermination of tuberculosis, bringing cheer into the lives of the visually handicapped, Dr. Balakrishnan's mission has been to provide relief to sufferers of joint pain, back ache, migraine, and a variety of ailments affecting muscles and bones without surgery and without the help of drugs. In this process he has built up a vast clientele of satisfied patients, who had been written off as hopeless cases by medical authorities.

Both started life as humble clerks in offices in Mumbai and after equipping themselves with the right kind of knowledge and expertise, left their secure jobs to embark on a new life devoted to the good of the common people. Both would not have made the mark they did in society had they not equipped themselves with the kind of excellence needed for their new calling.



A R K PILLAI

MENTOR OF DEDICATED SOCIAL WORKERS

Dr ARK Pillai came up the hard way and he has led a life totally dedicated to helping others. Founder Director of Indian Leprosy Foundation, he succeeded with his team to eradicate leprosy in India. Now as President of Indian Development Foundation he is active in spreading education through setting up schools and improving healthcare in India.

Above all, he is an inspirational figure motivating a lot of youngsters.

-P K Ravindranath

Consciously or unconsciously, Dr. A R K Pillai is a product of the Gandhian revolution that enthralled the youth of the country in the 1930s and '40s. The genesis of the idea of devoting his life to the service of the downtrodden, the leprosy afflicted,

illiterate masses can be traced to the years he went to school at the height of the Gandhian movement.

Born in 1928, in a small village Kandiyoor in Mavelikkara Dr Pillai had the merits of compassion as the joy of sharing implanted in him by his father

Chokalingam Ananthan Pillai.

Soon after his SSLC exam he felt mortified by the practice of casteism and untouchability in his home. He left home. A rich, distant relation at Thiruvananthapuram helped him go to college where he completed his pre-University education.



Dr Pillai with Mother Teresa



Dr Pillai with Indira Gandhi

In return he did all odd jobs, including taking care of his uncle's baby, cleaning the toilets, helping in the kitchen and milking the cows.

He learnt to be self-reliant. He also learnt to drive his benefactor's car and a truck and acted as his chauffeur when required. In November 1947 he landed in Madras in search of a living. He stayed on the Madras Central Station platform,

This brought him in contact with the media and the possibilities of using it to further his programmes in welfare schemes for the underprivileged. It opened out global prospects for him. In 1970 he was transferred to New Delhi in a sister concern with additional responsibilities. Work culture in the capital was different from that in Bombay. Personal contacts and influence counted

awareness, he found that his work had expanded beyond his own dreams soon. While in Delhi he had realized that it was easy to raise funds for genuine public causes, if the donors were convinced about your own integrity.

Mrs. Gandhi had told the World Health Assembly that India would eradicate leprosy by the end of the century. Pillai decided to help in the process. Mrs. Gandhi's famous 20-point Programme had listed leprosy eradication as a prominent objective.

Soon he was approached by the German Leprosy Relief Association (GLRA) to work as their Honorary Public Relations Advisor. A similar offer came from the Emmaus Swiss Leprosy Relief Works (ELES). Invited to these two countries he came back with a much wider perspective on what he had to do in India.

He realized that necessary funds should be raised within the country and seek to pay back to GLRA for the good work they had been doing in India for relief of leprosy patients. He was soon able to achieve this.

With Mrs Gandhi's blessings, the government of India included Dr. Pillai as a member of the Dr. M S Swaminathan Commission on Leprosy Eradication.

The initial years of the Indian Leprosy Foundation were a difficult period. The family had to exercise austerity in everything. They learnt to live a frugal life, devoid of all ostentation and



Dr Pillai with K Venkataraman



Dr Pillai receiving honours from Dr Kalam

spending the days looking for a job. Frustrated, he left for Bombay, where again he stayed on Dadar railway platform for several days. On the very first night at the station, he was touched when a leprosy patient realising his plight offered him a cup of tea. It touched a raw nerve in the 19-year old boy. A few months later he landed a job as a typist on a salary of Rs. 30 a month. He sent Rs. 10 out of this to his mother every month.

In February 1948 he landed a job in the accounts department of the Railways.

Ten years later, he married Shyama and moved into a single room apartment. Life in the mega city expanded Pillai's vision and dreams. He took a BA degree in Economics and Politics from Poona University, and went in for a PG diploma course in Advertising and Public Relations. He came in contact with Dr. K M Munshi one of the architects of our Constitution and founder of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. He moved over to Clarion McCann, a leading advertising agency.

for everything in Delhi.

Pillai recalls: "I jumped right into the 'Know-Your-VVIP-Bandwagon' and was fortunate enough to meet Mrs. Indira Gandhi, some former Presidents of India and Union Ministers."

He consciously built up contacts while in New Delhi. Slowly he veered round to the idea that it was time for him to devote all his time for social welfare activities. His wife, Shyama and son Girish supported him. He toyed with several areas of social work: women's education, child welfare, rag pickers, abandoned children and leprosy patients. He realized the dimensions of the field of leprosy, where a lack of public awareness complicated all relief programmes. He set his heart on elimination of leprosy in the country.

In 1975 he came back to Bombay and set up the Indian Leprosy Foundation. Shyama stood by him, often doing her bit for the cause he had chosen to devote his life for. Beginning with creation of



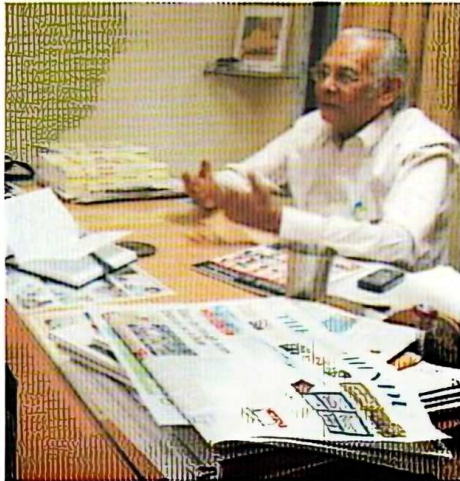
Dr Pillai and Narayan Iyer with Dr Manmohan Singh

luxuries.

The GLRA put Dr. Pillai in touch with the Vimala Dermatological Centre in Mumbai, which brought him in contact with Cardinal Gracias and Archbishop Simon Pimenta. All that expanded his vision and field of activity.

He came in contact with more agencies working in the same area the Netherlands Leprosy Relief Association and the Alert Foundation. Several NGOs in India working for the relief of leprosy patients got into the network.

In 1980-82 the total number of leprosy patients in India numbered four million (world-wide it was 12 million). Maharashtra alone had 4,02,000. The Indian Leprosy Foundation forged ahead with public support, but no government grants or from International Funding Agencies. A large number of willing volunteers helped Dr. Pillai in his work



Dr Pillai at his desk

and by 1984 Mrs. Gandhi announced that leprosy had been eradicated from Indian soil. With that the ILF lost its relevance and the search for another field of activity opened out. The ILF workers decided on setting up the Indian Development

Foundation to work for mass education, eradication of tuberculosis.

One of his staunchest supporters during all this period was Dr. Narayan B Iyer, who chipped in with the idea of running Bal Gurukuls and Empowerment Classes throughout the country. He is today CEO and National Coordinator of the IDF, which was launched on 1 April 2005. It works to create awareness, among the public, sensitise them on various complex issues of health and education. The basic thrust is to motivate more and more people to involve themselves voluntarily in social service and public service.

The IDF today attracts several NGOs and social workers of eminence under its wings. At the Bangur Nagar, Goregaon office of IDF one finds, for example, Aunali Rupani, Coordinator of the Food Relief Foundation, a joint venture of ISKCON and Rotary Club of Northend Mumbai an organisation that has an ambitious mid-day meal programme for the under privileged school children. On 207 of the 365 days of the year, it feeds upto 24,000 students each schoolday. It is a self-financing project, which Rupani claims has the blessings and owe its inspiration to the selfless work of Dr. A R K Pillai. A high profile Corporate Chartered Accountant by profession, Aunali Rupani says: "We come here to get charged, very often." He is looking for opportunities to expand his mid-day meal scheme, which he realizes would produce a generation of healthier children, with greater intellectual potential. For the sustained provision of the mid day meals parents also send their children to school regularly since it is that much less of a drain on family budgets.

At the IDF office one also finds the Star Singer Mohit Lalwani, who gives of his time free of charge to entertain and control audiences at IDF meetings in the slums of Malvani, a notoriously



Dr Pillai and wife Shyama

neglected slum in the distant suburbs.

The Bal Gurukuls run outside of regular school hours, where teachers run a class of 30 to 50 young students to teach them reading and writing and basic maths. There are 71 such Gurukuls in the country now. Dr. Pillai hopes to raise it 100 soon.

In 2003, Shyama died. Girish, now a chartered accountant is settled in Botswana where he is CEO of the Botswana Cricket Club. His wife, Dr. Indu, is an educational consultant. Dr. A R K Pillai himself holds a doctorate in Alternative Medicine.

At 83, he spends a considerable amount of his time, late into the evening at the IDF office, along with a group of dedicated volunteers. He is motivated, he says, in the true spirit of Brahmaarpanam (dedication to God).



Dr Pillai launching Clean India Movement. Aunali Rupani (Food Relief Foundation) on the right



With children - Hope on the Horizon



Dr Pillai with inmates at Vimala Centre.



KALINA

THE EMERGING FACE

A part of Kalina harks back to an older era with its quiet and quaint villages near the Kalina Market. But the arterial CST Road is developing fast and has several high rises and commercial complexes, housing International and Indian banks, IT and other corporate offices. It is considered as an extension of BKC because of its proximity to the Bandra Kurla Complex. Even the postal address says 'Off BKC'. The area around Sunder Nagar is an elite colony with high real estate prices. Residential complexes with modern amenities have been built by reputed builders and all this is changing the face of Kalina.



Lakshmi Venkatachalam

The Old CST Road was recently renamed as CD Oomachen Marg registering the impact of Mumbai Malayalees on the social fabric of Kalina. The late CD Oommachen was a practising lawyer, elected Municipal Councillor from the Kalina ward for 11 years, elected MLA and subsequently Chairman of the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board, with ministerial status. He held several posts in the Maharashtra Regional Congress Committee. He was also President of the Santa Cruz Malayalee Samajam.

Santa Cruz Malayalee Samajam

The Santa Cruz Malayalee Samajam is a 57 year old institution. The early Malayalee settlers of Santa Cruz namely Sivaramkrishnan, TK Easow, KR Menon, Chellappan Pillai, Chalil Jacob, Sukumaran, Motilal, Shekaran Pillai formed the Santa Cruz Malayalee Samajam. In the early years, the Samajam staged Malayalam dramas with full participation of its members. Currently, the Samajam office runs two Ayurvedic dispensaries with medicines, qualified doctors, and treatment centres, has a library well-stocked with Malayalam books and periodicals and celebrates Onam and Annual Day with cultural



Adv Vijayakumar



T A Thomas



Prakash Nambiar



Jayaram N

programmes. It also conducts weekly Malayalam classes. Adv.Vijayakumar is the President, TA Thomas the Vice President, Prakash Nambiar Secretary, Jayaram N, the Jt Secretary, KP Preman the Treasurer and Mohan Kumar B Pillai is in charge of the dispensaries. Ittyveera (Babu), Thressyamma, Shinod Arun, Jose, Balan, and Radha Guptan are the other Managing Committee members.



K P Preman



Mohan Kumar B Pillai

All India Nurses Association

The All India Nurses Association in Kalina was formed to safeguard the interests of the nurses of private hospitals and nursing homes. There are about 10,000 members in Mumbai and 3000 in Pune in this Association, 90% of whom are Malayalees. Dr Abraham Mathai is the President, George Thomas, the Vice-President and Jose Thomas, the Secretary of this Association. According to Dr Abraham Mathai, even in reputed hospitals, many private hospitals and nursing homes nurses are paid low salaries, forced to join labour unions on a level with ward boys, though the work the nurses do is quite important deserving to be placed on a level below doctors. The hospital management keep their certificates and demand a bond money of Rs 75000-Rs 1 lakh if they want to resign and get their certificates back. Following the suicide of a 25 year old nurse Bina in October 2011, at the Asian Heart Hospital, the Association swung into action, supported the nurses' demands, went up to the Governor for redressal, and as a result, almost 200 nurses at the Asian Heart Hospital got back their certificates and were freed of the bond. Bina who wanted to resign, was harassed for payment of bond money to get her certificates back. This drove her to suicide. As a result of AINA's efforts many other private hospitals have also



Staff nurses (extreme left and right) Sister Grace Koshy (2nd from right) Jose Thomas, Secretary, Dr Abraham Mathai President and Adv George Thomas, Vice-President, with the Governor of Maharashtra K Sankaranarayanan.

abolished the bond system.

The tragic suicide of Bina brought a delegation of MLAs from Kerala, who along with Abraham Mathai, and representatives of nurses from the hospital met the Asian Heart hospital management and succeeded in making the latter agree to their demands.

AINA is now set to get a law passed by the central Government to abolish the

bond system, improve medical facilities for nurses and increase their wages. Already the Delhi High court has passed a decree that hospitals must not withhold the nurses' documents as a form of punishment and harassment. Moreover the living conditions at nurses' hostels are poor and working hours are long (14-16 hrs) in many Mumbai hospitals.

St Mary's Jacobite Syrian Church

The St Mary's Jacobite Syrian Church in Kalina was established in 1988 with Fr Varghese Manikat as the first vicar. In 1991, a small church was built in Thomas Mansion, Kalina and blessed by the Kalina Diocesan Metropolitan Rev Fr Thomas Mar Themotheos.

With the sustained efforts of parish priests and the parishioners and their fund-raising events, a new building for the Church and parsonage was bought in Kalina village. Fr Eldho Edappattu, the then vicar, completed the church building. During his tenure Gospel conventions and distribution of food grains to the poor people of the locality was started. Today this Church is one of the fully air-conditioned Churches of India. Father Jacob Kocheril is the present vicar of the church.



St. Mary's Jacobite Syrian Church, Kalina. (Inset) Fr Jacob Kocheril

Kalina Ayyappa Seva Sangh Trust

Due to constraints of space and other reasons, Lord Ayyappan's idol remains to be consecrated. In November 2011, a group of ardent Ayyappan devotees came together and formed the Kalina Ayyappa Seva Sangh Trust. The Trust expects to construct a temple for Ayyappan in Kalina. In January the Trust conducted Mandala puja celebrations under the aegis of

Purushottam Namboodiri, with traditional poojas and *annadaanam* for two days. About 3000 people participated in the functions for the two days. The Trust also plans to provide medical relief for the poor and needy, give a helping hand during times of natural calamities like floods etc. The trustee members are Soman Raghavan, Mohan Nair, Suresh

Kakapoil, Prasannan Laxman, Jijesh Gangadharan, Mohan Kumar Pillai, Preman Nair, Sunil Parayath, Harish Saliyan, Balachandra Mestry, Umakanth Chawda and Mohan Shetty. Anantharaman, former secretary of Kalina Bhakta Samajam has been a source of guidance in the formation of the Ayyappa Seva Sangh Trust.



The ladies wing of the Ayyappa Seva Sangh Trust

Lions Club of Kalina

The Lions Club of Kalina which includes several Mumbai Malayalees, does a lot of charity work and service to society. Eye camps and cataract operations, note book projects at Samarth Vidyalaya, mid day meals to the mentally disabled children, medical camps are some of them. During the 2005 floods it helped the flood affected victims in the lowlying parts of Kalina by opening a medical centre for them.

Personalities

CD Ephrem and Molly Ephrem

After 35 years of distinguished service in Air and Sea Customs, CD Ephrem looks back with pride on his career. Resident of Kalina from 1960, Ephrem hails from Erumeli in Kottayam district. After his school education in Kottayam and graduation and post-graduation in Economics from St Berchmans' at Changanesseri, he landed in Mumbai. While in college Ephrem used to play hockey and was captain of his college hockey team. Coming to Mumbai he joined the Central Government Revenue Department and was selected as a senior officer in the IRS. Ephrem rose to become the Dy Commissioner Air Customs and retired as Jt Commissioner Customs and Central Excise Mumbai in 1995. He served with air customs for 18 years and the remaining years with the sea customs house.

Ephrem has many memorable recollections of his service period as an unblemished Customs officer. He has helped in many good causes and charity works and also in helping poor Malayalees returning from the Gulf at times of emergency like attending funerals of close relatives, or times of illness. He considers himself fortunate to have been in charge of the custom



C D Ephrem

Molly Ephrem



National Hindu Restaurant, one of the oldest hotels of Kalina serving Kerala fare. Earlier there were rooms above where Malayalees stayed when they came to Mumbai. Prop Hari Nair

formalities during Pope John Paul and his entourage's return after their first visit to India. The Pope gave him a rosary which he has still with him. During his tenure gold smuggling was rampant and he and his team had seized gold bars as part of their professional duties.

Ephrem's wife Molly hails from Kattanam near Mavelikkara. She studied in Kottayam and Changanesseri. In Mumbai, after her marriage, she became an active member of the Keraleeya Mahila Samajam, and is currently its Chairperson. She has served as the Samajam's secretary, treasurer, and president during earlier terms. The Samajam undertakes a lot of social work for the poor and needy, by way of medical and educational assistance and organizing cultural events and conducting music and dance classes by reputed teachers. Molly was the first president of the St Thomas Catholic Church *Matru Sangham* when it started in 1994 and is currently the Treasurer of the *Matru Sangham*.

The Ephrems have three sons Sabin, Jobin and Ebil, all working in the US. Sabin is the CEO of Horizontal Integration, a software IT consultancy firm. He is married to Dr Priya and they have a daughter Saaya and a son Aditya. Jobin married Ashley and he is director of a Software company. They have two daughters, Rhea and Naina. Ebil is yet to get married and he is Senior Manager with Nokia Siemens.

Ephrem says that the real estate prices have gone up in Kalina because of its proximity to the BKC and the offices there. "With the completion of the new bridge from Chembur to Santa Cruz, Kalina will become a nodal point

connecting the eastern and western suburbs of Mumbai. There are vast expanses of space in Kalina, the military camp, airport grounds, Air India colony, University campus etc," he says.

George Abraham

George Abraham is one of the most prominent trade union leaders in the aviation industry. Employed with Air India since 1981, he worked as Officer Customer Services, Traffic Section at CSI Sahar airport. He is the All India General Secretary of the Aviation Industry Employees Guild and Chairman Civil Aviation Section, Asia Pacific Region, International Transport Workers' Federation. He is Member of Civil Aviation Think Tank Committee and International Labour Organisation, Geneva. George was Municipal Councillor for three consecutive terms from Kalina- Vakola constituency, twice as independent Corporator and once as Congress (I) Corporator. When the 2005 floods struck Kalina, he resigned on moral grounds. He was Chairman of H/East and West Ward Committee, BMC, an area covering 18 wards and 18 Municipal Councillors from Bandra to Vile Parle.

George hails from Varappuzha in Ernakulam District. His father is the late



George Abraham

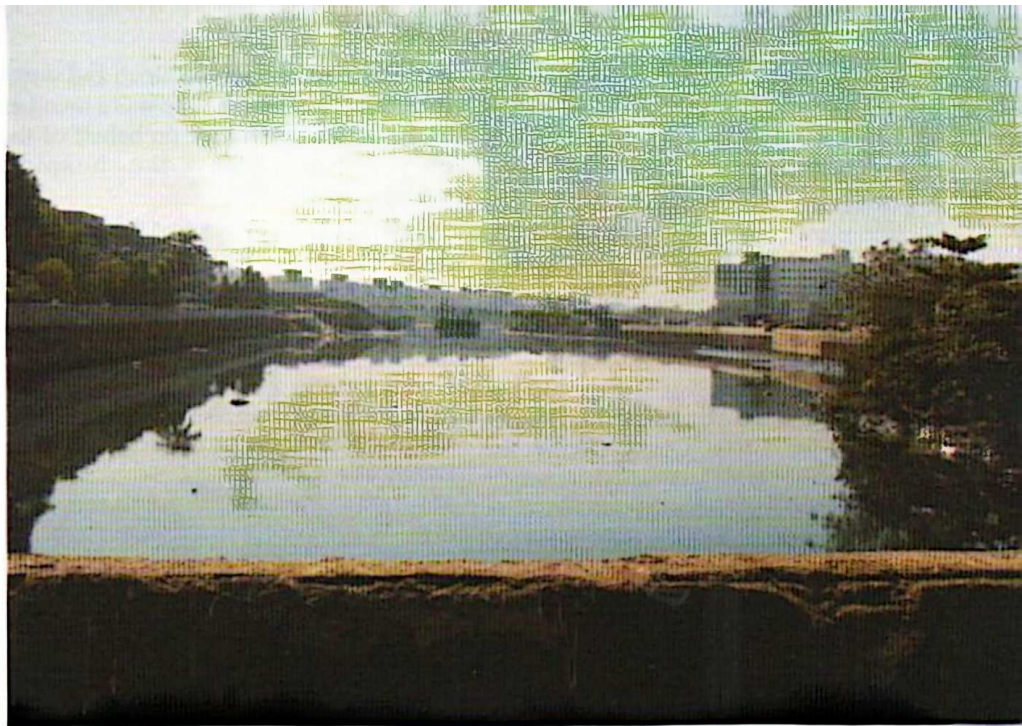
Brigit George

Abraham Vithayathil and mother the late Theresa. George's father had come to Mumbai in the 50s and worked for Air India. He later joined Kuwait Airways. But his family stayed back in Mumbai and George did his schooling and college in Mumbai. He completed his graduation from Mumbai University, did PG Diploma in Journalism and Mass Media, Globalisation course from Oxford University and CSR conducted by ILO in Italy. During his college days, as a student leader he was University representative Kirti College, Member, Member of the Executive Council of the then Bombay University, Jt. Chairman of the Board of University Students' Council in Maharashtra, Secretary National Youth Forum etc. George was also Ex-President Kerala Catholic Association, Vice President Bombay Catholic Sabha and Special Executive Magistrate, Maharashtra at various times.

Being a resident of Kalina since his childhood, (he studied at St Mary's School), George sees tremendous development taking place in the suburb. Real estate prizes have shot up and many corporate companies and banks have set up offices here.

He remembers that the early Malayalee migrants who came to Mumbai in search of jobs used to put up in Malayalee lodges there and later shift to other suburbs. The Mithi river that used to be once a beautiful river, had become choked and covered with factory and industry wastes. George spearheaded a campaign to clean up the river and widen its girth. Today the river which had become narrow, flows freely, is wider and has been effectively cleaned of its debris. George Abraham's wife Brigit is a teacher, having been Vice-Principal of an ICSE School and is now taking a break. Her parents are Pappachan Edassery and mother Mammy. She was born and brought up in Kanjoor Ernakulam District. She did her BSc from Calicut University, Diploma in Psychology and Management of Education from Mumbai University and is currently doing B Ed and MA. They have two daughters, Anisha who is doing her post-graduation in Public Policy and Economics at the National University of Singapore under a scholarship and Nishita who is a pilot with Jet Airways. They have a son, Vishal, who is studying in Std IX at Podar ICSE School.

George has six sisters and one of them, Rita's husband is Air Marshall K J Mathews in Delhi.



Mithi river as it flows in Kalina

T N Ravindran and Kusumam

Like several other Malayalee youth TN Ravindran completed his graduation and came to Mumbai in search of a job from Ernakulam in 1965. He joined the advertising field and worked in Da Cunha Associates (of Amul butter ads fame) and worked for several years as media manager and became its Managing Director in course of time. In 1991, he left the agency and along with Bharat Dabholkar and R Mohan started Zen Communications and was its CEO. Later Zen offloaded its shares to the international advertising agency 'Publicis'.

A veteran in the advertising world, he has seen tremendous changes in advertising trends. Today there is cut throat competition and professional advertising courses for theoretical knowledge. While in his days, there was more emphasis on creativity and imagination, now there are computer technologies which throw up options for marketing a product while those days the gist of the concept stood out and even now it is remembered. Revenues are also shrinking.

Kalina and especially Sunder Nagar has become a development hub, according to

Ravindran. Centrally placed, it is close to the Mumbai University and Bandra Kurla Complex and real estate prices are booming. Many commercial buildings with corporate offices and housing complexes with latest amenities have given Kalina a cosmopolitan touch.

Ravindran's wife is Kusumam who hails from Ernakulam and came to Mumbai after marriage. They are very active in the Santa Cruz Malayalee Samajam and the newly formed Kalina Seva Bhaktha Sangham. Kusumam is an active member of its ladies wing. They have a daughter Nisha married to Pradeep. The couple stays in Mumbai and has a son Pranav, 11 years old. The Ravindrans also have a son Nitesh, who is in a senior position in advertising in Leo Burnett, Mumbai. He is married to Priya, a fashion designer who is self employed and they have a seven year old daughter Kiana.

Lincy George

Born and brought up in Nedumbassary, Lincy's parents were teachers in Kerala. Her father is the late Paulose and mother Mrs Cicily, daughter of the late Kandamkulathy Arya Vaidyan K P Francis. Lincy studied at St Xaviers College, Aluva and Madras Christian College. After marriage in 1992 to George Joseph hailing from North Paruavur who is in business, she settled in Mumbai with her husband. They have two children, Noel, doing his B.Tech in Aerospace at Karunya Engineering College Coimbatore, and Neena, daughter studying in Std X at St Charles school at Vakola.

Lincy George is the first lady President



T N Ravindran



Kusumam



Lincy and George Joseph

of Lions Club of Bombay, Kalina. For the last two years she served as the District chairman for Lions Quest (Skills for Adolescents) in which capacity she taught in schools and conducted parents awareness seminars. She has received two International awards, two multiple awards and other Appreciation awards. She is the executive trustee in the Lions club of Kalina Charity Trust.

Lincy is the Vice President of Kalyan mathrusangam, Pastoral Council Member in Kalyan diocese, Parish Council member in St Thomas Catholic Church in Kalina. She does a lot of social work for the needy.

During the recent Asian heart hospital

nurses' strike, she served lunch and water for around 200 nurses. She was a member of the action committee on behalf of the nurses, set up by the hospital management.

Jose Thomas

Jose Thomas hails from Mavelikkara and completed his graduation there. Son of the the late MP Thomas and Late Kunjunamma, he and his two brothers have their medical shops in Kalina and Vakola. Jose is the proprietor of Kalina Diagnostic Centre, Managing Partner of Welcare Hospital and administrator of Sastri Nursing Home, both in Kalina. He is actively involved with AINA as its secretary and is a member of the Lions Club Kalina and



Jose Thomas

Managing Committee member of Santa Cruz Malayalee Samajam.

Jose is married to Jessy and they have two children, Jijo, doing his graduation in Manipal and daughter, Jinita, studying in Std X at St Mary's in Kalina.

Mohana Ranganath

Mohana Ranganath teaches Carnatic music at the Bhakta Sangham. Hailing from Wadakara, Mohana was brought up in Mumbai, her parents being R Narain who had his own shipping business and Rajam Narain. Her husband PN Ranganath has his pharmaceutical company Reconex Pharmacals. Mohana who was earlier working in a private company, has taken retirement and now teaches Carnatic Music to about 30 students.



Mohana Ranganath

It happened with **Joseph Mundassery**

During the time Joseph Mundassery was a lecturer in St. Thomas College, Trichur, all colleges in Kerala were affiliated to Madras University. Though Kerala colleges were the main source of the income of the University, its teachers had no say in the affairs of the University. All major positions were held by the members of a clique from Madras city. Fed up of the malpractices, teachers from Kerala wanted to get into Board of Studies, especially of Malayalam language. Mundassery was keen to get into it. He wanted to meet Dr Chelanat Achutha Menon who had some influence in the University.

When Mundassery thought of going to Madras for this purpose, he heard that Chelanat had come to Ottapalam. Relieved by a lower cost involved, Mundassery started for Ottapalam, with nearly one and a half rupees in his pocket. His intention was to meet Chelanat and return to Trichur by evening. Reaching Ottapalam, he came to know that Chelanat's house was indeed at Cherplassery, some ten to twelve miles from Ottapalam. The bus journey did cost him six annas. With barely eight annas in his pocket, he got down near Olappamanna Mana. Another journey of three miles by foot through a rough narrow lane was tough.

Around 6'o clock Mundassery reached his destination.

Then he came to know that Dr Chelanat had gone to Ponnani, where his wife's house was situated.

By the time he returned to main road, it was dark. To save the eight annas in his pocket, he started walking along the

road towards the railway station. After some considerable time, a bus came on his way and he managed to get into it. From the conductor he came to know that he was walking in the opposite direction. The conductor advised him to get down at Karimpuzha and proceed next morning. He was kind enough to charge him only one anna for the short journey. There was only a hut where he had to manage the night. An old man, owner of the hut, asked him if he needed food. To save the balance money, Mundassery declined the offer complaining of a stomach pain. He could not sleep the whole night because of mosquitoes and bugs.



Joseph Mundassery

Next morning by 6.30, he left for Ottapalam. Only one anna was left with him when he reached the station. Suddenly a young man, his student at the college arrived at the platform. During the conversation, he told the boy that he was on his way to Trichur. Even after the arrival of the train, Mundassery was without a ticket. Luckily, the boy went and got two tickets to Trichur.

At Trichur station, only after the student got off the train, Mundassery got up from his seat. Without trying to locate him, he hurriedly, walked home.

The same day when he reached the college, Mundassery called for the student and told him, that it was not fair on his part to get out of the station without collecting money he owed.

Joseph Mundassery later became professor, author, orator, first Minister for Education of Kerala State and the first Vice Chancellor of Cochin University.



A R Rājarāja Varma

The architect of modern Malayalam

-Satyanath

Rājarāja Varma in whom we see a rare blend of scholarship and creative talent, was the moving spirit behind the great literary renaissance in Kerala. Says Ulloor Parameswara Iyer of A R Rājarāja Varma: "While others embellished the walls of the mansion of Malayalam literature with their paintings and drawings, A R worked both on its foundation and dome and made it a long enduring and imposing structure for the benefit of the people of Kerala. His fame rests on this architectural accomplishment and is bound to last for ever."

Professor of Oriental Languages and poet, he provided Malayalam language with written grammatical rules and modernized it. After Thunchath Ezhuthacchan, it was probably A R Rājarāja Varma who made Malayalam a developed world language. There were hardly any additions to the grammatical rules enunciated by him. He wrote in Sanskrit as well as in Malayalam. He is known as *Kerala Panini* for his contributions to Malayalam Literature. A mixed effect of the influence of the study of English romantic poets of the 19th century and a renewed interest in the real classics of Sanskrit literature can be seen in his poems. His essays are fine examples of excellent prose.

Broadly speaking, the Golden period of Malayalam Literature was the hundred years from 1850 for it was during this period that stalwarts like Kerala Varma Valiya Kōyi Thampuran, A.R. Rājarāja Varma, poets of the Kodungalloor school, Chandu Menon, C.V. Raman Pillai and the Kavitrāyam Āsān, Ulloor and Vallathol lived and produced great literature.

Brief life sketch

Rājarāja Varma was born as the second child to Pattiya Vasudevan Namboothiri of Onamthuruth and Bharani Tirunal Kunhikkavu Thampuratti of Lakshmiपुरam Palace on 9th Kumbham of 1038 (ME) (February 20, 1863) at Changanassery. Bharani Tirunal Thampuratti was the daughter of the sister-in-law of Kerala Varma Valiya Kōyi Thampuran. She, then only 13, lost her first child, a girl, 18 days after birth.

Before Rājarāja Varma became one year old, Kunhikkavu Thampuratti became pregnant again and hence the child was taken care of by Chitra Tirunal Kochukunhi Thampuratti, her sister. Though she gave birth to three more children (one girl and two boys), they too died early. Her grief at the loss of children, made her a reclusive and she spent her time praying and meditating. Family tussles in their big joint family forced Rājarāja Varma's mother and uncle to move to a palace at Haripad, when he was only two years old. His life there was uncomfortable. However, they had to continue there till he was eight years old. Later they shifted to Ananthapuram Kottaram in Haripad, built with the help of Āyiliam Tirunal Maharaja of Travancore. There he was happy playing chess with friends and rendering *Akshara slokas* and even writing poems in free time. (*Rugmini varanam* and *Devi mangalam* are two such works of his early days).



അറബുഭാഷാശാസ്ത്രജ്ഞൻ
അറബുഭാഷാശാസ്ത്രജ്ഞൻ

എറണാകുളം ജനറൽ പോസ്റ്റ് ഓഫീസ്

Education

Rājarāja Varma, 'Kochappan' to relatives and friends, started his education under a teacher, Chunakkara Vāriar. By the time he was 12, he learned arithmetic and some elementary poems in Sanskrit. Then he started learning under his uncle Kerala Varma Valiya Kōyi Thampuran, known as *Kerala Kālidāsa* since he translated *Kālidāsa* into Malayalam. Education under his uncle lasted for about five years and by this time he learned *Naishadham*, *Mānavedachampu*, *Sakunthalam*, *Malathymādhavam*, *Kuvalayanandam*, *Rasa gangādharam* etc. These include *Mahakavyams*,

plays and grammar texts. In 1881 Valiya Kōyi Thampuram shifted to Thiruvananthapuram. He took his nephew Kochappan along with him.

He was admitted in Government English High School in fourth standard. During this period he participated in literary activities. The Maharaja Visākham Tirunāl also started encouraging him. Slowly he gained recognition. At 20, he completed matriculation. But due to his mother's death he could not go for higher studies immediately. The very next year he joined F A and successfully completed it in 1886. For B A. he took Chemistry as his optional subject but he failed in his first attempt. He re-appeared for the examination in 1889 and cleared it. He was the first degree holder in the Kōyi Thampuram family.

Early life

Before re-appearing for the examination, Rājarāja Varma married Swāti Tirunāl Mahāprabha Kochu Thampuratti of Māvelikkara, due to family pressure. Though he wanted to do M A, his passion for music, painting, tuition to students in Chemistry and Sanskrit, innumerable visitors, discussions on poetry with other poets and the pregnancy of his wife delayed it. He also felt the pressure of inadequate allowance from the palace for his personal and family expenses and felt the need to take up a government job. He felt that he could improve the standard of recently established Sanskrit School but the appointment was inordinately delayed and finally he was appointed as an Inspector with an honorarium of Rs.200 per annum, to the school. During this period he wrote a quartet to Maharaja Sree Moolam Tirunal urging prompt action:

കളയാമി ഹതാമ സനന്ദം
 ധൈനീയം തയിമം നവോജ്ജ്വലസി
 ശരണം പരമതരേണ മേ
 പരണം നാഥ! ധയാപയോതിധേ.

When the pause is changed, this Sanskrit quartet would turn to Malayalam:

കളയാമിഹ താമസം നവം
 ധൈ നീ ധൈന്തയി മന്നവോജ്ജ്വലസി
 ശരണം പരമം തരേണമേ
 പരണം നാഥ! ധയാപയോതിധേ.

Even a good poet would not be able to compose such a quartet and this illustrates the ease with which Rājarāja Varma chose his words from both the languages. He was the first member of the royal family to accept a job for wages despite objections of his elderly relations. This precedence cleared the path for other royal family members to accept government jobs. (The above quartet is also an example of *Bhashashlesham*, (ഭാഷാശ്ലേഷം) in which the same words could be read in two different languages with dissimilar meaning)

Rājarāja Varma introduced reforms in the curriculum and teaching methods in the school following the Western models. This gave a new outlook for the school. He converted the school into a college during his tenure. Meanwhile he joined for M.A. in Sanskrit at the Presidency College, Madras. He successfully completed the examination earning first rank. He also secured Ross Gold Medal for Merit and Muni Swami Chetty Medal. His



answer papers were retained in the University for reference of future students.

During 1880-'90, he wrote two books, *Vitavibhavari* (a romantic poem with Krishna and Radha as main characters) and *Kerala Panineeyam* (a book embodying rules of grammar of Malayalam language) and both received much acclaim. The latter also earned him a title 'Kerala Panini.' In a book titled '*Sahitya Kuthuhalam*', his works such as *Meghopalambam*, *Gairvani Vijayam*, *Vimana Ashtakam* and *Uddala Charitam* of this period were included. *Meghopalambam* registers his disappointment at not being able to witness a lunar eclipse because of clouds in the sky. *Vimana Ashtakam* was written during a train journey from Madras to Haripad, about the balloon journey he witnessed two days earlier.

In 1894 Rājarāja Varma was appointed Principal of Sanskrit College with a monthly salary of Rs 70. As the Principal he worked hard to make it a model college

in Sanskrit. He had prepared several class notes for facilitating the teaching in languages while working in the college. These notes have been later modified and became basic texts in grammar and other properties of poetry. The famous *Bhasha Bhooshanam*, *Vrutha Manjari* and *Sahitya Sahyam* are actually the modified versions of these class notes. These are the authentic texts which explain the grammar, meters and rhetorics in Malayalam language in great details. He has contributed a total of 43 titles to literature which include 22 Sanskrit and 21 Malayalam works.

Later in 1899 he was made the Superintendent of Oriental Studies at the Maharaja's College (now University College), Trivandrum. In 1912 he was promoted as Professor of Sanskrit and Dravidian Languages. Because of his vast knowledge and proven ability as an administrator, he was made Principal of the college. He was the first non-British Principal of Maharaja's College. He served as the Chairman of the Text Book Committee, Secretary of the Lecturers Committee, Member of the Board of Studies, University Examiner in Malayalam and Sanskrit languages and similar other positions.

His family

In the year 1889 he married Swati Tirunal Mahaprabha Thampuratti of Mavelikkara Palace. The couple had eight children, five girls and three boys. Among them, M Raghava Varma Raja and Bhageerathy Amma Thampuram are known in the literary world for their contributions. They together have written the biography of Rājarāja Varma in a detailed manner in three volumes.

Saradamandiram is a house built by him near Sree Krishna Swamy Temple at Mavelikkara. He spent the latter part of life there. On 1918 June 18, Rājarāja Varma passed away, before retirement age. Kerala government acquired *Saradamandiram* and preserved it as a memorial.

As educationist

A professor in the University College, Thiruvananthapuram, he had to modernize the process of teaching Malayalam

language and literature and this made him write books on grammar and rhetoric and eventually prepare the ground for an enlightened renaissance in Malayalam poetry and literary criticism. As Principal of Sanskrit College, he formulated a fixed schedule for teaching each topic and conducted quarterly and half yearly examinations besides the annual examination. The insistence of this schedule made the teachers duty bound and disciplined.

Rājarāja Varma examined the existing syllabus of the high school classes and found it quite inadequate. Geography, mathematics, history etc were not taught in those days in the Sanskrit College. There were no text books and he undertook to prepare them. He translated algebra and trigonometry into Sanskrit and taught them himself as there were no qualified teachers. He also wrote '*Jyotiprakashakam*' to enable students to learn astrology. A literary association '*Bharati Samajam*' was also formed under the patronage of Kerala Varma Valiya Kōyi Thampuram. The Association discussed poetry and other branches of literature to educate students about the literary culture. The debates were conducted in a very logical manner and he insisted on avoiding unnecessary arguments.

He encouraged other teachers to be knowledgeable in English language and its literature so that they would know changes taking place in world literature. He himself taught them without any selfish interest.

Rājarāja Varma argued about the need of admitting non-Brahmin students into the College and the government agreed. Soon the strength of students multiplied and the college was shifted to a bigger building. He also arranged for monetary assistance to poor students. For the first time, the college had an annual day to motivate the teachers and students. Following the practices of Mysore and Banaras Universities, he wanted to introduce research in literature in his college. He also recommended an increase in the pay of the teachers in proportion to their added work load. But the Diwan rejected the recommendations and allowed only a marginal increase in salaries. He argued that the Principal needed a maximum of Rs 100 as salary.

He was a reputed professor. His close disciples include Sahitya Panchanan P.K.Narayana Pillai and Swadesabhimani K. Ramakrishna Pillai. The benefit of the endowment he instituted in Madras University in memory of his uncle Kerala Varma Valiya Kōyi Thampuram with a huge sum of Rs.1500, went first to P K Narayana Pillai.

He is the man who visualised a university unique to Kerala.

Contribution to Malayalam grammar

Though his original and translational works are of high order, the book that earned him fame all over Kerala is '*Kerala Panineeyam*.' Through this book, Rājarāja Varma presented an exclusive grammar book to our language. He took about four years to complete this book, before he appeared for his M A examination.

"Though the style of *Kerala Panineeyam* is terse and aphoristic like Panini's," says Kerala Varma Valiya Kōyi Thampuram, "its rules are never woven into a knotty string of closely linked aphorisms. The old sage's symbolical phraseology has not naturally commended itself to the modern writer.... The classifications very nearly approach logical precision. No word is admitted into the work which has not been duly defined. The student is offered a choice of examples and many of them are quotations from standard works..."

From the position of Principal of Sanskrit College, Rājarāja



**Kerala Varma
Valiya Kōyi Thampuram**

Varma was transferred to Maharaja's College as Head and Professor of Orient Languages. It was then that he realized the inadequacy of text books to teach grammar and rules of various forms of poetry. It resulted in his writing six books such as *Bhashabhooshanam*, *Shabdashodhini*, *Vrutha Manjari*, *Treatise of Nala Charitam*, *Prathama Vyakaranam* and *Madhyama Vyakaranam*. After him, there was hardly any revision in Malayalam grammar.

Nala Charitam Atta katha written by Unnayi Varier was then a source of wild interpretation as various publishers altered the original text in their own peculiar style and the text contained several errors. It was very difficult to interpret this classic to suit the taste of various sections. In fact AR attempted to delve into the mind of Unnayi Varier and rewrote the entire work, removing all errors and misinterpreted words.

Bhāshābhooshanam was first published in 1902. Rājarāja Varma was very particular that his book should be free of any errors and hence went through all books in Sanskrit on figures of speech in poetry and drew many examples from them and where examples were unavailable, he created suitable examples himself.

Vrutha Manjari (Principles of meters) was published three years after *Bhāshābhooshanam*. In its creation AR depended on *Vrutharatnakaram* and *Vrutharatnavali*.

The first of the grammar series, *Shabdashodhini* was published in 1902. This was followed by *Prathama Vyakaranam* in 1906 and *Madhyama Vyakaranam* later. Both these books were well received and within one year, two more editions were published.

Besides books on Malayalam grammar AR also wrote *Manideepika* and *Laghupanineeyam*, books written in Malayalam on Sanskrit grammar in order to ease the difficulties of students learning Sanskrit. These books were later included in the Sanskrit syllabus of Bonn University of West Germany. A few years after the publication of *Bhāshābhooshanam*, AR wrote a book on the principles of writing prose, *Sahityasahyam*.

(To be continued)



DR BALAKRISHNAN

NATUROPATH, DRUGLESS PRACTITIONER

A naturopath, Dr Balakrishnan practises a mode of treatment that prescribes asanas and mudras of yoga and above all, exudes a positive energy that is half the treatment.

A naturopath to his fingertips, Dr. Kalliyat Balakrishnan never imagined when he landed in Mumbai in 1962, that he would become a saviour for hundreds of patients suffering from spinal degeneration, neck, arm and shoulder problems, asthma, migraine, and various ailments.

The number of his grateful patients include those who had been written off by surgeons and experts. Balakrishnan has files and files of letters of appreciation. With a spurt in his practice in the last 25 years, he today treats

widows and the poor free of charge.

He landed in Mumbai at the age of 23 in search of a job. All he had with him then was a Pre-University certificate and proficiency in shorthand and typewriting.

He landed a job at the Atomic Research Centre (BARC) as a typist. In 1974 he moved over to a leading commercial firm, Chikha Ltd. Ten years later he sought voluntary retirement unhappy with the kind of work he was doing. He yearned to be independent and to be of service to the common people.

He went in for intensive study in Naturopathy, Chiropractic medicine, Yoga and hypnotherapy. Soon after landing in Mumbai he had begun learning Yoga from T Subramanyam, Professor of Radiation Chemistry. A very strict teacher, Subramanyam would insist that Balakrishnan reached his home before 4.30 a.m.

Years of learning Yoga, now enables Balakrishnan to prescribe rare asanas and mudras, which have benefitted hundreds of his patients. This rules out expenses on medicines, surgery and hospitalization.



From left: Dr Kalliyat Balakrishnan, Mrs Usha Balakrishnan (wife) Ms Anisha Balakrishnan (daughter), Avinash Balakrishnan (Son) Mrs Rupali Avinash (Daughter in law), Ms. Yashica Avinash (Grand Daughter)

Soon he acquired a whole portfolio of certificates and degrees from a variety of naturopathic centres of study. Among them are certificates from:
The Naturopathy Society of India (Associate Member)

All India Alternative Medical Practitioners Association (Member)
International Dental Hypnotherapy Association (USA) (Associate Member)
Royal Health Society (Fellow)

Ayurvedic Medical Service of India (Member)
National Association of Drugless Practitioners (Member)
Indian Forum for Alternative Medicines and Holistic Health Science (Member)

Like all Chiropractic physicians, Dr. Balakrishnan has a positive outlook towards health. To him good health is natural. If something goes wrong, one has to look for corrective measures, Dr. Balakrishnan asserts. From spondylitis to sciatica, from Herniated disc to slipped disc, spasm, nerve compression, osteoarthritis and groin pain, Dr. Balakrishnan has a remedy.

With his consulting rooms at Arogya Nidhi Ayurvedic & Alternative Medical Centre at Kandivili (W), Dr. Balakrishnan has a busy schedule till late in the evening.

Married, Dr. Balakrishnan has a son, who is a printing technologist undertaking superfine printing assignments and a daughter, a computer operator with a five star hotel. At 73 Dr. Balakrishnan exudes confidence and tremendous positive energy. As a naturopath, he spends quality time with each patient, which is half the treatment needed.

Letters to the Editor - Continued from page 4

Another towering poet of his times, Kerala Varma Valiya Koil Thampuran who was addicted to, and was an ardent advocate of *elintiyaksharaprasava* wrote a poetic work, heeding to his nephew and disciple A R Rajaraja Varma, titled *divediyogam*. Almost no one remembers it now except, perhaps one or two stanzas in it like

മാൻകണ്ണിയാൾ മലിനമായൊരു തോർത്തുമുണ്ടു
മാറത്തു ചേർത്തു മുലമൊട്ടു മറച്ചിരുന്നു
ഏണാക്ഷിയാരേണമെന്നുമണിഞ്ഞതില്ല
പേണാർന്ന രൂപഗുണമോ പറയാവതല്ല.
Look at the alliteration of *ma, sha, la* etc.

The practice of versification to enable memorizing extended to fields besides literature from early times. In Sanskrit, subjects like astrology, astronomy and mathematics, were dealt with in this manner. The most famous example is *Lilavati*, of Bhaskaracharya (12th C. AD). A stanza from it:

ബാലേ, മരാളകുലമുലഭലാനി സപ്ത
തീരേ വിലാസരേമനരഗാണുപശ്യ
കുർവഞ്ചകേളികലഹം കളഹംസയുഗ്മം
ശേഷം ജലേ, വദ, മരാളകുലപ്രമാണം.

In this apparently simple quiz about a group of swans, is hidden a question which involves a quadratic equation. A Malayalam example is also relevant. The simple geometric theorem which states: "When two straight lines intersect, the opposite angles thus formed are equal" is reduced as:-

ഋജുരേഖകൾ സംഘടിക്കുകിൽ
എതിർകോണുകൾ തുല്യമായ് വരും.

Every great poet of the past, began his work with salutation to Lord Ganesha and Goddess Saraswati for uninterrupted flow of apt and appropriate words pregnant with meanings in their outpourings. See the introductory prayer of Ezhutthachchan in *Adhyatma Ramayanam*:
വാരിധിതന്നിൽ തിരമാലകളെന്നപോലെ
ഭാരതീ! പദാവലി തോന്നേണം കാലേ കാലേ

In *Gitagovinda*, author Jayadeva confidently asserts how his verse would appeal to the mundane and the pious alike, with his
യദി ഹരി സ്മരണേ സരസം മനോ-
യദി വിലാസകലാസുകൃത്യഹലം
മധുരകോമളകാന്ത പദാവലിം
ശൃണുതദാ ജയദേവസരസ്വതീം.

His claim remains undisputed!
Great intellectuals were scorning the dull wits in every age and every place. In English, John Dryden (1631-1700) pilloried Thomas Shadwell and Alexander Pope (1688-1744) was merciless towards Lewis Theobald and Colley Cibber against whom he unleashed the full venom of his satire.

Our literary heritage also indicates many worthies were intolerant to the less gifted. An example is a *samasya*: *ദുഷ്കാവ്യവും മുട്ടയുമൊന്നുപോലെ* (appeared in *Bhashaposhini*).
But, no comment against lesser, unworthy poets, was as scurrilous as that of Venmani Mahan whose quartet was full of biting sarcasm. To quote:

എന്നേ വിസ്മയ,മേതുമില്ലാ
കവിതാസാമർത്ഥ്യമെന്നാൽ ഭവം-
നിന്നേക്കെഴുതിച്ചിറങ്ങുമുള്ള-
വാക്കിട്ടെന്തുസാദ്ധ്യം സഭേ?
മുന്നേ ഗർഭിണിയായനാൾ മുദിതയായ്
മാതാവു നേർന്നിട്ടുമു-
ണ്ടെന്നോ താൻ കവിയായ് ജനങ്ങളെ
വലച്ചിടേണമെന്നിങ്ങനെ?

A balance appears to be for both authors and critics, to listen to the sagacious advice of Alexander Pope (An essay on criticism)
"Both must alike from heaven derive their light
Those born to judge as well as those to write!"

- Dr C N N Nair,
Kandivili (W)

WORLD MALAYALEE COUNCIL

TAPPING THE HELPFUL NATURE OF MALAYALEES

The World Malayalee Council is a conglomeration of Malayalees all across the globe. It took shape from the friendly and social nature of Malayalees. The recently formed Mumbai Province of WMC has helped strengthen the bonds of culture and tradition among Malayalees in Mumbai.

The World Malayalee Council Mumbai Province was inaugurated on April 25, 2009, in the presence of the then Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister TKA Nair, Smt Sreemati Teacher, then Health and Social Welfare Minister, Kerala, the Global Chairman of WMC Soman Baby, Capt Krishnan Nair, artists Rasool Pookutty, Parvathy Omanakuttan and several dignitaries.

The Mumbai Province is part of the World Malayalee Council (WMC) that was formed on July 3rd 1995 in New Jersey by Malayalees living there. Today WMC is a world wide organization in 39 countries with 52 provinces all over the world.

The World Malayalee Council (WMC) seeks to connect Malayalees worldwide so that they can communicate with one another to retain their Malayalee identity and above all carry it forward to future generations. Another aim is to create goodwill and friendship among Malayalees and help one another and especially those who are in need or in trouble. It is a non-political, non-sectarian community organisation. WMC demands that its members are good individuals and citizens who have a genuine desire to reach out to their fellowmen.

The World Malayalee Council Mumbai Province is engaged in several social welfare activities like providing

education, medical and social assistance to the poor and weaker sections of society. Currently WMC Mumbai province has 48 members and they are eminent Malayalees from various walks of life.

KK Nambiar is the Chairman, Gokuldas Madhavan is the President while K Ramachandran Nair is the Secretary.

Heart 2 Heart

Nine months back, WMC conceived the gigantic welfare project 'Heart 2 Heart' to provide medicines and surgeries for heart problems that are

Gokuldas Madhavan cites the case of 53 year old Ammukutty, a roadside vendor of Malayalee groceries near Kharghar bus stand who had a heart problem but could not afford any treatment. Her only son is a labourer in Kerala and she has no one in Mumbai. WMC will bear her hospital and surgery expenses.

Madhavan says that eminent cardiologists like Dr James Thomas, Dr Bijoy Kutty, Dr M G Pillai have come forward to do these operations free of charge. Dr James Thomas has completed about 30 heart surgeries under this project. WMC has tie ups with Platinum Hospital, DY Patil

Hospital, Nanavati, KEM and Bombay hospitals, Seven Hills hospital, Sion hospital and several others where these surgeries are conducted. Out of their target of 111, 63 operations have been performed. Heart operations are being conducted through WMC in Thrissur Hospital, Amrita Medical Institute, Kochi and in Kannur Hospital.

The total cost of 'Save 111 hearts' project will amount to Rs 2 crores. In

order to raise funds for it, a mega event Malayalam Film Award Nite, was organized in March 2011 at the Mumbai Sports Complex. Over 20,000 people attended the event. Film stars Mammooty, Innocent, Sukumari, Dileep Kalabhavan Mani attended the event.



Fund raising event, March 2011

expensive and beyond the reach of poor people.

WMC Mumbai has set a target of giving financial support for 111 open heart surgeries to needy Malayalees and others within Mumbai who cannot otherwise afford them. The treatments will include bypass, angioplasty, valves surgeries etc.



K K Nambiar
(Chairman).



Gokuldas Madhavan
(President)



Ramachandran
(Secretary)

The motto of the WMC Mumbai Province is in line with the Global WMC : All WMC members must work as one group with a common goal. There is a higher calling among us, where as men and women, we should help our fellow Malayalees as well as other human beings.

Awards were given for best film, direction etc.

Maitri Nite

WMC Mumbai province conducted a 'Maitri Nite' on February 19 as a thanksgiving for all those who contributed to the project 'Heart 2 Heart' and those who have been involved with it since inception. Eminent guests at the event included Captain Krishnan Nair, George Kulangara, MP Ramachandran, K C Shetty, Oommen David, NRK Pillai, Asianet Madhavan, MV Nair, Dr James Thomas, Dr MG Pillai, Daniel Fernandes, AP Kurien and Laalu Alex.

Several eminent Malayalees were recognized for outstanding contributions

in their respective areas of work. The awardees were Nandakumar K, MD Chemtrols, Venu Krishnan, Director, Hotel Leela, A M Shaji, Metmech Radiographic Inspection Pvt Ltd, Dr Bijoy Kutty, Platinum Group of Hospitals, M I Damodaran, Director Rajalaxmi Group of Industries, Venugopal BN, Chairman, Zenith Group of Industries, Bhupesh Babu, Chairman Enkay Homes, R Mohan film Industry, SG Nair, Chairman, Forstar Frozen Foods, PJ Mathew, Founder, Mathew International and Paul Parappilly, Paulsons Group of Schools. The Council's official website was also launched at the event by Capt Krishnan Nair.

ICE Awards

Shailaja Nair Foundation invites entries from in-house-journals from organisations in any language and from any part of the world for its annual ICE Awards to honour the best talent and creativity in in-house magazines. Realising the importance of keeping people in an organisation connected through the print medium, the Shailaja Nair Foundation has initiated the ICE Awards since 2009.

A competent jury judges the magazines across varied categories like name, design, content, employee participation, etc. The prizes are then awarded to the winners in a glittering function, that is scheduled to take place on 22nd June 2012.

Renowned organizations like Reserve Bank of India, Hindustan Unilever Ltd, Mumbai International Airport Pvt. Ltd, UTI AMC Ltd, Dr Reddy's Laboratories Ltd,

Thane Municipal Corporation, Hindustan Zinc, Mahindra & Mahindra, Kirloskar Brothers Ltd, UB Group, Cafe Coffee Day, Kuoni Travel Group, Boeing International

Ltd, BEST, McDonald's, Hindustan Copper Ltd., IIT Bombay, Taj Hotels, Varroc Group, Nabard, Government Law College, Vanarai Foundation, HT Media, Raj Bhavan, Mumbai, etc. have participated in this event. UTV Bloomberg was the media sponsor last year. Last year there were 500 entries. The Shailaja Nair Foundation aims to make the ICE Awards bigger and

better with each passing year and a name to reckon with among organisations and corporates.

For further details on ICE Awards and the Shailaja Nair Foundation, visit website: www.iceawards.in ;www.shailajanair.com



SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF KERALA IN MUMBAI

The second anniversary of KERALA IN MUMBAI was celebrated at the Shanmukhananda Hall on 4th February along with the annual musical programme of Raagalaya.

The eminent Malayalam poet Krishnan Parapally was felicitated on the occasion, specifically in observance of his ninetieth birthday. Others to be felicitated were Dr. Abraham Patani, Dr. K M Vasudevan Pillai and M N Kutty Nair. Each one of them were presented a shawl and a citation. Two others who were to be thus felicitated, but could not attend were handed over their citations by the Consulting Editor P K Ravindranath and Managing Editor, P V Vijaykumar. They were Capt. C P Krishnan Nair (who was also felicitated on his ninetieth birthday) and M V Nair, Chairman and Managing Director of Union Bank of India.

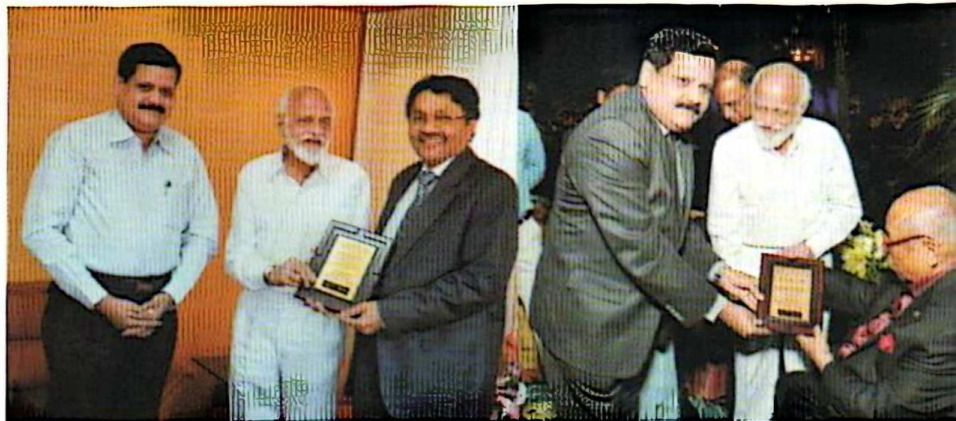
KP Sasi Nair, founder and Managing Trustee of Yashoda Charitable Trust and Director of Yashoda Institute of Research and Advanced Studies was felicitated with a citation for the charitable work his trust is carrying out for the impoverished and the underprivileged during the event.

The Raagalaya programme provided three hours of entertainment which comprised of chosen songs of the late Malayalam Music Director Johnson. Johnson's wife, daughter and son were also felicitated and presented with a cheque of Rs. 25,000.

M G Radhakrishnan and Jayaraj Warriar compered the programme, which also included a dance recital by Shobhana and her troupe. The anniversary issue of KERALA IN MUMBAI was released on the occasion by Ms. Shobha Chari, Chief Commissioner of Customs, Mumbai who handed over a copy to Shobhana.



Shobha Chari, Chief Commissioner of Customs Mumbai hands over the KIM Anniversary Issue to Shobhana



P V Vijaykumar and P K Ravindranath hand over citation to M V Nair and Capt Krishnan Nair



P K Ravindranath felicitates Krishnan Parapally, Dr Abraham Patani, M N Kutty Nair, Dr K M Vasudevan Pillai.



P V Vijaykumar hands over citation to K P Sasi Nair. Jayaraj Warriar also seen



K R NARAYANAN

AMBALAVASIS OF KERALA

Ambalavasis literally meaning 'temple dwellers' are a group of different castes/communities who in olden days did all jobs of a temple except the actual Pooja. A look into their origins and customs.

As historians put it, Kerala had been a secret shared between the mountains and the seas and a melting pot of varied ethnic groups, religions, castes, traditions and cultures. Originally a land of the jungle-inhabitant Mundas (like the Negrito and Astroloides aborigins), it gave way to the Dravidian and much later to the Aryan culture and way of life. The migration of the original Namboothiri Brahmins to Kerala is scarcely recorded and whatever we know is confined to the *Keralolpathy* and the Sangam literature. We are to believe that they were around even in the 2nd century AD. Further Brahmin settlers came in from Tulu Nadu (the present-Dakshina Karnataka) along the West Coast.

The promotion of Vaishnavism by the Kulasekhara Kings of the Chera dynasty (800 AD to 1122 AD) strengthened the influence of the Brahminical settlers.

The *Aryan Brahmanas*, as they were known then, became prosperous and powerful enough to play an important role in the administration of the Chera kingdom as well. The poojas were performed by these brahmins (Namboothiris) who, unlike other brahmins in India, followed the *tantric tradition* rather than the *manthric tradition*. They were assisted in the temple rituals by a group of brahminical subsects. As these sub-sects resided within the temple premises to perform such 'kazhakam', they were known as *Ambalavasis* (inmates of the temples).

The Aryan-brahmins brought with them the Vedic culture and established "*Gramas Kshetras*". Along with the Aryans, many other groups of people too seem to have entered the present Kerala region. The Nairs and Ambalavasis are said to be very important among them. Edgar Thurston (1855-1935), the then Superintendent of the Madras

Government Museum, throws much light on these communities, in his monumental work, "*Castes and Tribes of Southern India*".

Ambalavasis

Ambalavasis are considered by some as a sub sect of brahmins, while others consider them as an intermediate class between brahmins and kshatriyas. It is most likely that these groups had their origin from the initial brahminical settlements in Kerala. The term *Ambalavasi* is derived from two Malayalam words *Ambalam* (Temple) and *Vasi* (Inmate). It is a generic term applied to all classes of people engaged in the service of temples in Kerala, and is applied to all castes whose occupation is connected to the temples one way or another. (*Keralamahatmyam* refers to them as *Kshetravasinah*, which has also

the same meaning).

Ambalavassis are a group of different castes/communities, who did all the jobs of a temple (except the actual pooja), like cleaning, fetching water, organizing flowers, playing the temple instruments as a routine during festivals, performance of temple art and dances, and some times- the management of temples as well. Generally, they lived in the village lands owned solely by the royal family, the Namboodiri Brahmin families (*Illam*) or the household of a Nair landlord (*Tharavaad*), and associated themselves in the day today chores of the temples. *Ambalavasis*, by and large, followed the matriarchal tradition (*Marumakka thayam*), like the Nairs.

There is some confusion about the origin of Ambalavasis. Some say that they were already a distinct group to carry out all the duties of the temples, except the rituals within the *sanctum sanctorum* and the performance of the poojas, even before the entry of Aryans into Kerala. Some others are of the view that they were a part of the Aryan community itself, but deprived of their brahminical status, in course of time, due to some reasons.

There are many stories about the origin of Ambalavasis. One of them is in particular reference to the Marars. Thurston remarks in his "*Castes and Tribes of Southern India*" that: "*Before the days of Sankaracharya, their sole occupation was beating the drums in Brahminical Temples.*".

When Sankaracharya was refused assistance in the cremation of his mother by the Namboodiri Brahmins, he is believed to have sought the help of one of these temple servants (*Marar*) and with his aid; the body was cut into eight pieces and deposited in a pit. The *Marar* was excommunicated by his caste. However,



Vaidya Rathnam P S Varrier



Kuttikrishna Marar

a compromise was affected subsequently. In recognition of this service, Sankaracharya is said to have declared the Marars to be an indispensable functionary at the death ceremonies of Namboodiris and other Ambalavasis.

Ambalavasis are considered by some as a sub-sect of Brahmins, while others consider them an intermediary class between Brahmins and Kshatriyas. Similar para-brahmin communities are very common and found all over India. Niyogi Brahmins of Andhra, Chitpaavan Brahmins of Maharashtra, Bhumihars of Bihar, Mohyal of the Punjab, Tyagis of West Uttar Pradesh, etc. are only a few among them. These communities have the same status of the Ambalavasis in Kerala. Besides all, it is said, the travellers of the past had classed the Ambalavasis along with the Paradeshi

Brahmins or the brahmins from outside Kerala (like the Gauda Saraswats, Iyers, etc.), in the official documents and records. In their caste-professional status, the Ambalavasis are generally categorized as *Antaralas*, on account of their intermediate position between the brahmins and the sudras. On the other hand, they are also considered as the fallen/deprived brahmins.

Keralolpathi, however, would classify them as advanced Sudras. The rationale of their occupation seems to be that, in accepting duty in temples and consecrating their lives to the service of God, they hope to be absolved from the sins inherited from their forefathers. The delinquent brahmin cannot be retained in the brahminic functions, without lowering the standard of his caste. He had, therefore, to be allotted other functions. The temple services of various kinds, such as garland-making for the Pushpakan, Variyar, Pisharodys and others, and the recitation of God's works in many forms for the Chakyar, were found to hold an intermediate place between the internal functions of the brahmins and the external functions of the other castes. Hence arose probably an intermediate status with intermediate functions for the *Antaralas*, the intermediates of Hindu Society.

The Classification

Ambalavasis are not of a single caste. They are a group consisting of many castes. The prominent among them are the thread wearing castes - like Moosad, Chakyar, Nambiar, Pushpakas (Unni,



Padmeshri Dr M Leelavathy

Nambeesan, Nambidi etc.), Elayathu, Adikal and the like. The people of these threaded castes undergo Upanayana ceremony, wear the sacred-thread and adhere to *Gayatri* mantra. Ambalavasis, who do not wear the Sacred Thread, include *Variyars*, *Pothuvals*, *Pisharodys*, *Marars*, and others.

Each of the Ambalavasi caste claims to be superior to the other. Historically, however, they all have had more or less an equal status. However, it is believed that *Moothathu* heads the threaded group, while Pisharody heads the non-threaded Ambalavasis. However historically they all are more or less of equal status in the hierarchy.

Some denominations among Ambalavasis and their functions in general are:

1. Nambeesans: (Feminine: Brahmani Amma): The main jobs are gathering of flowers, arranging things for the offerings in the temples, preparing garlands etc.
2. Pushpakan: (Feminine : Pushpakathi): Their jobs are more or less similar to the Nambeesans.
3. Chakyar: (Feminine : Illiyodiamma): Performs Koothu, Koodiyattam and other temple arts.
4. Adikal: (Feminine: Adiyissyar): Poojaris of Bhagavathi Kavu. They wear the sacred thread.
5. Nambiyar: (Feminine: Nangiyar): Accompanies the Chakyars with Mizhavu for Koothu. They also the perform Thullal.
6. Moothathu: (Feminine: Manayamma): Performs the task of carrying the deity on the elephant for Ulsavams or religious processions/festivals of the temples.
7. Marars: (Feminine: Marasyar or Marathi): Performs on various types of percussion or other types of musical instruments in the temple and during temple processions, festivals etc.
8. Pisharodys: (Feminine:

Narayana Panicker passes away



P K Narayana Panicker, President of The Nair Service Society (NSS) died on 29 February. Narayana Panicker was admitted to the NSS Medical Mission Hospital at Perunna in Changanassery following breathing trouble. Chief Minister Oommen Chandy and Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee president Ramesh Chennithala called on Panicker, who has been keeping indifferent health for some time. The Governor of Maharashtra, K Sankaranarayanan condoled the death of Narayana Panicker.

Narayana Panicker, the face of Nair Service Society, became President of NSS in June 2011. He was the second-longest-serving general

secretary of the organization, after the founder Mannath Padmanabhan, and served NSS for 28 years in the post. He was an advocate by profession, Narayana Panicker became General Secretary in 1983.



C K Moosad



Padma Sri
Mani Madhava Chakyar



Dr P R Pisharody
(Physicist-Metereologist)

inner courtyards of the temples.

Muthatu and Elayathu

Also known as Moosad, the Moothathu are considered the highest of the Ambalavasi denominations and are said to be degraded Brahmins, as they tattooed themselves with Shaivite images. The Elayathu was considered the lowest of Malayali Brahmins and is normally the priests of the Nairs.

Pisharasyar): More or less. similar to Warriors.

9. Warriars: (Feminine: Warassyar): Assisting the running and management of the temples.

10. Poduval: (Feminine: Poduvalsyar): Various types of jobs connected with the temples.

A brief account of these denominations is given hereunder.

Pushpakas

According to mythology, the warrior sage Bhargava Rama (Parasurama) is said to have brought a group of Brahmins to Kerala of which 64 families were allowed to conduct the ceremonies in the temples. They were the brahmins (Namboothiris). The remaining families of Brahmins became their assistants and were not allowed inside the Sree Kovil or main shrine of the temple. They came to

be known as *Pushpaka Brahmins* as their work was associated mainly with flowers. Pushpakas are lower class Brahmins in Kerala. The Pushpaka Brahmins have attributes of both the Brahmins and Kshatriyas. Hence they generally considered as an intermediate group between Brahmins and Kshatriyas. They are commonly known as *Ardhabrahmanar* (Semi-Brahmins). Although they wear the sacred thread and perform the Upanayanam, they were not considered brahmins in the true sense of the term. Nonetheless, they were considered superior Ambalavasis. There are various sub-castes within the Pushpaka caste. These include Nambeesans, Unnis, Nambis and Nambidis. Males of Pushpakas served as teachers in Pathasalas, as assistants to the main priest and as lamp-bearers (Vilakku-eduppukaar), while females are the garland makers and as cleaners of

Ambalavasi Nambiar

The Amabalavasi Nambiar can be further divided into Pushpaka Nambiar, Thiyyatu Nambiar and the Mizhavu Nambiar. Pushpaka Nambiar were primarily engaged with temple activities - the name pushpaka may be related to the flower (pushpam) garlands that they weave for every pooja in the temples. Thiyyattu Nambiar were involved in thiyyatu - an offering to gods, like Ayyappan or Goddess Bhadrakali. Mizhavu Nambiar traditionally played the *mizhavu* in ritualistic temple performances such as Koodiyattam and Koothu in the Koothambalam in the temple premises. The Sanskrit name for Nambiar is said to be "*Panivada*" (*Pani* meaning 'hand' and "*Vada*" vandanam and the word means 'playing'). This perhaps has reference to the Mizhavu Nambiar.

To be continued

Recipe for

BADAM HALWA

INGREDIENTS:

- | | |
|------------|---------|
| 1) Almonds | 250 gms |
| 2) Sugar | 500 gms |
| 3) Ghee | 500 gms |
| 4) Saffron | 005 gms |
| 5) Milk | 1 cup |

PREPARATION

- 1) Boil the milk, remove from fire and soak almonds over it for ½ hour.
 - 2) Peel of the skin of the almonds and strain the milk as to remove the peeled skin of the almonds. Grind the almonds in a mixer to a fine paste by adding the strained milk.
 - 3) Melt the ghee and keep warm.
- Boil the sugar with water to prepare string consistency in a heavy bottom pan. Add grinded almond paste in it stir the mixture on medium flame. When the mixture starts thickening add quarter portion i.e. 200 gms of ghee when the ghee is absorbed, the mixture starts leaving side. Remove from fire. Continue stirring the mixture by adding the full remaining ghee little by little. Take saffron in a teaspoon of hot milk and mix well with your finger and add the same to the mixture. Once all the ghee is fully absorbed the mixture leaves the pan to form a thick mass.



Courtesy: Mani's Lunch Home



K S Narayanswamy

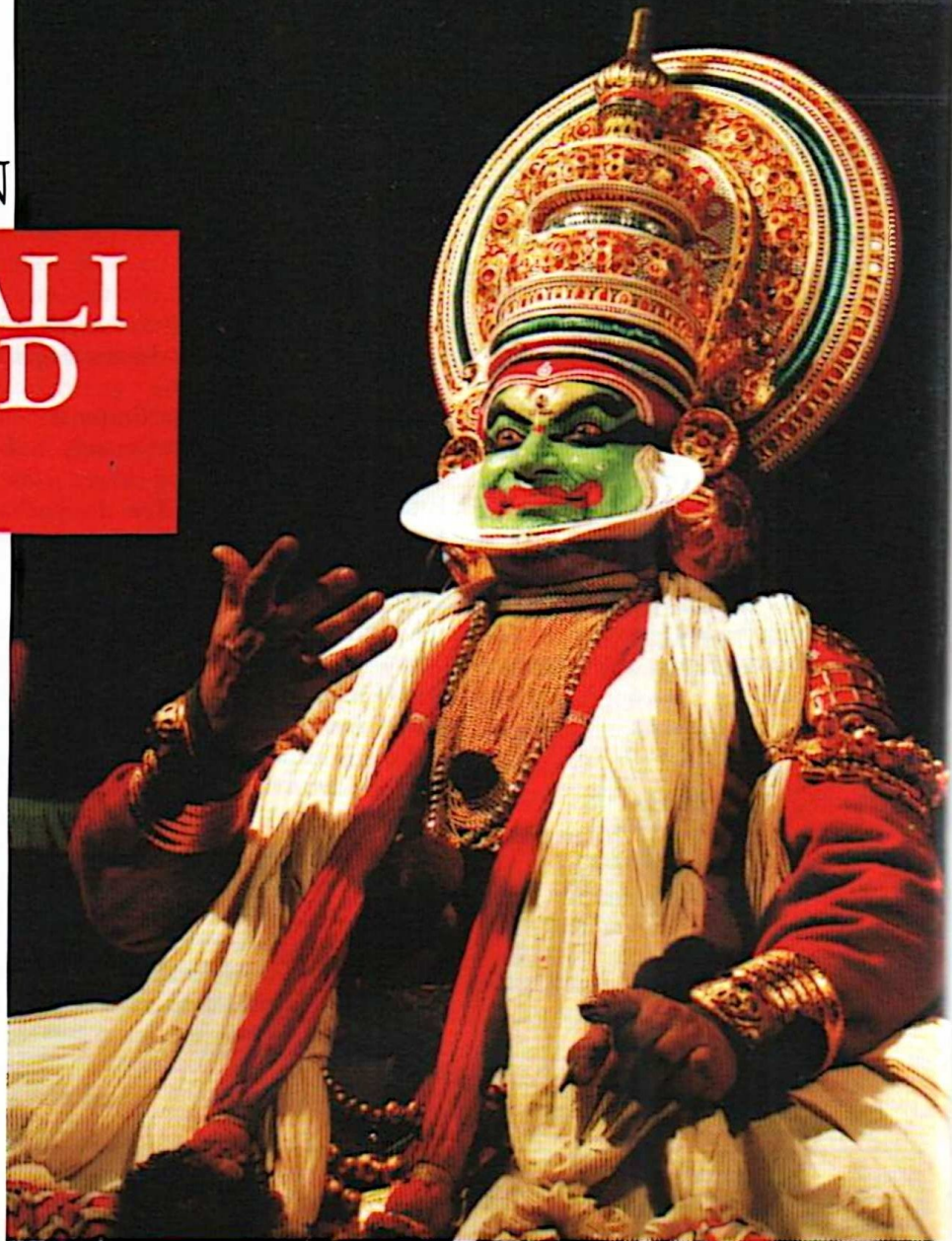
Artiste of the Month

KALAMANDALAM
GOPALAKRISHNAN

KATHAKALI GURU AND DANCER

-Lakshmi V

Kathakali has become a tourist attraction in Kerala. The highly stylized dance form with strikingly painted face and trained exaggerated facial expressions and body movements, showcases Kerala to the world. Kalamandalam C Gopalakrishnan is a dedicated artiste who has popularized this dance form in Mumbai.



Kalamandalam Gopalakrishnan as Satyavan (left) in Satyavan Savitri

Chonat Gopalakrishnan is a leading Kathakali exponent of Western India and has been teaching Kathakali and Mohiniattam for the past 30 years at Nalanda Nritya Kala Mahavidyalaya, Mumbai. He has also performed at various centres in India and countries like Russia, Singapore, USA, Canada, Europe, etc at ICCR sponsored programmes with the Nalanda troupe headed by Dr Kanak Rele, a veteran exponent of Kathakali and Mohiniattam.

A skilled Mohiniattam teacher, Gopalakrishnan is currently a member of the Core Research group with Dr Kanak Rele and Kavalam Narayana Panicker for the revival and rejuvenation of Mohiniattam.

He has choreographed solo items and several dance dramas namely, *Karuna*, *St Francis*, *Kavya Kairali*, and directed classical art forms in the *Mamankam*

2000 and the famous *Mumbai pooram*. Among his Kathakali repertoires are *Satyavan Savitri*, *Naranathu Bhrandan* and *Prithavishadam* which he has choreographed. Since he is a teacher at the Mumbai Deemed University of Nalanda, he takes graduate and post graduate classes in the dance forms and conducts workshops in his field of expertise. Gopalakrishnan has conducted theatre workshops along with Prof Waman Kendre, Dept of Theatre, Mumbai University and choreographed Kathakali actions for some Hindi plays.

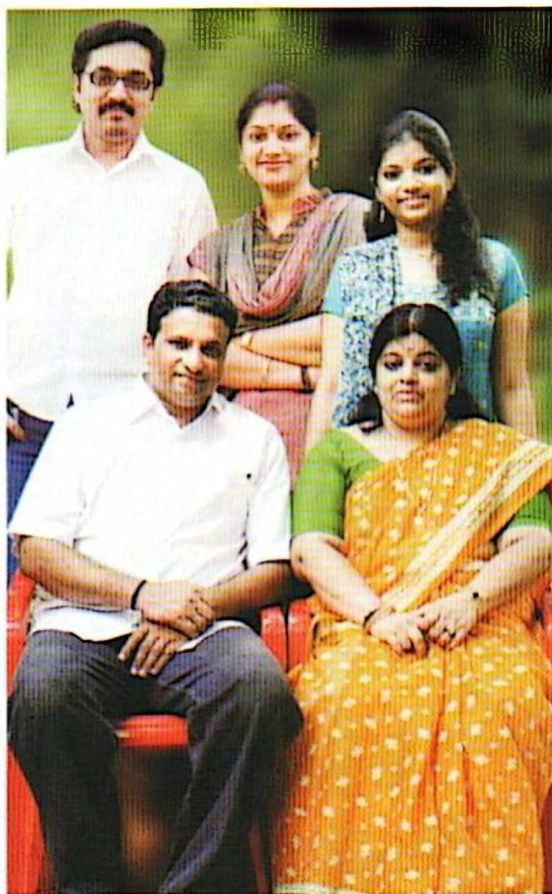
Gopalakrishnan hails from Shoranur where he completed his early schooling. Son of the late MK Narayana Menon who worked in the railways and the late Lakshmi Kutty Amma, his family was always lovers of music and dance. His mother used to sing. When he was 13, he joined Kerala Kalamandalam and continued there for 9 years to complete the post-graduate Diploma in Kathakali and later MA in Kathakali from this deemed university of Kerala.

He learnt the basics of Carnatic music under Kalamandalam Vasudeva Panikker and continued Carnatic music training under Venkitachalam. He had the opportunity to perform Kathakali along with stalwarts like Padmabhushan Kalamandalam Raman Kutty Nair, Padmasri Kalamandalam Gopi, Kalamandalam Padmanabhan Nair and others. He has also essayed major roles in Nalanda Productions like *Dashavatar*, *Rugmini Swayamvar*, *Swapna Vasavadatta* etc.

Gopalakrishnan came to Mumbai after completing his PG Diploma in 1982 and has since been with Nalanda. While in olden days, the performances used to continue from dusk to early hours of the morning, today the Kathakali programme duration is generally 3 hours only. The themes are usually taken from the Puranas, Ramayana and Mahabharata or stories of saints, (even Christian faith).

Gopalakrishnan has been specially trained in applying body massage which is compulsory for Kathakali dancers. He is an accomplished *nattuvanar* at dance shows.

Gopalakrishnan has been recipient of the Government of India Scholarship for Kathakali, and is 'A' Grade Artiste of Doordarshan. He has been felicitated by 'Ragasudha' for contribution to Kathakali and awarded citation 'Nrithyachudamani' by 'Padam' an organization of Connoisseurs of Classical Arts of Mumbai.



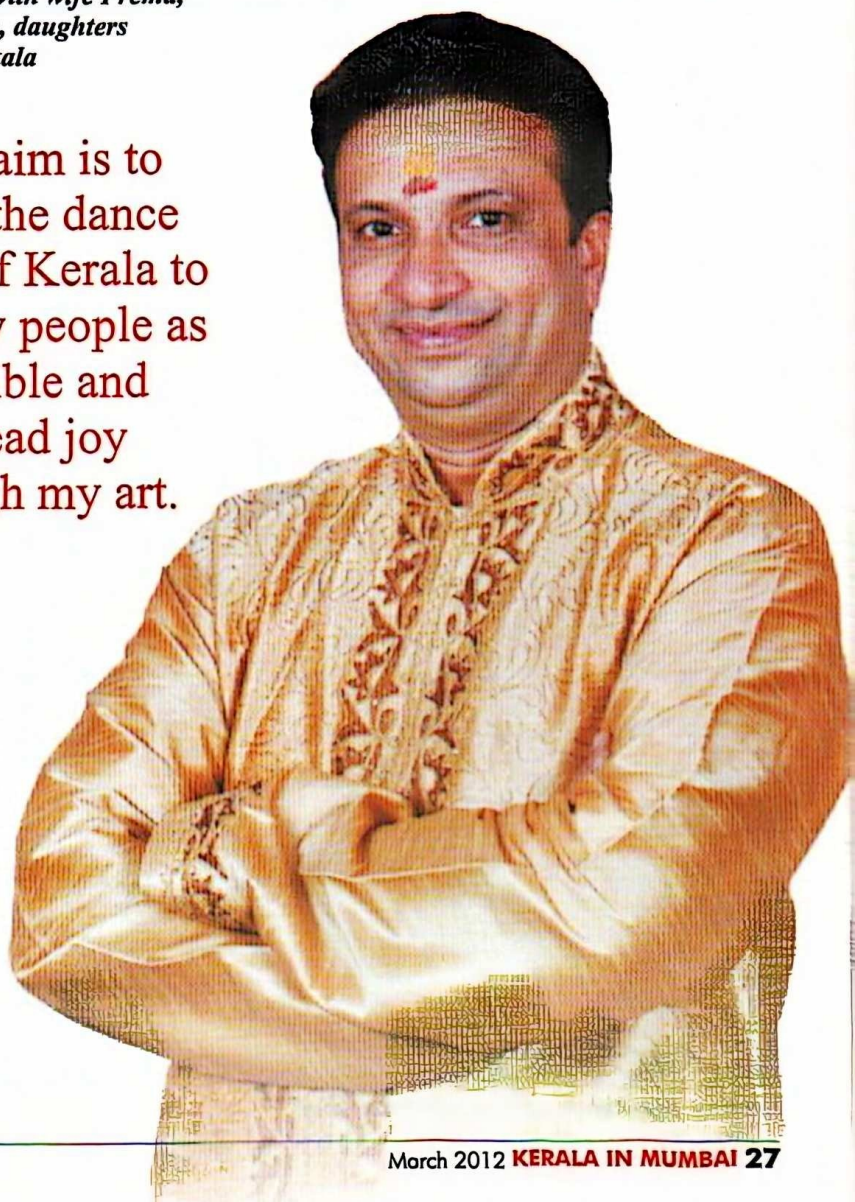
Gopalakrishnan with wife Prema, son-in-law Anoop, daughters Gomathi and Srikala

Gopalakrishnan is convinced that classical arts would never die. His advice to those learning the arts is not to commercialise it. "Bring out the essence of Kerala in your Kathakali performance," he says. "All art forms are divine. Only through God's grace can one have the good fortune to teach or learn the fine arts."

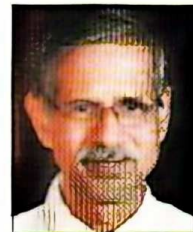
"My aim is to bring the dance forms of Kerala to as many people as possible and spread joy through my art. I also want to make the common man understand and experience the classical arts."

Gopalakrishnan's wife Prema is a housewife hailing from Shoranur. They have two daughters. The elder one, Gomathi, is married and living in Dubai with her husband Anoop Menon, a software engineer. Gomathi has learnt Carnatic Music and Kathakali. Their second daughter, Srikala, has completed her graduation and is doing MBA by correspondence. She is learning Bharatanatyam also.

"My aim is to bring the dance forms of Kerala to as many people as possible and spread joy through my art."



VETTEKKARAN PAATTU



Kunnam Vishnu

Vettekkan (Vettekku oru Makan) is believed to be the son of Shiva and Parvathi born during their sojourn in the jungle. We continue here the second part of an age-old ritual of Kerala, vettekkan paattu.



Kalampooja

Moothedam Aniyam, an expert on rituals of central Kerala explains the scenario. "At the top (near the head of the diagram) on a stool, an idol of the deity garlanded with flowers is placed, along with a small sword. The worship starts at sunset after the opening Keli. Worship is done outside the house, a little away from the site, called *mullakkalpattu*. The sword is then handed over to the Oracle, *velichappadu*. The deity and the oracle are taken in a procession accompanied by *melam*, to the

site where the diagram is drawn." Traditionally, members of a particular family called Karor Panikkar had the rights to be the oracle in vettekkanpaattu. When this family became extinct, some Namboodiri families like Erandapurathkadu, Mundottu, etc. took up their role and it is through their concerted efforts that the ritualistic art form still survives.

In all tantric poojas followed by Namboodiris, the deity is never brought from outside. The normal practice is to

draw a diagram, set a wick lamp in the middle and the deity is lit with a lamp. In this case, the deity is first worshipped outside, away from the house where *vettekkanpaattu* is held. The procession itself is a worthy celebration. The magnanimity of the conductors is reflected in the length of the procession.

The Celebrations

No Kerala ritual is complete without its due share of visual arts. The belief among the artists is that the audience is the deity himself. Thus every worship is a celebration. In vettekkanpaattu, *thayampaka*, the ideal solo presentation by an artist on Chenda in the midst of supporting symphony of *chendas* and cymbals is an unavoidable element. There is *kombu paattu* a rhythmic performance on horns. Then there is *kuzhal paattu*, a musical feast on *cherukuzhal*, which can be said to be the Kerala cousin of *shehnai*. These are generally done in the afternoon. Then the procession in the evening would be enriched by *Panchavadyam*, *Paandimelam*, *Pancharimelam* or *Chembadamelam*. All these are meant to appease the deity, provide visual feasts and entertainment for those present. The function goes on the whole day and night.



Erasing the kalam at the end of the ritual

The Mysterious Night

Once the procession reaches the site, the oracle dances around the *kalam* thrice and then ceremoniously places the sword on a stool at the head of the diagram-deity. The chief priest performs a *pooja*, sitting at the feet of the deity. All the *poojas* are accompanied by the *tottam paattu*, the propitiatory songs sung by the Kurup community, to the accompaniment of *Nandurni* a typical village musical instrument of ancient years to the beats of drums. After the *pooja*, the oracle performs a ritual dance, *eedum koorum* to the rhythm of drums (*chenda*) and cymbals and devotional songs. This resembles a dance of some victorious tribals.

There is one more *pooja*, followed by a series of *thottampattu*, the devotional songs, by members from the *Kurup* community, to the accompaniment of *Nandurni* and claps by the participants. One of them performs a ritual called *kalampoli*. Once again the oracle resumes his dances, this time around the *kalam*, the sanctorum. The steps are very masculine befitting a warrior. The *kalam* will be surrounded by a number of lamps. The mystic ambience created by the light



Kuruppu-paattu

of wicklamps in the dead of night, the mesmerizing songs, the wailing sound of *Nandurni* strings, the claps and occasional drum beats, the reverberating dance of the oracle, the picture and decoration of the ferocious deity, is undescrivable.

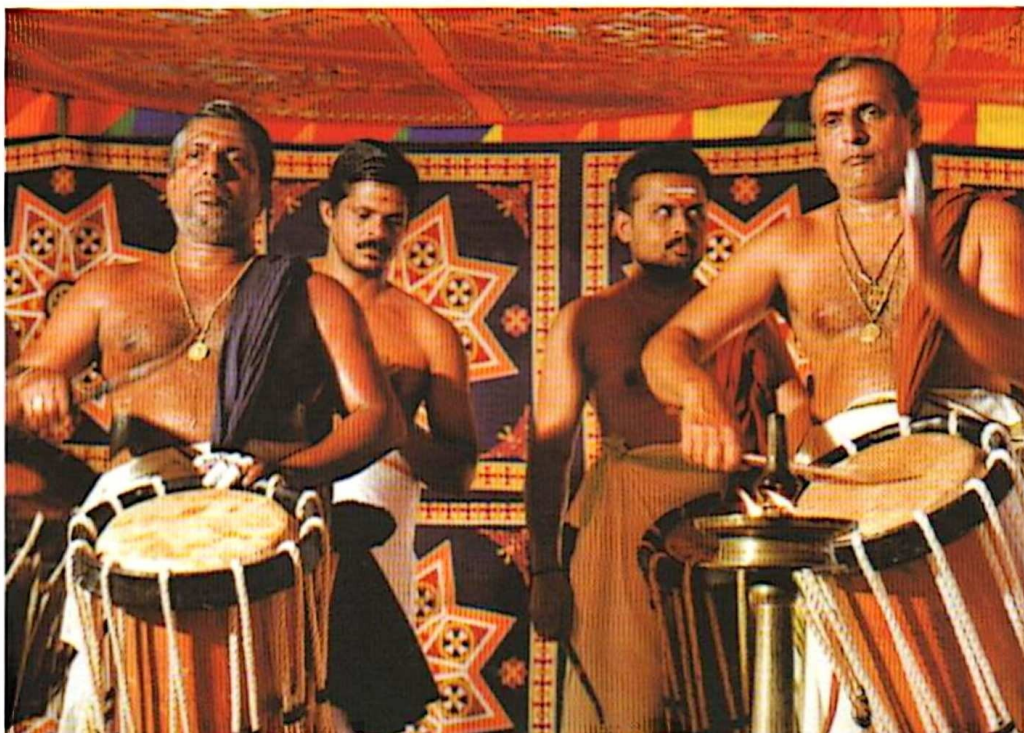
The oracle then enters the sanctorum and continues the dance. The torso of the diagram deity is done away with. Then he sits on a stool and continues his moves to destroy the picture except the face, by rhythmically moving the stool around the

sanctorum. Then suddenly, everything ceases.

It is time to shift the venue. Midnight is over. The next ritual is to break the coconuts by the oracle. It may be 1008 coconuts or in special offerings 12008 coconuts. The oracle places himself on a pile of coconuts and throws each coconut on a granite piece to the rhythm of *melam*. All the coconuts, except those in the pile on which he sits, is thrown continuously without a break. Not a single nut escapes shattering nor does he ever miss the rhythm. The ritual goes on for over three hours at a stretch. The stamina of the frail oracle, who could throw coconuts with such shattering force for three hours, without respite even to wipe the perspiration is remarkable.

With the last coconut thrown, the oracle gets up from his shapeless seat of round coconuts, stretches his body and runs in to the sanctorum. He then continues his dance sitting on the stool to wipe out the head of the picture by the tender leaves of coconut palm hung around the sanctorum. The deity is totally erased. The oracle then comes to the head of the family which has offered the ritual, and utters the blessings of the deity, *kalpanaparayaal*. The powder used to draw the picture in the sanctorum is offered as *prasadam*.

The ritual is over. It is dawn.



Thayampaka



A BIRTHDAY BASH TO REMEMBER



M N Kuttu Nair, Vijaykumar, Kumar Das

Birthdays of infants bring joy to the parents and close relatives. So was the second birthday of Kerala in Mumbai. The evening of February 11 at Hotel Keys transformed into an atmosphere of celebration. Even before the scheduled time of 8 pm guests nay, relatives trickled in. The musicians to provide the background score were the first to arrive followed by supporters from far away. By 8.30 pm, the hall was full and pleasantries were exchanged among the friends. People who never met earlier were introduced to each other and new bonds were cemented. S K Venugopal welcomed the guests and narrated the origin of the

magazine to the admirers and called upon P V Vijaykumar to start the proceedings. After a brief prayer, Vijaykumar sang his favourite song *Sandhya mayangum neram*, penned by



Sriprakash Menon



Jacob Koshy

Vayalar Rama Varma and set the mood for the evening.

P K Ravindranath, doyen of Mumbai journalism, recalled the meetings he had with various friends who wanted to break into publication of magazines for Malayalees, the strange ideas they had, the dreams they had but folded soon after launch. **KERALA IN MUMBAI** was a success story, he asserted.

There are various requests from various metros of India, to launch editions from their cities and are under consideration,



S G Nair



Suresh Kumar

Raviettan said. He expressed satisfaction at the rapid progress of KIM and the continuous compliments received from the elite subscribers, advertisers and the prominent Malayalees of the metropolitan city.

Many prominent personalities who were invited for the event could not attend, it



P K Ravindranath



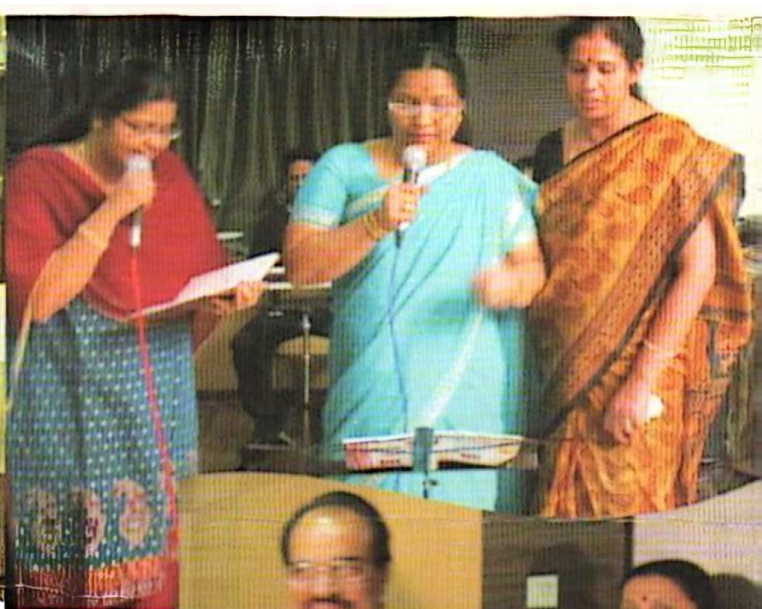
K V Satyanath



Venugopal



Upendra Menon



Harikumar Menon

Madhavi Harikumar

was revealed, for various reasons. M N Kutty Nair, who attended the event with his wife, felt that he was among his people. Nair, who hails from Manjeri, recollected that Vijaykumar also was from Manjeri. Soon he was recollecting an old favourite Malayalam song he whistled during his younger days. Soon everyone present was clapping to the tune of *Kayalarikathu...* The birthday that had no pre-set agenda soon turned into a musical evening. Girija, Vidya, Reshma, Lakshmi et al came forward one after another and burst into songs, entertaining the guests. Upendra Menon recollected

his association with KIM since its inception and assured his continued support. It was a dream of Mumbai Malayalees that turned into a reality and would grow to highlight their aspirations. S G Nair remarked that on entering the hall he had felt a little uneasy on seeing unfamiliar faces but while leaving he felt he was part-of-a big family.

The enthusiasm visible on all faces was viral and continued through the dinner and ended only when every one departed with the promise of meeting again soon.



Mrs and Mr S G Nair



Reshma



Vidya



Praveen



Girija

Vijaykumar

Harsha

Lakshmi

POPULAR MALAYALAM THEATRE

-Revathy

Last year the Kerala Sangeetha Nāṭaka Akādemi realised that Malayalam Drama is languishing. It initiated a programme of visiting various libraries, earlier drama troupes and educational institutions in an attempt to re-invent Malayalam drama.

Malayalam theatre has a very short history and its evolution took less than a century whereas Sanskrit and other Indian language theatres had a much longer history.

Sanskrit theatre can boast of a golden period that preceded Christ. The Maurya period had witnessed plays and the works of *Kālidās*, *Bhāna* and *Bhāsa*. Till the translations of Sanskrit plays appeared, Kerala, especially its southern part, had a close liaison with Tamil theatre.

Though Kerala boasts of an ancient drama form, citing *Kūṭiyāttam*, the claim cannot be substantiated. *Kūṭiyāttam* was consigned to *Kūthambalam* where entry was restricted to elite Hindus and hence had no mass base. *Kūṭiyāttam* remained static. Even its close relative, *Kathakali* in which there is clear cut storyline and several actors on the stage portraying various characters, can not be a forerunner of Malayalam theatre. It is only recently i.e., about seven decades ago that *Kathakali* came out of the palaces and temple complexes to the masses with the help of *Kalamandalam*, PSV Natyasangham and FACT *Kathakali* Club.



**Kerala Varma
Valia Koyi Thampuran**

The Portuguese brought some plays to Kerala and one of the earliest was *Genoa*. Among the historical plays that followed were *Caralman Charitam* and *Napoleon Charitam*. These plays however did not influence Malayalam literature in any way. The first Shakespearean play *A Comedy of Errors* was translated to *Ālmārāttam* and was staged in 1866.

Nevertheless it was Kerala Varma Valiya Koyi Thampuran who wrote the first drama literature. He translated *Abhijnāna Sākuntalam* in 1881. It led to several other translations. C V Raman Pillai's *Chandramukhi vilāsam* (1885), Kochunni Thampuran's *Kalyāni Kalyānam* (1888), K C

Kesava Pillai's *Lakshmi Kalyānam* (1893), Kandathil Varghese Māppila's *Ebrāyakutty* (1894) as well as *Kalahini damanakam* (from Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*) and Kocheepan Tharakan's *Mariamamma* were major landmarks in the growth of Malayalam drama.

Malayalam theatre has earlier been greatly influenced by Tamil theatre.



A man dressed as a woman on the stage

Mahakavi K C Kesava Pillai adapted the Tamil play *Sadarama* into Malayalam. When O Chandu Menon wrote his novel '*Sārada*', theatre activists, adapted it as a play. This was followed by short plays with historical themes by C V Rāman Pillai. Their presentation by amateur clubs in

Thiruvananthapuram marked a turning point in the evolution of modern Malayalam theatre.

While V T Bhattathiripad, a social reformer with no formal education, wrote *Atukkalayil ninnu Arangathekkū*, to lift his community from

orthodoxy and backwardness, he was followed with *Marakkutakkullile Mahānarakam* by M R Bhattathiripad and *Rūthumaṭi* by M P Bhattathiripad (Premji), all between 1929 and 1938.

Malayalam plays were written either imitating Ibsen or for entertainment of the upper classes. Playwright N Krishnan Pillai studied Western Theatre and by presenting famous plays from Western literature on the Malayalam stage, gave a new twist to the Malayalam theatre. Most of his plays were comedies.

The noted Malayalam dramatist C J



Kandathil Varghese Mappila



T N Gopinathan Nair



A P P Namboothiri



Cherukad



K Damodaran



C N Sreekantan Nair

Thomas held the view that "*Janoa*" was the first Malayalam play on the principles of Natyashastra.

C.V's *Chandramukhi vilāsam* is a combination of Sanskrit elements and western elements. *Mariamamma* dramatizes the characteristically Christian domestic problem of the conflict between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. It is a play clearly modelled on western social problems, in prose interspersed with quatrains in verses. The use of dialect is realistic and effective. C V Raman Pilla returned to the stage in 1909 with *Kurupillākkalari*, a prose comedy in the manner of Goldsmith and Sheridan. It was a very effective social satire. The henpecked husband and the westernized English-educated lady were satirized in the play. C V's later dramatic works included *Tentanamkottu Harischandran* (1914), *Kaimal āssāante Katassikkai* (1915), *Pandathe Pācchan* (1918) and *Butler Pappan* (1921). These are basically farces with an emphasis on social satire.

E V Krishna Pillai followed CV's path and came with his *Pranayakkammishan* (1932), *B.A.Māyavi* (1933) and *Vivāhakammattam* (1934). Being an actor himself, he could exploit the devices of stage presentation effectively. The serious side of his personality found expression in his historical tragedies: *Sitālakshmi* (1926), *Rāja Kesava Dāsan* (1930) and *Iravikutty Pillai* (1934). They were the dramatic counterparts to C V Raman Pillai's fictional representation of history. E V's comic legacy was pursued by N P Chellappan Nair, M G Kesava Pillai and T N Gopinathan Nair. His tragic heritage was sustained and improved upon by Kainikkara Padmanabha Pillai with his *Velu Thampi Dalava* and *Kālvariyle Kalpapādapam* (1934), Kappana Krishna Menon with his *Cheramān Perumāl* and *Pazhassi Rāja*, Kainikkara Kumara Pillai with his *Karishchandran* (1934), *Mohavum Muktiyum* (1938) and Kutanad Ramakrishna Pillai with his

Taptabāshpam (1934). The part played by Shri Chithira Tirunal's *Vāyanasala*, Thiruvananthapuram, in promoting the writing of new plays every year for the annual performance on the Maharaja's birthday has been significant, although on many occasions it had to be satisfied with second-rate or third-rate plays. But it remains the longest continuous tradition in amateur acting in Thiruvananthapuram.

Malayalam drama underwent a significant development in the 1930's, which started with the discovery of Ibsen. A Balakrishna Pillai, one of the major critics of the period, translated Ibsen's *Ghosts* into Malayalam in 1936 and wrote about him to popularize the kind of drama that he stood for. In 1940 C Narayana Pillai translated *Rosmersholm*.

N Krishna Pillai had defined the role of a playwright in categorical terms: "the ideal play, as far as I am concerned, is one in which some serious and fundamental human problem is realistically analysed and handled with the utmost concentration, avoiding wastage of words, dialogues, situations and characters. This ideal was instilled in me by Ibsen whom I consider the most successful master dramatist of the modern age and hence have attempted to emulate, with discrimination, his dramatic form and technique in my plays."

Krishna Pillai's major works are *Bhagna Bhavanam* (Shattered Home: 1942), *Kanyaka* (The Virgin: 1944) and *Balābalam* (The Trial of Strength: 1946), *Anuranjanam* (Compromise) in 1954, *Mutakkumutal* (Investment) in 1960, *Kutathile vilakku* (Lamp inside the pot) in 1972. He won the Sahitya Academy Award for his Literary criticism "*Prathipathram Bhāshanabhedam*" in 1987. Because of his contribution to Malayalam drama, he was nicknamed Kerala Ibsen.

Pulimana Parameswaran Pillai's



Actors of an old Malayalam play

Samatvavādi (The Socialist: 1944) is a remarkable work; it employs the expressionist device with consummate skill.

Social themes

Plays with social themes soon replaced historical plays. Special mention may be made of V T Bhattathiripad's *Adukkalayil Ninnu Arangathekkū* and K Damodaran's *Pāttabhākki*. With the increasing popularity of Malayalam drama as a medium of popular entertainment, professional troupes like the KPAC, the Kalidasa Kala Kendram and Kalanilayam reigned supreme till 1990. Kalanilayam Krishnan played a major role in spectacularising Malayalam drama. The professional theatre came into its own in the social and cultural arena of modern Kerala.

Edasseri Govindan Nair's *Koottukrishi* (1950) emphasised the value of rustic realism. A new dimension to the serious problem play was given by C J Thomas in his *Avan Veendum Varunnu* (He Comes Again). It anticipated the advent of modern Malayalam drama. C J Thomas' experimental urge found fulfillment in his *Crime 27 of 1128* (1952-1954). A challenge to directors and actors, *Crime* is unique among Malayalam dramas. Before Beckett and Ionesco were known as writers of the Absurd Theatre and without proclaiming himself to be the founder of any school, C J Thomas gave total expression to his concept of drama - neither tragedy nor comedy, but a fusion of both, each seeking its justification in the other. C J Thomas was to write one more tragedy, *Aa Manushyan Nee Thanne* (Thou Art That Man), a dramatization of the story of David and Bathsheba. This pattern of epic drama on mythological themes was taken up by C N Sreekantan Nair after his first attempts at social drama. The fifties and early sixties were the period of stage musicals, often with a pronounced socio-political thrust. Thoppil Bhasi, N N Pillai, K T

Mohammed, G Sankara Pillai and Kavalam Narayana Panicker, among others, have kept the theatre active and meaningful during the post-independence period.

It is to be noted that Malayalam theatre always stood for social changes and also to educate and popularise certain aspects of life. After Independence, K Damodaran wrote *Pāttabhākki*, against feudalism while propagating Marxism in a subtle way. Soon this trend was followed. Thoppil Bhasi wrote *Ningalenne Kammunistākki* (You made me a Communist) which was initially banned. This made Bhasi a cult figure. This play was hugely popular and successful and paved the way for early implementation of land reforms under EMS Namboothiripad's ministry. Soon plays with similar modalities emerged and all of them set a trend and enforced the belief that theatre was a strong medium to popularize an ideal. A popular play could even convert a whole population against judicial processes. In Kerala, the communist movement hugely capitalised from this trend. Once CPI captured power, the approach slightly changed and shifted to a new theme of nation building (*Putiya Ākāshavum Putiya Bhūmiyum*). In Malabar, plays were written to expose social evils among various religious sections. E K Ayamu's *Ijjū nalloru manusanākān nōkkū* (You try to be a good human being) was one such play.

Though professional Malayalam Theatre workers believed in song and dance routine, C N Sreekantan Nair and his colleagues clearly moved away from such musicals and made very gripping 'edge of the seat' plays. His plays were also of 'key hole' dramas and people really enjoyed them. While C N Srikantan Nair specialized on thrillers, N P Chellappan Nair concentrated on humour. His '*Atom bomb*', *Ksheerbala*



Chandu Menon's *Sarada* on stage

Sahachari Kashāyathil etc belonged to this genre. He wrote *Pranaya Jambavān*, *Minnal pranayam*, *Lieutenant Nāni*, *Ibileesukalute Nāttil* etc. '*Sashidharan*' written by N P Chellappan Nair, was the first Malayalam play to be adapted to the screen. This was the exact filmy version of the popular play '*Sashidharan B.A.*' or '*Premavaichithryam*,' by N P Chellappan Nair. However, the film was not as successful as the play. This film paved the way for many artistes, with Aranmula Ponnamma and Kottarakkara Sreedharan Nair being the most prominent. Interestingly, Aranmulla Ponnamma, the archetypal 'good' mother, began her career in this film with a negative role. She made an impact as a greedy, evil mother.

T N Gopinathan Nair targeted family audiences and wrote several plays such as *Pookkāri*, *Pareeksha* etc. N N Pillai believed in socially oriented as well as realistic themes. He founded *Viswa Kerala Kala Samiti* and produced, wrote, directed and acted along with his entire family in all his plays. In *Kapalika* with a story of a prostitute in Bombay, in which he, his wife and daughter acted in pivotal roles. He wrote *Atmabali*, *Wine glass*, *NOC*, *Manvantaram*, *Easwaran Arrastil*, *Njan swargathil* and *God Father*. The last mentioned was made into film in all South Indian languages and he played the main role in all of them.

However this paved the way for most of the successful plays to be adapted to cinema. *To be continued*



Akkitham



N Krishna Pillai



V T Bhattathiripad



Kunjandi



Kavalam

CANDID AND MINIMALISTIC



Krishnakumar Nair



Conceptualizing an office space for a Company which is establishing its presence in Mumbai for the first time after being the leaders as MEP contractors in the Middle East with the additional experience of constructing, designing and managing shopping malls in Kerala can be challenging for any design firm.

On one hand, there are no tangible reference points except the input from the Company's dynamic C M D whose mantra is simple living and high thinking. On the other hand, it can give one a certain freedom in the absence of clearly defined reference points to craft a new

design vocabulary. Krishnakumar Associates, the company who has designed M/s Elemecs's new and integrated office fortunately used the latter to their advantage while designing Elemecs's office in Wellington Business Park-2 situated in Andheri (E).



The Conference Hall

The design philosophy employed at Elemecs office sought to break away from the functional paradigm of a contracting house's office. The company has used the aesthetics of simplicity as directed by K D Gopalakrishnan, the CMD, so that it looks simple, spacious and different from a normal contracting house. This 7,500 sq ft space is Elemecs's new office, vastly different from any other contracting house. The brief given to Krishnakumar Associates mandated that the company was looking to create a new and progressive work culture, while still staying committed to its solid heritage within the global M E P sector. The design of the new premises had to reflect this. Combing the requirements of the brief with the personalized information and the inspirations of the CMD of the company along with the corporate culture unique to the company, Krishnakumar Associates decided to keep the concept as simple as possible.

The office is constructed in two levels. The Reception, Administrative staff, Designers and Engineers located on Level 1 with the Directors and conference rooms on the floor above. Right from the 500 sq ft reception area, the company's ethos is reflected in every aspect of its office decor. The reception counter is in dark brown and white combination with little brushed steel inlay to keep the looks trendy and modern. The walls have a splendid array of framed pictures that showcase the exclusive projects executed by the company and serves as a quick update for visitors about the company's evolution and also act as a decor element in the lobby. Behind the reception counter, the logo is in red ,



CMD's Room

grey and white combination which is placed on a white back ground. Starkly bright yellow is painted in the ceiling to emphasize the white portion which is distended and illuminated with concealed L E D lights. The waiting area and the meeting room are slightly elevated with wooden flooring to give a visual separation from the reception area.

The five feet wide corridor leads you to one department followed by the other. The Accounts, designers, design engineers, site engineers, pantry and dining room are well connected and equipped with state of the art modular furniture and flaunted with ample natural light which can be controlled by excellent roller blinds. The cabins surround the work area with the glass

partitions allowing a visual access to the employees who help maintain transparency and an open-door policy.

On the other side of the reception, the smartly designed staircase flaunts white pebbles and blue L E D lights which give visitors an earthy and welcoming feel that leads upstairs to the Director's chambers. On the Director's floor, the secretary's lobby occupies a waiting space furnished elegantly with a comfortable light yellow sofa and a coffee table. The huge conference room is nicely located between the three directors' rooms and the C M D's room is on the south west corner. They are designed in a minimalistic manner with state of the art furniture imported from the Middle East. The contrasting brown, white and non reflecting glass gives a feeling of spaciousness and this ambience extends to the director's rest room . Here, a recessed seating area with an exclusive yellow leather sofa and a circular centre table with an accomplished bed room can give complex to any five star suites.

The flexible open plan with its minimalistic aesthetics of an exposed false ceiling in white, open cubicles, and maximum use of natural light penetration promotes work place integration, communication and barrier free vision across the floor. The facility is especially planned as a space for work, collaboration, learning all the boxes that a modern work place demands. Krishnakumar Associates have also stayed anchored to the company's ethos.



Office Cabins



Rashma Anand

THE SMART WAY FOR A FLAT STOMACH

Blame it on Hrithik Roshan's six pack abs or Kareena Kapoor's svelte figure. Attaining a flat stomach has become a desire for many. You may not want ripped six pack abs or the super flat tummy sported by celebrities (after all one has to be practical). But you would surely like to get rid of the flab around your mid section.

Having a flat stomach has benefits beyond just 'looking good'. Accumulation of belly fat is bad for the health and is one of the contributing factors to diseases like diabetes and heart ailment. So if you have decided to cut the belly fat, it is a healthy decision.

The Way to a Flat Stomach

Unfortunately, there is no easy way. You have to work hard and wait patiently for results. All the advertisements that promise to flatten your stomach 'miraculously' within one week or one month are bogus. It does not work like that. The best way to obtain a flat stomach

is the right combination of diet and exercises.

Why is diet Important?

Often people feel that if they spend hours in the gym, they can eat whatever they want. This could not be farther from the truth. The fact is your abdominal muscles are buried deep within the fatty layers on your stomach. It is first necessary to burn this fat to expose those muscles. And the best way to achieve this is by paying attention to your diet.

Avoid sweets and refined foods like white bread and pasta. Include more whole grains like oats, barley and whole wheat products that are fibre rich. Fibres keep you full for longer.

Increase protein content of your diet with fish, chicken and egg whites. Proteins increase the metabolism and help burn more calories. Include fresh fruits and vegetables because of their health benefits.

Also avoid foods that cause bloating or 'gas' in the stomach. Vegetables like cauliflower, broccoli and legumes can cause this. Again high salt foods should be avoided as they cause fluid retention and bloating. So if you want that flat stomach, keep those wafers far away.

Exercises for Flat Stomach

Exercise plays an important role in flattening the stomach. The aim of exercise is to tone the abdominal muscles and develop strength. The exercise should also stretch and lengthen the abdominal muscles so that you get a slender appearance and not a bulky look. This is the reason why it is necessary to choose the right exercises for a flat stomach.



Fruits and vegetables and high protein foods are good for flat stomach

Most Effective Flat Stomach Exercises

Some of the most effective exercises are

1. Pilates

Pilates is a system of workout design to strengthen your core muscles. The core muscles include muscles of the abdomen, hips, legs and back, which support your spine or your core.

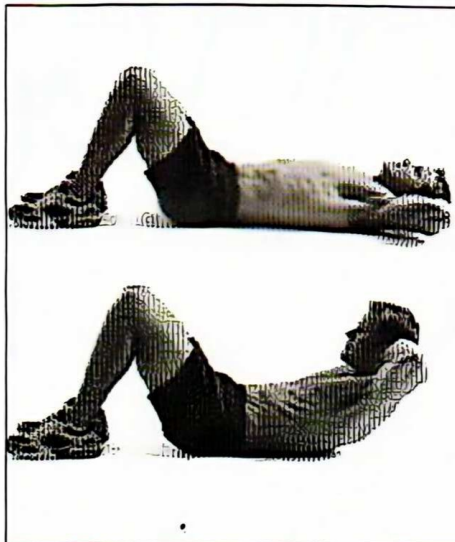
Let us consider two examples:

Pilates Pelvic Lifts

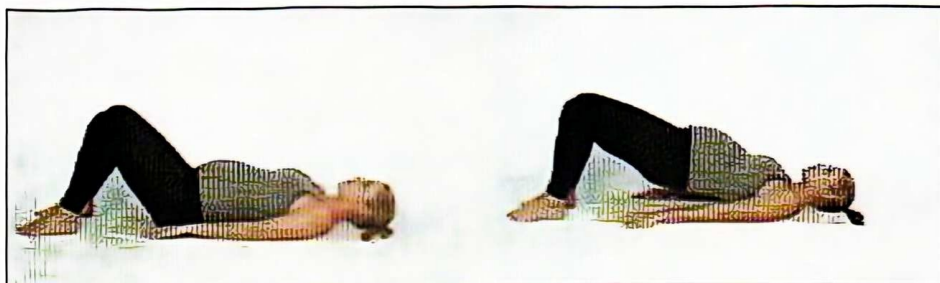
- i. Lie flat on the floor with your knees facing the ceiling.
- ii. Keeping your shoulder and head on the floor, raise your pelvis.
- iii. Come back to starting position to complete one repetition.

Plank Position

- i. Lie flat on your stomach
- ii. Lift your body off the floor in a straight line (plank), supporting yourself on your



As you hold this pose, your abdominal muscles will get really stretched and become lengthened.



elbows and toes.

As you maintain your balance in this position, your abdominal muscles are intensely engaged and develop tone as well as strength.

2. Yoga

Yoga has a number of poses or asanas that promote a flat stomach.

For instance, the *bhujangasan* or the cobra pose.

- i. Lie flat on your stomach with hands near the chest.
- ii. Raise your chest and upper body upwards, extending the elbows.

Dhanurasan (bow pose) *Naukasana* (boat pose) are other effective yoga poses for flat stomach. Yoga exercises like leg raises also help to work the abdominal muscles.

3. Abdominal Crunches

Abdominal crunches are effective for getting a flat stomach because they work directly on the abdominal muscles.

The Basic Crunch

- i. Lie flat on your back, with knees facing the ceiling. Place your arms behind the hand.
- ii. Raise your upper body, getting your

shoulder blades off the ground.

iii. Hold as long as you can and return to starting position.

The basic crunch works the upper abdominals. The twisting crunches work on the obliques (commonly called love handles) and the reverse crunch works on the lower abdominals.

Importance of Cardio Exercises

However, these exercises alone cannot guarantee flat stomach. Remember that the fatty deposits have to be burned in the first place. These exercises work the muscles, but have negligible impact on burning calories. So it is necessary to include some form of cardio exercises in your exercise routine.

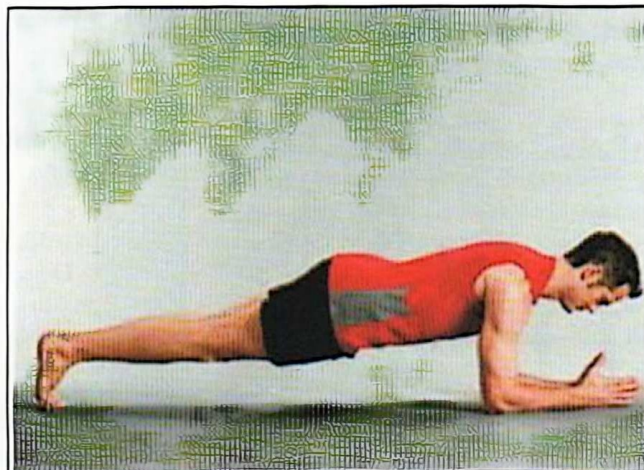
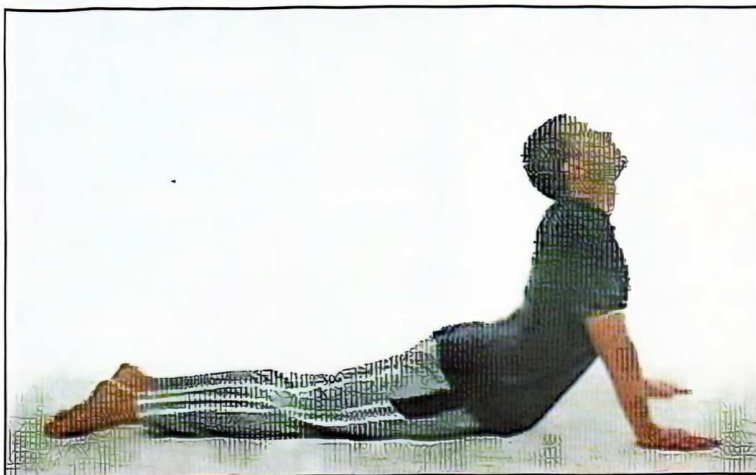
The higher the intensity of the cardio exercises you choose, the more will be the calories burned. For instance running is more effective than walking. Dancing is a fun and effective cardio exercise to burn fat.

Please note that the exercises described here are for information only. Please consult your doctor before initiating any new exercise regimen.

In Conclusion

A flat stomach is a health decision that you must make. But be aware of the various factors that go into delivering a flat stomach. If you are just doing 500 crunches in a day, but eating fatty foods, there will be no result. Similarly only focusing on the muscles, with no cardio component is also ineffective.

Workout smart. A well designed workout plan and healthy eating habits will definitely give you that flat stomach you dream about.



WALK YOUR WAY TO GOOD HEALTH

-Sudhir Nair

To enjoy a disease free life we have to bring a certain amount of physical activity in our daily schedule. Going to the gym, practising yoga, aerobics, swimming are all different ways to be active. But the easiest and simplest way to maintain our health is to take up brisk walking as a routine. Regular walking at early morning or evening, for its own sake, is a very good form of exercise, with no fear of overdoing or overstrain.

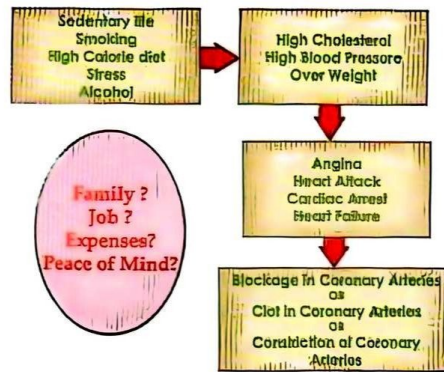
It is cheap, we can decide our time for this activity, and the rewards are manifold.

All we have to invest in, is a good pair of walking shoes. The advantage of walking in the morning is that the day has just started. The intensity of the sun is absent, nature herself wakes up every morning for a new day, we can plan our day as we take our walk, and a positive tone is set in our minds.

While walking all parts of our bodies are in motion, and this increases blood circulation in our bodies. We feel more active and this continues in the latter half of the day. Take a walk in the outdoors at dawn, enjoy the birds rising and starting their day, the trees and plants opening up with flowers and you will feel rejuvenated.

Walking as an exercise is different from walking to the market to buy things. Wearing a good pair of shoes and with

Human beings are tailored to walk. We move around and the best form of physical exercise to keep fit is walking. No wonder a thousand years ago Hippocrates the father of medicine stated, "Walking is man's best medicine,"



Walk to de-stress

Walking is an easy way to deal with tension, anxiety and stress. Studies show that people who exercise regularly can cope better with stress in life. Researchers in USA found a 14% average drop in anxiety levels in regular brisk walkers. Walking recharges our batteries after tension and stress have drained them of power and energy.

your hands free, a person should start walking at an certain brisk pace for at least 40 minutes a day. It is better to wear cotton clothes. Brisk walking every day for half an hour burns up 200 calories and reduces body fat.

Heart Disease is one of the most common diseases afflicting today's workers.



Cuts your risk of diabetes

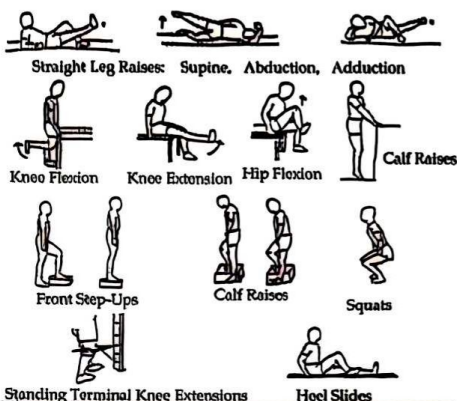
According to a study, regular walking improves the sugar levels in people with diabetes. While walking, more muscle movement leads to more use of glucose by the muscle cells. This involves the use of more insulin which improves blood sugar levels.

Good for your heart

Heart Disease is one of the most common diseases afflicting today's workers. For over 40 years now, studies have shown walking to be the best form of exercise that people of all ages can do. Regular walking can increase the levels of good cholesterol.

Benefits of Brisk walking

- ★ Controls diabetes.
- ★ Lowers high BP.
- ★ Strengthens the heart.
- ★ Massages the legs.
- ★ Strengthens the muscles.
- ★ Reduces cholesterol.
- ★ Improves blood circulation.





MUMBAI NEWS DIGEST

KIM News Bureau

Trade Partnership Meet

Kerala State Tourism Department held a Trade Partnership Meet - a platform where the trade fraternity from Kerala comprising hoteliers, tour operators, houseboat operators, homestays and ayurveda centres, could meet and interact with the travel agents and tour operators of Mumbai as part of its tourism development strategies. There were 50 persons from Kerala and 175 participants from Mumbai who attended the Meet. Suresh Kumar Dy Director, Kerala Tourism presided over the function. The business meeting was followed by a video presentation of

Kerala as the perfect tourist destination and a cultural show showcasing the classical arts of Kathakali, mohiniattam, and kalaripayattu at the event. The award winning Kerala Tourism Ad 'Your moment is Waiting' was launched at the event. It has won many international awards including the PATA Gold Award for marketing. As part of the Grand Kerala Shopping Festival, two guests won gold coins and Jet Airways sponsored free return tickets to Kochi after a lucky draw. This was followed by dinner.

Kerala Samajam Vasai East Annual Day

Kerala Samajam Vasai East celebrated its 11th Annual Day at Evershine City, Vasai Road East. The programmes started at 7 pm. Valsan Murkoth, President - Kharghar Malayalee Samajam was the Chief Guest. He inaugurated the celebration by lighting the lamp. The Guest of Honour was Smt Bindu Jayan, Vice President - Malayala Bhasha Pracharaka Sangham and Malayalam Mission - Academic Co-Ordinator.



Cultural show at the Partnership Meet



Valsan Murkoth, President Kharghar Malayalee Samajam lights the lamp.

Several cash awards for the academic year 2010-11 were distributed at the function. Miss Nissy Moncey, highest scorer in HSC - Science was honoured with Smt. Narayani Karuppan Memorial Award sponsored by K Narayan Kutty. Miss Anu Anthony, highest scorer in HSC - Commerce was honoured by an award sponsored by T Venugopal. Miss Nidhi Nirmal, who scored the highest marks in SSC with Malayalam as a composite language from Maharashtra and who was a student of Vani Vidyalaya, Mulund, received the cash award, initiated by Kerala Samajam - Vasai East to promote learning of Malayalam. There were music and dance programmes and the Malayalam play *Sunanda Teacher Yatrayakunnu* was staged by the Kharghar Malayalee Samajam followed by dinner.

Tribute to Yesudas by Swararnavam

As a tribute to Ganagandharvan Padmashri K J Yesudas's 50th musical year, Smt. Prasanna Varrier's "Swararnavam" music academy arranged a Ganamela, at Vasai Manikpur Sree Ayyappa Temple on Jan 29th. The singers were radio artist Ciriyaac from Calicut, Star Singers Arun Gopan, Sai Balan, Chandni Viswananth, and other senior students of Prasanna Varrier - Sreenath Varrier, Swathi, Swetha, Ambili, who all rendered the everlasting melodies of Yesudas. Noted lyricist Chowallur Krishnankutty presided over the function as Chief guest.



Students of Prasanna Varrier and Star Singers performing at the Ganamela

Muthappan Vellatta Mahotsav held



Muthappan and Thiruvappan at Mahila Samithi School ground, Thakurli

Muthappan Seva Samithi, Powai organized Sree Muthappan Vellatta Mahotsavam at the Municipal Grounds. Sree Muthappan is a Hindu deity worshipped commonly in Kannur dist. of Kerala. Muthappan and Thiruvappan are considered to be manifestations of Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu. Sree Muthappan is considered as the God of the common man of North Kerala and a benevolent protector who speaks to the devotees

through a human medium. Gradually elaborate rituals grew around these beliefs, as did the power of magic, sacrifice, sorcery, and divination of omens. Several devotees participated in the festival which started with Malayirakkal Karmam followed by Vellattam and Oottu Prasadam. Sree Muthappan Vellatta Mahotsavam was celebrated in other suburbs of Mumbai also.

Ambika Varasiar honoured with Kala Gaurav

Theatre Festival Cuttack presented Ambika Varasiar Kala Gaurav, a plaque of honour as a gesture of gratitude for her contribution for the development of drama dance and music as well as art and culture at the Global Theatre Festival 2012.



DR Nair, Vice-President, Hiranandani Constructions receiving Award from Managing Directors Niranjan and Surendra Hiranandani for successful completion of 25 years service in Hiranandani Group of Companies.

AIMA Chamber of Commerce and Industry Inauguration

All India Malayalee Association (AIMA) will inaugurate AIMA Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Mumbai on April 15 at the Leela Hotel. There will be a general meeting of AIMA where the Governor K Sankaranarayanan, Union and State ministers, film stars, other AIMA members and representatives from within and outside India are expected to attend. AIMA's newsletter, Malayalee Vision, will be released on April 15 by literateur Punathil KunjuAbdullah.

At an earlier meeting of AIMA on February 18, the need for such a business forum interlinking the business community was accepted by the members. The association is now on a membership drive to include more members into its fold. VS Abdul Karim (Creative Travels) and PJ Mathew (Mathew International) started the new membership campaign by pledging patron membership.

AIMA has its association in Delhi, Chennai and several other cities. The Association gives assistance at times of emergency or need to Malayalees who have left Kerala. It is a non-political social association helping marunadan Malayalees and Malayalee Associations at their times of difficulties or problems.



P J Mathew of Mathew International and V S Abdul Karim of Creative Tours and Travels handing over the patron membership cheques to Rajan Kadannappally and Mohan Kandathil of AIMA.

Borivli Mathrusangham Annual Day

Mathrusangham (Mothers' Association of Kalyan diocese), Borivli unit Mumbai celebrated its Annual day on 19th February under the title 'Revival of Syrian culture', during which around 100 women young and old draped themselves with the traditional Christian outfit called

'Chattayum mundum' with a half sari across the bust called 'kavini'. This white dress is a symbol of nobility, purity and simplicity and wearing this is an art specially when it comes to the plumes behind.

When the pastoral council secretary as well as Mathrusangham Secretary Prof .Mrs. Rosily Thomas suggested this idea, it was whole heartedly endorsed by the Vicar Rev. Fr. Shaibu Paul and welcomed by all the women irrespective of their age.

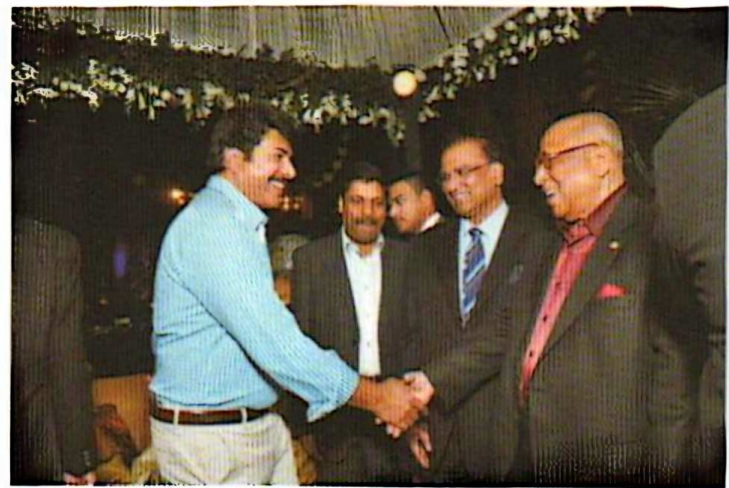
The Chief Guest for the occasion was Rev Br Giles the former Principal of St. Francis School and Junior College and currently the Provincial of Franciscan brothers congregation, Kerala. Rev Fr Valancio of Christ the King Church Borivli East was the guest of honour. The *shingarimelam* played in the background literally brought Kerala back to Mumbai and caused a feeling of nostalgia. The programme commenced with the lighting of the lamp and included *margamkali*, *Puthenpaana parayanam* and a short play. There were felicitations of those couples who completed 50 years of married life, mothers above 75 years and those who are special achievers. The dinner served was according to traditional Christian menu.



Puthenpaana Parayanam performed by Mathrusangham members



Film Director Priyadarshan wishing Capt. Krishnan Nair on his 90th Birthday. Vivek Nair on Capt Nair's right



Mammootty and Madhavan (Asianet) greeting Capt. Krishnan Nair

Division of Society dangerous to national interest

Dividing the society on the basis of education and caste is dangerous to the national interest, remarked T K A Nair, Principal Advisor to the Prime Minister. If this trend continues, it would be a threat to the integrity of the nation, he said. He was addressing a gathering during the 47th annual celebrations of Sree Narayana Mandira Samiti at Mumbai.

It is laudable that the Samiti is working on the basis of the teachings of Sri Narayana Guru who called upon Malayalees to unite and thus be strengthened.

The Samiti started its activities in a region where poor were living, he said. He also complimented the workers who provided free lunch to the poor students enrolled in the Samiti's school. It is the government's duty to make the right of education universal but without the people's participation, the government cannot succeed.

Samiti President N Sasidharan presided. Chairman M I Damodaran and Chairman Emeritus Dr K K Damodaran spoke on the occasion.

Capt Krishnan Nair's 90th birthday

Captain Krishnan Nair celebrated his 90th birthday at the Leela, Mumbai Malayalees from various fields as well as other well-wishers and friends of Capt Nair wished him on his birthday. The guests included Ramesh Chennithala, Shashi Tharoor, Kerala Tourism Minister Anil Kumar, Union Minister K C Venugopal and others.

Obituary



A Ramdas Nair

A Ramdas Nair (93), residing in Nerul passed away. Hailing from Mulloor, Thrissur, he is survived by his wife, Smt. Thangamma and children Ambika, Vimala, Girija, Shobhana, Lata and Pushparajan.

Ramdas Nair was employed with various organizations and finally retired from Mahindra and Mahindra. He was felicitated by the Nerul Nair Seva Samaj as the 'Seniormost Nair of Nerul' in 2010. He was a keen music lover. Many of his relatives and friends from Kerala acknowledge his endeavor in providing them education, shelter and food when they first arrived in Mumbai.

Johnson Master's son passes away in bike accident

Renn Johnson, the 23-year-old son of the famous Malayalam music composer Johnson who passed away last August, died in a bike accident on the IT Corridor, Chennai on Saturday morning. Renn, who was passionate about bike racing, was on his new 250cc Honda when he banged into a pedestrian and crashed into a median, sustaining severe head injuries.

Renn who was on his way to work, was not wearing a helmet at the time. He was taken to the Government Royapettah Hospital, where he died at 12.30pm on February 25.

Renn, who recently completed his engineering graduation, was working with an IT firm near Perungudi. He was residing in Chennai with his mother Rani and only sister Shan.



He had attended the Raagalaya Music Awards function with his family on February 4th where the Lifetime Achievement Award to his father, the late Johnson Master was handed over to Rani Johnson.

MOHINIATTAM PIONEER KANAK RELE HONoured

Kalakshetram and the International Academy of Intercultural Development (IAID) jointly honoured Dr. Kanak Rele, founder of Nalanda Dance Research Centre, on 25 February. To mark the occasion, her student, Dimple Nair Director of IAID, presented selected items from her repertoire as a tribute to her teacher and guru.

Veteran journalist P K Ravindranath recalled his 60-year old association with Dr. Rele and said over this long period she had emerged as the face of Mohiniattam all over the country, outside of Kerala. He said her efforts had prompted art enthusiasts in Kerala to ensure that the art form survived and is taken note of.

Dr. Kanak Rele said in the last forty years of the functioning of Nalanda, hundreds of students had been groomed in Mohiniattam and other art forms. The Institute today offers facilities for research experimentation and study on a big scale.

Kanak Rele had acquired her doctorate from Mumbai University for research on Mohiniattam. She has since, been responsible for introducing elements of richer dimension in academics and research in classical dancing.

She also helped build up a rich repertoire for Mohiniattam through research and study and interaction with veterans like Kunjukutti Amma, Chinnammu Amma and Kalyanikutti Amma and Kavalam Narayana Panicker.



Kunnam Vishnu, P K Ravindranath, Dr. Kanak Rele and Rajesh Jadhav of IAID Qatar at the event

Kalakshetram presented her a shawl and a plaque hailing her as the Acharya of Mohiniattam.

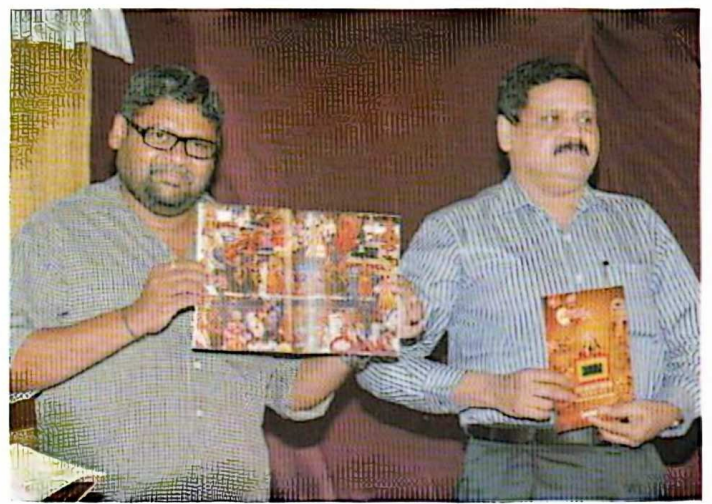
From the Gujarat Gaurav Puraskar Award to the Maharashtra Jeevan Gaurav Puraskar, from the Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, to the Kalidas Samman to the M S Subbulakshmi award she has got over 20 prestigious honours. She is a member of the Panel of Experts in Fine Arts for the UGC, member of the selection committee of the Ministry of

Culture for National Scholarships, Convenor of the Expert Committee to formulate degree courses in dance, Gujarat University, and several other dance institutes including the Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Mauritius.

Kunnam Vishnu, President of Kalakshetram welcomed the audience. P V Vijaykumar released the souvenir of Kalakshetram by presenting a copy to Dr. Anil Raghavan, Managing Editor of Whiteline Varta.



Dimple Nair disciple of Dr. Kanak Rele honouring her guru



Anil Raghavan of Whiteline Vartha and P V Vijaykumar during the Souvenir release function

FESTIVAL OF KERALA ARTS

Also named 'Kerala Festival', Goodnight Soorya festival Mumbai chapter that was organized in Dombivli by Kalakshetram, was a cultural feast of the classical, temple and folk arts, songs and dances of Kerala.

The villages and temples of Kerala have their own art forms classical, ritual and folk - and these were showcased at the Goodnight Soorya festival.

Dr Krishnan Nambudiri, Chairman, Keraleeya Samajam inaugurated the event followed by Nrithyashilpam *Soorya kala* directed by Kalamandalam Gopalakrishnan and excerpts from Kottayam Thampuran's *Kalyana Sougandhikam*, presented by Margi kathakali troupe. The artistes were Kottakkal Ravikumar, Kalamandalam Bipin, Kalamandalam Sukumaran, and songs rendered by Kalanilayam Nandakumar and Kalanilayam Mohanan. Kalanilayam Krishnakumar and Kalanilayam Rajiv accompanied the dancers on the chenda and maddhalam respectively.

On the second day the programmes started with veena recital by vidwan Kalyani Sarma. A disciple of Padma Bhushan K S Narayanaswamy and Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, Kalyani Sarma studied Carnatic music at the Thiruvanantha-puram Swati Thirunal Academy and currently teaches veena at the Shanmukhananda Sabha in Mumbai. This was followed by Mangala Dwani by Veena Sangeetha Sangham artiste Maya



Closing ceremony. Lighting the lamp by Kaithapram Viswanathan

Varma and Mallika Bharatan and later Thiruvananthapuram Nisha Ponni and Mumbai Janaki Krishnamurthy and Anuradha Vatsan. Veena Sangeetha Sangham is an association of Veena artistes based in Thiruvananthapuram.

This was followed by *Parayanthullal*. A highly exhibitive form of temple ritual arts, in *Parayanthullal*, the dancer wears a serpent hooded shaped throne, a red silk cloth tied over his waist, an anklet on one leg and he dances on one leg with the other one raised. *Parayanthullal* is one of the dying art forms of Kerala and this is the first time it is performed at the Soorya festival outside

Kerala. Kalamandalam Prabhakaran, disciple of *ottanthullal* veteran artiste Malabar Raman Nair performed *parayanthullal*. Aishwarya Warrior performed the graceful *mohiniattam*, another typical classical dance of Kerala.

On the third day, the festival opened with *sithangan thullal* by Kalamandalam Prabhakaran. This is also another ritual temple art form with variation in attire and adornments. The dancer ties a black cloth over his head, a crown, bracelets, armlets, and anklets (*kalthala*) made out of *karuthola*. He ties a red and white cloth round his waist and with the *karuthola kalthalam*, the dancer resembles a lotus in bloom. The dance was from the episode of *Kalyana-sougandhikam* from Mahabharata.

This was followed by *Nangiar Koothu* by Kalamandalam Usha. *Nangiar Koothu* is a silent mono-act with eloquent miming, facial expressions and hand gestures richly sprinkled with gracious dances and skilled acting. Kalamandalam Usha danced *tharaka vadham* from *Kalicharitham* at the festival.

There was *kootiyattam*, *chakyar koothu* and *ottanthullal* also during the event. *Kootiyattam* explores the unlimited extent of one's acting ability, is the pride of Kerala arts and has been awarded the status of 'heritage art' by the UNESCO. *Chakyar koothu* is a form of satire, generally on contemporary issues and has an abundant sense of humour. Perhaps it is the most hilarious form of India with an



Bhagavathikkolam, generally seen in the southern part of Trichur Dist and northern part of Ernakulam Dist

unrestricted licence to laugh at the audience for a good and honest purpose. These various art forms were performed by Kalamandalam Radhakrishnan, Kalamandalam Usha and Kalamandalam Sanjeev Kumar.

Village folk forms like pullavan pattu, nandurni pattu, Bhagavathi pattu, Ayyappan vilakku, vettekaran pattu, bhagavathi kolam, by artistes from Kerala were also performed by artistes from Kerala.

Pullavan pattu is performed to appease the serpent God, and Nandurni pattu for worship of Kali and Vettekaran (Shiva). Karinkaliattam, mayillattam, were other folk dance arts at the festival. On the fifth and final day of the Goodnight Soorya festival, music composer Kaithapram Viswanathan Namboodiri inaugurated the closing ceremony.

This was followed by a programme of village folk songs.

The next Goodnight Soorya Festival Mumbai Chapter will take place from January 27 to 31, 2013 with another round of Kerala arts and dance programmes to regale Mumbai Malayalees. The Festival also hosted a Kerala food festival at the venue during the event.

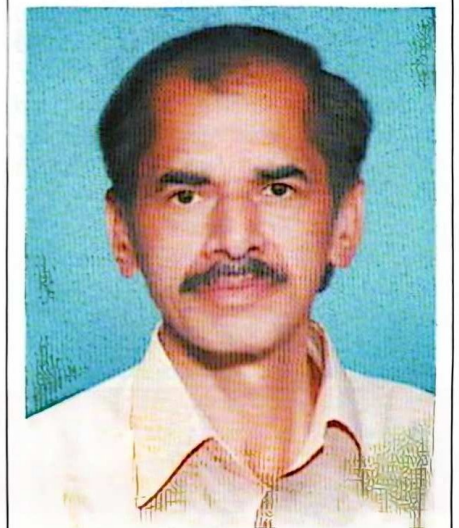
Dombivli based Cultural organization Kalakshetram headed by President Vishnu Kunnam, Treasurer PM Sudheer, Arts- in- Charge Kalamandalam Gopalakrishnan and Secretary the late



Parayanthullal by Kalamandalam Prabhakaran

Sasidharan Nair (he recently passed away) and other Committee members organized and co-ordinated this cultural feast. The brain behind the Soorya festival is Krishnamoorthy, popularly known as Soorya Krishnamoorthy who has been regularly organizing programmes of the rich arts forms of Kerala almost all days of the year, and reviving and popularising them in several parts of India and abroad.

Obituary



P M Sasidharan Nair

P M Sasidharan Nair (58) passed away on February 12, following a heart attack. A resident of Dombivli, Sasidharan belonged to Puthalathu family of Vallikkavu, near Kadalundi, Malappuram District. After working with rediff.com for over 30 years, he retired in November 2011. He was the Secretary of the Dombivli Cultural Organisation Kalaksetram and was actively involved in co-ordinating the recently concluded Goodnight Soorya Festival. Sasi is survived by his wife Komalam and his daughter Swetha who is a +2 student at Model College Dombivli.



Chakyar Koothu by Kalamandalam Radhakrishnan

“DIVIDED WE STAND, UNITED WE APPEAR”



Sriprakash Menon

For a non Malayalee (referred still as Madrasis by many) it may appear that the community is very organised, united and clanish but only a Malayalee will realise that they are not a "big joint family" but nuclear groups with multicentric individualistic interests. Individual Malayalees have done extremely well outside Kerala. Not that no one in "God's Own Country" has not done well. Yet some spectacular economic success stories have happened outside the 'land of coconut'. In Kerala they would have remained as a 'nut case'.

What they could not do collectively in their home state they have succeeded in organizing well outside their own state. But are they really organised as an entity? Almost every station in Mumbai may have Malayalee Samajams, Ayyappa Seva Sanghams or other cultural fronts. No doubt geographical distances and mechanical Mumbai life does not leave much scope for easy access to various collective initiatives whether it is spiritual, cultural or social.

Away from their roots, every community does aspire to preserve its identity be it traditional, linguistic, cultural or

political. It is therefore vital for the Malayalee community to have its own bodies to further its interest. Whose interests are these organisations really serving, many in the community may ask. Education and cultural awareness have empowered Malayalees in a much better way than many other communities yet their individualistic ego, false pride, caste and class based orientations have compartmentalized.

In the past, when one Malayalee spoke, the other joined and argued, the third one raised a flag and with the fourth one a union was formed. Today in the globalized era it is simpler, four Malayalees will start an association and after a year another four wants to take over and in the third year there will be eight Malayalee organisations. Individual solutions for social purpose in a customised market. Remember, Kerala had the first coalition government in India which meant that politically also they cannot function as a single ruling group.

Every Malayalee is a born leader within the community. Except for the cadre based organisations and political

set ups, nobody wants to be follower, everybody wants to a leader. Culture, literacy and education should actually make a person simple and ego less however Malayalees tends to be arrogant and snobbish. No doubt knowledge has helped the community to be ahead of others in the areas of health, hygiene, sanitation and in the realm of consciousness of social and political rights.

During the Mullaperiyar issue, many Keralites were scared of the "doom", if the water gushes out of the old reservoir. A typical local reaction then was "Malayalee..... scared of water, no way, the state with several rivers and lakes is so 'water centric'. Over and above an average Malayalee's Vallam (liquor) intake is so high, he is already drowned in water from within. Does he need to be scared of Vallam from outside. Malayalees can swim with and against the tide anywhere in the world, in Kerala they may not."

(The writer is a cultural observer / documentary film maker and KERALA IN MUMBAI may not subscribe to the opinions expressed.)

Anjali Nair receives WorldatWork scholarship

Anjali Nair daughter of Dr C N N Nair has been awarded the 55th WorldatWork HR certification scholarship. The WorldatWork scholarship program was launched in January 2010 to help HR practitioners obtain designations as Certified Compensation Professionals, Certified Benefits Professionals, Global Remuneration Professionals or Work-Life Certified Professionals. WorldatWork designations are known throughout the HR and rewards community as marks of expertise and excellence in all areas of rewards. WorldatWork Career Center data show that 83% of employers look for certification when



Anjali Nair

recruiting HR professionals. The value of a one-year scholarship package ranges from \$7,000 to \$18,000 and includes free WorldatWork Premier membership, access to e-learning courses and materials, and all related examination fees. Applications for a WorldatWork scholarship are accepted on an ongoing basis year-round. Scholarships are open to both WorldatWork members and non-members practicing HR anywhere in the world. Anjali Nair is now employed at Bangalore with a multinational organisation.

Chappaties and chicken curries from prison

Prison reformation in Kerala has reached its zenith not for the prisoners but for the people outside the prisons. For quite sometime, the prisoners are churning out tasty chapattis and curries, both vegetarian and non-vegetarian, to be sold to the people outside. There is no hesitation from the public to garner this tasty food. In fact at many centres of distribution, people queue up to have them.

The food is hygienic, tastier and cheaper compared to that of star hotels.

Presently three prisons in the state -- Poojapura central jail in Thiruvananthapuram, Viyoor central jail in Thrissur and the Kozhikode district jail have started the venture and is running successfully with about 60,000 chappaties being made daily with the help of machines by prisoners.

While Central prison at Thiruvananthapuram markets its chappaties as 'Poojapura Chappaties', Viyoor jail inmates branded their product as 'Freedom Chappaties'.

There are also plans to start similar ventures in Ernakulam district jail and Kollam jail. A proposal in this regard would be submitted to the state government soon.

In Poojapura central jail, 40,000 Chappaties, besides 3,500 packets of chicken and 500 packets of vegetarian curries are made on an average daily.

The demand for these ready-to-eat chappaties is so great that they are sold out. While a packet containing five chappaties and chicken curry is priced at



Rs 25, it is Rs 20 for the same set with vegetable curry.

The chappaties are ready by 9 a.m. at the three outlets at Thiruvananthapuram. People queue up to take away the packets. The counters are open till 6 p.m. and fresh chappaties are sent as per demand. Bulk orders come on Sundays.

Convicts serving life imprisonment, are among those participating in the venture launched by Tamil film Actor-Director Cheran two months ago. Earlier, only chappaties were made but from Jan 18 this year, the curries were also prepared and sold.

In Poojapura jail, the two chappati-making machines costing about Rs 2.5 crore each have been installed.

There was so much enthusiasm among the prisoners that, those from other jails are also keen to come to Poojapura. There are also plans to start a bakery unit soon for making banana chips and bread. The prisoners at Poojapura have manufactured about 10.5 lakh Chappaties in the past two months. The affordable cost of the product has been the key to the success of

the venture. Counters have been set up in front of the prison. About 150 prisoners work in different shifts in this exercise. About 250 kg of chicken is needed for making 1,000 plates of curry. About 500 vegetarian curries are prepared using mainly vegetables grown in the prison and also sourcing it from government-run vegetable stalls outside. There is demand for 5,000 packets of chicken curries presently. There are also plans to start a unit for women prisoners at Attakulan-gara in Thiruvananthapuram for making idlies, chutney and sambar.

During the Christmas season, the prisoners had made star-shaped chappaties and sold them at outlets outside. During the Mandala Pooja season, the inmates had provided 10,000 chappaties per day to the Padmanabhaswamy temple authorities to feed the devotees during the Sabarimala season.

The Poojapura prison complex is spread over 61 acres on which a variety of vegetables such as spinach and cabbage are grown by the inmates.

In Viyoor and Kozhikode prisons about 10,000 chappaties are made each day and sold. Curries are not made. However, during the recently held State School Youth Festival, the prisoners had supplied about 10,000 chappaties a day.

The prison department had written to the government to enhance the wages for those working in chappati making. Prisoners are also engaged in other vocational activities such as carpentry, weaving and masonry. Government furniture is also made in the prisons.

Smuggling of snake venom from Kerala forests

Snake venom worth crores of rupees is being smuggled out of Kerala forests. On January 26, customs officials of Nedumbasseri Airport arrested Solano Rais Jimmi Vincent, an Ecuador national. Information squeaked out of him shocked the officials.

From Vincent's bag the customs confiscated about half a litre of cobra venom, stored in 17 condoms. The venom is worth Rs.3 crore in the international market.

Vincent was boarding a Jet Airlines flight from Kochi to Chennai when the baggage handlers noticed some liquid bottles during scanning. The large number of bottles aroused their curiosity and when they



opened the bag, they discovered the condom pouches concealed along the lining of the bag. Vincent pleaded ignorance about the contents but stated that the bag belonged to Ostin, a Nigerian whom he met at the airport. CCTV pictures revealed that he ran out when Customs were examining the bag. His photo was immediately flashed across the Kochi city.

Soon Ostin was caught at Chennai Central. Snake venom, highly diluted, is used as a designer narcotic drug in many parts of the world and one gram of the potion would fetch Rs.10,000 (US \$200) in the international market. It gives a tremendous kick and works well even for long-term heroin junkies.

MBA GRADUATE TAKES TO FARMING

When C Radhakrishnan and his ilk are crying hoarse on agriculture, here is an MBA graduate from Valakkulam in Malappuram taking leave from the principal post of IATA training school and experimenting in farming. And he has no regrets.

The new farmer reaches his paddy field in an Ambassador car, neatly dressed. He changes clothes, takes out farming equipments from the dicky and joins the workers.

Now Eveleth Mattel Rafi (32) is an inspiration to the youngsters of Valakkulam of Veneer. The farmers of this village had almost given up farming for nearly three decades. As an experiment, Rafi took two acres of land on lease from them and prepared it well. Agricultural department gave him 'Uma' seeds. After the harvest, both Rafi and the officers were surprised. From two acres, they were expecting 10 tonnes but the return was 15 tonnes. Next year he increased the area by adding more land to the already leased one. Now he has 45 acres of land under paddy farming.



Rafi employs new as well as time tested techniques. To drive away birds, he used reflective ribbons. The ribbon tied around the field, reflects sunlight during daytime and thus frightens the approaching birds.

Rafi's forefathers were also into farming. "Any agriculture activity is risky until you harvest the crop. But one can make a clear profit if one sows over a large land and employs modern techniques", he says. He comes to the

field at 8 am and returns home at 8 pm. Unlike earlier days when workers started work around 7 and stopped at 11 am.

Now many youngsters are following Rafi's footsteps. He follows government's SEED project wherein the government provides seed and fertilizers against purchase of a minimum quantum of paddy after harvest. After this sale, there is still more paddy at his disposal for his own consumption and sale at the open market.

Young at seventy

Nalayyathu Puthan Veetil Chandramathi Amma is now 70 but she can put to shame much younger girls of the village. During the recent Kerala State Masters Athletic Meet, she won first place in 5 km walkathon and 400 m race and second place in long jump, beating women

below 35. Now she is preparing herself to participate in the national meet.

During her school days at Government High School at Adoor, she was ahead of her class

mates in sports. Wife of Bhaskaran Pillai, Chandramathi Amma is currently President of the Vanitha Samajam of NSS Unit of Muthukatara of Nooranad.



GRASS FARMING AT MAMPAD

Malayalees do not hesitate to change over from one kind of agriculture to another. From traditional paddy farming, they moved to vegetables, tapioca, coconut, cotton, rubber and many other items, never happy with anything for a long time.

Now a young farmer from Kattumunda of Mampad, near Nilambur, is cultivating grass, which everyone else destroys. Pallippadi Veluthamodayil Raju Skaria is into farming grass to feed cattle. He is a qualified electrical engineer but he is busy in growing grass and cattle breeding. He has 40 cows and the task of feeding them grass led him into grass-growing.

Six years ago, he went into areca nut farming in 10 acres of land and in between he sowed the seeds of grass, good for cattle. There are about 200 sprinklers fixed at various spots to water the grass daily. From each root, he cuts between 20 and 30 kg of grass a month. After cutting he covers the root with loose soil and put cow dung over it. New grass appears within next two-three days and within 25 days, it is ready to be cut.

The cattle get fresh grass everyday and the cow dung in return is used as bio-fertiliser to the grass. Skaria's daily need of grass is about a 1000 kg and the remaining grass he sells off at Rs.2 a kg. Since cattle growers need fresh grass daily, Skaria has no problem of finding customers for his grass. He can not meet their demand often.

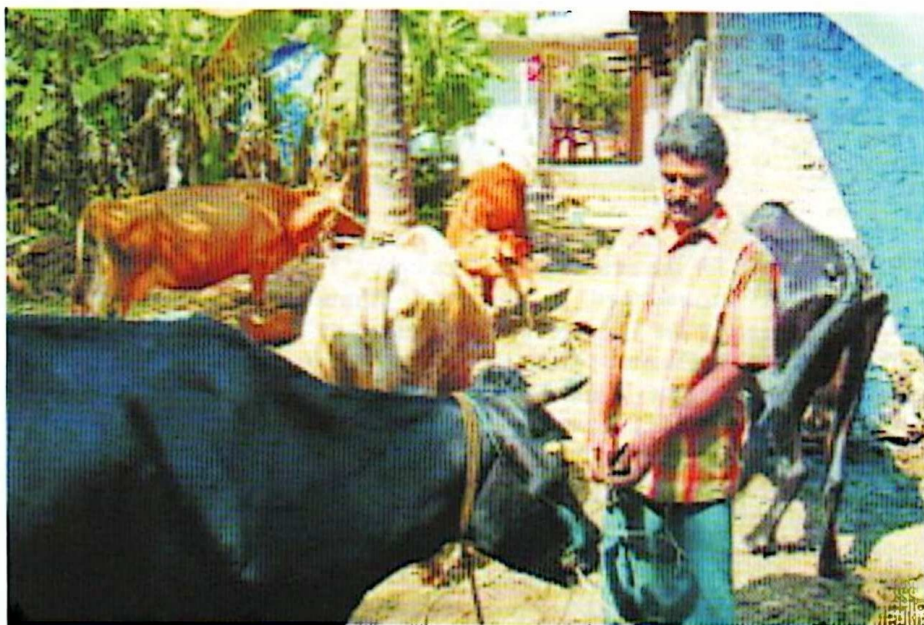


CATTLE BREEDING A NEW PROFITABLE VOCATION

With high cost of living, most families feel the need for both husband and wife to work. But Chillakat Raman of Sukhapuram near Edapal defies this need. According to him, if a family owns four cows, the living cost of a family is manageable. He has a cow shed for his four cows and he starts his day from 4 a m from this cow shed.

Raman studied only upto eighth and set out to earn a living. The family had one cow then and he bought one more so that its milk could be sold to earn some money. Then he made it four and now six cows.

He pulled down the dilapidated house and built a modern house, married Vasanthi, sent the children to a good school; all with the help of their cows. They have a paddy field on lease and grow plantains, coconut trees and areca nut trees etc. But the major income is from the cows. They also provide bio-fertilisers for their farming. Raman has



cows of HF Jersey and hybrid types. At 4.30 am, he starts milking the cows and from 7 to 9 he distributes the milk to his regular customers. He sells 25 litres of

milk daily.

Raman makes Rs.10,000 per month from the sale of milk. His a high level of hygiene keeps his cows healthy.

GRASS FARMING IN A BOX

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Though this grass growing technique was available in other countries and Indian states like Gujarat for the last couple of years, it came to Kerala only recently. 'Samagra' Dairy Farm at Bharananganam has started manufacturing this magic box recently.

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The box is designed by Greentech Organic Hydroponics System Manufacturers of Ahmedabad.



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Points to Ponder

BUDGET MUSINGS



Jacob Koshy

The Budget for the year 2012-13 will be pronounced in the parliament by the 16th March as indicated by the Finance Minister recently. Normally the Budget get notified on the last date of February each year with this year's an exception due to state elections.

Various representations by trade and other professional bodies needed immediate attention of the Finance Minister and his job become an arduous exercise.

The Direct Tax Code originally to be enacted effective 1st April 2012, in all probability will be extended further. The Parliamentary Committee chaired by Shri Yashwant Sinha on DTC will be completing their exercise soon and it's unlikely to get an affirmative nod of the Finance Ministry by the time the Budget gets underway.

The gap between the expectation and actual might widen with the ensuing elections results in the states which may likely to alter the equation between the allies and the major political parties in power at the centre.

One suggestion to raise the threshold limit for tax from the current Rs 1.80 lacs per annum to Rs 3.00 lacs may get a happy nod from almost all tax payers as the current statistics indicate that majority of the tax-payers fall in this

category. The Govt can concentrate on their efforts to augment its revenue by focusing its attention on the large tax payers of less than 2.50 million in number. Out of the total 300 million tax payers over 92 % of it falls in the tax brackets up to Rs 1 million and the efforts to garner revenue must be on the balance 8 % from which major revenue gets generated.

E-filing of tax returns has also helped the Govt to expedite its process of refunds etc. In the years to come the e-filing will become mandatory for more and more classes of assesseees.

General Anti Avoidance Rules, popularly known as GAAR is likely to get a major push in this Budget. As expected, the ruling

in the recent VODAFONE case by the Supreme Court may have a bearing while framing GAAR. Share of tax on any Gains arising on a transaction with a nexus or business connection with India may get hit by virtue of this decision.

The expected GDP growth is likely to be slower than anticipated due to various global pressures such as Euro Zone turmoil and slow economic recovery of the North Americas.

Budget Deficit is likely to be higher than expected which in turn will be inflationary.

Govt should re-introduce the much

delayed liberalization for further stimulating the growth in the economy. The targeted sale of the PSUs should be speeded up to achieve the desired mobilization of funds. A large segment of the citizenry expects that opening up of the retail sector would bring in the required push for economy to newer growth by creation of employment and opportunities for infrastructure development. Of course, opening up of the economy needed support from a rejuvenated Govt at the Centre..

A major thrust to industry across all sectors would be to introduce the much awaited Goods and Service Tax, popularly known as GST which the Govt promised to bring into statute books by 1st April 2012.

Govt must address the state's genuine concern of sharing of tax revenue and offset it if any short fall once GST come in to effect.

The GST will be the next major change in the liberalization process started twenty year back.

A general budget with fresh proposals for liberalization and easier and transparent laws would be a welcome change. A well meaning and simple drafted document with focus on growth with justice become the need of the hour.

jkoshy@vsnl.com

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Kerala in Mumbai

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Mootupatam മുടുപടം (1963)

Lyrics: Yusufali Kecheri Music: Baburaj
Rāgam: Singer: Baburaj

മൈലാഞ്ചിത്തോപ്പിൽ മയങ്ങിനിൽക്കുന്ന മൊഞ്ചത്തി
മൈക്കണ്ണാൽ വൽബിൽ അമിട്ട് കത്തിച്ച വമ്പത്തി
കമ്പിളാതുളള കരിമ്പുപോലുള്ള നിൻമേനി
കണ്ടമുതൽക്കാരോ വൽബിൽമേടൂന്ന് മുളുമാണി

ഒളിയമ്പ് കൊണ്ടെന്റെ ഉള്ളം നൂറായ് നൂറുണ്ടുന്ന്
ഒരുവാക്കു മിണ്ടാതൊളിച്ച് നിൽക്കുന്നതെന്തിന്ന്
കരളിന്റെ വാതിൽ ഞാനേറെ മുട്ടിവിളിച്ചല്ലോ
കതക് തുറന്നകം ഒന്നുകാണിച്ചതില്ലല്ലോ

(മൈലാഞ്ചി)

ആരമ്പത്തോപ്പിൽ വിരിഞ്ഞ പുന്നാരപ്പുവല്ലേ
ആശിച്ച മാറൻ നിൻ മുന്നിൽ നീരിയിരിപ്പല്ലേ
കുന്ദുപിളിവില്ലാട്ടം കാട്ടി എന്നെ തളർത്തല്ലേ
കുട്ടിക്കുരങ്ങ് കളിപ്പിച്ചെന്നെക്കൊക്കല്ലേ
അഴകറ്റ ഹൂരി എന്നാശക്കോട്ട തകർക്കല്ലേ
അടിയെല്ലാം പെണ്ടയ്ക്കും കൂലി മാരാർക്കുമാക്കല്ലേ (മൈലാഞ്ചി)



Baburaj



Yusufali Kecheri

Transliteration: Ā, ā = ആ, ാ ; Ē, ē = ഏ, ഐ ; Ī, ī = ഇ, ി ;
Ō, ō = ഓ, റ്റോ ; Ū, ū = ഉ, ു ; ũ = ൃ ; C, c = ച, ch = ഛ, D, d = ട,
Dh, dh = ഡ, Ḍ, ḍ = ള, Ḍh, ḍh = ഴ, jh = ജ, Ḷ, ḷ = ള് ; Ṇ, ṇ =
ണ, ṁ = ണ, ṛ = റ; rh = റ, ṛṛ = റ്റ; Ṛ, ṛ = റ്റ; Ṣ, ṣ = ശ; Ṣ, ṣ = ഷ,
T, t = ട, Th, th = റ, Ṭ, ṭ = ത; ṭh = റ

Mailanciṭṭpil mayāññi nilkkunna moncaṭṭi
maikkaṇṇāḷ khalbil amittū kaṭṭicca vampaṭṭi
kambillāṭṭulla karimpupōlulla ninmēni
kaṭamaṭalkkārō khalbil metunnū mullāṇi

Oliyampū koṭṭente ulḷam nūrhāy nurhuñnunnū
oruvāḷḷu miṭṭāṭṭoliccū nilkkunnaṭeṭṭinnū
karaḷinte vāṭṭil ṇāñērhe mutti viḷiccallō
kaṭakū ṭurhannakam onnu kāṇiccaṭṭillallō (Mailanciṭṭpil)

Āranpaṭṭṭpil viriñña punnārapṭṭuvallē
āśicca māran nin munnil nīrhiyirippallē
kunucillivillāttam kāṭṭi enne ṭalarṭṭallē
kuttikuraññū kaḷippicenne karhakkallē
azhakaṭṭa hūrhi ennāśakkotta ṭakarkallē
atiyellām ceṭṭaikkum kūli mārārkumākkallē (Mailanciṭṭpil)

Yousufali entered the film world quite accidentally. When *Mootupatam* was almost complete, its producer T K Pareekutty felt a character called Moidu, as in his first movie *Neelakkuyil*, to be added and he should have a song like 'kaayalarikathu'. When approached, P Bhaskaran refused for want of time. Then Baburaj recommended Yousufali to Ramu Kariat and both of them went to Trichur. Kariat went up to Yousufali's office and told him to come down urgently as some one is waiting for him. The latter was surprised to see Baburaj waiting. A brief discussion ensued and leaving the visitors down, Yousufali went up. Within a few minutes, he came down and handed over the lyrics of this song. Just as in *Neelakkuyil* in which music composer Raghavan rendered *Kayalarikathu*, in *Mootupatam*, Baburaj rendered this song that turned out to be quite popular. Balakrishna Menon acted as Moidu in both the films. When Uroob wrote *Neelakkuyil*, well known author S K Pottekkat wrote *Mootupatam*.

Abhiyum Njanum first phase shooting over

The first phase of the shooting in Mumbai and Kerala of the newly formed Mumbai Malayalees film production house Mumbai Cine Talkies' *Abhiyum Njanum* is complete. The second phase of the shooting will commence soon in Kerala. The film is Mumbai Cine Talkies first venture. It is introducing Mumbai Malayalee boy Rohit Rajendra in the lead role. Other actors include Lal, Menaka, Archana Kavi, Salim Kumar Guinness Pakru, Suraj Venjamaramood, Shoba Mohan, Baburaj and others. The film is slated to be released in the first week of May.



Nakshatra, daughter of Sumitra, makes her debut

Remember Sumitra, the teenaged heroine of M T Vasudevan Nair's *Nirmalyam*, a National Gold Medal Winner? Though she continued to act in some more Malayalam and Tamil movies, she could not make any waves later. Even after her marriage with Director Rajendra Babu, she continues to appear in Malayalam and Tamil movies in elderly roles. Her elder daughter Uma made her debut sometime ago and then disappeared. Now her second daughter Nakshatra is making her presence as an actress in *Kili Patum gramam*, directed by V M Anil. Nakshatra will appear in the role of a rustic village girl. Earlier she appeared in some Kannada and Telugu movies and now tests her luck in Malayalam. Shooting of the movie is progressing in Kozhikode and surroundings.

Reminiscences about Nirmala

After *Balan* and *Jnanambika*, it took eight years in 1948 for *Nirmala* to come out. It was the first Malayalam film to employ playback singing with songs written by poet G Sankara Kurup and music composed by Govinda Rao, who died last year. This movie was directed by P V Krishna Iyer.

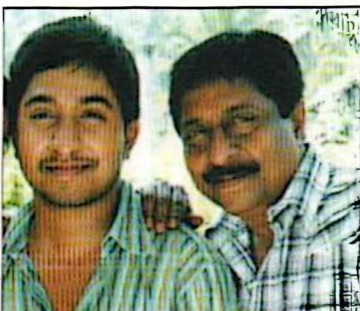


The only person associated with this film, who is alive, is its heroine, Baby Joseph. Its producer Chevalier P J Cheria was her father in law. Her husband Joseph Cheria was the hero.

Baby Joseph was married in 1943 even before the commencement of the film. She was also mother of two children before she entered the film world. She was 22 then. The film took nearly one year for completion. The story of *Nirmala* revolved around the love story of a couple belonging to different castes. *Nirmala* was the only film in which Baby Joseph acted.

Produced by Srinivas,
directed by Vineeth

The Malayalam film world is agog with a rumour that actor, director, screenplay writer and producer Srinivasan is getting ready to produce a movie to be directed by his son Vineeth. This is pursuant of the hushed talk that Srinivas is sniping at super stars, as projected in 'Padmasri, Bharat, Dr Saroj Kumar' that targeted Mohanlal. It is being produced under the banner of Lumiere Cinema, of which Mukesh is a partner. Their earlier film 'Katha Parhayumbol' was a super hit while Vineeth's debut directorial movie was an average film.



Chattakkari on the remake trail

Author Pamman's novel *Chattakkari* was made into a successful movie by ace director K S Sethumadhavan in 1974. Now the film is being remade and the director is Sethumadhavan's son Santhosh. For the role of Julie, immortalized by Lakshmi, Shamna Kasim is a strong contender. Shamna entered films through reality shows and had a few hit films in other South Indian languages with a changed name Poorna but was ignored by Malayalam. The movie is produced by Revati Kalamandir.



L R Easwari completes 50 years in movies

Fifty years ago, a new voice was heard in the South Indian world and it mesmerised fans and some of the attractive young actresses rode on her voice. After some time the actresses faded but the voice continued to titillate the fans and it remained captivating.

The owner of that magnetic voice was L R Easwari, a highly respectable conservative looking female singer. She could go beyond the directions of the music directors and make the songs she rendered sexy and voluptuous.

Easwari gate-crashed into Tamil cinema with a hit song, "Vārāyen thozhi vārāyo....", a song played even today either vocally or through *nādaswaram* at every wedding since 1961. Since then she sang more than 30,000 songs in various languages, for movies and albums.

Easwari lent her voice even to Jayalalitha in her debut movie *Vennirai Adai* and continued to do so till the current CM of TN bid good bye to movies. Her songs in praise of Mariyamman continue till this day to enthrall devotees. She has sung a number of *Oppana* in the sixties in Malayalam movies, especially in Muslim oriented films. Her popular *Oru kotta ponnundallo* and *Pullimaanalla*



mayilalla even today can be heard in reality shows. Baburaj was the composer of those songs. *Oru kutukka ponnu tharām* (Subaida) and *Kanmuna neetti* (Khadeeja) followed in this genre. She also sang for other types of songs.

Easwari is happy that she did not get into the acting. A spinster, she maintains youthfulness in her voice and also in personal appearance.

She completes fifty years in movie world.



RAAGALAYA MUSIC AWARDS 2011

At the 8th Raagalaya Music Award Nite, the annual Raagalaya Lifetime Achievement Award 2011 was given to the late Johnson Master, an established music Composer in the Malayalam film music. Johnson's

wife, Rani Johnson received the trophy and cash award of Rs 25,000/ on his behalf from NRK Pillai, Chairman & Managing Director of Aiswarya Group of Publications, publishers of Assignments Abroad Times.

caricaturist and mimicry artiste of Kerala. Johnson's daughter Shan Johnson, and son Renn Johnson were also present during the event. Shan Johnson sang a song as a daughter's tribute to her father.

This was followed by an evening of Malayalam film songs composed by Johnson Master and rendered by Madhu Balakrishnan, Swetha Mohan, Kallara Gopan and Preetha Kannan. The event was compered by Jayaraj Warriar, noted

The evening started with a scintillating dance performance by noted dancer Shobana. She performed excerpts from Ramayana, Ashtapathi and *thillana* which held the audience spell bound.

The first prize winners of the Annual



Sree Lakshmi S Pillai
performing during the event

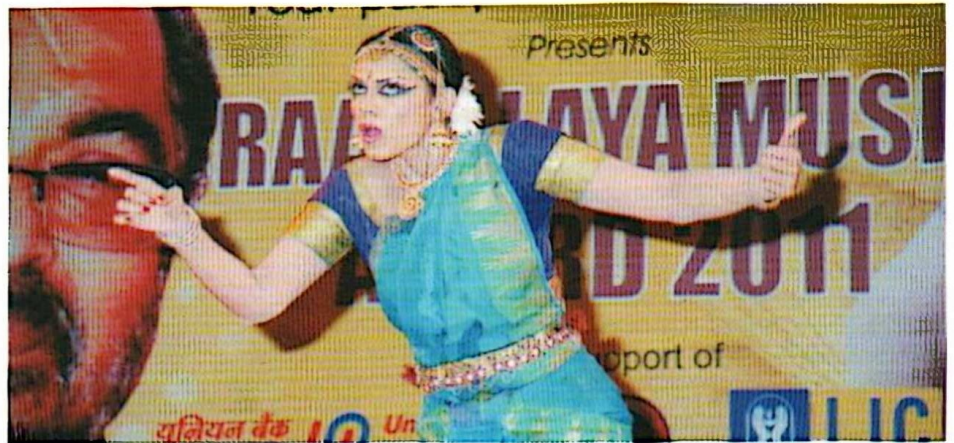


Dancer Shobhana as Radha - an excerpt from Ashtapadi



Shobhana and her dance troupe

Raagalaya Music competition were given their trophies and cash certificates at the event. They received it from the hands of the singers and Jayaraj Warriar, during the programme. Jayaraj Warriar gave a lively biography of Johnson Master's life and musical career interspersed with the Johnson's melodious songs rendered by Madhu Balakrishnan, Swetha Mohan, Kallara Gopan and Preetha Kannan. Jayaraj Warriar enlivened the atmosphere with his humour and wit. There was also a dance performance by Sree Lakshmi S Pillai.



A scene from Ramayana



Left to right: Jayaraj Warriar, Shweta Mohan, Madhu Balakrishnan, Kallara Gopan and Preetha Kannan performing



Madhu Balakrishnan is a prominent playback singer who sings in all South Indian language films. He has also released many devotional music albums and gives musical performances on stage in India and abroad. With a distinct flawless and melodious voice, Madhu, who has a strong foundation in classical music, is also a graded artiste of All-India Radio and Doordarshan

Interview

MY LIFE IS MY MUSIC

-MADHU BALAKRISHNAN

As a playback singer, Madhu has sung about 300 film songs in Malayalam, Tamil, Kannada and Telugu in a span of 15 years of his musical career. He performs regularly at the *Swaralaya* Dance and Music Festival held in Palakkad and the *Chembai Sangeethotsavam* in Guruvayur. He also appears on Malayalam and Tamil television as a performer or judge of talent competitions. Madhu's fame has spread well beyond Indian shores and he has performed frequently in the Gulf as well as in Singapore and Malaysia. He also performed in Italy in 2004 with the symphonic orchestra of Ilaiyaraja, who also utilised Madhu in his celebrated "*Thiruvagasam*" classical crossover album.

After graduation from the Academy of Indian Music and Arts, Madhu recorded devotional numbers in Malayalam and then got offers to sing for Malayalam films around 1999. His first song, *Paathiraa pooveh*, went into oblivion as the film *Sisiram* did not get released. Subsequently, Madhu began gaining attention when he sang for films such as *Umayapuram Sultan*. He was soon spotted and signed on by musical heavyweights such as the late Raveendran and M. G. Radhakrishnan, and today has sung for almost all Malayalam composers. He has sung in Malayalam for films such as *Neelanbari*, *Penpattanam*,

Yakshiyum Njanum and Inganeyum Oral, Vinodayatra, Rasathanthram etc.

Awards

Madhu bagged the Kerala State Film Award for Best Playback Singer in 2002 with the Malayalam song *Amme Amme* from the film *Vaalkannadi*. His powerful and poignant rendition of the song composed by M. Jayachandran gave him a firm footing in the Malayalam film music industry. Some of Madhu's popular numbers in Malayalam since then include *Raveerayai pooveh* from *Rock and Roll*, which won him an Asianet and a South Filmfare Award for Best Male Playback Singer, and *Ramayanam katha* from *Pathaam nilayile theevandi*, which won him one of several Kerala Film Critics awards over the years. *Kuttanadan Kaayalile* from *Kazhcha* in Malayalam

and *Konjaneram Konjaneram* a duet with Asha Bhosle from *Chandramukhi*, the Rajnikanth starrer are his other hits.

Recently he won the Vayalar Rama Varma Award for Best Playback Singer 2011 *Gopeehrudayam yamuna -- Arabiponnu* (Malayalam film.)

Leading a team of aspiring young singers, Madhu's team won the first prize in the inaugural Sun TV Sangeetha Maha Yudham Tamil music reality show. The grand finale was telecast on 10 October 2010 where his team beat five other teams, each led by a professional singer

Madhu hails from Koratty near Chalakudy. His father P N Balakrishnan (late) worked for the GOI press and mother the late M D Leelavathy was a teacher.

Madhu's strength lies in his classical music foundation. Although his late

father and his mother were not professional musicians, both had good musical sense. Mother Leelavathy had studied both music and dance - and encouraged him to study classical music. He started learning music when he was studying in Std V from Sreedevi teacher in Chalakudy. Later he learnt under Chandramana Narayanan Namboodiri. While in school he used to participate and win light music competitions. He won a Ford Scholarship and did his graduation in Music from the Academy of Music and Arts in Chennai. Madhu says he has learnt Carnatic music from 16 teachers including Dr Mani Krishnaswamy, Dr Vedavalli, Professor Pasupathi and TV Gopalakrishnan.

Madhu's wife Divya also sings. He has two children Madhav, 9 years old and Mahadev, 3 years old.

Recently Madhu was in Mumbai to participate in the Raagalaya Music Awards function where he sang several songs of Johnson Master since the programme was in memory of that late Malayalam film music composer and background music scorer. Here he shares his views on music with KIM readers :

What is the present Scenario of Malayalam film songs?

I feel there is less of the Malayalee essence in today's Malayalam film songs. The tunes have become more westernized and they are similar to the songs from films in other Indian languages. Many songs have the same rhythm and features and caters to the tastes of today's youth. There are more fast-moving numbers now. Of course there are very good melodious songs also today.

What is your advice to aspiring singers?

Do not become self-complacent but continue to practise and fine-tune your talent. *Shruti* is the greatest asset for a young singer. Show respect to your elders, parents and gurus, have devotion to God.

Any advice to the winners of reality shows in TV channels?

Remember this victory is not the end. It is a benchmark, another hurdle that you have crossed and emerged victorious. There are more hurdles to cross if you want to become perfect artistes.

What is your message to Mumbai Malayalees and your views on the Mumbai Malayalee audience who crowd your shows?

I would suggest that all Malayalees must learn Malayalam. Do not neglect your mother-tongue. Learn Malayalam, celebrate the culture of Kerala wherever you are.



Raagalaya President Vijaykumar welcoming Madhu Balakrishnan

Mumbai Malayalees are an appreciative audience. They listen to good Malayalam songs. Maybe because they are far from their native land, they become nostalgic, but they enjoy and appreciate the Malayalam music programmes where I sing.

What does music mean to you?

My life is my music. Without music I am nothing.

Who has influenced you most in your music?

Dasettan. I grew up listening to Dasettan's songs. Many compare my singing to his. I admire him but I do not imitate him. My gurus, especially T V Gopalakrishnan Director of Academy of Indian Music and Arts in Chennai who encouraged me to concentrate on my music and introduced me to Dakshinamoorthy. It was T V Gopalakrishnan, founder-director of the Academy who recommended my name. It was a duet with Chitra for Vijayakanth's 125th film, *Ulavathurai*. The song came out well. Earlier, I had recorded for a Christian devotional, and also sung a 'sloka' in another album.



Kerala in Mumbai

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